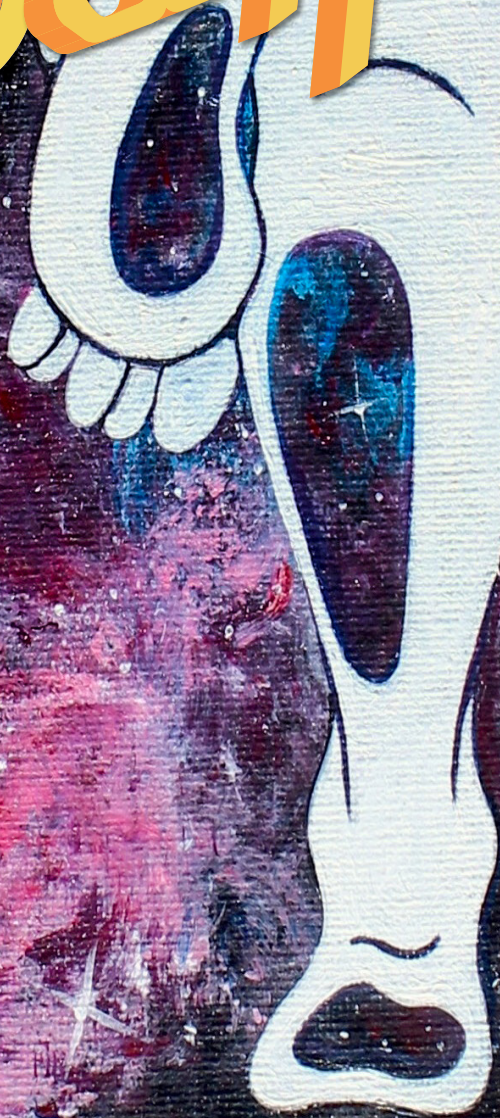


AUGUST 2015

# Cahms



## **About Us**

GAMS is a feminist, LGBTQ+ positive, trans-inclusive, mildly radical, pseudo-intellectual literary zine based at Appalachian State University. We publish an issue every two months, both as a hard copy to be distributed around our campus and as a .pdf file which is available on our website, [gamszine.weebly.com](http://gamszine.weebly.com). Each issue includes a mixture of short stories, poetry, essays, comics, and visual art. Donations and submissions are both welcome - see the back page or our website for details.

And happy reading!

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# Years Not Miles

by J.M. Paris

seven sisters with veils of silken atmospheres  
woven of many strange threads  
in seven silver needles poised at the neck  
deliverance via injection in a large quiet room

you're strapped in for the long ride  
rode a rising human tide of broken backs  
you cashed in, swung so wide  
slingshot round the sun but no one can take it back

you'll see stranger skies before you're done  
you and our seven sisters  
you'll mark the leagues in years not miles  
you'll sleep so very long

seven sisters singing life and death songs  
empty and full of every human thing  
you'll see the lights blinking on and on and on and off  
but you won't hear a thing

seven sisters shine brightly like little brass suns  
glass diamonds for their eyes  
you've plucked them out to peer through the lenses  
you've worn them in little gold frames

you'll see with stranger eyes before you're done  
but not from our seven sisters  
you've marked the leagues in years not miles  
you've slept so very long

# Amnesia

by Zoe Kaplan

I don't remember falling, but I can imagine it. I don't remember how the loose rock shifted under my feet, how I slipped backwards until I couldn't recover my balance. I don't remember the last moment that my toes felt for the edge of the bridge and the wind snatched me away. I don't remember the rush of the air in my ears or the way the back of my dress blew up between my legs. I don't remember my hair tangling in front of me or my arms trailing behind me like limp comets. I don't remember the roar as I hit the river or the all-encompassing cold of the water. I don't remember the sunlight from below the surface, flickering like white butterflies.

I don't remember my head striking the rock.

But I remember the beep of the machines when I jolted back to consciousness. I remember the worried, unfamiliar faces of my parents hovering over me. I remember asking what was going on and getting only non-answers. "You fell," "We're here," "You're going to be okay." I remember the look of betrayal on my mother's face when I asked her who she was. I remember how my father cried when they told us my amnesia might be permanent. I remember how he stayed with me through the night anyway. I remember how he held my hand when the pain meds wore off and I could feel both my broken ribs. I remember my mother bringing me my old favorite foods and beaming, tear-choked, when I ate them like I loved them. I remember walking with help, then with crutches, on my own. I remember going home in a car I had never seen, but whose smell I would recognize anywhere. I remember having to ask where my bedroom was. I remember being half-asleep, in the dark, and finding it again on the first try.

# Bobby

by Jason Huber

To those of us that are oblivious, these things seem like  
plain old, same old, meant to hold your hair things.  
They're in the couch and carpet  
underfoot.  
We skimmed on the warranty for our vacuum.  
Mistakes were made.

But that pin traveled from North Carolina,  
twenty-two hours on the interstate, breaking for caffeine and Cheez-its.

That one sat through hours of Netflix because  
"I grew up watching this. You'll love it. I swear"

Another one was there when I came home  
after a knock down,  
drag out with a friend I tried to care about.

That pin got drunk with me on my birthday  
because we knew we were going to be on TV, playing in a rock and roll band  
and we couldn't understand why the mics weren't on half of the time.

So there's plain old, same old, meant to hold your hair things  
and the little things I don't mind.

# Headlights

## Chapter 1: Axe

by Kathryn Johnson

*Note: This is the first installment of a continuing series.*

*Chapter 2 will be published in October, 2015.*

“Gem! Look, we just want you to dress a little less, I don’t know, wear less black or something?” Dad said. He ran his hand through his beard like he always did when he was frustrated. Gem folded her arms.

“Dad, everything I own is black.”

“That’s not my fault, is it?”

Gem scowled and rolled her eyes.

“I’m just saying it might be easier for you tomorrow. People out here are a lot less accepting than they were at your old school.”

“Yeah, I still don’t understand why we moved here,” Gem said. “Literally everything is worse. We’re in the middle of fucking nowhere and—“

“Watch your language.”

“Oh my God, I just want to go home!” Gem threw her hands in the air and stormed out of the living room into the hallway. Everything smelled like mothballs. The carpet felt like sandpaper under her feet. She flopped down on the floor and started pulling on her boots.

“Where are you going?”

“I’m just going for a walk.” Gem pulled the laces tight and stood up.

“Gem, I’m—take a flashlight or something, alright? And don’t go too far from the house.”

“Fine, whatever.” Gem grabbed the flashlight from the shelf next to the door, and stepped out onto the porch. The cicadas screamed. A soft wind stirred the branches overhead, wood squealing together. Gem groaned. So much for the woods being quiet.

She stepped off the porch and turned on the flashlight. It’s yellow light turned the leaves littering the gravel driveway gold. Shadows flickered everywhere. She wrapped her free hand around her waist and hunched her shoulders. The trees loomed overhead, dark against a night blue sky. She kept walking.

She turned down a trail a few hundred feet down the driveway. The sound of crunching gravel went quiet. The cicadas dropped to a hum and then

snapped into silence. Gem's flashlight flickered and went out. Blinking in the dark, she held her breath. There was something moving out there. A dark shape in her swimming vision, still imprinted with the flashlight's beam. She scrambled off the trail and hid behind a tree—twice the width of her shoulders.

The creature dragged something up onto the trail and crouched over it. It sucked in and breathed out like a bellows. The trees shifted in a moaning wind. The creature's eyes gleamed in the light of a sliver moon. Blood dripped black from its lips, fell on the leaf litter with a sound soft as a baby's touch.

She pressed herself against the tree. Bark scraped her skin. The creature turned. A twig snapped over its shoulder, filling the air with the smell of birch beer. Gem closed her eyes. Her lungs burned. Fog stung her mind. Tears ran down her cheeks and she hated them.

Gem let out her breath.

The creature's head snapped around. Its lips rolled back. It licked away blood, tongue slipping over teeth. Gem swore it saw her eyes in the moonlight. But it was too interested in its kill. It turned away from her, and dropped back onto its knees. It cupped the boy's head in its hands, turning it like a lover would. It sank its teeth back into the boy's neck. His eyes opened and his lips parted, but he didn't speak. His chest rose and fell only a little. His face almost the color of the moon overhead.

Gem ran. She stretched out her arms, feeling her way through the trees. The creature, heavy with blood, scrambled after her. Her boot caught on something. Branches lashed across her face. The creature laughed, too human. Its feet fell silent on the leaf litter. Gem scrambled to her feet. Thorns tugged at her leggings. She ripped them free with one hand. Her skin went warm with blood. She heard the creature groan, felt its hot breath on the back of her neck.

She plunged through the trees, every muscle burning, wishing she'd run harder over the summer. Lights glimmered through the trees. The house. Warm sheets and her eyes closed, dreaming. She wished she had never left.

The creature grabbed Gem's shoulder and yanked her back. She swung her elbow into its jaw, knocking its grip loose. She sprinted the last few feet into the yard. Moonlight gleamed off the blade of the axe, still sunk into wood. She ripped it free from the stump. Splinters glanced off her ripped tights. The creature came at her. Its face glowed yellow in the dim light filtering through Gem's bedroom curtains.



Gem swung the axe.

The creature's head rolled back. Gem saw bone but no blood. It crumpled to the ground, limp. No steam roller breath. Someone else's blood drying on its skin. Gem stared at it. The axe fell from her hand. She had to press both hands over her mouth to keep from screaming. Her knees shook but she stood until the screaming stopped, and wiped away her tears.

Gem grabbed the creature by its feet. She couldn't leave it in the yard. If her parents found out--she shuddered. She dragged it as far out into the woods as she could and piled leaves and fallen branches over its body. It was as good a burial as it was going to get. She hurried back to the house. She didn't sleep until the sun began to rise, and woke soon after to the sound of her alarm. She showered and packed her bag for school.

"Gem, don't you want breakfast?" Dad said. "You came in late last night."

Gem shouldered on her jacket and grabbed her keys from the table, shaking her head. She smelled bacon from the kitchen, but all she saw was blood. Spilling from the boy's neck. Splattered across fallen autumn leaves. What if he had gone to her new school? What if he had been in her classes?

"Gem, are you sure you're alright?"

"I'm fine, Dad," Gem said. "I just didn't sleep much last night."

"Alright," Dad said. "Well, call if you need anything."

"I will, don't worry about me," Gem said.

She grabbed her backpack from the floor and hurried out to Dad's truck. Her truck, really. It was red and rusting and ate gas like a fiend but when she closed the door behind her it slammed shut. She cranked the engine and gripped the wheel, thinking of the axe laying in the yard. She jumped out of the truck and grabbed the axe, tossing it into the bed before she pulled out of the driveway.

Probably not the best thing to bring to her first day of school, she thought. But she couldn't get the sight of bone at the back of the creature's neck. Of its human face twisted. Teeth too shark. Blood soaking into a shirt for a band Gem'd never heard of. Eyes shining like a cat's in headlights.

**Contrapposto** by Evie Gauconia



# Love Letter to A Friend

by Clove Davenport

Dear friend,

We've been through so much together. Years of friendship which has wavered in strength but never in connection. I don't know how this feels for you, but it feels like magic to me. I seek to make you laugh, kiss your cheek, hold your hand. I seek to wrap my arms around you and feel your heartbeat.

This is my love letter to you, dear friend. Since the moment we met I felt safe in your presence, as if maybe I could hide from my demons in the light of your smile. I feel an affection for you unlike anything which I had ever previously imagined possible. It transcends friendship. Unlike any romantic passion I have known, it reaches a higher, more pure state. I wish I could express to you the wonderful world within my heart which you've created. Like a secret gardener, you planted flowers and tilled the soil, and made a deserted space into a never ending paradise. Even if our friendship is lost, I know that the effect you've had on me will continue to be a part of my identity for as long as I live. I imagine that the ground around my grave will sprout flowers simply by virtue of the love within my heart.

You have taught me patience, my friend. You have taught it to me in many ways. I've waited for your call back, and I would wait forever for your next word. You have reminded me again and again that a friend is calm in the face of inconvenience, and strong in times of waiting.

You have also taught me to carry the love my friends feel for me in my heart. You reminded me to remember how much I am loved, how much affection each person in my life has for me, and the reason they feel these things.

Thank you for all of this, and for all that I cannot put into words. Thank you a million times over. I do not know if you will ever read this,

my dearest friend, but I hope so. I hope you learn the power your friendship has to save lives. That is what you have done for me. You've saved me from the path I was heading on. I was empty in a way which nothing had filled, and until I first felt your warmth, I did not think anything would ever fill me with joy. Joy is the closest word I can find for what you've given me. A joy which was so overwhelming that it rewired me—cleansed my soul—and made me a three dimensional person.

I hope for nothing more than for you to recognize the power of your presence on this earth. I hope you smile when you learn that. I hope you never stop smiling.

Love,

# Is there such a thing as infinity?

by Clove Davenport

My mind is a butterfly field

Thoughts flutter here and there like a sporadic lightning storm

I can't stay in one place for too long or I'll implode

My eyes scan over scenery seeing everything as a whole, taking in the big picture  
not the details most are drawn to naturally

I notice grass and the sky and the sunset

Contemplating

What is the meaning of life and is there such a thing as infinity

Curiosity bubbles up under my skin making me move when I'm told to sit still  
And they say what's wrong with you

Because my mouth is always an hour ahead of my words, so they get tangled like  
my shoe laces

My fingers still stumble over laces like my mind when I see an analog clock

And they say what's wrong with you

Emotions shoot through my body like earthquakes,

I focus on the world with the dedication of a painter, each line a love note that I  
read with a passion that shakes me to my very core

That love note was the only set of words I could read as a child and I let my eyes  
drink them in until my soul was filled with enough sunlight to float above the  
bookshelves my mind couldn't reach

My second grade teacher told me I was a stupid liar and put me in the highest  
reading level out of spite when I swore I couldn't read

When all I wanted was to watch caterpillars and paint and figure out if there was  
such a thing as infinity

They diagnosed me as having a deficit of attention, a disorder so common there's  
31 different meds to pop in kids' mouths like batteries in a remote

They said I needed therapy to fix my problem, they hooked wires to my head  
to see if that would make me stand still; they taught me to conform when all I  
wanted was to see if there was such a thing as infinity

I'm older now, and everyone I've ever met is surprised by my diagnosis

Because smart kids can't be broken

Because talented kids can't be messed up

Because somehow my success makes my condition invalid irrelevant untrue

I don't fit their stereotypical understanding based on statistics and comedy routines

No I don't get distracted by squirrels

No I don't bounce off the walls

No I don't interrupt people

No I don't

Don't assign me a label that doesn't quite fit, I demand perfection because there is NOTHING

Wrong with me

I have no filter and thus I cannot lie

I have no blinders and thus I see the truth

I see no fault in being this way; your ignorance won't be my downfall

See I have attention surplus hyper-creative disorder, a condition so special it got me on two honor rolls and three scholarships and one fabulous reputation

Don't act surprised when I tell you that, don't treat me differently

ADHD doesn't make me less of a person

It just makes me more alive

It makes me more like

Infinity





## About the Authors and Artists

Multi-genre writer and renaissance humanist, *Clove Davenport* pursues a BFA in writing at SCAD. She composes and preforms poetry, and also writes fantastical fiction and children's literature. In her spare time, she volunteers for a fair trade artisan organization which connects with the artist community while creating positive change for those in need. She aims to publish her novels and use part of the proceeds to support learning-challenged youth.

*Evie Giaconia* is a sophomore Biology major, at least for the moment. She is an artist and writer, and enjoys running and drinking copious amounts of tea. She loves dragons, books, kicking stuff, and YA series.

*Jason Huber* is vehemently passionate about Netflix and cheese-based snacks. In the frightening world outside his apartment, he's studying composition and rhetoric on the graduate level. His parents are proud of him despite these things. Jason still has Pokemon cards from his childhood. His greatest regret is never finding a Charizard.

*Kathryn Johnson* is a Physics major with a minor in English at Appalachian State. They've won Nanowrimo three years out of five, but their work rarely sees the light of day. Their best friend is a horse named Buzzy, and they've seen every episode of Supernatural. They love comics, movies, horses, and tacos (not necessarily in that order).

*Zoe Kaplan* is a sophomore English major with minors in Biology and Women's Studies, because she likes too many things to choose a viable career path. She has worked for several short fiction publications, including The Peel, Lightspeed Magazine, and Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy, as well as the neuroscience journal, Impulse. She loves princesses, cats, books, and punching things, and she's always up for a Lord of the Rings marathon.

*J.M. Paris* was born in a specific place and continues to live, doing things and having experiences that are similar to but also different from your own.

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