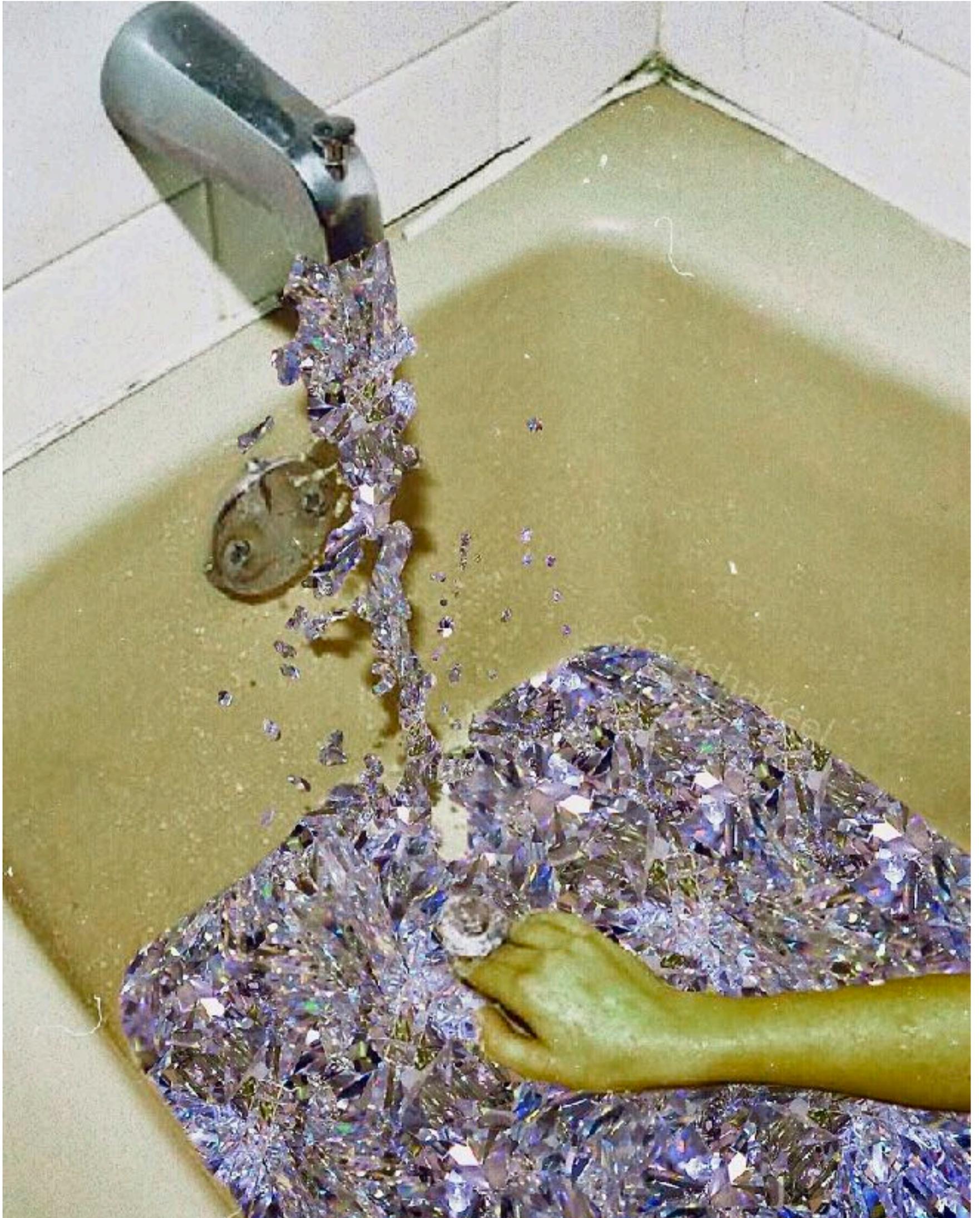


Lemon Star Mag Issue 1



Issue 1 Staff:

Editor in Chief/Founder/Poetry Editor & Web

Assistant: Lacey Trautwein

Fiction Editor: Cecilia Parrish

Nonfiction Editor: Mary Kate Elliott

Web Editor: Gemyni Turner

Internship Coordinator: Sylvia Collings

Readers: Mitchell King, Robin Cedar, Sylvia Collings, Luke Faste, & Tyrel Kessinger

Intern: Sara La Cotti

Dedication:

To all the persons who have supported Lemon Star at the beginning and middle of it all—thank you.

Cover photo by Lacey Trautwein

Contributors

Nonfiction

Justin Allard

Poetry

Alrisha Shea, Derek Berry, Rebecca Kokitus, Khalypso, Lauren Suchenski, Reid Goins, Linda M. Crate, Kassie Shanafelt, Kayla Bashe, Ella Helmuth, Daysi Sanchez, Roxanne Harvey, & Christina Anton

Fiction

Adam Lippert

Preview of Issue 1 published on our Home/Blog:

Adrian Sanders

IN MOTION

Justin Allard

Pedal to Serenity, a Long Time Coming

The pedometer gets stuck in kilometers and I have to think about the world in this not-so-familiar measurement. My headphones buzz with jazz: Hiromi blazing away on the piano. Gears click upward and I am rolling wearing the Wolfbike jersey I got on Amazon and some Garneau bike shorts my co-worker recommended I buy. She's a sporty-type so I trust her—plus they have the glorious ass-padding I have come, already, to cherish. I bear the painful memories from last summer's biking: saddle-sore throughout my nether regions from riding without the proper gear.

It is an evening ride in September, liquid cool as the first respite from August's heat always is. My legs are fresh and I pedal with frenzy. It feels good to be moving, pouring motion across the pavement. I ride through my neighborhood, around my old grade school, through J-town proper, and then back. A good 13 kilometers (8ish miles if my wobbly calculations are correct). And, in that time, I think about three dozen words. Mainly words of utility like *turn*, *slow down*, *brake*, and while going uphill with burning quads and asthmatic lungs *fuck*. My mind hums in mechanical efficiency, opening its vents, letting the world flow in and out, absorbing nothing. But in this new, emptied space, I think wordlessly.

Biking has been rehabbing me: setting me in motion, prompting me to breathe, not think, to move forward, to be happy.

When I dismount in my driveway, I pull out my headphones. I lean against the old, inherited, green Mustang and listen to the cicadas calling out, watch the lightning bugs blinking. Unzipping the jersey I let the cool air traipse across my chest while the stars come out.

It is a good thing something is trying to teach me how to be happy because it's something I have yet to figure out.

Learning to Move

The history of motion in my life is torrid, sickening, long. As babies, my mom drove me and my brother around late at night when we woke in the night screaming and crying. The motion soothed us. But, in the backseat of the cars of my youth, I learned that motion precipitated nausea, that I had to be careful of its influence. No videogames in the car, no music, no movies, and no books—a fact that devastated the budding reader that I was. My family went once to California to attend my aunt's wedding. We flew into Reno and made the drive up to Lake Tahoe. On this journey, we passed through the Rocky Mountains: high, inconceivably curving roads with no guardrails. In the backseat of my aunt's SUV, I learned that motion could squeeze the world into suffocating disruption, that skin could turn green, that the world was constantly in motion, constantly spinning, and I was just being tossed around.

Shy but active is how I would describe those years, I loved walking and riding my bike, I played basketball, soccer, volleyball without skill and inconsistently for my school, played whiffle ball with neighborhood kids, and ran track and later cross-country.

I had the ability to sit for hours on end with a book or a controller, but I could also move. Especially when I became angry or frustrated. I was known for my runaways. State fairs or stores or the backyard before church, it didn't matter where I was. If I became upset, I was on my feet barreling away from the situation, chasing an escape route only I could see. Flight was a relief: that unconsciousness of moving. Only later, alone and lost surrounded by strangers, would I realize the significance of my actions and my utter inability to ask for help. Generally followed by tears. I would then keep my head down and keep moving, hoping I could find my way back.

Running with the Devil

I start running competitively in the sixth grade and don't stop. I am a small, slight child not built for many other physical activities. But it doesn't take coordination or upper body strength or imagination to run. All it takes is the endurance to do something painful repeatedly. I am a very patient child.

Inhaler puffs, Asics shoes, inserts broken down by a million steps, spikes dulled, jerseys and number bibs, miles and miles. Weekends are spent at meets. Rituals arise: we go to Steak n' Shake with the team after every meet. I keep journals with what workouts I did each day, the weather, and how I felt before and after. Family members marvel at the miles, the *grand feat* of it all. If they ask me how I am, I talk about running (that's what I assume they want to hear about). I have no friends who don't run. My mom helps my brother and I repaint the bedroom we share a plain military green color from its previous pastel yellow. She forces us to pick out a wallpaper border. It ends up being sporting equipment from four sports I don't play or watch. But this is what my life consists of.

I receive running socks for my birthday one year. I pull them limply from the bag and let them lie on the dining room table. They have Colorado written on the sole and a sun and stripes around the ankle. I think they are ugly. I have never been to Colorado. I smile weakly and say thank you because I do not want to be ungrateful. I chastise myself. It is a privilege to receive anything at all. And I am a runner after all.

After sophomore year of high school I want to quit. The continuous motion leaves me exhausted. I don't feel that my friends and teammates understand me. The thundering footsteps distort my body, isolate me. I begin to realize I am becoming something very much different than the boys around me. Being around them, I feel too hairy, too fat, not manly enough, not social enough. I discover no matter how hard I try I can never make myself like them. At night I lie in bed burning with anger and anxiety because I am not right. I have no idea why I am running: I hate it and it leaves me with no time, no room

to think. But those reasons are simultaneously the reasons why I am doing it. In motion I maintain the simplest definition of myself and that is just moving.

I have to come to terms with the fact that my life and my identity will never follow the arc of my peers. Their narratives are not mine and every time I try to speak in their voice, to say the script we've all been given, I lose myself. Maybe I was not ready to admit this to myself and I definitely did not understand the details then, but this is the time of my life when I knew. But with that knowledge comes a sickening dilemma—how do I interact with those around me? An *all-male* Catholic high school has almost never embodied accepting of divergence. Yet, I have run enough cross-country courses in my life to know the key to never getting lost is to simply follow the person in front of you. That is my survival strategy. Instead of finding my own path I will follow the others.

I don't know the first thing about understanding myself or my narrative.

So I run.

And I follow.

I run for 11 years.

I run through hot mornings in the parks of Louisville, bundled up circuits around St. Xavier's parking lot with snow and ice six inches thick. I run races, at practices, on my own. I run road races, along trails, during July droughts, and during a flash flood where the water comes up to my neck.

I run because I can be consumed by it, because as long as I am in motion—reeling from exhaustion and nausea—inertia prevents change; because I can imagine the tedium of footsteps grinding away at my shins and knee joints until I fade into vacuous intangibility.

I run because when I run I hate running and not myself. When I run I am nobody: not some person with depression, identity anxiety, and an eating disorder, not a person with a terrible relationship

with their best friend, their brother, not a person who smooths everything over with silence. I submit myself to motion, abuse myself with it. Once a coping mechanism, it corrupts into something self-destructive. Running is the punishment I levy on myself, the punishment I accept as a sycophant does, for not meeting my expectations.

Perilous omniscient stillness and breakneck insentient motion: these are the only stages of existence I know.

As long as I am running I am safe from myself.

PR

The stationary trees drop away in rapid succession as the kaleidoscope of jerseys flutter through. Bodies heave air inward and expel it in gasps; arms pump and swing; legs in short shorts and out-gear in spiked shoes lunge forward. Follow the course! Faster! Push!

My lungs burn and I taste the blood in the back of my throat. Now that I'm moving I can barely feel the cold rattling my exposed body. This is the Rumble in the Jungle meet. It is late in my high school career and this is the first time I have been allowed to run this race. It is one for the older boys and the better runners. I have come to this meet as a spectator twice before, listened to "Welcome to the Jungle" blasting from the speakers. Now I am here pacing myself, teetering on the line of full throttle.

My mind silently, subconsciously, examines the body for cramps, stitches, soreness. It glides across the hundreds of miles run during the summer in preparation for racing. I am not that person who woke up every morning during the summer to make an 8AM practice. I am not the person who ran in the morning before school, attended all my classes, then ran after school. I was not the person who stayed up until midnight or 1AM working equations, reading novels, studying Spanish vocab, never completing anything. With each step I erase those people, with each step those people fall behind—I trample them

with my spikes. Racing, I am nobody and I can barely keep the small smile from my face. Move forward! Catch those guys! For this brief moment I am an insentient, just motion, and I lean into it. I am by no means fast, but I can outrun these cumbersome shadows.

With the finish line in sight, I kick as hard as I can, passing a few people, being passed by others. At the line, I tear the perforated slip from my bib, I take the complementary hand towel, I vomit so violently I nearly black out. Over and over again between gasps of air everything pushed down, everything held in place (ever-so-precariously), everything that I am not erupts from my body. I stagger down the finish chute, guided by unlucky volunteer moms, cleansed.

Never have I thrown up after a race before in my running career, but for the rest of the season, after practically every race I puke. I prove to myself that if I just move fast enough I won't feel anything at all. That I can cleanse myself of being human. And at the finish line, a small spasm of relief accompanies the barfing: proof that I have not been completely lost to the world of sensation.

Transitioning Transportation

After high school, I move to Danville, KY, to attend Centre College. I bring my running shoes and my inhaler with me. I haven't run that much since leaving the cross-country/track world behind. I firmly decide that I will not be a member of Centre's running teams. But I bring the shoes because I can't not bring them.

It is good to be in a different environment, but it takes a while for the narratives to unpack themselves, for me to start thinking differently. Unwittingly, I bring my high school mentality packed into all my totes. I run around the historic neighborhood, the track, towards Millennium Park, around the two-mile jogging path. I run in all the seasons, disappointing myself at how few miles I can manage. Three has

me exhausted when I used to do eight no problem. Running is the only thing I was good at in high school, the one thing that defined me as a human being, and now I can't even do that.

I study English and Spanish. I study abroad in Mérida, Mexico, and of course the shoes come with me. I run from my host family's house in Itzimna to el estadio where I circle the track, running pyramid workouts. I even run a 16K between Uxmal and Muna, regardless of the fact I am undertrained, just for the experience of it.

Returning to the US and unpacking my suitcases, I realize how tightly packed away my issues are. In a new place and in a new language, I invented for myself a happy persona, one without all this baggage. But here I am, back in my old bed, surrounded by the mementos of my old self. I traveled to another country, but I really hadn't moved at all. These high school narratives I had left behind upon embarkation are still here and I am still adhering to their governances. I had happiness in Mexico because I made myself someone different, but comparing that to the piles of my life around me I realize that the two are incompatible and incomplete.

I lace on my shoes and vacillate between running and drinking wild amounts. Straight-laced some days, blacking out weekend after weekend, I go through months of stumbling, heaving oblivion. At the end of spring semester, two friends sit me down in my dorm room and tell me I need to do better. That they are afraid I am going to hurt myself if I keep going like this. I sit on my bed, laughing nervously, burning on the inside, ready to defend myself and my actions. On the inside, I am absolutely frozen: nothing is turning out how I expected or how I wanted. I am continuously disappointing myself, moving and moving, leaving a wake of chaos behind me and then running from the repercussions.

Senior year embodies the fallout of this realization. I start running regularly, but I begin biking, too, especially the summer after graduation. It takes a while to recognize that biking is good for me: that just because it isn't running doesn't mean it isn't healthy for me. They are not the same—they are not even

comparable—but that is because they are completely different activities. The differences are what I need. On the bike I borrowed from my mom or my dad, I feel free in a way I don't while running. When I am running I feel heavy, lumbering, encumbered by gravity.

Biking is a new form of motion and while it isn't what I expected I enjoy embracing it. I can spend an hour cycling, listening to music, pushing myself, but it is easier to come back. To cycle back. My intentions with this motion are so much healthier. I begin to feel valuable, to be immersed in fluid motion, but not lost in it. Full of post college vigor, I press myself to embrace this thing that actually makes me feel healthy and gives me a sense of inner serenity, that helps me begin to really decipher the conflicting narratives inside my head and to begin speaking the one that supports my identity. Whoever I become, I promise that I will never be one of those bikers in the spandex shorts and the jerseys. At least, I will never be that type of person.

Healthy Cycling

A year after graduating college, I'm standing before the mirror in my childhood bedroom. It is built into an armoire and too short to show my full body standing upright. I have no head.

There is a person there wearing spandex bike shorts and one of those jerseys. I would never have imagined I would own this gear, even as recent as a year ago. These clothes are the outfit of the entitled biking class who clog one-way roads and ignore traffic laws, push runners off the path. But here I am, wearing this gear. And although I still try not to ride on roads without bike lanes, I can't help but notice the striking and unexpected evolution of my perspective.

Really, a lot of things in my life now are not as I expected them to be. I wanted to be working full-time at a job in my field of study (publication or marketing), I wanted to be living in my own apartment, I

wanted to be accepted into graduate school in an MFA program. Maybe I would even have a few pieces published in literary journals.

But here I am in tight black shorts with none of these things accomplished: as if I hadn't moved at all in the past year. I applied to graduate school and didn't get accepted into a program I could afford. I wrote half a novel, three short stories, poems and poems, none of which have been published. I worked two customer service jobs, part-time—got a promotion at one and quit the other.

Through the lens of my expectations and comparisons to the lives of others, I have accomplished nothing: remained immobile.

However, if I compare the list of things I expected to do and the actual list of accomplishments, I find they are not comparable. Like running and biking. These are the lives of two utterly different people. One is a fantasy construct who is mired in self-loathing and self-denial. The other one is me, a human being.

My motion has completely diverted from the race course and I have stopped following the guy in front of me. And I have also stopped wielding movement as a weapon against myself, as a medium of erasure, as a current against which I throw myself to the point of destruction. I try to move now not according to my expectations, but what is healthiest, what I am excited about, what I am comfortable doing, who I am comfortable being. I am using motion as a vehicle to find myself: I will go where I must to explore fluidity and validation.

Going out into the world, growing as a human, coming back and accepting yourself is difficult. Cycling has given me the space to work and the opportunity to return to where I started if I stray too far. I have not yet pedaled to happiness, but I am in motion.

VOLTE-FACE

I.

The Body Rots. The Mind Remains.

II.

Then, out of nothing, the sound of a
hunting rifle.

You're awake again.

III.

You struggle out of bed and stumble all
the way to the sink. You turn on the hot water

and just look at it for a bit.

IV.

You turn it off.

V.

Blood and water pour from
your nostrils. You ignore the trickling
across your lips.

You walk out into the kitchen, and see
your dog. You open the back door for him.
He won't leave the porch unless you're there.

He stands against the side of the house.

VI.

You see his shadow spun against the
wall and let your body do as it desires. You pull
out your pistol. You shoot.

VII.

No, not water, spinal fluid. You're awake again.

VIII.

This time, you get into your car and go to work.

IX.

You arrive at your office building and go to your
cubicle. You see your computer monitor and
slam your head through it. The glass digs into
your neck. Suddenly, blood again.

X.

Your dog has followed you the 200 miles
on your commute. You pet his ears. And then,

II.

out of nothing, the sound of a
hunting rifle.

You're awake again.

XI.

Is someone else here? This is the
first time you've asked this question.

III.

You struggle out of bed and stumble all
the way to the sink. You turn on the hot water
and just look at it for a bit.

XII.

You leave it running. It overflows and
floods your bedroom, so you swim out into
the kitchen.

XIII.

You wade your way to your car to find
the streets filled with murky ghost lakes.
Clearly, it rained last night, unless

VII.

No, not water, spinal fluid. You're awake again.

III.

You struggle out of bed and stumble all
the way to the sink. You turn on the hot water
and just look at it for a bit.

XIV.

You see your reflection in the mirror.

VI.

You see his shadow spun against the
wall and let your body do as it desires. You pull
out your pistol. You shoot.

II.

Then, out of nothing, the sound of a

hunting rifle.

You're awake again.

I.

The Body Rots. The Mind Remains.

My favorite teeth: the canines,
designed for tearing, reminding
us we descended from monsters or
God, whichever came first.
Call this body what you will, but who
has not dreamt himself as a feast or song,
whatever may fill a hungry mouth?

But I am no carnival prize,
no strong man swinging an anvil
against the fairground bell.
I am a hand grenade exploding
hymns, a bouquet
of bruise & belly fat.
I do not love this body because it is beautiful,
but rather, because it is my body.
Even this prelude to a corpse
may be loved if only for holding me
when nothing else will keep its grasp.

I dream myself afloat on an ocean
of sugar, claws scratching against the currents
and bringing joy to my lips.
Instead I've got this unsatisfying relationship
with food, all thrust and no foreplay,
always after pretending that I'm finished.
Let me become again a monster, consuming
entire cities in single slurps, my teeth
serrated & searching through the night
for a taste of molasses, a sea dark & sweet
with flesh.

This life is too often a self-conscious fever dream,
frantic scrabbling to salvage love
from the wreckage of self-loathing.
But I have never witnessed Cthulhu
squeezing his chubby tentacles in the mirror of the ocean,
mostly because my ship would have capsized, but
also because monsters
do not pop pimples,
do not floss fangs,
do not lie awake all night dreaming their ugly into a shotgun.

Imagine Godzilla on a Thigh Master. Laugh
and he might incinerate the nearest skyscraper, your hometown
exploding like a canister of Pillsbury Dough Boy biscuits.

Let me become
again a monster, feared for my size
as I ravage the coast, everything burned & beautiful
in the mass of my aftermath, smiling all canines
down from the sky. When they write my obituary,
they will not include my waist size, but
rather the glint of teeth in a
mouth preparing to
swallow the whole damn world.

what saturday morning had to say about all that

on friday shed your finest clothes and choose/ skin rough as burlap/ become naked enough to wear hair
as/ bravery/ tell yourself truth lies/ in follicles/ sip warm beer/ drink your weight/ you know by now
how/ to flaunt manhood as if it were a shine/ at the tip of a rusted axe/ you know by now how sin is/
synonymous with feminine/ just eat their hearts out/ collapse with blood on lips/ the party dies in your
sleep/
be quiet for once/ sweep last night's broken/ glass from the porch, collect red/ cups from the kitchen/
remember to recycle/ dress in gentlest chaos: long, flowing skirt, black/ hat, bewitch/ strangers/ do
nothing but doze with/ your lover/ in bed, walk together/ to the sea/ remember to shave your legs,
smooth as song/ uncurl your fist into/ palms/ above/ palms dance with no one/ to impress/ stop spilling
your voice into the world/ listen hard/ straighten your/ skirt/ not every moment must be miracle

On Pleasure

The first boy whose cock
I held in my mouth
like a lucky penny, or dissolving
pill or someone else's
secret
messages me on Tinder, asks
Are you back in town?
Can I come over?

& last time we brawled in bed
together, neither of us came.
Too drunk, I said, my cock
a limp puppet he wished to choreograph
to climax.

A Halloween party at my house,
both of us costumed: he—a vampire,
cue joke about sucking; me—
a swamp witch, burlesque
swathing flesh in feminine.

I shiver, my body a bog of goosebumps,
hot as lightning-struck mud.
I reach into a sky
I do not own and clothe
myself in night's reckoning.
I smear lipstick on thighs, name
the kiss a sloppy relic.

He asks,
does this feel good?
To be wanted, yes, this feels
good. To be marionette
in nimble hands, yes, let me dance
for you. Ventriloquize my body
into unnamable immediacy.

Must pleasure be toothache, longing
for absence? Must pleasure
be always either blood or glitter?
I am still so uneasy in my skin,
inarticulate in what makes me shudder.
There are parts of my body
I don't talk about
you can only see in the dark.

LIGHT AS A FEATHER

At sixteen years old I learned how to levitate.
I grew so light that I'd float
in the locker-lined hallways—two fingers tucked
beneath all my edges like dressmaker pins,
cradling each rib like a menthol cigarette.
A circle of all the girls
I aspired to be holding me
an inch or two above the linoleum,
and nothing existed between my heavy head
and my heavy feet.

I hid in the library at lunchtime,
I blended in because my skin turned
the color of the pages in the old books,
sallow. But it wasn't shallow—
though it was at first.
It became part of me, the yellowness
and those bruises on the world
each time I stood up too fast,
and my bones creaking like bedsprings
as I tossed and turned inside myself.

O'Miser: Rumpelstilskin (after Fiona Apple)

it is not
the before
that i am afraid of.

it is the after,
the hollow that

accompanies a

grim realization.

i have known him
many times before
this ask.

he demanded my first kiss.
said, with it, that he'd spin me
the finest golden dress

of gossamer sweet nothings
and devotion.

then,
it was my slick,
my eager

and
much obliged
i am little more

than greedy and easily
distracted by anything
that shines—even with tarnish.

what more
is
my firstborn when

i have promised every first

to a man who knows little more
than my shame and every beginning
i have held dear.

Grown?

it is my understanding

that all grown folk need a vice—some something
to tell your kids not to do
when they get to be your age

mine is

welcoming a short life with grey, burning breath—
the only kind of fight i have ever backed down from;

refusing to fuck girls i love;

& loving boys whom i should only be fucking.

i have abandoned eating.

i have abandoned space.

i am ducking out of my life plot to make room
for someone new, worthy, and unshattered

do i now have a seat at the dominos table?

or must

i surrender another withered

need to the poached air?

Every Mother I've Ever Known Only Knows How To Love Where It Hurts

when i could call myself girl,

i watched a mother bird
wrench her children's fresh carcasses
from a storm drain's unyielding grate.

she hopped up and down on their chests
until her children's bodies were
little more than pulps of painted feathers

and squawked herself hoarse

with anger,
and I could only think, *"What kind
of mother mourns with corporal punishment?"*

last tuesday, the last day i called myself
a woman,
my mother found an open pack of newports in my
bureau.

my tombstone must have flashed

across her sight somewhere when
she looked into my eyes because

all she could do was shriek &
slap me & slap me & slap me;

so hard i could taste the fire from which

the smoke i crave comes,

so hard i could only say sorry and mean it this time,

so hard i saw stars and i swear there were millions of red-speckled feathers
herded into their dazzling orbit—a reverie of doom—and it looked like

her tears, the pillars of a hurricane that
could choke every tender, new thing

she cannot call her own offspring.

it looked like

a bird's face tossed to the sky, cursing

the reliability of a god we'll never know

it looked like making my mother cry.

it looked like making my mother cry.

Self portrait of 22 at 26

upon being 22

in a nation clean and bright – whistling, courageous but out of step with the sea and the sight of the shoreline

i raged orange peels through paint drips, sallow metrocards, wallowed shoes caving in at the center

i broke my arm in a tiny fissure

i healed my arm on a purpled couch under the overhang of the bypass; painting under the leaky shower where the pink rings stuck on the sink

i tucked myself into the bus stations; i tucked myself in at night (i fell asleep

in arms or blankets or pillows or on top of the wooden slabs called floor that kept creasing in the corners)

i hurled myself around this suburb called Toowong, i read a biography of grace and goodness traced onto the city steps

i tried to find the culture, sandwiched in between the pacific and the pedestrian – i found my own pretension, i found the pretense that a place is more than a past and present tense

i pressed hard – there was a

road to keep rumbling;

i radiated outwards.

i swallowed donuts/couscous/raw flour mixed with eggs (desperate for cookies but where is the time)/

sushi that rolled inside and out

i blend my memories now – toothbrush and horse hair, i swirl them around like a sieve

i mirror my memories now – tunnel visioned and circumscribed (i, the scribe, you, the scrivener)

i hunt my memories now – filo-pastry-doughed and fleshswollen – bits of something real comes seeping over the edges of the pot (i always let it boil over, i always let the yeast rise higher)

i bake myself (my self turns brown at the edges if you watch it carefully/burns black if you forget to keep an eye on it/singes white if you remember everything at once)

Maybe your body too

Maybe your body too,

feels it –

the snap of sinews,

the stretch of musculature;

your chest when my head burrows, neatly into tendon and courage, tucked into your lungs, and the space between your ribcage and your heart - cells like anything else, atoms like anything else, raging like anything else - a marching band like anything else, like everything else is only a slave to this wizard - this heart creature, swollen and incorrigible

you hollow into the small of my waist,

a finger just delicate enough –

my string of dandelion vertebrae corrode into honey and jam, marmalade words ringed like opals in your eyes (this is a love poem, this dance our adrenaline makes)

you cary grant kiss me like oxygen, i supple watering can grow mountains, i shed tectonic plates, i am walking rose bush, fluttered silk, i am musculature on fire, i am waterboned and rivergasping

Sometimes I'm so goddamn endearing I can't stand it

you wink / (did you really just do that?) / I hop into your eyebrows; warm water fowl curling through your gaze / are you flying towards me? are you flapping your wings, peacock? did you grow those wings for me? those plumes? Or am I just a casualty of the grace of nature

Upon finding yourself in CVS at 2am at age 15

And the wolf rages
and the wolf rattles - ten pages long
and nineteen feet wide - the wolf carries me;
hunkered flesh and militant colors; the wolf carries me

– That summer, in the
cobble up street / the CVS
made manifest
all twelve consumer dreams we ever had as pre-pubescent pearls -
Tampax, Twix, turnstyle tissue-boxes and a bottle of turpentine
We blew condoms into balloons on the sidewalk
(The pictures still astound me)

The particles of water
that wrapped around me
still drip onto my head - precipitating, condensing
(courageous and wild)

I never thought to shave my legs, but sometimes you did (think to shave my legs)
Hungry-voiced and hopped up on Little Debbie's (an identity of personhood, inc.)
you tried with razorblades to walk me towards cleanflesh
– Is it clean, or is naked/bare/separated?

Because, you said, I never wrote anything that revealed myself
I burned myself wild in the convenience store (how convenient, for a metaphor)
I shaved waxed moon hairs from every place worth seeing
I curled myself against the corridors of Bugles and bugles
I heralded
I became
a summer, in a cobble up street
the CVS made manifest

all twelve consumer dreams
made clean

A Long Time Ago

I remember you.
Sitting, rolling a joint
At the skate park.
I thought that was so fucking cool then.
You just didn't care who saw.
That was the only time I met you,
But your brother told me quite a lot.
I remember when you borrowed his bike
And broke it, just like he said you would.
And I remember when he told me
About you hitting licks and taking cars on joyrides,
And I said you were gonna get in a lot of trouble one day.
And I remember your funeral,
It was open casket and your braids
Had just been done
And your mom was
Wailing wailing wailing
And I couldn't look your brother in the eye.

pink sunsets are for weeping

i don't know how many times i've risen from the ashes, but i am stronger now than i was when you met me; you woke in me the dreaming when i thought the dreaming was dead & you taught me that our scars make us beautiful—i remember when you saw the scars from my gallbladder surgery, and you told me they looked like japanese flowers; i recall the trip to philly and dracula's ball, i remember seeing *the producers*, our walk in autumn around Edinboro, going to that gay bar with josh & cody, i remember meeting andy and leotie, i remember the ren faire and how you told me to be careful with the sangria wine which i became quite fond of, i remember drinking appletini's in erie, i remember being a part of your play, so many recollections i don't think i can name them all, i remember your little pink car, i remember the regret that came when i pushed you away because of both my confusion and rage, i remember the apology that wasn't enough, i remember that it was my fault that we were no longer friends; and i will forever be sorry for it—i saw a pink sunset and wept because you were all i could think of, and the memories may have forgotten you but i will forever remember that otherworldly girl that smelled of roses; you were unforgettable—& the only woman i ever loved.

Silk Stockings

Uncle Sam says he needs your silk stockings, but he won't take mine.
In fact, he's the one who gave them to me.

Give me your tired, your hungry, your poor.
Give me your silk stockings, and I'll give them to a British girl.

I own the last pair of silk stockings in all of London.
In them, I take shelter beneath the archway of a golden door.

Bombings mean nothing. I watch the dogfights with my fist raised high.
Tempest-tossed into the ditch by a soldier for safety.

Wretched refuse of my silk stockings is all that remains.
They cling to my legs ripped and covered in ash.

Uncle Sam says he needs your silk stockings, but he won't take mine.
The delicate cloth is like armor that will protect me.

Snakeskin In A Small Town

There's a legend
in a small town.
She arrived in 1945.
Five-foot-two feet
of pure terror for
the local housewives.
Whispers spread through
the town like wildfire
about the snake
walking in snakeskin shoes.
They tried to cut off
her head once, but
she grew another one.
That's how I was born.
Another beast with flowers
or leaves caught in her hair.
Crawling through the streets
Waiting for a chance to strike.
The two of us were
not made like them.
Women who wash
behind their ears
and brush their hair
every day of the week.
Women who walk
not run.
These women wait in wings
for men who ask them
politely to dance.
We beasts have
wings of our own.
Try to clip them
and you will die.

Mesmerizing Alien

Graceful as a puma against muddy stone. Power armor, gleaming anodized oil-slick shine. Eyes gold and slitted like a cat's, and smooth-scaled hands. As many colors as a soap bubble. Lilac, lavender, chemical spill. Shimmery meteor-scratched. A high honeyed voice sings of the morning sun, all bittersweet hope and gentleness. Of something you don't even know you want until you take that first sip.

Cards on the Table

you speak in quotations of yourself
and I've never met anyone who does that before.
so steeped in what flows from your head on to paper
that it falls out of your mouth.

just here to party, but mostly a lesbian
who describes their sexuality that way?
and how is it that even the way you walk
is entirely cartoonish and also sexy
in its own way?

I'm a cards on the table kind of gal
as I told you a hundred times
but your cards slip from your pockets
one by one and I walk behind you
trying to build a house.

you always look at where a pen is from
before you start writing with it,
why is that important?
does the congleton lumber company logo
mean something to you, about me?
or is it just the significance of the tool?

AMY

Stop trying to be Amy
If you want real tears
To water the grave flowers

You'll only be getting
A healthy, glob of phlegm
From me
All over those flimsy weeds

Blame

But three nights ago, you were mumbling,
Stuttering,
You didn't hear me,
You pretended you could.
Me asking if you were okay, was my polite way of saying
"I'm not okay with you right now."
And 'right now' then, has happened too many times in my life.

And I could move on if "'right now' then," was you, 'right now' forever.
But I never know which 'right now' right now.
And I am reactive. I am pre-reactive. Preactive.
And I am not right now. I am now and then and 20 minutes from now, and when you're dead, and future relationships, and when I'll need a favor, and you were fine this morning, and maybe you *are* making sense, because I'm tired too. And were you always this way? And will I always get this upset? Am I spoiled? Was I always? Will I ever not be? Does it matter?

And I'm scared. I am so scared.

Should

I should be
I should be
I should be
searching for
I should be
typing.
I am
But I should be
Doing something else too
And feeling differently
And I must remember
But I can't think too much
It's not healthy
To be so sedentary
But it's not healthy
To be thinking about my weight
And I should be doing crunches
But I shouldn't have an end goal
But I should know what I want to do with my life
But I should allow for
tangents
But those are distractions
But I should always be prepared
Except not wound too tight
But maybe I should care
But not too much
And maybe I should
do something else
But I am finally doing
Something.
But if I keep going
It might-

Fetus Thanks

- Never asked for extra miles
- And never will either
- Obstinate/occlude/obstructive
- Last night my hands traced
- Every curve with a novelty
- But short-lived delight
- As if nobody can “find” my
- Physical form of self or body
- As if no body, as if

- Instagram Security’s team member
- In fact addressed me “hi, bitter”
- This root of misery felt so
- Clear and potent w/i her

- Everything around me is moving
- Yet with an undeniable stillness
- Cupid and Psyche switching places
- Filling up each other’s capillaries
- No malocclusions in our routines

- To need, tether, and unbind
- The double-helix you became
- To endorse the results again
- For you need to see my town;
- Its early history was of rose businesses
- And your city’s was of other possibilities
- We are to become new for spring

- Something leaves my mind like
- A bird gnawing at my brain
- As if it were a worm, as if
- Finally stops and flies away
- 1,021 people are talking about this.

They Will Come for Her

The movers had renovated Garrett's new bedroom, transforming it into a medieval castle by lining the walls with brown cardboard bricks. The new duplex was small. And Garrett's mother decided his bedroom should double as storage until there was time to unpack all their belongings. A tower of boxes stood before the room's solitary window, and the dusk of a late September evening glowed along its edges like the magnificent corona during a solar eclipse, but otherwise, the room was starting to look gray and tenebrous. In the corners pooled shadows. Blackness mortared the seams between moving boxes. And every minute or so, Garrett scanned the room for shiny eyes that might be floating in the corners or peeking out from behind a stack of moving boxes. The light remained off. If he moved or caused commotion, Garrett thought he might become easy prey. A foreboding silence had settled into the dim room. Somewhere down the hall, out of sight and earshot, his mother seemed unreachable. Garrett compensated by breathing harder than normal, and making his sound effects while playing with toy cars a little more emphatic than usual. He wanted to go back home. He didn't understand why they had come to live in this terrifying place, but Garrett was young, and still couldn't comprehend much of what had occurred in the past few weeks.

Garrett knelt on the scratchy rug on his bedroom floor and played with his toy cars, which hadn't left his sight the entire move. He had even taken the old metal coffee can where they were garaged into the rest-stop bathroom. Even as a six-year-old, Garrett knew that his cars had come to bear a monumental significance, and he needed to protect them at all costs. He hadn't seen the duplex until they had arrived with the moving truck only a few hours ago, but he knew it would be okay, no matter what, if he just had his cars, especially his favored mini cooper.

A small tow truck was clutched in Garrett's left hand, and the mini cooper was in his right. He stretched each hand out to their respective sides and he started the countdown. Ready. The cars faced each

other as if ready for a new kind of violent drag race where there was a possibility that neither driver would triumph, let alone survive. Set. They imaginarily revved their engines, eager for brutality and destruction. Go. Garrett zoomed the cars towards one another, and when they smacked together he flung the tow truck away and it tumbled under his bed, settling somewhere unseen in the darkness beneath. And the mini cooper sat on the rug unharmed. It always won these duels of demolition derby, regardless of the challenger.

Once again Garrett swiveled on his bottom and peered around the spooky room. He imagined that he was in the turret of a castle's highest tower with a guttering candelabrum on the floor nearby. In this fictitious realm, there was no glass in the windows that separated the domestic from the wild. And if he leaned his head out the window and listened intently, he would be able to hear torturous screams from a heretic enduring "The Gaunche" in the courtyard and from a peasant in the subterranean dungeons being stretched on "The Rack." Garrett was familiar with these concepts because of television programs and movies like *Are You Afraid of the Dark?*, *Goosebumps*, and his favorite, *Scooby-Doo*. But at the moment, nothing ominous seemed to be studying him from the room's gloom, so he turned back to his cars, but he was careful not to tempt fate and kept his legs curled close to his body and his arms close to his sides.

Garrett hated the rug on his bedroom floor. It made his legs itch, but most of all, it wasn't his. It had come with the house. He had wanted the movers to take it away, but they had trapped it under the weight of his bed before he'd been able to dispute its presence. Garrett's old bedroom was awesome. He had loved how it sparkled with sunlight because of the large windows. The walls were painted a bright blue, one of which had a mural of the Scooby Doo gang on it. It had been familiar. And everything in it had been his. He'd grown up in that room. All of the recent horrors that had happened in that house were less important than the fact that that house had been, still was, home. This room with its sparse furnishings, towers of moving boxes, and dim lighting felt as welcoming and homey as a leaking camping tent during a frigid downpour.

Garrett jumped as his mother poked her head into the room. She must have crept down the hall on tiptoes because she hadn't made a sound until the light-switch snapped upward. And now that the light was on, the gloomy atmosphere of a haunted castle seemed to dissipate. The shadows that had hung about the room had instantly fled like burglars from a security alarm, and along with them, any monsters they had concealed. Now he could see the room for what it really was: a small and cramped, yet somehow naked bedroom. And Garrett may have only been six, but he knew something was deeply amiss, even if he couldn't quite put his finger on what it was.

"Honey, I'm going to hop in the shower. Everything okay in here?" His mother asked from the doorway. Of course, everything wasn't okay. But this was supposed to be their new home. There was nothing that could change that, so Garrett simply nodded amenably.

"I'm six Mom," Garrett stated. His birthday had been three months ago, but he still flaunted the fact that he was six years old like it was a new outfit. "I can take care of myself for long periods of time. Remember? Remember when you talked to the neighbor outside for five whole minutes? And I took care of myself? Remember that?"

"You're right. Sometimes I just forget how big you have grown." She said with a chuckle. Then she left quickly. Her blonde hair was flat and greasy and had hundreds of split ends. Her eyes were glazed with exhaustion and there were puffy pillows beneath them discolored by bruising, which matched the way her fingers were swollen and discolored as they protruded from the cast on her wrist. The only signature on her cast so far was an oversized, back-slanted scrawl that had been made by a certain six-year-old.

Once his mother was gone and the shower squeaked on, Garrett went back to playing. He lifted the Mini Cooper into the air and slammed it down onto a red Ferrari that was parked in the middle of the rug. Again, the Mini Cooper emerged unscathed. Garrett pretended that the Ferrari had caught fire. He wheeled a fire truck next to the sports car and imaginary firefighters scurried to douse the flames. Once the danger had been extinguished, Garrett looked around for the tow truck. Its services were needed. But

it was nowhere in sight. Eventually, he remembered how the tow truck had tumbled under the bed.

Garrett fell forward and crawled to retrieve it.

Despite only moving in today, a thick layer of dust coated the rug and flooring underneath the bed. And the shadows under here seemed too dark, as if his mother had scampered back to the room and flipped the light off again. Garrett reached out and grabbed the truck, but something caught his ear.

It sounded like Garrett felt like he had just put his ear up to a sea shell. There was a hushed, rhythmic, cooing noise that at first only seemed like random, enigmatic timbres, but after a few seconds of curious listening, Garrett knew the noises had some intelligible meaning. There was a pattern to the noise that was just beyond his capabilities to decipher. The sound emanated from a grate on the wall, directly underneath where his head would rest at night. Garrett crawled closer and placed his ear against the metal grating. Gradually, the tones rose in volume and intensity. Then, the soft murmur ignited into a feverish and vicious chant performed by hundreds of voices. The voices never broke their unity, but he could tell there were lots of them. A chill ran down Garrett's spine and the nape of his neck prickled. This sound was horrific, and terrifying, and also mesmerizing.

All at once the chanting silenced as if it emanated from radio speakers, which had suddenly been ripped out of the socket. The shower curtain scraped back and he could hear his mother singing a gentle tune. Garrett came to his senses and scrambled out from under the bed, clutching his tow truck so tight with both hands that it left painful imprints on his palms. His mother walked down the hall a few minutes later. When she spotted Garrett standing next to his bed, she ran to him. His little face was frozen in terror. His mother grabbed him and hugged him, but pushed herself away once she realized he wore a thick coat of dust.

“What’s happened dear?” She was only wrapped in a towel, which she pressed closed with her cast. She placed the other on the back of Garrett’s neck and pulled him onto her bare shoulder. He was crying

now. The droplets of water clinging to her skin wet Garrett's hair and face and were colder than the tears streaming down his cheeks. "It's okay sweetie. Let it out. I don't want to be here either."

Later on that night, after Garrett had settled down, taken a bath, and been tucked in, he laid in bed. Garrett had been so caked in dust that his mother had needed to retake her shower after consoling him.

The bedroom door gaped open and he had convinced his mother to leave the hallway lights on. He spent several hours awake, listening for more noises to emanate from beneath his bed, but the house was completely silent, except for the loud snoring from his mother's room down the hall.

Garrett eventually dozed off, but woke from his light sleep only an hour later to the sound of a door creaking open. Briefly, from the living room, there was the patter of tiny feet running. Then, a soft, irregular chanting had begun. The rhythm and tone of the words sounded like waves crashing against rocks. It seemed to be coming from somewhere down the hallway.

Snores still sounded from Garrett's mother's room. The chanting wasn't coming from his mother. Garrett knew that sometimes when the moon was full his mother would do some weird things like talk in her sleep, or even sleepwalk. But it wasn't her.

Garrett turned on his side and stared down the hallway. He grabbed the covers tightly and pulled them up to his eyes, and curled his legs up to his chest. All of a sudden, Garrett realized that a door in the hallway was about half open. Had it been like that when he had fallen asleep? Garrett was sure that it hadn't been. And his mother hadn't opened it, because Garrett had heard her snores long before he had drifted into unconsciousness. Garrett began to shiver with panic once he realized the hallway door that was ajar lead to the basement.

Garrett edged to the side of his bed and hopped onto the ground, away from the bed and into the strong lighting of the hallway, because monsters liked to hide in the blackness beneath people's beds at night.

The wood flooring of the hallway was cold on Garrett's bare feet. He inched toward the basement door. The chanting became clearer. The language was nothing like he had ever heard. The burbling, guttural series of noises didn't sound like anything that could be produced by a human's vocal cords, or was like an ancient song that South American barbarians would sing during a ritualistic sacrifice.

After reaching the door, Garrett pressed his back flat against the hallway wall, with the basement door immediately on his right. He pondered what could be down there. Since moving in this morning, Garrett hadn't been downstairs, and neither had his mother as far as he knew. It could be anything. There could be people that already lived here, in the basement, that they hadn't noticed yet.

Garrett mustered up the courage to creep around the door and peer down the wooden stairs, which were painted a faded maroon, old, and steep. The basement floor was concrete. The walls were white cinderblocks. Everything downstairs basked in a silver-blue glow that perpetually wavered, as if there were a shimmering swimming pool down there. But Garrett couldn't see from where the light emanated. After a few moments, Garrett felt a mesmeric paralysis overcome him. He was swept away by the hypnotic rhythm of the chanting and wavering light, and his body became rigid and immobile. After a few moments, the noise drifting up from the stairs fell silent, and as soon as it stopped, Garrett woke from his trance, but he still couldn't move. Two or three minutes passed. But it felt like hours. It seemed like Garrett stood there, at the top of the stairs, the entire night. He consciously tried to move his limbs, but they would not respond. He heard the patter of hundreds of tiny feet upon the concrete of the basement floor and prayed with the entirety of his soul that nothing rushed up the stairs towards him. His breathing became frenzied. The immense panic seemed to wake his limbs from their paralysis and Garrett saw his wrists twitch, and then lazily move at his request. Once the spell was finally broken, Garrett sprinted down the hall and leapt into his mother's bed. She jolted awake and instantly grabbed him, and began consoling him, telling him that it was only a bad dream. The rest of the night, he slept while caressed in his mother's arms, knowing that it hadn't been a dream.

The following day was the first full day in their new duplex. In the daytime, the place didn't seem as ominous. Plenty of sunlight filled all the rooms. There would be plenty of room once everything had been unpacked and the towers of cardboard boxes had been broken down and burned in the fireplace.

However, Garrett still didn't want to live here. Now, there was a little distance between Garrett and the incident last night, but he still didn't think it had been a nightmare, but the event now felt so surreal that even his six-year-old mind didn't find it plausible. Most of all, Garrett missed home. He missed his dad. He wondered where his dad was, and what he was doing. Since that night, when his parents were yelling really loud and his mother had tripped down the stairs, Garrett's mother refused to acknowledge that his dad had ever existed. The few times that Garrett had begun to introduce the subject, his mother had sharply cut him off and sent him to his room to stand in the corner. Garrett hadn't even had a chance to say goodbye during all the commotion. His dad was just gone.

While helping his mother unpack, thoughts of his dad swirled through Garrett's young head. Apparently, he had been enlisted into an army and his mother was a drill sergeant. Her arm might have been broken, but her voice was as strong as ever.

Currently, Garrett knelt on the kitchen linoleum and slid pans into a kitchen cabinet. The sound of the pans clanking together pleased him, so much that he had become purposefully clumsy.

"Sweetie," Garrett's mother shouted, sounding distant. "Come here, I need your muscles."

"Where are you?" Garrett picked up a cookie sheet and let it fall onto the stack already in the cupboard. He giggled. His bangs fell into his eyes, and he blew a gust of breath up at them and flicked his head to the side. He hadn't had a haircut in some time now.

"In the basement."

Her words seemed to echo.

"No way." Garrett blurted, but stood up and began creeping toward the hallway anyways. His bladder suddenly felt full, and he wasn't sure if he'd be able to make the bathroom in time.

“What did you say to me?” His mother yelled from the basement.

When he reached the hallway, Garrett placed his back against the wall and slid sideways until he looked down the jagged crag of wooden stairs leading to the basement. The memory of blue-silver lights playing on the wall and floor like rippling water stepped out of the surreal fog like Jack the Ripper and stood before him in clarity. Garrett’s legs warmed as piss ran down them. And all he could do was release a little grunt.

“Garrett,” his mother shouted again. She moved to the bottom of the stairs and looked up at him. Garrett’s cheeks were burning. His mother’s tone had changed the next time she spoke. “Garrett? What’s happened?”

His mother rushed up to his side and guided him into the bathroom to wash up. She stayed in the bathroom, sitting on the toilet, waiting as Garrett bathed and composed himself. Once Garrett was dried off and feeling himself again, he ran up to his mother and gave her the greatest bear hug he could muster. His mother said that he still had to help her unpack. He still felt very apprehensive about going downstairs, but allowed his mother to lead him by the arm to continue unpacking and preparing this small duplex to be the stage where their lives were played out.

Once he was downstairs and was satisfied that the only footfalls echoing on the concrete floor was his and his mother’s, some of Garrett’s fear dissipated. It was just an unfinished basement. There were hard floors and hard walls. The staircase bisected the room in two. His mother made her way over to the boxes she had been riffling through before Garrett’s accident. The movers had placed about ten boxes down here. Even though he was still a little frightened, Garrett meandered away. On the far side of the basement Garrett noticed a crack that ran up the cinderblock wall like a flicker of lightning. It ended near the top left corner of the wall, and ran to the bottom right corner, ending behind the washer and dryer, which seemed too far away from the wall, and cocked at a strange angle. Creeping slowly, Garrett moved toward the washer and dryer furtively. Behind the dryer there was a large hole burrowed into the cement.

“Hey.” The shock of his mother’s voice made Garrett jump. “Get over here and help me.”

From that point forward, Garrett didn’t stray from his mother’s side and assisted her obediently.

That night, Garrett begged and pleaded to sleep in his mother’s room, but she had refused his efforts. She threw his tendency to flaunt his age and maturity in his face. Such a big, six-year-old boy needed to sleep in his own bed. After his mother had tucked him in and left, Garrett gawked at his bedroom door. It hung open. Why hadn’t his mother let him shut it? The hallway lights were still on and the basement door was shut, but that didn’t comfort Garrett much. The extra protection of a closed bedroom door would have alleviated some of his agitation, but Garrett was too scared to get up and close it himself. So he stayed awake as long as possible to keep watch. But eventually, he couldn’t keep his eyes open any longer.

He woke to the same type of chanting that he had heard the previous day, but this time it came from the grate underneath his head and from the basement door that was now wide open. Garrett didn’t waste any time. He leapt up from his bed and bolted down the hall to his mother’s room. He burst in. The room was empty. He checked the bathroom next. It was also unoccupied. Without hesitation Garrett sprinted back down the hall and past the basement door, but his mother wasn’t in the living room or kitchen either. Only one terrifying possibility remained.

Garrett stepped to the top of the stairs and peered down into the silver-blue waggling gloom that he had glimpsed the night before. He had no choice.

He gripped the railing as he descended the stairs, so tightly that a few splinters stabbed into the fingers of his trembling hand, but Garrett hardly noticed. His heart hammered harder, competing with the maddened sound of the occult chanting. Garrett took the final steps into the basement, conscious that this was the end. Garrett’s heart panged and thumped wildly as he saw them. A throng of creatures was gathered in the basement, all circled and facing a spot in the middle of the room where his mother lay unconscious, or dead. When he stepped into the basement, the chanting continued as if these little

creatures didn't even notice his presence. There were hundreds of them. They were about two-feet tall, covered in matted fur, and the silver-blue light waved across their bodies like an octopus's body can pulse with light. They had huge, bulging eyes and horrible mouths in the middle of their head. The top of their head jumped into the air and slammed back against the bottom half of their face by whatever spine or muscle that connected the two parts of their head. The pulsing light made the creatures look like they were drenched and dripping with something, but the floor was completely dry. The terrible things swayed back and forth together, as if they were wasted and singing an Irish drinking song.

One of the little creatures jumped atop the chest of Garrett's mother. All of a sudden, it was as if a knife had severed the chord of chanting. It was completely silent. The thing on his mother said something all on its own. It raised a ring in its weird little hand, lowered and placed it on his mother's hand. It pushed it down as far as it would go, until it pushed against the cast on her hand. Then, it lifted Garrett's Mini Cooper, his favorite toy car, into the air. It said something else, and all of a sudden, Garrett felt all control leave him. He became a passenger to his own body as the chanting started and grew to resume the pitch it had reached before. They were telling him what to do. He had to obey. No matter what. He didn't understand the language, but he knew what the creatures wanted. He lifted his hand and scratched his head. He jumped off the ground. They were testing their newfound authority over him, and Garrett knew their dominion would never wane. Then, the creatures began moving.

They moved in an uneven lope, throwing their bodies from side to side, almost jumping with each step. They formed a procession that moved to the other side of the basement, all the while uttering the guttural, burbling incantation. Garrett walked in the middle of the monsters. He followed, and watched his body approach the hole in the wall he had seen earlier, and crawled inside after them.

CONTRIBUTOR BIOGRAPHIES

Justin Allard graduated from Centre College and currently lives in Louisville, KY. Their work has appeared in *Perigee*, *Entropy Magazine*, and *Luna Luna Magazine*.

Alrisha Shea is a 17 year old non-binary high school junior planning to go into Bioinformatics in undergrad. Their work is published or forthcoming in *Golden Walkman*, *Occulum*, *Polyphony HS*, and more. They have no website, but feel free to follow them at [@alrisha_s](https://twitter.com/alrisha_s) on Twitter.

Derek Berry is a poet & novelist living in South Carolina. His first poetry collection is forthcoming from PRA Publishing in 2018. He is also the author of the novel *HEATHENS AND LIARS OF LICKSKILLET COUNTY* & the poetry chapbook *SKINNY DIPPING WITH STRANGERS*. He is the co-founder and President of literary non-profit *The Unspoken Word*. He is also the editor of *Good Juju Review* & co-host of the *Contribute Your Verse* website. He has been published in several journals, including this one. You can find more of his work, tour dates, & musings at derekberrywriter.com.

Rebecca Kokitus is a part time resident of Media, PA just outside Philadelphia, and a part time resident of a small town in rural Schuylkill County, PA. She is an aspiring poet and is currently an undergraduate in the writing program at West Chester University of Pennsylvania. More of her writing can currently be found in *Philosophical Idiot*. She tweets at [@rxbxcca_anna](https://twitter.com/rxbxcca_anna).

Khalypso is a Sacramento-based activist, actor, and poet. They are fat, black, neurodivergent, queer and badass. Their work can be found in *Calamus Journal*, *Drunk in a Midnight Choir*, *Rigorous Journal*, *Wusgood Magazine*, and *Shade Journal*, as well as a few others. They are a Leo-Virgo cusp, they want to be your friend, and you can find them on Twitter [@KhalypsoThePoet](https://twitter.com/KhalypsoThePoet)

Lauren Suchenski has a difficult relationship with punctuation and currently lives in Yardley, PA. She has been nominated twice for the Pushcart Prize as well as twice for The Best of the Net and her chapbook "Full of Ears and Eyes Am I" is available from Finishing Line Press. You can find more of her writing on Instagram [@lauren_suchenski](https://www.instagram.com/lauren_suchenski) or on Twitter [@laurensuchenski](https://twitter.com/laurensuchenski).

Reid Goins graduated from Kentucky State University, where he completes a BA in Liberal Arts with a minor in History. He is currently saving up to buy an RV and travel the country.

Linda M. Crate is a Pennsylvanian native born in Pittsburgh yet raised in the rural town of Conneautville. Her poetry, short stories, articles, and reviews have been published in a myriad of magazines both online and in print. She has five published chapbooks *A Mermaid Crashing Into Dawn* (Fowlpox Press - June 2013), *Less Than A Man* (The Camel Saloon - January 2014), *If Tomorrow Never Comes* (Scars Publications, August 2016), *My Wings Were Made to Fly* (Flutter Press, September 2017), and *splintered with terror* (Scars Publications, January 2018).

Kassie Shanafelt is a social media manager living in Brooklyn. She has work forthcoming or appearing in Coffin Bell Journal, Cold Creek Review, and Enclave. She is the founding creative director of Millennial Pink, an online community for fellow creatives. Find out more at the website, <https://www.millennialpinkofficial.com/>

Kayla Bashe is a graduate of Sarah Lawrence College. Her fiction and poetry has appeared in Strange Horizons, Liminality Magazine, Mirror Dance, Ink and Locket's "LBGT Warriors" anthology, Breath and Shadow, and Cicada Magazine. She has also released several novellas. Find her on Twitter at @KaylaBashe.

Ella Helmuth is a 19-year-old from Lexington, Kentucky who currently resides in New Orleans, Louisiana. She loves poetry, American history, local bookstores, photography, and Appalachia. At the moment, she is figuring herself who she is going to be next.

Roxanne Harvey is an avid listener of podcasts, living in Kentucky with her preteen dog. For more ramblings, you can find Roxanne on twitter (@RockySand) and instagram (@roquesand).

Christina Anton's writing has not been published in print and she is currently working on publishing her book titled "No Angelic Façade". Many of her prose works have been featured online; on personal blogs and on Metatron. From just north of Toronto, completed BA in Psychology, and writing has been a serious passion since early teen years and she uses it to understand and make sense of the world and her own perceptions of it.

Adam Lippert is a writer.