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Tent Sleep

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Tent Sleep
Lauren Ehlers

I wake up baking but don't leave the tent. It's too early for noise, and the shift of my weight would stir the girls beside me on the air mattress. The day is looming hot and green outside, and I try not to think about the sweat beading on my forehead, which only makes more. I turn my neck to the left where the friend who brought me here sleeps soundly, her blond hair coiling and frizzing in the heat. Her nose twitches.

I turn again, eyes tracing a slow arc above me until they catch on the girl to my right. Linger. Her hair is light brown and ponytailed. She studies psychology and has a girlfriend. Today she'll show me a page in her book about babies recognizing the voices of their mothers while they're still in the womb. Tomorrow we'll lie side by side on our stomachs, legs bouncing against each other, arms gripping tight to an inner tube as it skips the surface of the lake like a flat stone.

Eyes forward again, to the front flap zipped shut, light falling in through the black mesh of its upper half. I can make out the back of the house, short and white-paneled, with small windows. Thick sheafs of grass obscure the seam where the siding meets the ground. There's the drone of bugs, no rush of wind. My legs are overheating beneath the blanket, but I won't move. I look to my left again, then back to my right. I wish for a moment half-alone in the morning.