

Once an Addict

A is for Apple

take a sip, he said,  
it will make everything more beautiful  
so I did, and it did  
I didn't realize  
I would see differently without it  
after my first sip  
I would be banished from any garden with color

The Apple Doesn't Fall Too Far from the Tree



if you really understood  
what it was to be high  
wouldn't you always want to be?

So, let the apple know where it's falling from.

If You Give a Mouse a Cookie

If you give a mouse an apple,  
he'll probably ask for another.  
If you give him another apple,  
he's probably going to find a way to get more.  
When he finds a way to get them,  
it might not always be legal.  
Since it's not always legal,  
he's probably going to end up in jail.  
Because you gave him his first apple,  
he'll probably ask you to bail him out.  
If you bail a mouse out of jail,  
he's probably going to need a ride home too.  
When he gets home, he's going to want another apple.  
He hasn't had any in a while.  
So the mouse will probably ask to borrow your car.  
If you let him borrow your car,  
he's going to ask you for some money too.  
Once he's bought his apples with your car and your money,  
he'll probably eat them on the way home.  
If he eats while driving,  
he'll probably get stopped by a cop.  
If he gets stopped,  
he'll probably get his license taken away.  
If he gets his license taken away,  
he's going to start asking you for rides.  
If you bring a mouse to where he wants to go,  
he'll probably ask you to wait in the car.  
He'll be right back.  
If you ask a mouse any questions,  
he's going to ask you to trust him.  
If you give a mouse some trust,  
he won't want to take advantage of it...

But he probably will.  
If you let a mouse take advantage of your trust,  
he might even ask you for a cookie.  
And once you give a mouse a cookie,  
he will always ask for more.

Will you tell me a bedtime story?

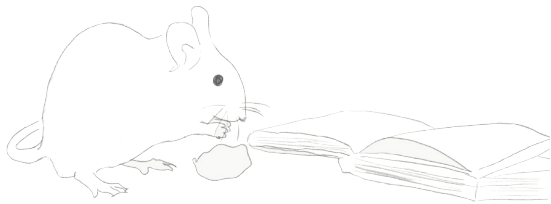
Yes, but it has to be quick; it's late.

How about this one?

Perfect.

The Story of the Drunk in a Bottle  
there once was a drunk in a bottle  
and she drank.

Okay, lights out.

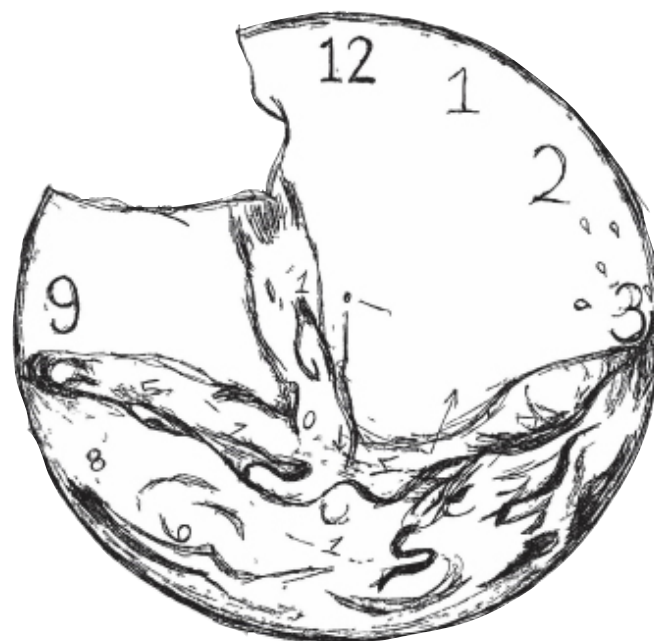


B is for Blackout

what's a conversation  
that is lost?

a small moment of your life  
insignificant at best  
barely a minute  
or two  
three  
that add up  
become an hour  
and then two  
or three  
hours that turn to days  
days that turn into weeks  
it is only this much  
all this time of yours

you claim it is lost  
but let's face it  
without a memory  
it was never yours to begin with



Drowning

Don't you

Remember?

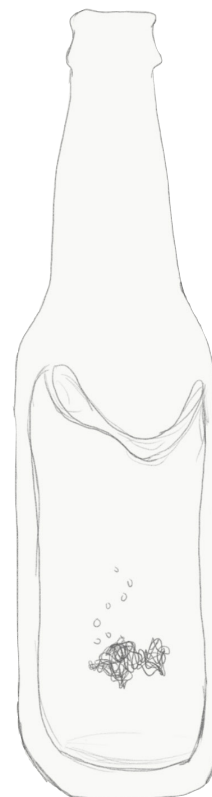
Or were you

Not there?

I don't –

No, I can't ~~stop~~ remember

How to swim.



I'm going to stop, you say  
But they're laughing at you  
They're laughing at you  
You're going to stop? They say  
They hand you a drink  
They're laughing, they're laughing

this  
is  
your  
life  
this is what  
you are good for  
all you will ever  
be the best that  
you will ever have  
you cannot be  
any thing other  
than what you  
have made your  
self into you are  
confined to you  
belong inside  
this bottle



### Castaway

i am stuck on an island  
and lately i have been thinking  
of living my life in a bottle  
writing myself down on paper  
rolling myself up and sticking myself in there  
corking the top and throwing it out to sea  
for someone to find and open

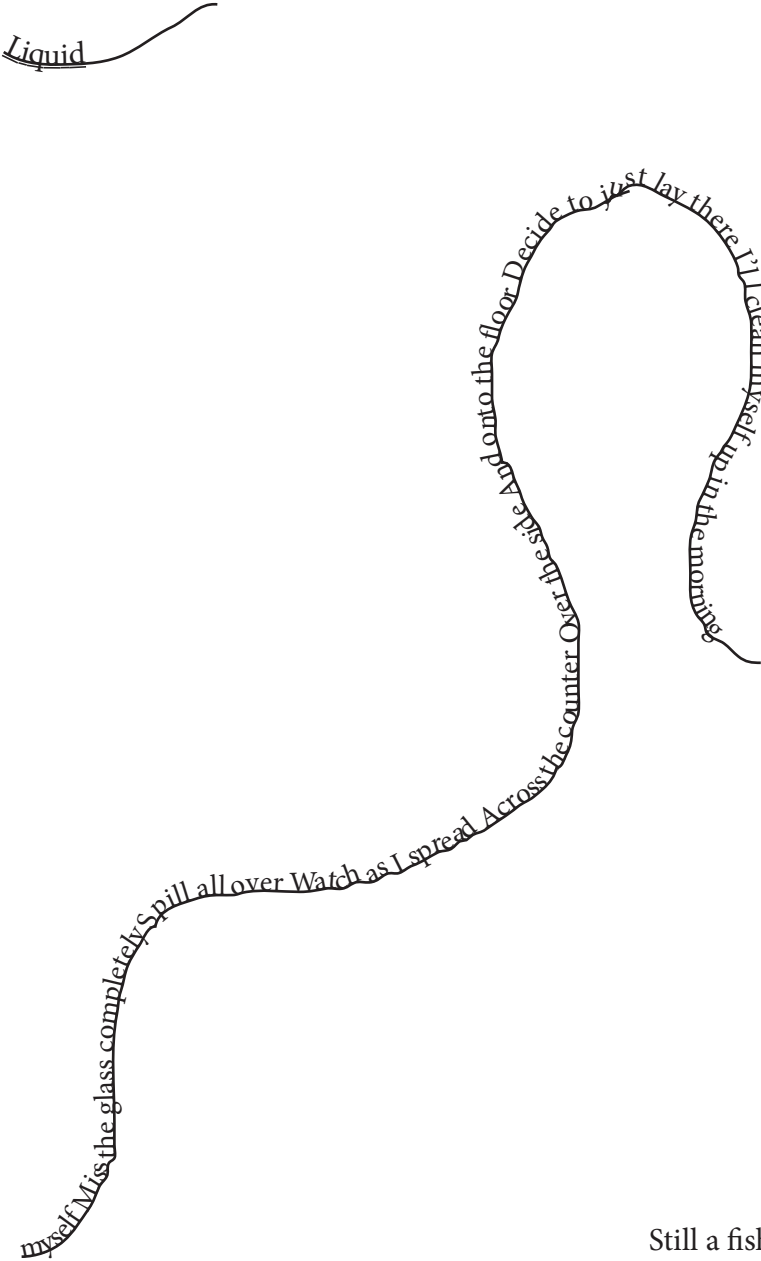
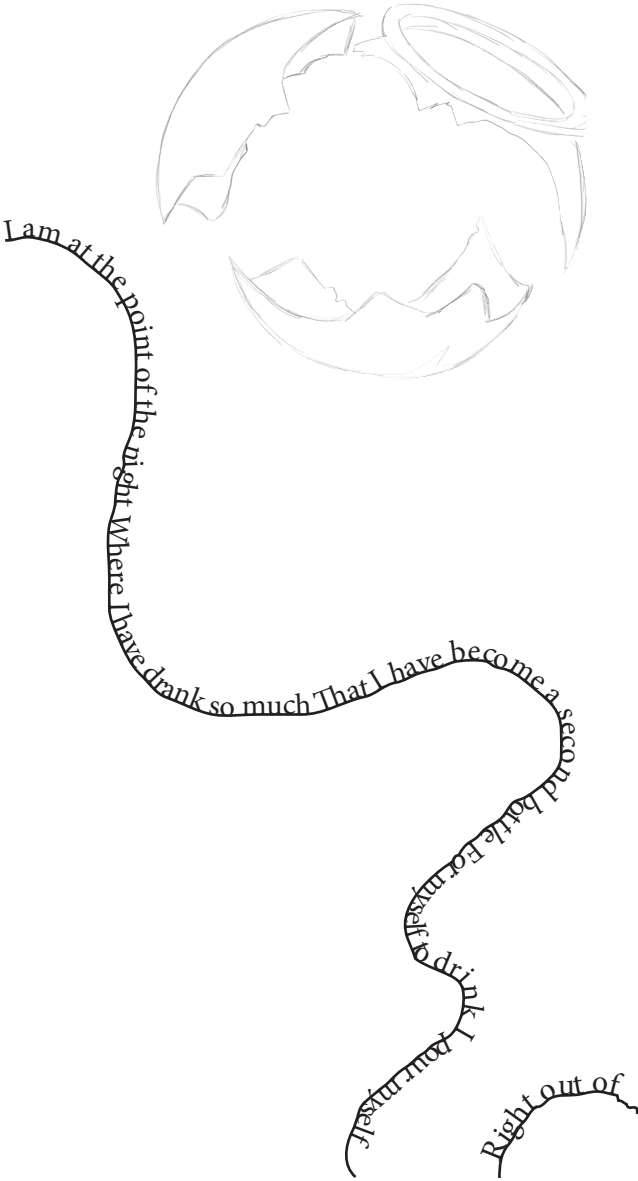
they will hold me in their hands  
unaware of what i once was  
- that i wrote myself down  
asking for help to be sent  
pleading for someone to find me  
without really wanting to be found –  
seeing only what i have become

a washed up piece of paper  
with just a few scratches  
indecipherable to all  
remembered by none  
because i let the bottle drown me  
and i let it pull me under  
so i could no longer be found

i have been living my life in a bottle



Fish Out of Water...  
What's a fish without water?



Drained

reach for the bottle  
grab your life  
pour it down the drain instead

drip drip

drops on your tongue

empty bottle?

open another one

drip drip

what's that sound?

your life in drops

as they hit the ground

drip drip

onto the floor

you always seem to need

so much more

A is also for Ant

find your way to a park  
    crawl up a picnic bench  
        onto a plate  
            from your place  
            you're flung, weightless  
        for only a moment  
inevitably pulled back down to earth  
    straight down  
        to the bottom of a bottle  
    where you land with a soft clink  
and frantically fight  
to scale the brown edges  
    but the walls are high  
        all around it is slippery  
        effortless as it was falling  
it is impossible to get out  
you are trapped  
    helplessly fixed falling down this slope



We sat in the dirt under a tree in the back yard,  
watching a million ants fly past us. Later, we will follow them  
to large crumbs left in the tall grass, but for now you are  
practicing your counting on their slight bodies.

You exclaim that there must be nineteen, probably  
more! The happiness in your smile is blinding. You look up  
at me, proud of your accomplishment, hoping that I am too.  
Twenty is not yet a number you can count to and so it seems  
that nothing could be larger than this. You are at an age  
where you cannot fathom anything beyond us in our back-  
yard. The neighborhood is our world, anything beyond it,  
the universe.





There's something hanging around your head.

Just thoughts. Ignore them.

They look –

It's fine. They're just a little heavy right now.

Okay.

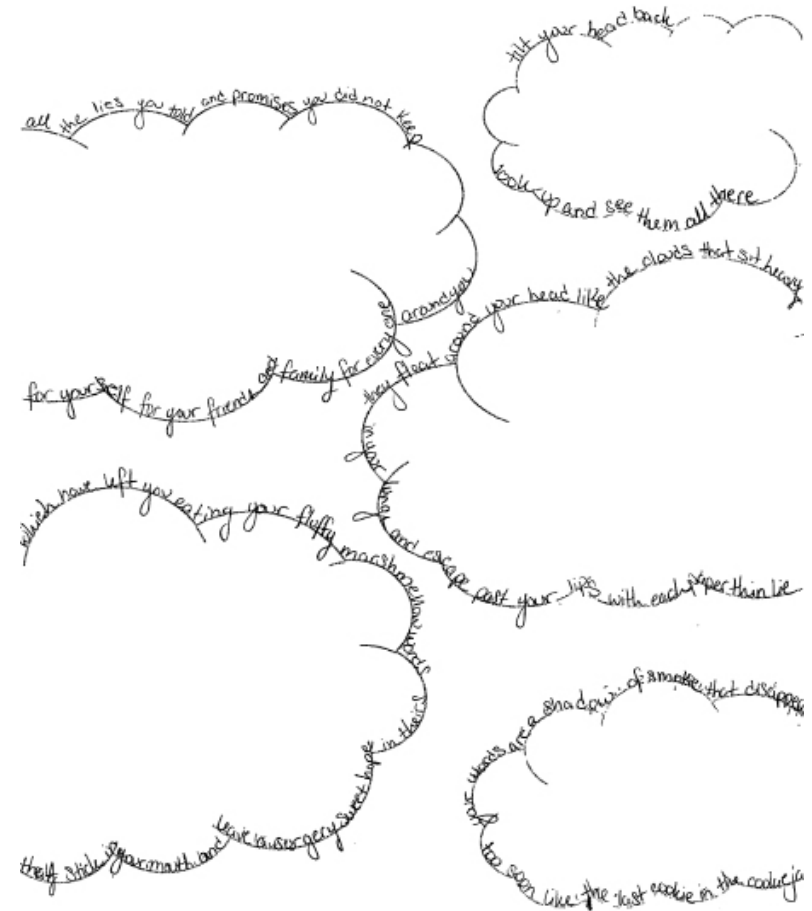
Take this. It should help.

## Talk

open your mouth  
to let something out  
pour something in instead

pull it all in  
never let it back out  
clouds collecting in your chest  
never learned a way to let them out

## Clouds



### C is for Can't

can I have another cookie mom?  
no, she says,  
you've had enough  
this is for later on  
when you learn the next letter  
so that when you ask yourself  
can I have another?  
you will really stop to think  
well  
can I?  
but really, should you?

### Two More, One More

It is time for one last snack before bed and mom calls to us from the kitchen, where we find she has made cookies. There are two on each plate for us. We quickly eat them both. You look up at her with big bright eyes, as you do every night.

"One more?" you ask excitedly, one chubby finger held up to her.

"One more," she agrees and gives us each a third cookie. We smile and eat them no slower than before.

"Okay, time to brush your teeth before bed," she says when we are finished again.

"Two more one-mores!" you exclaim with as much enthusiasm as the last time and as every night. And like every night, mom laughs and shakes her head until you've convinced her by saying it enough times.

I can't stop, you say  
Now they're crying for you  
They're crying over you  
You couldn't stop they say





T is for Toddler

This is your name

This is how you move your limbs

This is how to count

Can you tell me where you live

Can you show me how to move your body

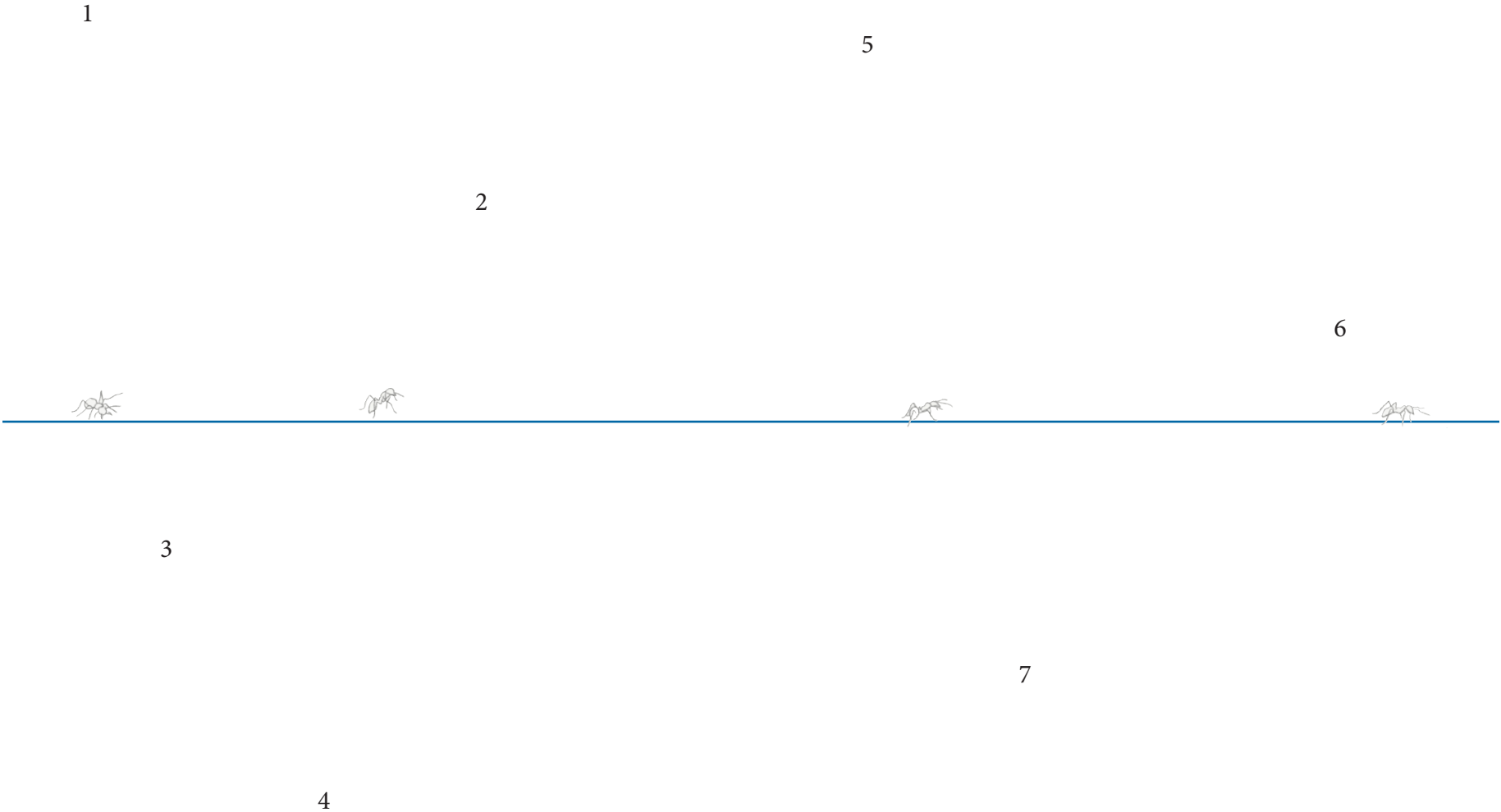
You are a child again, learning all these things for the first time

Until they put you in the ambulance

And you remember you can't afford another overdose like this

Can you count for me?

Show me how you count.



Eight



“Nine one one, what’s your emergency?”

“Please help, he’s blue.”

“What did he take, ma’am?”

“There’s smoke in his lungs, pills in his stomach, powder in his nose and ants in his veins.”

“...ants?”

“Please, hurry; he’s blue.”

### Blue Boy

little blue boy  
you have done it this time  
you have taken a color  
put it deep in your veins  
let it creep hrough your heart  
consume your body and your thoughts  
you see only in blue  
think only of blue  
mind ice, can't stop  
until your face has frosted over  
frozen veins and frozen mind  
little blue boy  
everything is blue  
and now so are you

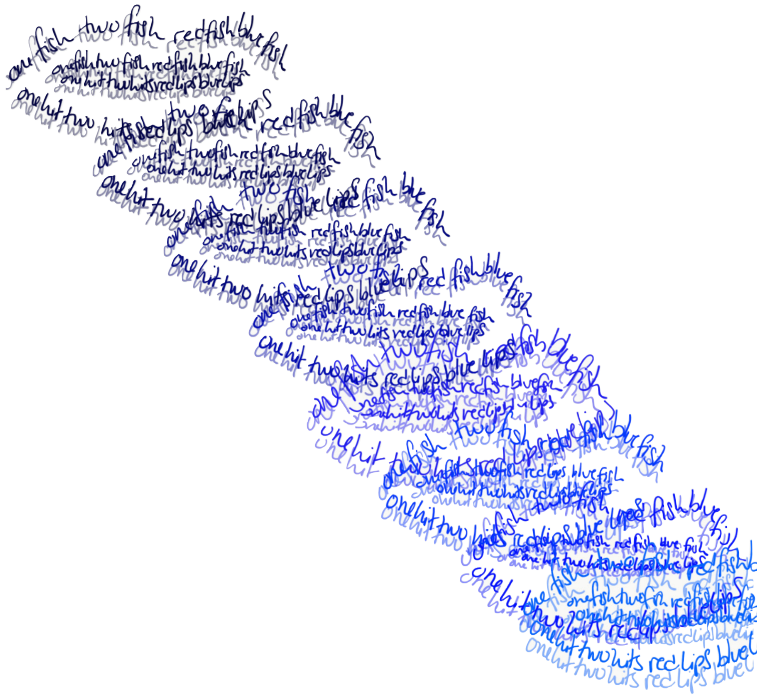
Can we play a game mom?

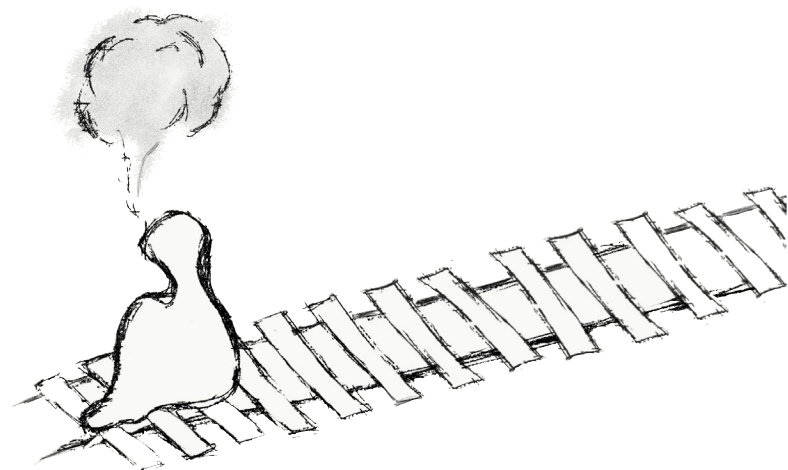
Well, I guess we have to now.



...Is Still A Fish

What's an addict without their drug?  
Still an addict.





### The Little Liver That Couldn't

chug chug chug puff puff puff  
the little liver puffed as she chugged  
she was a happy little liver, for she had such jolly things to  
carry  
she was filled full with good things for boys and girls  
dolls with yellow eyes and blue lips  
dolls with red eyes and chapped lips  
and the funniest little toy clown you ever saw  
she was full of every kind of thing boys or girls could want  
but that was not all, the little liver carried good things to eat  
and drink, too  
fat red cheeked apples for breakfast  
fresh baskets of fish for their dinner  
and big round cookies for after meal treats  
chug chug chug puff puff puff  
the little liver was taking in all these wonderful things for  
years and years  
and for years she puffed along merrily  
how happy these things made her, but oh how they slowed  
her down  
one day all at once the liver came to a stop  
“oh dear,” said the liver, “what’s the matter?”  
she tried to chug and she tried to puff again  
she tried and she tried but she simply could not  
“i cannot, i cannot” she said  
the little liver was so tired and she needed to rest  
there was nothing that she could do  
there was nothing that could be done  
the little liver simply could not  
save herself

round after round after round after round after round after

round and around the tracks we go

thats probably why

there are so many track

marks on your arm

anyways

pass the needle

i'm dying

for another round i mean

After Party

before the party

she can have her cake

and maybe eat it too

(really she shouldn't)

yes, it may be her birthday

but at the party

she can only have the cake

she eats it then too anyway

and then again at the after party

and after the after party

actually

after the after party

she fell asleep

and never woke up

it wasn't ~~her~~ ~~your~~ ~~their~~ his fault

there's no one to blame here

### Anyone But

There was nothing you could do  
They tell each other  
Now they're blaming you  
They're blaming you  
Anyone but themselves

### A Fair Warning

now I'm not blaming you  
and I'm not saying you  
did anything to make me like this  
or that your parents before you  
made you into who  
we both did not want to be  
and I know you did not want this  
for either of us  
again I'm not blaming you  
I'm just wishing you  
had given me  
the tools to deal with  
the knowledge to choose with  
the example and the chance to better myself with  
but then maybe you didn't know  
no I'm not blaming you  
how could I?  
when you were not given  
a fair warning to live with  
and by the time you had figured it out  
it was too late to give me one either



“But then why did she drink?”

“What, sweetie?”

“The drunk.”

“Oh, right...”

Because of Excuses

It puts me in a better mood

I am happier

I am calmer, more at ease

I can be myself

I have more confidence

I can forget about my problems

Why wouldn't I?

Other people do, so why shouldn't I?

What's the big deal anyway?

It's not a problem

I don't have a problem.

Mind your business

I don't need help!

I don't want to stop

And I don't need to stop

Life is short, I'll live it how I want to

And if it's what I want,

I'll die how I want to

There once was a drunk who drank herself to death.  
there once was a drunk  
and when she died  
her friends - drunks alike  
sat around her grave  
and drank to her name  
they cheered to their drunk  
“we don’t drink to your death,  
but to your life!  
it was a life well spent with you our friend.  
at least what we can remember.”

I can’t remember a lot of things,  
but you remember even less.  
If you could remember one thing,  
Would you remember the last time we were sober?  
It was fall.  
We walked home on bright yellow-orange and beautiful red  
leaves.  
They were golden without any help.  
It was a good time without anything else.

But you probably wouldn't  
drink to forget  
it's the reason you drink  
so you can only think  
about why you're drinking  
but that's okay  
more will do the trick

Group Chats  
“sit down” they say  
“there's no easy way to say this-“  
You don't remember what happens next