***My Aunt Paints Bible Verses***

three poems by Allyson Leskovic

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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 puffy-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

 my teenage secrets.

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**

/’brəksizəm/

*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.