

## Wilderness House Literary Review 7/2

*Roger Real Drouin*  
**Further**

**H**e was further out than he had ever been, well past the old half-rusted cattle tin that no cow had drank from in years. He had passed the tin a while ago. Three miles later he ducked under the park-service gate to cross over into the Refuge.

He had passed another line too. He had been so careful not to cross it. One had to be careful and measured not to, and just two drinks would mean the difference. But he already had emptied a quarter more from the fifth of Southern Comfort than he should have, so he took another long draw from the bottle. He gripped the bottle in his hand as he walked.

It would be dusk soon, but he kept on. He kept going. On his own. There ain't no other way to do. He had been careful not to cross that line. But what the hell, he ain't no saint anyhow. He couldn't stop walking. There was a place he had to go. He couldn't stop drinking. It was a place he had to get to. It wasn't until much later that he knew there was a darkness inside that had to die before there could be any light.

The trail here was straight as a plumb line. He looked back, even though he knew he wouldn't be able to see stilted buildings on the old man's property. Hiking and drinking. Now that was a good hobby, he thought to himself and grinned.

The sun was low and still warm and made everything a pale green-purple around him. Brian drank from the bottle while he walked along the rutted trail as straight as a plumb line.

"I didn't know you were a Marine?" she had asked. He could still smell her citrusy shampoo and feel a smooth stretch of flesh that should be nothing more than a hazy memory by now. It was stupid, he thought, that he could still remember the intricacies of her skin. He had told her how he was a Marine only long enough to get the tattoo.

He wondered how far the trail went. He was out where he had never been, where the tall marsh grass grew up everywhere and the pines stood behind the marsh on the higher ground. Half-closed morning glories sprouted up between the two ruts of the trail. He wondered now, as he walked further with the bottle in his hand, whether he could get the tattoo removed. He wondered what the MineCo. men would do to this land. Even with the new Casino Row twenty miles to the east, there still was some wildness to this land. When he looked north, he couldn't see the casino lights that they just flicked on, like constant dry lighting. He couldn't hear the rush of the cars on the six-lane highway, and he could pretend this was the Glades his Pap knew. Would they take it away? He knew they'd try, and he didn't want to think about the men or the dirt caked dozers back in Miller's field.

He wasn't sure if he heard something or if he just saw the amber-brown shape standing thirty yards ahead. The animal meandered across the trail, until she saw Brian, and bolted into the marsh. Across the way, he could hear the Bobcat tearing through the grass towards the sanctuary of the pines.

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He stood there in the middle of the trail and took a drink from the bottle, remembering the muscled flesh of the animal frozen, eyes looking out at him, wild and confused. Brian stood there as darkness came down.