

## David Ryan

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### About the Writer:

David Ryan lives in Connecticut with the painter Susan Breen and their daughter. He is an editor at *Post Road Magazine* and teaches in the writing program at Sarah Lawrence College in New York.

### About the Writing:

David Ryan is the author of *Animals In Motion: Stories* (Roundabout Press). His fiction has appeared in *Esquire*, *BOMB*, *Tin House*, *Fence*, three *Mississippi Review Prize* issues, and elsewhere. His stories have been anthologized in *Flash Fiction Forward* (WW Norton), *The Mississippi Review: 30*, and *Boston Noir 2* (Akashic).

### Where to Purchase:

*Animals In Motion: Stories* is available to purchase at bookstores or online through [Roundabout Press](http://Roundabout Press) or other major online retailers.

## The Good Life

Once in San Diego I was picked up at the airport by a woman I used to know in high school. She hadn't actually come for me, but had just flown in herself and recognized me standing at the baggage claim. *I thought it was you*, she said. I had never known her well—we'd kept with different circles—and so the enthusiasm of her embrace seemed misplaced. I recalled that her first name was almost the same as her last name. She offered to drive me to my hotel, then suggested dinner as we located her expensive car in the lot. She said she was in sales and was returning from a trip to Canada. She appeared to have done well. She drove too fast, and when her car took turns the tires sounded in a fine-tuned German shriek.

It was like old times without really having had any. As she spoke, her thoughts seemed to arrive, light, and pass me in clusters of knotted logic, operating on some set of predetermined rules I hadn't learned, but liked the sound of anyway. *You've lost weight*, she said. *Imagine, you and me escaping that shit-hole*. At dinner she ordered glass after glass of wine and somehow remained sober, recalled things that happened to me that had never occurred, people we both knew well whom I hadn't known at all.

It eventually dawned on me that she had mistaken me for someone else. *Congratulations!* she said, toasting. Later, in the car, she turned off the air conditioning, took out a plastic bag filled with white powder, and held it out like a dead offering. *Pharmaceutical grade*, she said. *We take the money up to Vancouver*, she said. *The old rinse and spin. Cut it up like wedding cake*. I saw a man standing in the parking lot and recalled the name of a boy in high school who looked like me. We were seldom confused with each other, but then again years had passed. *My husband broke my back in two places*, she was saying. The man in the parking lot walked toward us, passed, and disappeared inside the door of another car. *Did you ever worry?* she said. She had stopped looking at me as she spoke. I no longer understood who she was talking to. *You know you've achieved peace when...* she began to say. I could see where her nose had been broken, a small crest at the bridge the dark brought out. As if she realized I had noticed this, she lifted her face from the plastic bag, and said: *You get to where all you can see are the spaces between people passing on the street*.