

# MYTHOLOGIES

Whic Organ

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This story is a snapshot of a relationship with a very subtle plot. actor. What's at all! Okay!

Notice the pronoun -

**T**

they are heading east on 35, crossing over the Kanawha and into West Virginia when they see that the traffic has slowed.

The man is flipping through the AM stations, listening to bits of sports talk radio, weather reports, and the like. As an act of kindness he has the volume low. The woman is reading.

The man says, For a class?

Mythology, the woman says.

She is not really reading. Just skimming. Looking out the window at the traffic, at the town, noticing that the water is up, that there are barges pushing coal at what seems too slow a pace to be going anywhere.

The man says, Which ones?

The Five Ages of Man and the Flood. Prometheus. All of them, really.

This is months before the separation, years before what will become "a bitter time in all their lives." Before the accident at the house. Before the job transfer. This is the melancholy they will look back on with some fondness—driving now through the fertile bottomland of early marriage, of new love.

notice simple syntax + fragments.

This is a fragment. That's okay because it's intentional.

Also a fragment. But her thoughts are fragmentary now.

How can it be all of them?

mystery - we'll never know.

imagery

They take the ramp off 35 and circle down into Henderson, just across the river from Point Pleasant—the radio popping and fizzing with static as they pass under the bridge. On the left, the river pushes slowly into West Virginia. The man has his window down and can smell the river, he thinks, mixed with diesel exhaust from the tractor trailers ahead of them. Can smell late summer and fresh-cut lawns. Occasionally he catches a glimpse of shirtless men on barges between the clapboard houses and mobile homes that line the river.

The man says, Is it interesting?

The reading? Not really, the woman says.

Short syntax in the dialogue

The traffic is as thick and heavy as the slow-moving river. She is looking out her window now, further up the mountain to where they are building the new interstate. There are orange signs at regular intervals warning of two-way radio communication and blasting zones. A number of rocks have rolled down from the construction site and have smashed small trees and flower beds, have spilled onto the road in places. There are larger boulders lodged against the corners of homes, embedded in screened-in porches and resting against rusted swing sets. She sighs loudly as they pass a blue Ford Taurus with the hood crumpled completely by a bright tan boulder nearly twice as big as the car itself.

Jesus, the woman says. Those poor people. Just so we can get there sooner. Where? Does she mean a real place or is she being metaphorical?

The man says, I wonder where this river goes.

She rolls her window down to feel the humid warmth of summer on her skin.

The ocean, the woman says, still looking at the flattened Taurus. Always to the ocean.

\* This author uses italics for dialogue.

If seems like she knows more than him.

I don't want you to do that.

Is she talking about death? Looking at the flattened Taurus? Their relationship, too, is dying.

This long sentence lists where the boulders are - climax?

lots of prepositional phrases.

# EXAMPLES of FLASH FICTION

A.9.5

Jim Heynen

## WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE ICE STORM

Lots of imagery & simple syntax

the is casual, like someone is about to tell you a story on the street.

Simple exposition

Notice the direct syntax  
ne winter there was a freezing rain. How beautiful people said when things outside started to shine with ice. But the freezing rain kept coming. Tree branches glistened like glass. Then broke like glass. Ice thickened on the windows until everything outside blurred. Farmers moved their livestock into the barns, and most animals were safe. But not the pheasants. Their eyes froze shut.  
Some farmers went ice-skating down the gravel roads with clubs to harvest the pheasants that sat helplessly in the roadside ditches.

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Notice how the author uses no names, just "Farmers," and "boys."

## Heynen / WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE ICE STORM

The boys went out into the freezing rain to find pheasants too. They saw dark spots along a fence. Pheasants, all right. Five or six of them. The boys slid their feet along slowly, trying not to break the ice that covered the snow. They slid up close to the pheasants. The pheasants pulled their heads down between their wings. They couldn't tell how easy it was to see them huddled there.

The boys stood still in the icy rain. Their breath came out in slow puffs of steam. The pheasants' breath came out in quick little white puffs. Some of them lifted their heads and turned them from side to side, but they were blindfolded with ice and didn't flush. The boys had not brought clubs, or sacks, or anything but themselves. They stood over the pheasants, turning their own heads, looking at each other, each expecting the other to do something. To pounce on a pheasant, or to yell Bang! Things around them were shining and dripping with icy rain. The barbed-wire fence. The fence posts. The broken stems of grass. Even the grass seeds. The grass seeds looked like little yolks inside gelatin whites. And the pheasants looked like unborn birds glazed in egg white. Ice was hardening on the boys' caps and coats. Soon they would be covered with ice too.

Then one of the boys said, Shh. He was taking off his coat, the thin layer of ice splintering in flakes as he pulled his arms from the sleeves. But the inside of the coat was dry and warm. He covered two of the crouching pheasants with his coat, rounding the back of it over them like a shell. The other boys did the same. They covered all the helpless pheasants. The small gray hens and the larger brown cocks. Now the boys felt the rain soaking through their shirts and freezing. They ran across the slippery fields, unsure of their footing, the ice clinging to their skin as they made their way toward the blurry lights of the house.

147 after climax.

LONGEST SENTENCE, MOST COMPLEX SYNTAX shortly

inciting incident starts action

Repetition of "The boys" emphasizes sympathy for their actions

short syntax

syntax becomes complex