

meta mundanity  
a poetry collection

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@shhhitsfine

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# introduction

During quarantine, I became obsessive with cleaning out my room and in turn, became obsessed with de-cluttering my closet. At the time I was working at a used bookstore, and constantly worked around large quantities of *stuff*. After spending a week straight in my room, I became a lot more aware of the amount of stuff I owned.

Some of it was easy to get rid of, old Halloween costumes, books I was never going to read, things like that. I had completely forgotten about their existence until I found them again in that closet. If I forgot about them that easily, then I think I would be fine without them. However, other things were insanely difficult to get rid of.

On the top shelf in a vans shoebox were a bunch of t-shirts from middle school. There were shirts from clubs, musicals, and a class of 2016 t-shirt. They didn't fit anymore, and even if they did, I certainly wouldn't want to wear them. Although I was able to get rid of some of them, I couldn't get rid of my old gym shirt. It was covered in colorful sharpie signatures from my classmates. On one of the last days of gym, we all signed each other's shirts like it was a yearbook page.

I had attended school with the same fifty people since kindergarten. After middle school, we all split up to go to different high schools. It was weird to suddenly be separated from all these people who you weren't friends with, but in some regard, close to. You knew people's hobbies, and the neighborhood they lived in, and sometimes you were invited to the occasional birthday party. And then suddenly everyone started growing up on their own.

That shirt is still in the back of my closet, somewhere and I don't think I'll ever get rid of it. Yes, there's class photos and yearbook pictures, but the shirt was proof of something different. Something that is intangible and also doesn't exist anymore. And its weird that an object can do that! Five years after that shirt was signed, I still felt an appreciation for all my old classmates.

It's similar to Marie Kondo's schtick about things 'sparking joy'. Joy brings appreciation, and with appreciation for the little things, you can bring appreciation to the life you live. That's not to say to always be positive about everything, it's important to recognize the problems and suffering you encounter in life.

But once you find the perfect ratio of sugar and cream, every morning coffee tastes delicious. When you have a balcony that faces north, you can sit outside and enjoy the warm weather without burning up. Your days suck a little less. Life is mundane and boring. And the societal expectations for how we live our life are also mundane and boring. But even still, sometimes the mundane can be more complex and beautiful than we expected.

## wallets

A physical body isn't enough. An existence is verified through plastic personhood, strips of green road, and flimsy proofs of happenings.

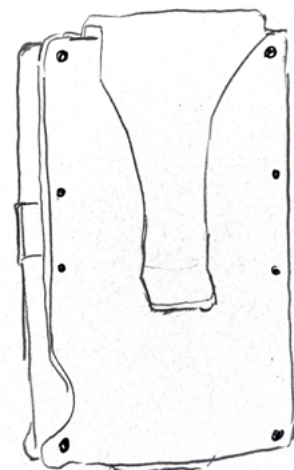
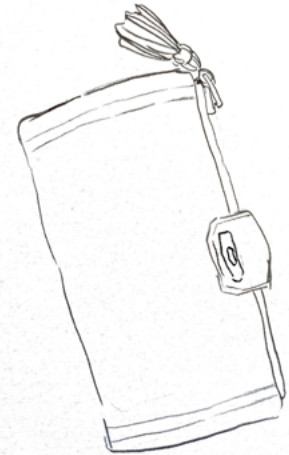
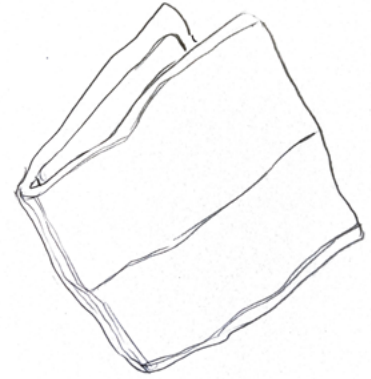
For example, a simple brown leather wallet.

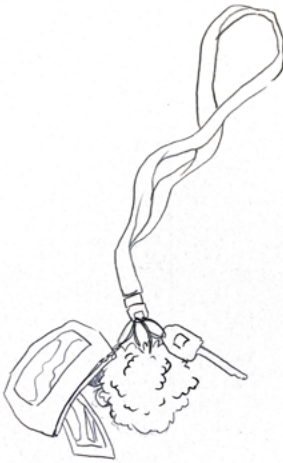
It will be used until the spine collapses beneath the weight of credit cards and bank receipts of college fund deposits and family photos. Yet when it's finally buried, there are hundreds of offerings, volunteering as replacements.

Some people prefer more space and a bit more personality.

Clutch wallets are versatile with inoffensive neutrals and tasteful, yet impersonal zipper tassels. Their secrets are tucked behind the zipper, the coins are neatly hibernating in their slim cave. Each bill is an attentive soldier, its uniform crisp, waiting in line for manicured nails to send him overseas.

A more extreme version is the metal accordion. It is a condo wall that will never be personalized, but holds simple cards, maybe bank cards with their preapproved designs, or memberships to the city soccer team.





It's heavy in the pocket, unlike the keychain wallet of a sixteen-year-old.

It's not so much a wallet as it is an extension of the car keys; a metal rod in the windchime. Maybe it's an old coin purse from middle school, the only thing that hooks onto a lanyard. The walls fold into crushed up bills, nickel pebbles, and a glossy proof of friends.

It will never compare to the gaudiness of a six-year old's wallet.



It's an archive of birthday gift cards and holiday gift cards. Or maybe they have a bird's nest coin purse, full of parking lot pennies and other shiny finds.

Yet with all these options, some people disregard wallets all together.

Wads of cash in a rubber band and change at the bottom of a cargo pants pocket. All they need is tucked away into a cocoon of bills. Their pockets are portals, coins traveling between pairs of pants, so they always have spare change to drop into a tip jar.

The layers of a person tucked away in the folds of a wallet.



# trials and tribulations of cooking for one

*Sam's Choice  
Chicken Bone  
Broth*

**Calories: 30**

**Ingredients:** Left behind by prior roommate, don't know what the heck to use it for.

*Swanson Chicken  
Broth 33% Less  
Sodium*

**Calories: 15**

**Ingredients:** I forgot how I got this and I will continue to forget about its existence.

*Dr. Pepper*

**Calories: 90**

**Ingredients:** A six-pack of Dr. Pepper for Elizabeth who drinks it six times a day.

*Algood Peanut  
Butter*

**Calories: 180**

**Ingredients:** A backup if I run out of JIF.

*Betty Crocker  
Supreme Original  
Brownie Mix*

**Calories: 160 per**

**1/16<sup>th</sup> mix**

**Ingredients:**

Making brownies is a careful game of how I can perfectly use up a half dozen eggs.

*Great Value Fudge  
Brownie Mix*

**Calories: 170**

**Ingredients:** Not as good as Betty Crocker but a viable substitute.

*Good & Gather  
Honey Dry Roasted  
Peanuts*

**Calories: 190**

**Ingredients:** If I don't have time to make lunch I throw these in my bag and snack on them with charcoal dusted fingers.

*Market Pantry  
Light Organic  
Syrup*

**Calories: 50**

**Ingredients:**

Always used for dinner time, never used during breakfast hours.

*Campbell's Chunky  
Sirloin Steak Soup*

**Calories: 120**

**Ingredients:** The chicken dumpling one was so revolting that I hide this can in the back of the cabinet.

*Good and Gather  
Penne Rigate*

**Calories: 200**

**Ingredients:**

Bought with three other boxes of Penne and then I got sick of it a week later.

*Pasta Roni  
Fettuccine Alfredo*

**Calories: 200**

**Ingredients:**

Tastes fine unless you accidentally make it with sweetened vanilla almond milk then it becomes disgusting.

*Betty Crocker  
Suddenly Pasta*

**Calories: 180**

**Ingredients:**

Yes you use half a cup of mayo no you can't taste it.

*Market Pantry  
Macaroni and  
Cheese Dinner*

**Calories: 250**

**Ingredients:** You can't have a young adult pantry without mac n cheese.

*Barilla Penne*

**Calories: 200**

**Ingredients:**

I forgot I had opened the other box of penne and so now I have two half eaten boxes of penne pasta.

*Campbell's Slow  
Kettle Style  
Tomato & Sweet  
Basil Bisque*

**Calories: 280**

**Ingredients:**

Campbell's was scary after the chicken dumpling incident but the slow kettle soups are actually quite tasty.

*Libby's Cream Style  
Sweet Corn*

**Calories: 70**

**Ingredients:**

I forgot how creamed corn tasted and it was a lot nastier than I remembered.

*Sliced White  
Potatoes Michigan  
Made* **Calories: 80**

**Ingredients:**

Canned potatoes  
are a thing?!  
What?!

*Del Monte Sliced  
Peaches*

**Calories: 70**

**Ingredients:** Oh  
sweet, canned  
peach in delicious  
nectar, you have  
all the comfort of a  
mother's hug on a  
lonely day.

*Top Ramen Beef  
Flavor 6 Pack*

**Calories: 190**

**Ingredients:** Easy  
peasy comfort  
food,

*Great Value Long  
Grain White Rice*

**Calories: 160**

**Ingredients:** Rice  
tastes a thousand  
times better  
cooked in a rice  
cooker compared  
to cooked in a pot.  
It's also a lot  
harder to burn.

*Chicken of the Sea  
Pink Salmon*

**Calories: 70**

**Ingredients:** If  
Walmart is all out  
of canned salmon,  
salmon in a pouch  
is fine.

*JIF Peanut Butter*

**Calories: 190**

**Ingredients:** JIF  
will continue to be  
in my pantry there  
until I die, or they  
do something  
problematic.



# online contacts

## Amelia | 20F Maryland

Amelia has three loves in her life, Mahdy, animal crossing, and cats.

*Added: 2016*

## Comuna | 19M Brazil

Including 'kkk' in a text is the Portuguese equivalent of 'lmao' or 'lol', not a reference to the Klu Klux Klan.

*Added: 2021 / Archived: 2021*

## Danny | 21M Georgia

When you can't go to art school, the next best thing is knowing someone who DOES go to art school and to compare your experiences.

*Added: 2021*

## Emma | 22F Michigan (?)

She works on a horse farm in Michigan, she's from Virginia, and her driver's license is from South Carolina. She worked over the summer at a state park and came back with a stick and poke tattoo and a nicotine addiction.

*Added: 2022*

## Fer | 18F Chile

Her last name is Lechuga (Spanish for lettuce).

*Added: 2016 / Archived: 2017*

Jack | 21M Oklahoma

Jack and Sydney have been together since March of 2019. He has eight siblings, his dad is a vet, their family has a crematorium (for animals) and last year he made something thousand dollars selling cows.

*Added: 2019*

James | ~~21~~20M Australia

When James was young his mother chased him around the house with a knife, and he had to lock himself in the bathroom. At the end of our friendship, he confessed to being a pathological liar.

*Added: 2018 | Archived: 2021*

Mahdy | 20M Maryland

Mahdy is Amelia's boyfriend and gets her a dozen Krispy Kreme donuts every year for their anniversary. He's worked at Amazon, been a seller for vacuum cleaners, and a bunch of other jobs that I don't know about, or don't remember.

*Added: 2019*

Nash | 18NB Puerto Rico

Despite Spanish being their first language, they're better at English than I am. They have corrected me multiple times on misspelled words, and their contact is now 'Merriam Webster Dictionary' in my phone.

*Added: 2019*

Sydney | 20F Texas

It's twenty minutes to Josephine, Texas (sister, niece and nephew), thirty minutes to Rockwall, Texas (Target), one hour to Durant, Oklahoma (Jack) and one hour to the Dallas Fort-Worth airport (Rachel).

*Added: 2016*

Tatum | 20F Montana

Last week she was out shopping in downtown Livingston, a town of seven thousand, and there was a man walking a young buckwheat horse named Hazel.

*Added: 2018*

Zozo | 19F Netherlands

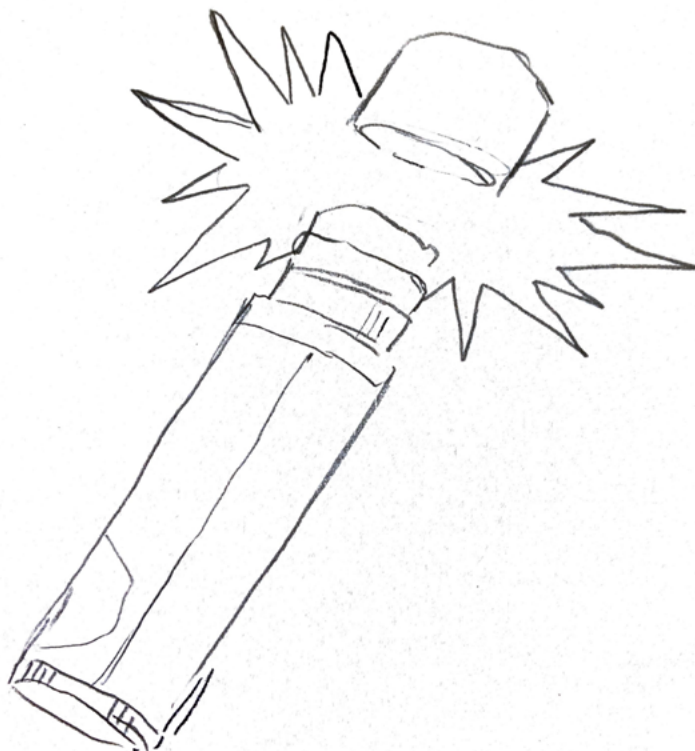
Ona zna polski; she knows english; sie kann Deutsch; 她懂普通话. She studies language in Hague, Netherlands. Did you know the housing is hard to find? Universities don't provide adequate housing and most students couch hop.

*Added: 2021*

Name | Age Gender Location

Edit Notes

+Add Friend



## chapstick

when the winter air is cruel, do you know which Chapstick you buy? Are you loyal to a flavor or do you grab something random? maybe the Chapstick you've used for years was found melted in your backpack and now you have to choose

everyone starts with classic Chapstick.

a base, a start. it's a white wall, waiting between candy and tabloids, or a spare from your mother's purse

but teen girls aren't plain, they are

doctor pepper

coca-cola

sprite

orange fanta

hi-c

root beer.

recognizable, excitable

shiny brightly colored tubes, effervescently smooth.

soda is childish but 'baby lips' is grown up. It's Maybelline, basically makeup. it's what everyone else uses. there's even tinted Chapstick in rosy reds and first date pinks. gentle, subtle

and then lip gloss and lipstick, leaving rosy red marks and anniversary pinks.

medicated Chapstick– carmex, blistex, fuck your ex

it's tv on your face. the empty radio stations between the pop station playing this season's heartbreak and this season's love anthem.

and during class all the girls smear it on their lips every ten, fifteen, twenty-five minutes because if you don't your lips will burn from disuse

but

there's all natural, organic, eco-friendly. soft and gentle flavors, tasty and trendy. honey-colored bodies and jewel color heads. they snap quietly, swipe gently. you are tuned back in.

and when you wear through the  
pomegranate

pink grapefruit

cucumber mint

mango

coconut

and then

finally at last

vanilla. a base. an eggshell wall that you pick out yourself. As you grab it from your purse, it blankets your lips as gently as spring's melting snow.

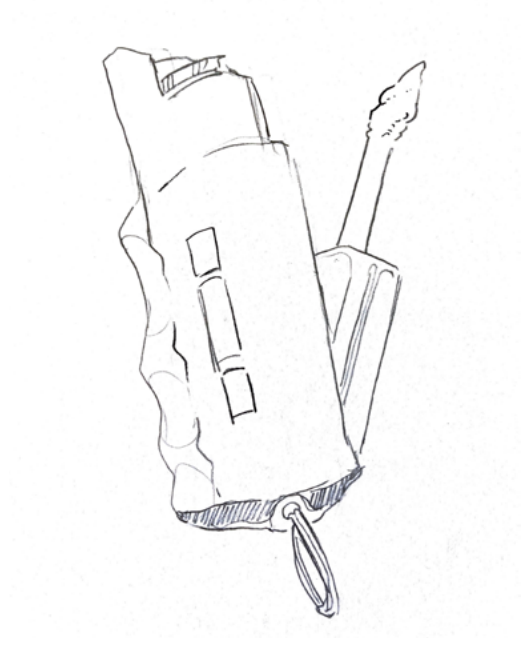
# girlhood

Girlhood is green grass stains on pretty pink dresses.  
 Girlhood is let boys be boys but let girls be seen and not heard.  
 Girlhood is also, somehow,  
 Malala Yousafzai &  
 Sally Ride &  
 Nancy Drew.

Girlhood is finger painting your makeup, with your teddy bear out on your bed.  
 Girlhood is shorts and summer sandals shoved in the dresser, dress up dolls out on the carpet.  
 Girlhood is now the Backstreet Boys and Brad Pitt and the fastest boy in P.E.  
 Girlhood is eight different girls each owning eight ounces of Japanese Cherry Blossom from Bath and Body Works.

Girlhood is shiny legs and oversized shirts at school pool parties.  
 Girlhood is when the length of your hair is the measure of femininity.  
 Girlhood is shame in you, in your voice, in your body, in the tampon you slip up your sleeve  
 when you slip out of class.  
 Girlhood is being forced to hug a ~~family friend, parent's coworker, a distant relative—~~  
 a man you don't know  
 and he holds on for too l o n g and his smiles stretches too w i d e and his arms are too l o n  
 g and a smile that lasts too l o n g  
 let go  
 let go  
 let go.

Girlhood is when boys stop being boys and instead become the other.



Girlhood is neon pink pepper spray.

Girlhood is the guardians angels you text when you get home safe.

Girlhood is watching the girl you hate at a party, wary of the guy whose hand wanders too close to her drink.

Girlhood is the borrowed bobby pins, the gifted hair ties, the tampons freely given when they cost seven dollars a box.

Girlhood is the fleeting friendships formed in the bathroom.

Girlhood is not only

Malala Yousafzai &

Sally Ride &

Nancy Drew,

but also

your friends

your mother

your sisters

your aunts

your grandmothers &

your ancestors too.

Girlhood is greeting each other with compliments and kissing each other goodbye.

# the circle k five minutes away

When I was seventeen,  
I got a job at a place  
that had previously been  
a gas station.

*(You could tell by the Tetris cars in the parking lot  
and the jigsaw of tile and laminate floor).*

They had built a second gas station down the way,  
the roundtrip taking ten minutes out  
of my thirty-minute unpaid break.

*(Which by the way they had to give me whenever I worked more than four hours  
because I was under the age of eighteen,  
and when I turned eighteen, they started scheduling me for four- and half-hour shifts,  
no breaks).*

The Circle K was just past a bus stop, a law firm, and  
an office building.

*(I don't remember what was in the office building, as I was  
too busy skipping over the gate of grass between it  
and the Circle K)*

I would usually get  
swiss rolls or  
cosmic brownies or  
chocolate stuffed croissants.

*(And when the weather was cool I would buy one of those iced coffees to celebrate  
since walking five minutes in the summer sun made me very sweaty  
and I only had two,  
or was it three,  
work shirts)*

I remember that we had a break room,  
but did it have a neon green or neon yellow wall?  
Did Zoe quit before or after Chloe quit?  
*(she might've quit before, she was only  
a year younger than I was)*

Regardless, I remember that Circle K,  
that processed foods paradise.





# margaret

My mother's mother sent me an envelope five days ago.

It was forwarded from my mother's house,  
because my mother's mother doesn't know  
there's a spare room in my childhood home.  
A hole in my parents heart that phone calls can't fill.

Her handwriting is forgotten blue veins on top of corpse flesh.

Four days from my twentieth birthday,  
and the envelope darts around my room.  
At night, I cage it into my nightstand drawer,  
and hope its enough to muffle the sound.

Three days till, and it is an albatross.

Three generations of women all have the same middle name,  
but my sister's blood runs red, with star shaped cells.  
We become more American with every passing generation.

Three months ago, I was eating cereal  
When my dad called, saying nana had passed away.  
My mother called soon after to check if I was ok,

My nana left behind children's murals, an unfinished canvas,  
two children and five grandchildren, all loved.  
My dad left his eulogy with 'I love you mom'.

It's weird to say I don't have grandparents anymore.

It is two days and I wake up with the envelope around my neck,  
I tuck it into my shirt, where it pants against my ribcage.

It digests my schedule, my hobbies, my time,  
it's stomach seemingly fuller, but my mouth is dry.

I don't remember much about my mother's mother,  
and I don't know much about my mother's mother,

Except the butterflies, pinned and framed in her kitchen.  
I could see their corpses through the glass cookie jar.

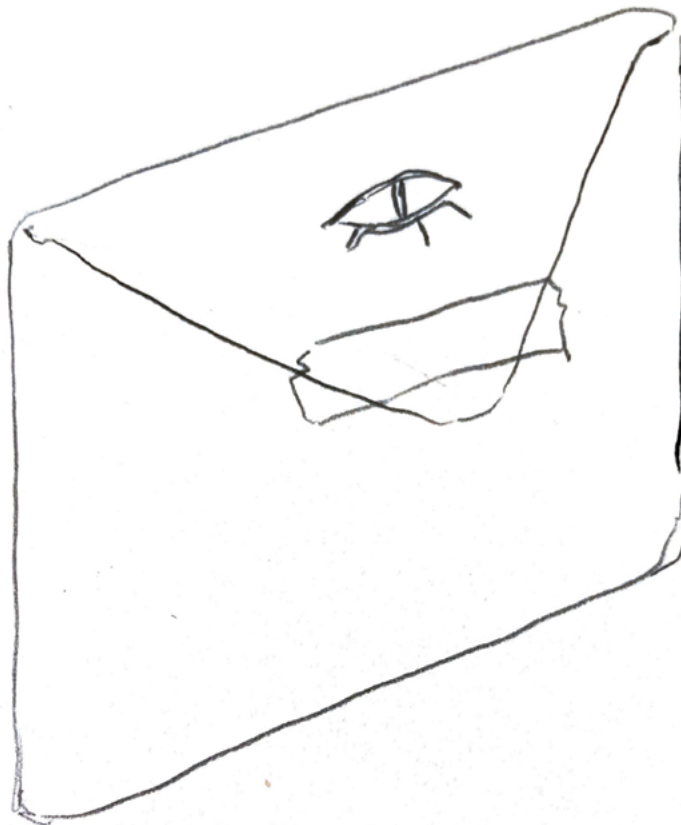
Except her tongue was a thick Irish whip,  
and my mother still feels the sting of the scars.

I could open it sooner, but I wait one more day.

When it is finally my twentieth birthday, I gently peel off the tape.  
I wished I opened it sooner just so I could get it over with.  
The store-bought card is a bitter wasp sting.

Signed 'love grandma xoxo'  
accompanied by a twenty-dollar bill.  
The price of claiming a grandchild.]

I wish she signed it Margaret.



# livingston

The observing sky, a diluted blue  
a temperature that simply holds you.

Neither angry nor bitter, it simply exists,  
occasionally delivering a cool breeze's kiss.

Where bikes are parked without locks  
on the sidewalks of all the downtown blocks.

A movie theatre sign with stripes of colors,  
a date night spot for newly paired lovers.

The breeze on our backs as if it could  
push us all the way to the neighborhood.

White picket fences, power lines,  
restless lawnmowers and backyard windchimes.

Mismatched wooden kitchen cabinets.  
A silver fridge with artsy magnets

store our bowtie pasta harvest,  
Saran wrapped plates, clean and honest.

A slice of cake, a second sliver,  
before rendezvousing with the river.

As downtown faded into suburbia,  
the land morphs into mystical arcadia.

A pink amphitheater accommodates the trees,  
a memory of a parade across its frieze.  
A playground for the gentle breeze.

Where children run freely, feet bare,  
over sugar-spun grass and fairy hair.  
Existing in the world without a care.

Down crunchy forgotten gravel paths  
Marked by nature signs and graffiti tags.

Feel the river's changing current  
the grooves of its undulating torrent.

Ridges that grow gentle near the bank,  
where birds gather to give thanks.

Cross the bridge from where you came  
leaving a world that stays unchanged.

and when you board the flight back  
over bruised molars, peaks snowcapped.



you wonder if  
it ever really  
existed at all.

# laundry rooms

## 1. 1921 Nanticoke

You always did laundry in the afternoon when the eyes of the garage door were bright, before the neighbors started to party. The washer and dryer stood guard over Mom's SUV. Make sure not to knock over the recycling bin by the door. If any of your secondhand uniforms fall on the floor just shake off the dirt.

If you waited, there was only a bare lightbulb a little too far away from the door with a chain that was just a little too short. Make sure the roaches don't run over your feet, and don't step on any of their fallen comrades.

## 3. Dorm #231

Free laundry is now three hours away. Bring your quarters.

It was 2.75 for a load, every other Sunday. Each trip requires you to put on a comfy pair of shoes. Put your bedsheets on top so people won't see your dirty underwear. The light is always on, even if it's one, seven, or eleven pm. The dryers rumble with people's belongings, but there's never a soul in sight.

## 2. 4533 Highgrove

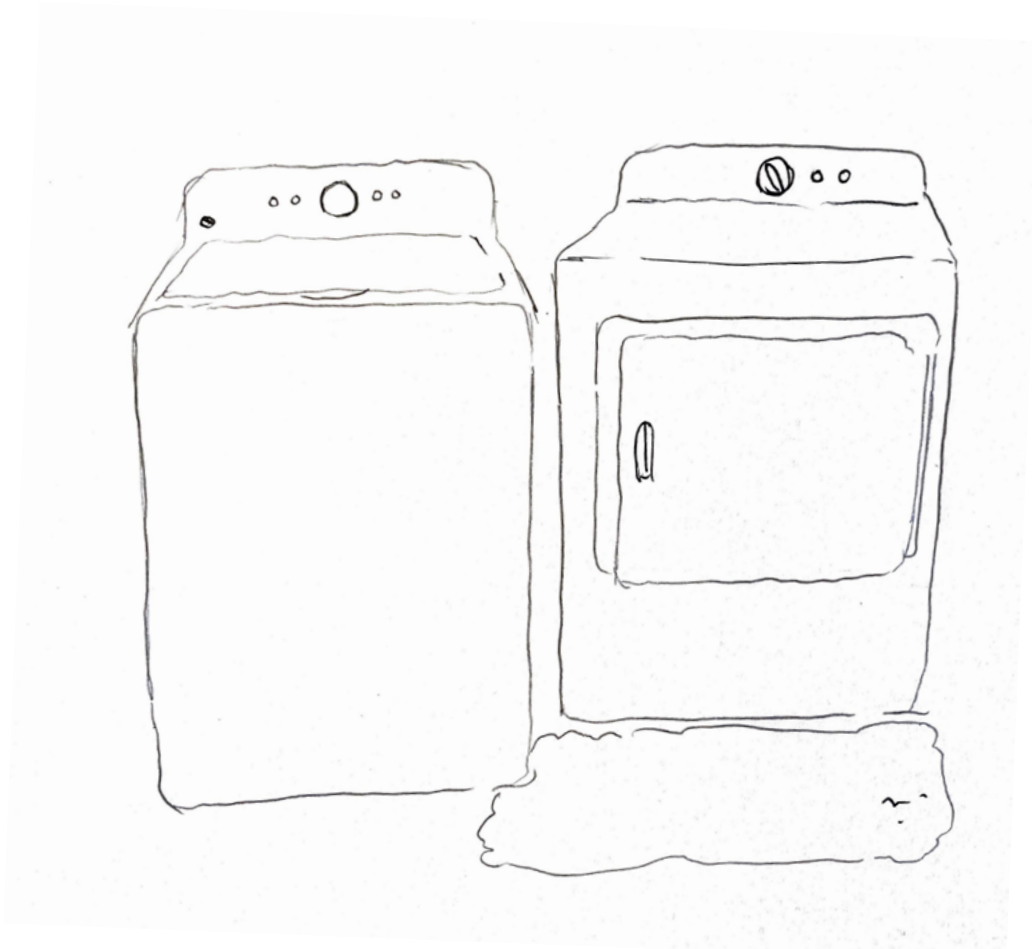
In our new house, our washer and dryer were inside a little nook inside one of the bathrooms. It had a light fixture that snaked across the ceiling unusually with a horizontal light switch. Its three eyes provided a decent ambience in the middle of the night.

The previous owners kept it behind a second shower curtain, but we didn't. No more dirty feet in dad's oversized shoes, or mom's heels that she left by the door, just wear your mismatched socks.

## 4. Apt #204

My parents were surprised when they learned that the small room by the front door was the laundry room.

It has a wire rack, a wire shelf and a washer that can't take powdered detergent. The doorknob sometimes gets stuck, make sure to jiggle it or else it won't close. It used to smell faintly of cat food, until my roommate's cat burgled the bag one too many times and now it just smells like laundry. We hang our delicates above the dryer, a marker that this is ours.



I would like to thank my dad for taking me shopping when he got a new, brown leather wallet, my mom for always restocking my pantry whenever she visits, Sydney, Jack, Amelia, Mahdy, and Nash for always making me laugh in the discord group chat, Elizabeth for standing up for me when a mutual male friend was being creepy, the Circle K on Thomasville Rd. for always having delicious snacks, Tatum for inviting me to visit her in Livingston, and all the other people who were inspiration for this collection of work.

I would also like to thank Professor White for his encouraging feedback, and inspiring me to try my best at something I had never done before.