

## Novels vs. Reality

Novelists writing about LAS VEGAS: Most locals don't live on the Strip, we only go there if we have to. Also, we're not all blackjack dealers and strippers. If you visit with the hopes that you'll have crazy fun like in The Hangover chances are you'll wind up in jail.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEVADA: Janet spit her tooth into the last sips of miller highlife and whispered "you can't own the sky, boy." A tumbleweed bounced past the brothel's open door and into the vast barren valley.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN NEVADA: It was a Budweiser

Novelists writing about living in Alaska: the dog sled flew along and the winter wind chafed her face as icy crystals frosted her hair.

The truth: Thank God the car has been plugged in all night and I have an auto start because I'm too sick of the cold to go out.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN ALASKA: I lived in the wilds of the Yukon surviving only on the animals I trap and the berries I pick, in the cabin my father built.

ACTUALLY GROWING UP IN ALASKA: Kids recess is cut early today and there is a moose on the playground.

Novelists writing about growing up in Oklahoma: Dusty wind blew through my hair as I rode my horse Lightning on the way to the rodeo.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN OKLAHOMA: Dusty wind blew through my hair as I rode my horse George on the way to the rodeo.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABT GROWING UP IN THE DC AREA: The sprawling suburbs were an extension of the capitol, booms and busts dictated by turns in administration.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Gov't workers don't care. Except that kid I did HS theater w/ whose dad became Trump's Sec of Defense.

Midwest novelists: the hum of cicadas as we splashed in the sun-speckled creek

Actual Midwest childhood: it's -10 degrees and another white person asked me where i'm \*really\* from today

NOVELISTS WRITING THE MIDWEST: The farmhouse breached the waves of corn as a boy ran towards the door, his hands full of frogs,, his eyes full of the denim-blue sky.

ME IN THE MIDWEST: Please, I am so sick. Please give me the cough syrup, I swear I will not make meth with it.

Novelists writing about growing up in NY: The city pulsed with life, millions of people rushing to their myriad destinations.

My actual childhood in NY: They re-did the road and there are more potholes. I can smell both the dump and NJ.

Novelists writing about NYC: The dazzling lights! The incredible energy! It's hard to keep up, but such a thrill!

Me, growing up: I wish we had yellow school buses instead of having to depend on the MTA

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT LONG ISLAND: She grew tired of her mansion on the gold coast so she chartered a helicopter and headed off to NYC for the weekend

ACTUAL LIFE ON LONG ISLAND: I have been sitting in traffic since 1982

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT NJ: Joey hacked up a lung as he stumbled into the diner. The haze from the petroleum refinery next door obscured everything. The mobsters at the corner table planned the next hit against their rivals.

ACTUAL LIFE IN NJ: Wanna go to the mall?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW YORK: Sirens wailed down the street. She teetered down the alley into the nightclub anyway, dodging crack-addicted pigeons.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN NEW YORK: Getting reprimanded in 3 languages in the elevator for not wearing a hat.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT NYC: it's the city of dreams, where anything can happen and everyone has the chance to be famous.

MY ACTUAL NYC CHILDHOOD: This train deadass late \*again\*??????

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT CENTRAL NEW YORK STATE: The cows lowed in the fields, the mountains rising in the distance like ancient sentinels in this forgotten wilderness.

MY CHILDHOOD: It's April. Has the snow melted yet?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW JERSEY: Burned rubber outta the factory yard onto the turnpike with my girl to get a moment's peace on the hypodermic-strewn Shore. MY

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: After we walked through the orchard we saw horseys!

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT NEW JERSEY: It's all mobsters, hot-rodders, spending the summer down the shore, and wishing you lived somewhere more interesting.

MY CHILDHOOD IN NEW JERSEY: Well, you forgot about the blizzards in winter and insanely humid summers, but basically, yeah.

Novelists writing about growing up in MD: The whitecaps lapping at the pylons supporting the grand expanse of the Bay Bridge were a perfect mirror to the puffy clouds in the wide blue sky. I could already taste the salty bite of Old Bay on the fresh crabs my Pop would steam.

Actual childhood in MD: first of all, we eat J.O. on our crabs, not Old Bay. Secondly, pretty sure those pylons are full of bodies of people who died building the bridge.

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Writing about the Midwest: \*talks about corn and snow but is still actually set in either Minneapolis or Chicago\*

Actual Midwest: "ope lemme just sneak past ya I gotta get my karuba coffee from da Kwik Trip on my way to da packer game in my blaze orange hunting gear"

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE MIDWEST: Butter from my corn dripped onto the gingham picnic cloth like drops of sunlight

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE MIDWEST: the hawks left a half-eaten squirrel in the yard but it's surrounded by insane wild turkeys so I guess it stays

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT THE MIDWEST: As fall faded into winter, the fields faded too, the greens and yellows of the cornfields razed to beige clumps between black dirt

ACTUAL MIDWEST: blizzard tomorrow—I'm still sunburnt from last weekend. I have 13 mosquito bites and 1 glove

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP BROWN IN THE CITY: There was another shootout. The bullet holes pockmarked our school's brick walls. My chicas and I roll our eyes and snap gum in unison. We're all 7 months pregnant.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE CITY: I was at home, reading.

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IDEAL MASSACHUSETTS: He stood on Plymouth Rock, soaking in the rich history of his forefathers as the salty breeze carried the tangy smell of clams.

ACTUAL MASSACHUSETTS: A man in a Patriots hoodie is yelling racial slurs because Dunkin' Donuts ran out of hash browns.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN MASSACHUSETTS: Ah, the lighthouse! Such a quiet harbor town of weathered wood and cobblestones.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Playing in the same sandpits where the Providence mob dumped their bodies.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN MASSACHUSETTS: Dirty secrets in Boston, ghosts of the Combat Zone, Daddy is a obsessed cop and/or alcoholic and best friend's dad is probably an Irish mobster.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN MASSACHUSETTS: Suburbs. Three Stooges on black-and-white TV

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN BOSTON: Everyone's angry and grim and knows people in prison and/or organized crime

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN BOSTON: Hiding at Nana's for a week because a bank robber knew my dad's name and threatened his kids

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW ENGLAND: The trees were full of gorgeous colors and the air was crisply scented like cider

GROWING UP IN NE IRL: It's April and I just had a fucking snow day. Boston is only 25 minutes away on a map but it takes me 2 hours to get there.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT NEW ENGLAND: she lingered in a high window, looking over sea-worn cliffs. Fog settled as thick as ennui on the horizon.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN NEW ENGLAND: A man drove through a slushy puddle, splashed me on purpose, now I'm wearing clothes from the Lost and Found

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE NORTHEAST: Those were the days; long summers with the neighborhood kids watching fireflies... winters with snow so thick you could eat it like a marshmallow

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: gino cheesesteak or pat? these bagels suck gotta go to NY

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Novelist writing about Maine: The beauty of the pine trees sprawled across the side of Katadin, the Sun rose in all its magnificent glory

My actual childhood in Maine: I'm either freezing or my flesh is being eaten by horse flies. Got called a tranny in the school bathroom.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT SUMMER IN MAINE: I awoke in my cottage surrounded by blueberry bushes, and walked through the pine trees lining the rocky coast to get to my fishing boat.

ACTUAL SUMMER IN MAINE: Got bit by 3000 black flies and tried to go swimming but got hypothermia.

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MINNESOTA WRITING: The quiet still of the cold lake reflected the majestic pine forest like a mirror. A walleye broke the surface, causing the forest's reflection to magically dance as gentle ripples glided toward the shore.

ACTUAL: Gary's balls froze while waiting for the bus.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT MINNESOTA: As the sun set in the cold western horizon, the children, their cheeks rosy from the warmth and fun of skating, went inside to enjoy a meal of wild rice hotdish.

HOW MINN IS: hey guys do you want to go to caribou it's too cold (26 degrees F)

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN Minnesota: It's 43 degrees outside and freezing as hell, and were eating tater tot hot dish to keep warm.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN MINNESOTA: It's 43 degrees outside not that cold and eating hamburgers outside.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN MICHIGAN: The snow is so beautiful! Bonfires, s'mores, ghost stories around the campfire. Hunting and ice fishing. Riding snowmobiles. Boating on the Great Lakes. A nature lover's dream.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Uh, it's the same! Never mind!

NOVELISTS ABOUT GROWING UP IN IOWA: Walking out of the thick humidity of seven-foot high corn towards the school bus stop, farm dog Ranger close behind, I yearned for the big city life.  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: The noon farm report seemed to go on forever as I waited for cartoons.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN IOWA: As the fireworks illuminated the lush fields, she pulled me into the corn for our first kiss, surrounded by fireflies.  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN IOWA: "Oops she said, pulling another wolf spider out of my overalls.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN KANSAS: Sunflowers raised to the sun, pondering the vast expanse of sky as we ran through the wheat field.  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN KANSAS: oh my god it's so boring here and this heat and wind is like a goddamn blast furnace. Kill me

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN KANSAS CITY: We roared on our Huffy Rock It bikes past the rustling murmur of the cornfields, luxuriating in the flatness of the Kansas planes. On a good day you could coast for miles.  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: I'm in MISSOURI you assholes!

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN CO: Soft flakes drifted down through the chilly night air as the streetlights blinked on, the glow of snowclouds obscuring the mountain peaks.  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN CO: Damn 1st snow, I can only fit 5 layers under my Halloween costume

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT THE ROCKIES: The wind whipped around the craggy peaks, blasting the exposed skin around my eyes. I focused on skiing faster - the avalanche was almost upon me.  
ACTUAL EXPERIENCE: The city of Denver sent me another ticket for watering my lawn too much

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN COLORADO: She reached the summit just as the sky turned pink, rugged mountain ranges stretching into the distance.  
ACTUALLY GROWING UP IN COLORADO: Stupid bear knocked over the trash can and a skunk lives under the porch, which smells worse?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN COLORADO: The feel of new snow on her face was bittersweet as she pushed away on her skis, knowing she would never see him again.  
MY ACTUAL TEENAGE-HOOD IN COLORADO: Only rich kids could ski. I wasn't one of them.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT KANSAS: we're not in Kansas anymore  
ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Every time I tell anyone I'm from Kansas they do the "you're not in Kansas anymore" joke and I've seen it in so many books it's just annoying at this point.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT THE MIDWST: the lowing of cattle rose gently into the sunset night as a fresh spring breeze ruffled the tender new plants.  
ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: it's humid as fuck, there are hordes of mosquitoes in the pasture, Spring doesn't exist.

Novelists writing about growing up in midwestern USA: Everyone is cautious, safe and scared of tornados and take proper safety measures to survive.

Reality: Playing on the swings outside when my neighbor's full size trampoline flies over the fence into our yard and I jump on it

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN COLOMBIA: They had to escape through the lush jungle while the Cartel forces chased them across days.

ACTUALLY GROWING UP IN COLOMBIA: This city is gigantic and we will travel to Miami to buy shoes. Why are there so many birds?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT CENTRAL FLORIDA: Mosquitoes stung my neck as I stared through tall, knobby cypress trees at a sunbathing alligator, his powerful jaw open and waiting.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN FL: Hey, wanna break into the old Wonderbread factory and skate? Lolz

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN FLORIDA: Powder white sand beaches and eating ice cream on The Pier.

ACTUALLY GROWING UP IN FLORIDA: I would rather die than go to Busch Gardens again in 100F heat but we have a season pass and I refuse to go when the tourists are here.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN FLORIDA: The sunshine glistened on the waves ...

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN FLORIDA: Ow! How did I forget to put on sunscreen AGAIN?

WRITING ABOUT DFW: I grabbed my cowboy hat, pearl snap shirt, bolo tie, and leather boots for another day of good ol'-fashioned ranchin' and horse-ridin'

THE REALITY: I wonder if 35 will be finished this year

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN OHIO: one minute it was winter and the next it was a rocket summer. everywhere, there is corn.

ME, ACTUALLY GROWING UP THERE: I'm going to the zoo with my friends today and pretending the endless construction and OSU Buckeyes don't exist

NOVELISTS ON GROWING UP ON THE GULF ISLANDS: The best friends trooped through the woods, singing songs and holding hands

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD ON THE GULF ISLANDS: I trooped through the woods, alone, talking to myself cause I hadn't seen another kid in three months.

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Novelists writing about generic Houston TX: desert, oil wells, nearly jungles, rodeos, cattle, horses, pecans, bluebonnet flowers, only county music, swamp (all at same time/place). Quickly drive to Dallas, Austin, Galveston, San Antonio, etc. Only Tex-Mex food and BBQ...

Reality: little rain in summer only. Rare 2 see oil pumps from major roads. Oak and pine trees and small palms r native. 1 huge annual rodeo. State plants bb's along some roads. Diverse music and food options! 2 hour drive across Houston. 4ish hours to others except Galveston. (About 1hr.)

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN HOUSTON: I remember the thick blanket of humidity, the slow drawl of the sun baking the bayou, the aroma of coffee filled the 2nd Ward.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN HOUSTON: It was always at least 89°, even in winter. Oh, and potholes. Lots of em.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN TEXAS: The cows could be heard in the distance. The heat clung to my skin as I rode my horse.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: WHY does it take TEN HOURS to drive through this state? I'm going to melt IT'S 115\*- wait why's it going to be 30\* tomorrow?

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SMALL TOWN TX: "Loper and Sally May had gone to Abilene [...] so Slim Chance was holding down the ranch by himself. Actually, I was running the show, but you know how it is with cowboys."

ACTUALLY: bRiSkEt brlSKet 4H HoWdY lEtS gO MudDiN'

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN TEXAS: The bloodred dust blew out of the sun. He touched the horse with his heels and rode on.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: The elders convened by their SUVs as the children sipped suicide Route 44s - someone's dad said the n word at our game today.

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Novelists writing about Texas: barbed wire, vultures, Marlboro jaws, eyes the color of faded denim, skies the color of, dunno, horses or some shit. Oil derricks and sadness. Probably a tumbleweed or four having a melancholy bacchanalia.

Texans writing about Texas: DALLAS SUCKS!!!

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TX WRITERS: Pappy was as Texan as an April bluebonnet bloom. Growing up in El Paso, a forgotten city on the state's westernmost edge, he'd reflect on its mix of the American Dream and Hispanic philosophy of communal piety.

MY ACTUAL TX LIFE: Pappy and his sons called me a terrorist.

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TEXAS WRITERS: The dust cloud at the end of the lane announced his arrival. The state championship game was an hour away, but there were still chores to get done.

MY CHILDHOOD: I had to go to the ER after falling into a cactus.

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Novelists writing Texas childhoods: A dry heat wafted over the *arrondos*, pushed by hot winds that made the horses whinny and stamp the dry soil

My childhood in Texas: it was 100% humidity today and a cop made me get off my bike cause some kids called my Meow Mix t-shirt gay

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN TEXAS: The cattle grazed peacefully while the nearby pumpjacks endlessly drew oil from the ground. The sole ride tipped his Stetson as his horse cantered by me.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN TEXAS: Watching Monty Python on PBS.

WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN TX: "Texas," or "Tejas" as we were once known, is called "The Friendship State" for a reason. I never knew a family without open arms and an extra seat at the table  
GROWING UP IN TX: Every morning we had to pledge to the TX flag.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN WEST CENTRAL TX: Cows. Cows and grass everywhere.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: The base's jet planes are making the cat crazy and \*boom\* it's demolitions day. Oh god, the wind shifted and now we can smell the pig farm that's next to the base.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT WEST TX: The tumbleweeds blew across the wide open plains that stretched on endlessly into the beautiful sunset.

ACTUAL LIFE: The 60mph wind blew my backpack off my back as I Gilligan style walked across campus to my car, dust glued like glass to my contacts.

NOVELIST WRITING ABOUT TEXAS: Sunset lit the sky red and gold as the hands gathered around the cook fire. Zeke strummed a guitar for a chorus of lowing cattle.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: When the wind is from the SW you can taste the cowshit. This is why we drink so much Dr. Pepper.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW MEXICO: The mountains gleamed in pink magnificence as the sun began to set behind the Mesa.

ACTUALLY GROWING UP IN NEW MEXICO: My car got stolen, which sucks because I stepped on a needle at the park and I needed that car to get to the ER.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT NEBRASKA: The children huddle in their one room farmhouse. Granny Hoopla serves the last reserves of corn for dinner.

NEBRASKA: It's snowing. The roads are iced. There are 3 car wrecks by the road. That means less traffic y'all. Driving conditions are perfect.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT AZ: The arid climate of the Arizona southwest created skies so crystal clear the cowboy could see vistas of mountains and saguaros for miles from atop the hurricane deck of his mustang.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN AZ: I'm. Melting.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN ARIZONA: After school we saddled up the horses to go visit the Native American wise man, who taught us his ancient ways.

MY ACTUAL TEENAGE-HOOD IN ARIZONA: "Crap, the internet went out, Mom picked up the phone!"

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN PHOENIX: The cowboy's leathered face and tattered jeans defied his bright, wise eyes. He hopped off the saddle...



REAL LIFE: My OP shorts are so short that my ass sizzled on the Datsun's vinyl seats. Dad told me to stop whining. I'm melting.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN KENTUCKY: the barefoot bluegrass tickled my feet as I ran to the nearest creek, feeling the southern heat glare down on my neck as I swung from the rope.  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: 'do you just wanna go to Steak and Shake again'

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT THE SOUTH: Peggy sue was as sweet as pecan pie, her sun-kissed skin glistened in the afternoon heat

THE ACTUAL SOUTH: I stepped outside and started sweating. I stepped inside and oh it's still hot. I'm sticky. I'm covered in mosquito bites. Humidity is 210%

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE SOUTH: "We spent that care free summer hunting crawdads in the crick, who's cool waters helped keep the thick heat at bay."

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE SOUTH: "Mom, why is there a burning cross in that yard?"

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE SOUTH: The annual BBQ was packed like church on Sunday. Jim Bob pulled up in his pick-up blasting Garth Brooks, life was good.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE SOUTH: It's too hot to function I'm going to stay inside and play video games

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN TENNESSEE: She ran barefoot down the dirt road, while the smell of fresh blackberries tickled her nose.

MY ACTUAL TEENAGE-HOOD IN TENNESSEE: The pavement is too dang hot, she had to wear shoes. Oh shit, WASPS.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN GEORGIA: The red clay stained our denim shorts as we huddled under a oak tree, taking shelter in the curtain of Spanish Moss.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN GEORGIA: we can't go too far back in the woods because a pack of methheads lives there

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NOVELIST WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN ORLANDO: We eagerly awaited the Monorail. We could see it in the distance and a cheer went up thru the crowd. The Magical World was around the corner.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN ORLANDO: I worked at a theme park. Everyone did. We fuckin hate 'em

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN FLORIDA: The alligators moved lazily through the blood-warm, shallow water. Long festoons of Spanish Moss hung down from the water oaks in the shadowy swamp.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: MOM! The thunderstorm's knocked out the cable again!

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE SOUTH: Ma always said, "Sure as the good Lord made crawdads, you got to love your chile no matter what."

ME WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE SOUTH: Mom always said, "Ehi, piccolo marmocchio! Torna qui e prendi i tuoi vestiti!"

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES: The crooks were easily caught by the local Mountie, Clarke, and his trusty steed, Poutine.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE CDN PRAIRIES: No, Mom, I have black eyes because I was bumperhitching. Why can't I feel my ears? Is that frostbite?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT CANADIAN WINTER: As the flakes glittered from the heavens he could hear the crunch of snow under his boots and feel the crisp air cooling his lungs.

ACTUAL CANADIAN WINTER: "Sorry I'm late, my car doors were frozen shut."

NOVELISTS ON LIFE IN CANADA: the light reflected from the virginal cover of snow with the force of the sun as ice crystals spun like ballerinas

ACTUAL LIFE IN CANADA: four more homeless people died of hypothermia overnight, and our waterpipes were frozen for the 3rd day in a row

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN EASTERN CANADA: Poverty, and quickly darkening winter skies. The cold eats at our souls until we begin to engage in inhuman acts.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: My Great-Grandma makes the best tarts, best eaten in the shade on hot summer afternoons.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP CANADIAN: All is winter and stillness. We stare out at the forests, the margins, and ponder the places we passed to come here, now: Canada.

ACTUAL CANADIAN CHILDHOOD: Double-double and a box of timbits, street hockey in the parking garage.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN CANADA: We all met on the local frozen pond to play some hockey and enjoyed hot chocolate by the snow banks.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN CANADA: Got frostbite walking to school in a blizzard.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN CANADA: Jacques, Marie and I huddled for warmth against the whistling wind as Papa put another log on the fire.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN CANADA: Weather Channel calling for snow tomorrow. Guess we better cancel our 7-hour drive to Ikea.

NOVELIST WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN CANADA: The wind billowed, biting at my cheeks as the snow crunched beneath my feet.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN CANADA: The plow went by just as I was finishing the end of the driveway so my dad got pissed cause he couldn't get the car out

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN CANADA: The snow fell gently, and painted the world a hushed white. MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN CANADA: walking through the wind-whipped stinging snow, I slipped on the black ice and got grey slush on my ass again.

NOVELISTS ON LIFE IN CANADA: It was a quaint life - all toques and toboggans, eating maple syrup off snow and being kind.

ACTUAL LIFE IN CANADA: It was a quaint life - all toques and toboggans, eating maple syrup off snow and being kind, and viciously mocking Americans.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT NEWFOUNDLAND: Alistair landed in the picturesque village where mischievous, salt-of-the-earth men and available young women fought for his attention.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN OUTPORT NEWFOUNDLAND: Tragic news: they had acid wash jeans in Toronto 3 years ago.

NORTH DAKOTA WRITER: As Lars Larson watched the dark storm clouds gather on the distant horizon, he wiped the sweat beading on his bronzed, weathered brow. "Hail," he muttered putting his tractor in gear. "Damn."

ACTUAL: Getting cold. Better put another tire on the tire fire.

WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SOUTH DAKOTA: The wind whipped violently as snow piled on barren plains. Cold and nervous, we continued to pioneer.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SD: The wind whipped violently as snow piled on barren plains. Cold and nervous, we continued to school.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SOUTH DAKOTA: there was nothing to do on the barren prairie but watch coyotes freeze to death

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SOUTH DAKOTA: Aw shit, beloved 30 foot tall bearded guy holding a pipe, Mr. Bendo, has gone missing

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT MONTANA: He rode his horse to the river, the big sky stretching in every direction, rainbow trout shimmering under the water's surface.

REAL GROWING UP IN MONTANA: Drives around aimlessly in the winter, listening to the Spice Girls and waiting to turn 18

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP ON THE NORTH SHORE OF CHICAGO: Juicy tracksuits. Adderall. The hot kind of anorexia.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD ON THE NORTH SHORE: It's none of my business that your mom's in the hospital, you will not pass 8th grade until you make a toothpick bridge

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP BLACK IN CHICAGO: Roaches were armed. Rats had crack in their paws. No one cared if I lived or died. I dropped out of school at 9.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Grandma made me eat vegetables and there were 18 people checking my grades. Including a coyote

NOVELISTS ABOUT GROWING UP FILIPINA IN THE MIDWEST: My family prays to the Virgin Mary constantly. No one understands winter. I'm never allowed to watch TV.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: We watched a lot of Star Trek, relatives wanted to visit in Winter and we never went to Mass.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT HAWAII: We ate *poi* and *ahi poke* after surfing the best breaks we've had all year. We danced impromptu *hula* as auntie played the ukulele.

ACTUAL LIFE IN HAWAII: I live between a rooster farm and a massive coqui frog infestation. I haven't slept in years.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN HAWAII: we all go to the beach, we all surf, we all subsist on a diet of poi

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: (while playing WCW/NWO on N64) eh u goin to Zippy's? Grab me one Surf Pak

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP LATINX: I got three degree burns making *sopa de pollo* with my abuela. The police came to our door and made fun of me. *Tristeza* means sadness.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: My brother ate my Dunkaroos what can I eat while Gargoyles is on?

NOVELISTS ON BEAUFORT: The sun rose slow over a live oak tree that was older than the country itself. The air so thick with humidity you could cut a slice for breakfast.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: The fish factory was canning today and the smell was so bad Sarah threw up on the playground.

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Novelists writing about FL: The salt spray misted the beach as the pastel sunset turned the Gulf purple.

REALITY: Red tide gags you. Motherfucking LOVEBUGS. Snowbird season. GD LOVEBUGS. AGAIN. Hurricane season. LOVEBUGS. Repeat. PUBLIX CHICKEN. Park in the shade.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN MIAMI: Uncle Joe told us (again) about the time he walked into his trailer and found a gator. It had 7 lbs of cocaine under its hide.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN MIAMI: Bro, Tío Pepe no se calla about the time he found a twenty at Pollo Tropical.

Novelist in FL: Sitting at work, all I could think of was the beach, tossing my surfboard in the ocean and feeling the sea salt air in my hair

Real life: My shirt was still stuck to my back as I put a generous amount of aloe vera to my new sunburn. Is Publix still open? I want a sub

NOVELISTS WRITTING ABOUT GROWING UP IN FLORIDA: The humidity gripped my hair to my skin. As we walked to the Winn Dixie/Publix for ice cream and fried deli food.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN FLORIDA: The one class I give a shit about was cut short due to the pep rally.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN FLORIDA: My dog got eaten by an alligator in the middle of a hurricane

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN FLORIDA: My mom is at a waterpark wearing neon pink sunblock like it's redneck road, and I'm pretending I don't know her

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SOUTH FLORIDA: The hot sun beat down on the oiled, half naked bodies lying in the sand.

My actual childhood: Stuck in traffic on the Rickenbacker Causeway and I have to pee. The a/c in my parents car is broken and I am sunburnt.

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North Florida author: the sun shone through the pine forest. Woodland animals frolicked in the underbrush. Emerging into a clearing, she saw the crystal clear spring water.

Reality: a logging truck overturned on US 17 again. Nestle is sucking up spring water to bottle it.

NOVELISTS ABOUT FL: I spent every day on the beach. I am tanned and fit. Alligators. Everglades. Florida Man. Disney.

GROWING UP IN FL: Tourists and Snowbirds make traffic unbearable. I have been to Disney 10 times and 6 of them were class trips.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT LOUISIANA: The sounds of midnight mass meshed in the night air with the snazzy tones of a jazz funeral down the street. The local voodoo woman stood on the porch and said "Come on in, cher. I got some good gris-gris and bad ju-ju."

Actual Louisiana: There is literally a corpse hanging from a building in New Orleans and Baton Rouge shut down for like 2 days last week because of a football game.

NOVELISTS ABOUT CHILDHOOD IN SOUTH LOUISIANA: I sloshed around swamps catching crawfish and other critters, eating things that normal people would run away from.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SOUTH LOUISIANA: Well, actually, that was my actual childhood.

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NOVELIST WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW ORLEANS: She fanned her sweet tea and gazed through the wrought iron balcony at the Spanish moss on the live oak.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN NEW ORLEANS: Walking to KandB for a Yoo Hoo hoping to get caught in the afternoon monsoon.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW ORLEANS: The streetcar clanked down the street, rustling the Spanish moss into the air which was full of ghosts.

MY CHILDHOOD: Imagine the Fire Swamp from Princess Bride but everyone is drunk.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW ORLEANS: Jazz music wafts from Jackson Square as I sit at a patio table outside Cafe du Monde.

MY ACTUAL TEENAGE-HOOD IN NEW ORLEANS: My shift manager at Popeye's stole my wallet, the canal stinks, and there's a lizard in my bedroom

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT CALIFORNIA: The weather was perfect: pastel rainbow sunsets with nary a cloud in sight. And as the bright summer heat receded, crowds of tan Californians set out for their cool night bar crawls.

ACTUAL CALIFORNIAN: Everything is on FIRE

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SOCAL: The surf pounded the beach. The locals were getting out their boards for another day of shredding against some awesome swells. MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SOCAL: Stuck in traffic and there's no place to park. It took 90 minutes to get from X to anywhere at any time of day or night. How was it possible that at 2am every highway was backed up 15 miles?????

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN LA: the blonde teens cruised down Sunset in their convertible, without a care in the world

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN LA: it's 1AM and I am losing at chess against Russian immigrants in a doughnut shop run by Cambodians

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT LA: Characters mention zipping along the 405.

ACTUALLY LIVING IN LA: Nobody has ever zipped along the 405, not even at 2 am.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN LA: After class we pulled on our wetsuits and headed out to the beach to catch some waves before driving up the 101 in our sporty convertibles.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Never going to the beach because parking was too expensive.

NOVELIST WRITING ABOUT LA: I spent my time in Hollywood, trying to meet any celebrities I could, hoping I could make my big break.

ACTUALLY LIVING IN LA: Avoid Hollywood at all costs because traffic. I think I saw Ashton Kutcher once on my way to Universal Studios.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY: The fog rolled into the fields, the raisins, with their shriveled beauty, soaking up each drop of mist

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY: It's too hot to walk to Blockbuster today, I'll settle for Video World

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NOVELIST WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SAN FRANCISCO: Trolley's bells ring through the bustling city.

MY ACTUAL GROWING UP IN SF: Walking home from school w lil brother, stumbles across a skunk, gets sprayed (again), and waits outside for parents to get home w tomato juice.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT SAN FRANCISCO: I swung by and got a kale juice between yoga and work. Today is bring your pet to work day!

ACTUAL SF: I almost got run over by a car on my way to the office. Now my coworker is eating a tuna sandwich and stinking up the floor.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP BLACK IN SF: Every day on our way to work in the Hunters Point Shipyards, we be-bopped down Fillmore Street to the sounds of jazz music wafting from clubs where Duke Ellington played 24/7.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Let's bike around Lake Merced again

NOVELISTS WRITING RE: GROWING UP IN SF DURING THE 60's: She steps out into a kaleidoscope of colors and the smells of groovy peaceniks. The sounds of Psychedelic music fill the air.

MY ACTUAL EXPERIENCE: Who are all these strange people? I hope my parents don't get divorced.

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TV WRITERS SETTING A SHOW IN SAN FRANCISCO: Orphaned white teens eating ice cream on a sunny day in front of their giant Alamo Square Victorian

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SAN FRANCISCO: nonwhite teens in hoodies in the back of the bus spitting sunflower seed carcasses on the floor

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT DC: The Senator exited his limousine in front of his favorite restaurant at Pennsylvania Avenue and [nonexistent street].

ACTUAL LIFE IN DC: Our usual hellish traffic was worse today because some tourist made an illegal turn, and now, there's no parking.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT SOUTHERN MARYLAND: ...

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SOUTHERN MARYLAND: ...

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN MARYLAND: I popped my headphones in and watched the landscape as I took the train to my private high school in the heart of DC.

ACTUALLY GROWING UP IN MARYLAND: Dear Diary, I can't tell if that was a murder gunshot or a hunting gunshot.

Author about VA- The sweet smell of jasmine permeated air that was thick and moist as we watched fireflies lazily light up the night.

Me- Being teased for being a Yankee in a town that is still somehow segregated in the 90s and where kids don't seem to understand VA was a Confederate state.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN VA: Playtime on the beach as our wealthy parents sip iced tea and lament their indiscretions

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Beach is full of tourists and jellyfish so we're going to Williamsburg. No, not Busch Gardens. COLONIAL WILLIAMSBURG.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN WV: It was then I knew. I could never follow daddy and papaw into the mines.



MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN WV: "we gotta get to the trailer park to shower cause our water's out, but head out there and move the dead rabbit outta the driveway first"

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN WV: Something something mamaw, something something The MiNeS

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN WV: it's me, my dog, and these feral cats ruling our kingdom that is the gravel alley we live on

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN APPALACHIA: We were so goshdang poor, but Meemaw always found a way to keep our bellies full of squirrel pie and oxycontin  
ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: My Meemaw is a nice Italian lady who bakes 1000 cookies every Christmas and calls laundry a "warsher"

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN APPALACHIA: I quit school at sixteen and took off into the mines because mama needed the money and daddy done got himself tangled with the law again.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: I was the only person in my Spanish 1 class not a native speaker

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN COAL COUNTRY: The air was gray with ash and dust. The men headed off to the coal mines while the women and children wondered if they'd come home  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD GROWING UP IN COAL COUNTRY: The mines were closed. Played football in cemetery.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE OZARKS: she longed for the rolling hills and deep cliffs with their wild spring-fed rivers.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE OZARKS: you can't go outside without running into spider webs or getting ticks.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE RUSTBELT- the sun hit off a climbing wooden funicular groaning its way towards the once smoke scarred sky.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE RUSTBELT- a mulleted "uncle" @ this firehall party won't stop taking a/b seeing Bill Cowher @ a car wash

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE SOUTH: The Sun's heat moistened the air as I walked down a lonely dirt road

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE SOUTH: It feels like death and I almost got run over by some rednecks blaring Nickelback as they sped by in their beat-up F-150

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE SOUTH: The heat hung like molasses in the air as we headed to the pond. We set down our poles, stripped down to our under stuff, and jumped on in.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE SOUTH: got called gay for crying during "Hardball" again today

Novelist writing about Appalachia: Granny played the banjo while we kids made moonshine and the men work in coal



Real Growing up in Appalachia: I played sports and picked up chewing tobacco but still got called a faggot because I had long hair

WYOMING NOVELISTS: It was a tough life on the last frontier, navigating a wind-blasted, stark landscape and the hard, silent men who defined it.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN WYOMING: Meth addicts stole our firewood and my ratty shoes off the back porch – again

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN WYOMING: He took his rifles, his whiskey, and his dog to the prairie. He was a hard young man, no emotions.

ACTUAL WYOMING CHILDHOOD: Well yeah, that sometimes. But do you wanna drive to FoCo and talk about what I said in therapy yesterday?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN WYO- I drove my truck through the reservation with the windows down to look at the mountains around me.

MY ACTUAL EXPERIENCE GROWING UP IN WYO- 9 months of snow. No snow days. The wind never stops. Stay inside and read.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN AMISH COUNTRY: The dew settled on the budding corn stalks as Jedidiah brushed the velvet skin of the new baby cow

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: A raging Amish party got busted in a field and everyone was really excited when they opened up a Taco Bell

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NJ: My life is as wild as the wind down at the shore, driving to the mall for the second time this week with my friends.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: None of your friends drive, you're all broke, don't ever hang out, and you go to the shore once a year.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NJ: I walked along the shoreline, a Bruce Springsteen song playing from a nearby Cape Cod home, the smell of sea salt..

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN NJ: What exit do I live off of? 13A. Yes towards the chemical plants. You know the IKEA? Yes there.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE PNW: Pewter skies called for cozy sweaters of the same color. She slipped on her Hunter boots and grabbed her umbrella.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE PNW: It's raining, but the teenagers are wearing mini skirts and flip-flops. Umbrella?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE PNW: Basically that Ray Bradbury short story where the rain stops and the sun comes out only once every seven years

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Okay yeah that's pretty accurate

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: Something lurked in the woods. Something terrible and dangerous. And hungry.

ACTUALLY GROWING UP IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: \*to something lurking in the woods\*: sup, man

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST: They wandered the ancient forests wading in icy rivers and hunting for Bigfoot. Atop Cascade ridge, the sun warmed their faces as eagles soared overhead.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: It's raining for the thousandth day in a row.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE PNW: Parents were pot-smoking hippies, we grew our own food and danced naked in the rain.

ACTUAL PNW CHILDHOOD: Parents were yuppies, we kids smoked all the pot and after graduation we moved someplace with less rain.

PACIFIC NORTHWEST WRITERS: The lichens glistened with a foreboding mist. The rhythm of raindrops syncing with their footsteps. Would they reach the summit in time?

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN PNW: My neighbor with the garage sales was arrested last week for being a serial killer.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE PNW: We climbed until we reached the top of the massive mountain. I looked over the beautiful world and knew I was home. MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE PNW: jaexxxson offered me a joint and when i said no he called me the f slur. also rain.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT THE PNW: The rain falls through the forest to find the sharp, metallic river that winds like a massive snake ever seeking the ocean.

MY CHILDHOOD IN THE PNW: It's 85 degrees, I'm allergic to everything and I think I'm gonna die.

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Writers on the Pacific Northwest: the rain dripped from my nose, steady as my tears, as a family of vampires stepped out of the woods. They were here, the clouds blocking the sun to welcome them. My actual childhood: it hasn't rained in 3 years and a scorpion is in my cereal.

Novelists writing about growing up in Chicago: Al Capone

My childhood in Chicago: regularly scheduled field trips to Al Capone's grave

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN ILLINOIS: The radiant glow of the setting sun filters through the gently rustling stalks of grain as cicadas begin an evening symphony.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD GROWING UP IN ILLINOIS: Watching a deer jump into the grill of your car at twilight.

Novelists writing about Pittsburgh: Gray buildings, stained with soot of the industrial past, cast shadows over a proud, diverse people, whose ancestors mined the ore that built America.

My childhood in Pittsburgh: Got called gay for not knowing the "Bucs" were the Pirates.

Novelists writing about Pittsburgh: Mill hunks coming home to wash up in the basement before dinner.

My childhood in Pittsburgh: Dad complaining about the traffic on Route 51 and yelling "Run, you motherfucker" at the football players on the TV.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT APPALACHIA: 16 of us lived in a 2 room dirt floor shack. Daddy worked 28 hours a day in the mines. Mama's hands were cracked raw with the washing.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: There's nothing to do in this shitburg. Let's go drive around the Walmart parking lot.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE DESERT: The bright sun beat down, the high ululation of a coyote urging me forward into the heat.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE DESERT: caught a lizard on the play ground and then played catch with some cow patties

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP BLACK IN ALABAMA: I drag myself outside to pick cotton before school. Whoops, the Klan burned our school. We learned to read from Jesus.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Arguing with the librarian that theoretical physics should be called "math magic."

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN CHICO: The quaint city of trees; the scent of Sierra Nevada hops in the air. In the distance, the soothing sound of the train.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN CHICO: four bodies have been found in One Mile this year but we're still gonna swim in it

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NYC: The city pulses, even at night, the streets like rushing rivers of light and sound.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN NYC: Got busted by a NYC Transit cop jumping the turnstile at 72nd St. and a Dominican girl laughed at me saying, "you stupid!"

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NYC: the August sun beat down on concrete jungle. The air was alive with possibility. Shaun breathed it all in.

ME, ACTUALLY GROWING UP THERE: he breathed in through... his mouth I hope. There's a garbage strike and a rat just ran by with pizza.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT NYC: There was a certain glamour to the metropolis, possibility gleaming on every subway platform.

ACTUALLY: Fucking tourists. Don't bring your luggage to TIMES SQUARE. Do you NEED 50 pictures of the stairs going down to the Dining Concourse in GCT?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT STATEN ISLAND: People don't actually \*go\* to Staten Island, do they?  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN STATEN ISLAND: Not by choice, generally, no.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT NY STATE: All my big dreams cling to my small hope of making it to the Big Apple and getting out of this town

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN NYS: I tried to leave school but there was this big ass goose on the way. We got into a staredown, now I can't go anywhere.

NOVELISTS ABOUT INDIANA: The thrumming roar of the racecars echoed across the stadium in waves, like the stifling windless, heat.

MY CHILDHOOD: saw a turkey vulture on the neighbor's windowsill, got dive bombed by sparrows, mowed entire lawn, realized mower doesn't work in rain.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN INDIANA: Meth meth methmehtmeth  
methmethmethmethmethmethmeth

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Okay some meth, but also pentecostal jean skirts!

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN UTAH: RuthAnne felt nervous as Jebediah came courting her to be his 2nd wife. She had just turned 14 and had never known the taste of coffee.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Dressing Goth, playing lot of the Cure and Depeche Mode, writing fantasy novels.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN UTAH: Everyone is either gay or Mormon and everything is very fraaaaaaught!

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: ... fine, yes, everyone is gay or Mormon (or both), but there aren't nearly that many A's in fraught. Also everyone has a Diet Coke addiction.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT VERMONT: The autumn foliage turned the mountains fiery; beyond those hills, the farmers set out from their barns to check the sap buckets in the woods  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN VERMONT: The four seasons are summer, winter but without snow, winter, and mud.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN MEXICO: The blazing sun pierces my chattered window, as I pack up my coin pouch and leave to play football (soccer).

ACTUAL: it's fucking hot, jesus christ. I'm eating pozole again today. where's my anime shirt. gonna watch dbz super on yt.

Novelists writing about growing up in London: the dim glow from the milk float cut through a fine fog as it climbed Primrose Hill on a crisp spring morn.

Actual childhood in London: I missed the bus so spent my lunch money on a chicken and mushroom Ginsters from Londis, and walked it

WRITERS ON LONDON: He gets on to the tube from the cold platform. His glasses steamed up. The cute girl opposite smiles.

ACTUAL LONDON: It's raining, everyone on the tube is damp and has a cold. The old guy opposite might be asleep or dead, No one checks, we don't want to be delayed

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN LONDON: Thick smog bellowed from open chimneys, fishmongers trawling broken carts down cobblestone streets. A new day's market, and a new day for enterprise.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: fuck these trains

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN ENGLAND: moody countryside, ancient castles, eloquent characters everywhere

GROWING UP IN ENGLAND: you drop your chips in the school dinner hall and everyone goes WEYYYYYYYYYYYYYY

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN ENGLAND: the scent of roses danced care-free about the air while I sipped my 4th Earl Grey of the morning

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN ENGLAND: forgot my PE kit so had to play rugby in smelly cast offs. Stayed in all weekend because of the rain

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN ENGLAND: after a long day frolicking in the fields, I return home to my mansion where my mother hath prepared my favourite pudding; spotted dick

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Fredo prices have risen again and we are Pissed Off

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN CORNWALL: Endless summers at the beach, ice cream and scrumping apples.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Wet, wind-blasted. no way to go to the beach or it was too busy. Cultural desert.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN RURAL ENGLAND: foxgloves and bluebells in dappled sunlit woods, scones and tea picnics in bonnets and waistcoats

ACTUALLY GROWING UP IN RURAL ENGLAND: 1 bus to town once a week (one way?!) and no phone signal until...well, still none.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN YORKSHIRE: Hiked uphill both ways between t'orphanage and t'upper pasture to milk t'sheep b'fore breakfast

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN YORKSHIRE: catching the bus to the shopping mall in town with the cool 2nd-hand bookshop in the basement arcade

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE NORTH OF ENGLAND: Me pa lashed me again fur not scrumpin enough apples to feed us al fur ar dinner. I ran to t' old mine shaft an' threw stones in till me tears ran dry.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE NORTH: Well adjusted and well fed.

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NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT SCOTLAND: "Och aye yer a bonnie lass," Hamish said, kilt blowing in the breeze, the haunting sound of bagpipes in the distance.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Skater kids wearing baggy jeans drinking bucky at the park. Some dude named Chris throws up in a bush.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SCOTLAND: There is tartan and whisky. There are misty walks over mountains and much frolicking in the heather.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SCOTLAND: Too young for whisky and much too young for frolicking. Besides, heather itches something awful.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN IRELAND: The dew glistened on the grass as the morning sun stretched out across the fields. Silently, a crowd gathered at the low stone wall.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN IRELAND: The third can of cider went down easier. The weight slowly lifting.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN WALES: we bathed in the bubbling spring water, and went home for fresh milk, throwing on our jumpers knitted with wool from our lambs

MY CHILDHOOD IN WALES: got called posh again today. said diolch once, feeling cultural

Novelists Writing About Growing Up In Wales: "The rolling green hills of The Shire made way to picturesque valleys where the Hobbits had their quaint little dwellings."

My Actual Childhood Growing Up In Wales: "It's raining and this sheep won't stop headbutting me."

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN PARIS: Taking in the culture and beauty of cathedrals, museums, and splendor

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Sitting in the car reading Nancy Drew, waiting for Mom and Dad to get out of that damp, cold, grey church so we can get hot chocolate

ALSO NOVELS ABOUT PARIS: she put on her quaint beret and went on a melancholic walk next to the seine with a baguette under her arm. Everyone was smoking.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: she dodged the crowd of tourists to get into Macdonald's. The Metro was on strike. Everyone was smoking.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT SPAIN: I fell in love with her fiery spirit, as I drank a sangria and talked deep into the night, beneath an olive tree.

REALITY: Day 17 of trying to get required paperwork. Have gone to 27 different offices and waited in 50 lines. Send rations.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN PORTUGAL: Every night there was a party. The aroma of sardines filled the air, intertwined with joy and love.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN PORTUGAL: No, Uncle, I don't like alcohol. Aunt, please stop trying to undress me so I show more cleavage.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT THE CARIBBEAN: WEED CARNIVAL SEX GRINDING BODIES AY AY AY  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Aunt won't ever consider cannabis products for her arthritis and my cousins didn't go to Carnival in Trinidad they were that Christian.

WRITTEN NORWAY: From his perch on the snowy mountain top he gazed outwards the majestic fjords. A Viking ship sailed in the distance.

ACTUAL NORWAY: I haven't seen the sun since September. Had to sit beside someone at the bus today, I almost died from anxiety.

WRITTEN NORTHERN NORWAY: She stood by the shore, looking for the fishing boats on the horizon. The chill winds made her pull her wool shawl closer around her shoulders.

ACTUAL NORTHERN NORWAY: was late for school because a moose and calf was in my yard. Everyone laughed.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE FINNISH COUNTRYSIDE: Look at this mystical wilderness and exotic people!

ME GROWING UP IN THE FINNISH COUNTRYSIDE: Endless log trains passing the village and old men traumatized by the war shouting obscenities in the winter night.

Novelists writing about growing up in Italy: children playing soccer in the town's square, church bells can be heard, the sun kisses us as the breeze flows through the olive trees

Actual Italian childhood: i have 60cents left after getting *pizza al taglio*. that's six goleadors

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN POLAND: The autumnal rain is ringing against my windows, as blurred, yellow light enters my room. Behind the glass, I can see cordons of people gliding across the streets.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN POLAND: fell down from the carpet beater again

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN BRAZIL: beach every day in tiny bikinis, *bossa nova* playing in the background as I feel saudade for a time that is no more

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: 1 hour to the beach by bus meant never going, fuck *Garota de Ipanema*, give me some grunge

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SINGAPORE: Those were the kampung days. We lay together in the grass on our bellies like fattened lizards, hunting for large grasshoppers.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SINGAPORE: attends 3 remedial sessions and 1 trombone lesson before dinner

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SINGAPORE: the sun bronzed her skin as she sipped her refreshing sugarcane juice, the breeze sultry with the scent of sweet ripe fruit

Me as an actual teen in Singapore: Oh no BOOB SWEAT! Ah shit, another mozzie bite \*scratches\*

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN SINGAPORE (post CRA): They donned their Prada uniforms and went to school in a chauffeur driven Bentley.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN SINGAPORE: They donned their cheap polyester uniforms and sweated on a public bus to school with no a/c.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE PHILIPPINES: I woke up to the sound of waves crashing on the white sand beach just outside my home.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE PHILIPPINES: Pollution sucks but I have to endure another day going to school in a tricycle.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN PAKISTAN: The monsoons refreshed us as we danced outside in the rain. The smell of mangoes was intoxicating. We ate spicy curry.

ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: mosquitos in summer, load-shedding, arguing w/ the Islamiyat teacher about anal sex, sisterhood

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN PAKISTAN: It was a desert wasteland, with palpable fear and danger around every corner. I looked at the unforgiving sun and whispered "water."

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Got my ass kicked in Tekken 3 at Salim Bhai's Arcade and Pool Hall every day.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN PAKISTAN: everyone was weary because the heat was hot and terrorism made shit hard but also happy because mangoes.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN PAKISTAN: I'm almost done memorizing this propaganda for my history test. Ah crap the electricity went out.

WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN JAPAN: my gentle kimono clad Obaachan taught me how to sip tea and play the koto

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Grandma and I shared secret chocolate parfaits w/o telling Mama and OMG that kid next door is practicing his tuba again

WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN AUSTRALIA: The heat and sunshine stung my eyes as my kangaroo picked up speed.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN MELBOURNE: "Fuck, I forgot my jacket again!" I exclaimed as the scorching morning transitioned into a cold and stormy afternoon.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN AUSTRALIA: We all go to the beach, go bushwalking, surfing on the Aussie waves

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: It's too hot to go outside, grab me a superduper, slip slop slap, my thongs have melted again

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW ZEALAND: The *pōhutukawa* trees were in full bloom. We went to the beach and talked about how nothing ever changes, bare feet burned by hot concrete.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN NZ: there is one mall to hang out at. the entire school is there.



WISCONSIN: I turned the pail over right-side-down and took a seat next to old Bessy. Cracked a beer, pulled the cloth from my nap sack and unraveled the hunk of cheese - we sat like that watching the sun go down over the fields.

Real: Grabbed the flavor of the day at Culver's.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP NATIVE: The wind played w/ her long, dark hair and it moved like a graceful dancer to the beat of my heart drum.

MY CHILDHOOD ON DA REZ: Mom brushed and braided my hair like a punishment; left free, it got stuck everywhere. Bane of tubs and vacuums.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP CHINESE AMERICAN : I resent my parents for being super foreign and can't wait to assimilate to glorious America and then regret it when I'm 30

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Oh no do I have a crush on this yugioh character

male novelists writing lesbians: she hated men and she loved her gf's boobs, she thirsted over those juicy melons, they tempted and tormented her. the girls didn't mind that men didn't consider their sex real; it was real to them.

me, a lesbian: is this my 12th or 13th orgasm?

Male **novelists writing** lesbians: my best friend's a man and we spend a lot of time checking out chicks and then I explain fisting. Also we fuck. But I prefer scissoring, which is real

Me, actual lesbian: I'm going to therapy today for a break from all this talking about feelings

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GOING TO AN ALL GIRLS SCHOOL: Piety by day, debauchery by night. Sexy lingerie beneath heavy woollen skirts. Everybody's a heinous bitch

GOING TO AN ALL GIRLS SCHOOL: Girls talking openly about period pains while reading each other's Harry Potter fanfic

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT SEX WORK: Lost girl, haunted by sad past. Mascara runs down tear-stained cheeks, never quite washing away the regret and shame...

BEING AN ACTUAL SEX WORKER: Endless admin while sitting in sloppy PJs, shoving chips into your mouth. And having sex sometimes

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ARE BIPOLAR: She felt like she was splitting in two. She was hot and cold, yes and no, in and out, up and down. She got manic one time and tried to fly.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Everyone thinks I have anger issues? Lol time to sabotage myself

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT AUTISTIC KIDS: My family and my friends and my teachers all have to suffer because of how difficult I am, but they're so patient and allow me to participate in my own life sometimes!

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: nobody was patient, I learned to hide myself.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP AUTISTIC: The child-shaped shell circled blankly around the playground's edge, never engaging with her peers, unaware that others even existed. MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Dreaming up the next dramatic scene in my Super Mario/Starfox crossover epic

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP AUTISTIC: He had never understood the idea of caring about other people's feelings. They were annoyances, extra terms in the great equation of his life MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: Will it annoy the teacher too much if I ask to go to the bathroom?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP DISABLED: "She struggled against the tide of the crowd, straining her poor, twisted form."  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: "You are between me and the sole accessible toilet stall. Move or die, asshole."

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP ASIAN-AMERICAN: I saw the red B+ on top of my math test and my heart sank. My parents, both doctors, would disown me. I'd never live up to their impossible expectations.  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: "What's your daughter studying?" "Uh...liberal arts?"

WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP WEST INDIAN IN NYC: The herb wafted through the bleak morose concrete jungle of my crack littered hood blasting Bob Marley  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: I'm on a train. Forever. Over two bodies of water. Community Gardens are everywhere

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW YORK CITY: Gangs ran the streets, a crack house on every corner, girls as young as 10 can't walk home by themselves w/o pimps trying to recruit them.  
MY ACTUAL EXPERIENCE: Free art classes at the Met and free Broadway plays w/ student I.D.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NYC: I stood, body swaying to the rhythm of the subway, snaking beneath mirrored skyscrapers towards the brick-faced Greenwich Village brownstones.  
MY CHILDHOOD IN NYC: Sitting in Union Square, a stranger handed me a mouse from his shirt pocket

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NYC: The chrome skyline juttled into the air. The city never seemed to sleep, always rustling with ambition.  
MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: I trip over the sidewalk while running for the bus and dodge a shitting pigeon.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN NEW YORK: I spent the summer in the city that never sleeps, writing for the NYT. I started dating a handsome barista after he put his number by my \$13 latte.

REALITY: the creepy guy drove to school with a confederate flag on his truck again.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN BUFFALO: Alcoholism and vanished manufacturing jobs. Everyone drives a snowplow, and is still mad at Scotty Norwood.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD: First of all, nobody writes about Buffalo. Second of all, that's fair.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT PLAYING CLASSICAL MUSIC: Bach's notes flowed from his fingers through the strings, and the immortal fire in his soul ignited the deepest urges of her desire as she was overcome by his genius.

ME, PLAYING MUSIC: Shoot, that's B, not Bb.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT MY LOVE LIFE: Her approach was silent. I didn't know she was there until her dress whispered promises as it touched my bed frame.

MY ACTUAL LIFE: I leap to the bed with a shout of "LET'S MAKE AN HEIR" as she gives a look of what I'm going to call delight

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT SNAIL MAIL: She gently closed the envelope and dripped a bit of wax onto the flap, using the seal with her initials to close it.

ME ACTUALLY SENDING SNAIL MAIL: Uhh, sorry it's been three months, and also why do envelopes taste funny when you lick them?

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP IN THE BATHYAL DEEPS: My father laid, shining bone and ragged spirit, in the sand as my siblings, already filigreed with tentacles, drank deep of his marrow.

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD IN THE BATHYAL DEEPS: why the fuck is it so dark down here.

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT ATTENDING A PRIVATE SCHOOL: Our uniforms and scholarly attitudes project a kind of maturity that other teenagers lack, but secretly we're home to lies and corruption

MY ACTUAL EXPERIENCE AT PRIVATE SCHOOL: yearly rendition of the school song with kazoos

NOVELISTS WRITING ABOUT GROWING UP ON PLANET EARTH: The planet was beautiful and full of life, rolling oceans, vast forests, and an amazing civilization

MY ACTUAL CHILDHOOD ON PLANET EARTH: The planet was not full of any intelligent life.