

My Aunt Paints Bible Verses

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My Aunt paints Bible verses on river rocks

that I pulled from the Allegheny River. An old boyfriend and I had our feet
by the headboard

breaking in my first apartment.

I kicked a big rock (*1 Corinthians 13*, bordered by
painted marigolds) from the nightstand into the cheap drywall. I covered the hole
with putty and a tube of oil paint
but didn't get the security deposit back.

The landlord kept the five hundred dollars. At the time, I didn't believe
that he would find out that I had burnt the faux leather sofa that came with the place.
On the street in the rain.
I wanted a picture of me sitting on it
while it was on fire.

Seventeen years ago, 3AM, before I left home for good: My Aunt and I were on the roof of a rented
beach house.

She needed help with her religious crafting.

She couldn't puff-paint WWJD on twenty-two Gilligan hats by herself.

I painted a green cat wearing a top hat on mine
when she went back inside through the window for another Marlboro.

I threw it into the sand dunes.
After all, the hats are for Christ.

Most of the women in my family smoke
Marlboros. I was thirteen when I stole

two from my mom's pack from the top of the washing machine.

They were crushed - tobacco spilling through my sweatshirt pocket
and useless by the time I got to the back of the garage.

3AM, this morning: I paint "Lets get out of this bed today" on cardstock
and set it on the nightstand.

Closet Sweet Closet

hot glued felt letters on a throw pillow.

My Aunt, who paints mainly in bible verses, made the pillow for my new room.

I slept in the hallway closet for a year.

I was seven years old and liked the idea of being alone.

Twenty years later I am holding a cocktail

dress over myself - it still on its hanger. "Will this be too much?"

She kisses me

and tells me that I am *always* too much. I pull her
into me and I remember my mother

digging through my closet

looking for my journal. She found

1. I lost my virginity in my first boyfriend's college apartment. *Die Hard 2* playing in the background.
2. The boyfriend rolled my joints for me.
3. I kept them between the pages of my New King James Bible.

"*Love, sweet love.*" Scribbled on a piece of notebook paper
and left on the dining room table. I tell her that I want to live

alone again.

On Being a Teeth Grinder

I kept kissing the other man
until my chin was scratched
red from his lip ring and lazy stubble.

That was a good stopping point.

brux . ism

/ˈbrʌksɪzəm/

noun

the involuntary or habitual grinding of the teeth, typically during sleep.

I ate napkins as a kid.
I ate lollipop sticks
and the edges of spiral notebook paper.

I chewed and chewed until my gums bled.
Until they were half raw - like cutting a new row of teeth.

I can't stop.

grinding my teeth.
My dentist asked me to start wearing a night guard - before there's nothing left to grind
before the roots
of my teeth are exposed. Before my teeth are ruined for good.

I can't stop kissing his stubble.
I can't stop stealing travel sized toiletries from Walmart.
I can't stop skipping my birth control.

My childhood dachshund ate
the stuffing from his toys until was sick. \$400.00 dollars in vet bills sick.
My dad took away his toys.

I was 21 years old and my boyfriend drank
until he was sick
on our bathroom floor. Face in a tipped over mop bucket.
I kept loving him
until I ground my teeth to the roots.