

DAN MOREAU

108 Degrees Under Partly Cloudy Skies

The Texas heat is a sledgehammer, it's a brick oven, it's sand in your teeth. The Texas heat is wearing the same clothes three days in a row. The Texas heat is an ex-wife who won't return your calls. The Texas heat is paying \$4 a gallon for gas. The Texas heat is waiting in line all morning, getting to the front and having the clerk go on lunch break. The Texas heat is sweat running down your back and your armpits. The Texas heat is finding out your car needs a new radiator. The Texas heat is finding out said radiator costs a grand. The Texas heat is sitting in a parking lot with no shade. The Texas heat is the burning smell of hot tar on a roof. The Texas heat is having your windows rolled up. The Texas heat is your A/C conking out in the middle of the night. The Texas heat is waking up in a sweat. The Texas heat is a car that's been baking in the sun all day. The Texas heat is a metal seatbelt buckle that scalds your skin. The Texas heat is finding out your landlord's increasing your rent. The Texas heat is not being able to find a job that pays a living wage. The Texas heat is a highway patrolman who pulls you over for doing five over the posted limit. The Texas heat is finding out your insurance rate, because of said infraction, is going up a hundred dollars. The Texas heat is plugging holes and chinks in a windowless attic, in the middle of the day, the air so hot it burns your lungs. The Texas heat is not being able to find your job interview site and being ten minutes late. The Texas heat is not having people recognize your talent or worth. The Texas heat is a fifty-car pileup on the freeway. The Texas heat is working on a road crew pouring asphalt and wearing a hard hat. The Texas heat is losing your

health insurance because of a missed payment. The Texas heat is moving into a new apartment by yourself. The Texas heat is a windless, treeless plain. The Texas heat is finding out you need root canal. The Texas heat is sweat stinging your eyes. The Texas heat is your sunglasses melting on your dashboard. The Texas heat is having only one supervised visit per week with your kids. The Texas heat is not being paid overtime. The Texas heat is a wave of hot air hovering above the pavement. The Texas heat is a final notice from your electric company. The Texas heat is finding a scorpion in your bathroom. The Texas heat is a blister that won't heal. The Texas heat is not being able to fall asleep at night although your body is dead tired. The Texas heat is noisy neighbors who stay up all night listening to techno. The Texas heat is hearing your kids say they want to go home to their Mommy. The Texas heat is a foreman who won't give you the morning off to see a dentist. The Texas heat is your mouth killing you. The Texas heat is your parents saying you'd never amount to much. The Texas heat is talking to other people about how hot it is. The Texas heat is counting the days to December when, if you're lucky, the temperature drops to eighty. The Texas heat is drought. The Texas heat is a mulch fire that's been burning for days and sending sooty ash into the air that you can taste in your lungs. The Texas heat is breaking into a sweat five minutes after leaving the house. The Texas heat is changing shirts—twice—in a single day. The Texas heat is taking two cold showers. The Texas heat is a sunburn. The Texas heat is getting drunk, driving by your ex's house and losing your visitation rights. The Texas heat is getting a headache in the sun. The Texas heat is sunstroke. The Texas heat is passing out on the job. The Texas heat is a medical bill you can't afford. The Texas heat is trying to quit smoking. The Texas heat is quitting your job and your boss refusing to pay your wages. The Texas heat is an airless storage unit. The Texas heat is walking to an army recruiter's office. The Texas heat is boxing up your stuff and putting it into storage. The Texas heat is seeing your kids one last time. The Texas heat is riding a bus to Fort Hood with a bunch of knuckleheads. The Texas heat is fighting with another recruit over a bunk bed. The Texas heat is a sergeant who makes you do pushups in the dirt and makes your nose touch the ground. The Texas heat is wearing eighty pounds of gear on patrol. The Texas heat is a roadside bomb. The Texas heat is the smell of burning flesh and singed hair. The Texas heat is trying to save your own hide. The Texas heat is an extended tour. The Texas heat is a swimming pool in one of Saddam's former palaces. The Texas heat is falling for every woman you see. The Texas heat is listening to your kids' voices on the phone. The Texas heat is a burning latrine. The Texas heat is an oil field on fire. The Texas heat is a limping, tick-ridden dog, half its flesh charred off. The Texas heat is a bullet. The Texas heat is an Iraqi

woman who wants you to take her baby. The Texas heat is shoeshine boys who sell bootleg porn. The Texas heat is receiving a notice from your storage company that says it will throw out your stuff unless it receives due payment. The Texas heat is a TV reporter screaming at you to get out of her live shot. The Texas heat is forgetting the last time you made love to a woman. The Texas heat is longing for a moment alone. The Texas heat is a sandstorm that jams your M-16 and insinuates itself into every groove of your being. The Texas heat is smoking some of the best hashish Iraq has to offer. The Texas heat is getting caught with said hashish during a barracks inspection. The Texas heat is being court-martialed for possession. The Texas heat is serving time in the brig and being dishonorably discharged. The Texas heat is being sent back home. The Texas heat is having a beer in a bar outside Fort Hood. The Texas heat is having a fight with the owner of the storage unit who threw out your stuff. The Texas heat is punching him in the face and being picked up on assault and battery charges. The Texas is awaiting arraignment. The Texas heat is sitting in jail. The Texas heat is being hit with two years of probation, sentence served and required anger management classes. The Texas heat is living in a motel and getting drunk every night. The Texas heat is not being able to see your kids. The Texas heat is going to anger management class and doing lines in the bathroom during break. The Texas heat is getting into a fight in the parking lot after class. The Texas heat is your kids growing up not knowing who their father is. The Texas heat is being picked up on a DUI and violating probation. The Texas heat is seeing a court appointed mental health specialist. The Texas heat is telling said specialist about your recurring nightmares and lack of sleep. The Texas heat is taking a lame ass poetry class with a woman who works with Iraq vets. The Texas heat is reading your poem aloud while your classmates snicker. The Texas heat is sleeping with your poetry instructor. The Texas heat is trying to get a handle on your life. The Texas heat is trying to stay sober. The Texas heat is enrolling part-time in community college. The Texas heat is seeing a couple with their two young children getting ice cream. The Texas heat is thinking what if? The Texas heat is

DAN MOREAU'S fiction and nonfiction has appeared in *Redivider*, *New Ohio Review*, *Fourteen Hills*, *Los Angeles Review*, and *Hotel Amerika*.