



## Neighborhood Yells

Brenden Layte

- Kids playing basketball at the dead end up the street on a hoop made from worn red railroad ties.
- One of them hitting a few shots and getting mouthy with the distinct confidence of a preadolescent who's starting to realize that they're actually good at something.
- A boy skateboarding by his old best friend's house—the one who hangs out with the older kids now—and shouting their inside joke just loud enough to hopefully get his attention.
- A cat being called home and running happily out of some bushes and over a patchy lawn before throwing herself down in a sunbeam, trilling, and rubbing her tortoiseshell fur into the warm grass.
- A sister and brother running down the street when their puppy gets hit by a car, their frantic footsteps slowing to nothing as they approach the body.
- Their father when he comes outside and sees them with the driver of the car—watching, paralyzed—as the puppy's blood runs down the street.
- A group of kids dashing through sprinklers in the afternoon sun.
- The cheers when one of their parents come home with a new Slip 'N Slide.
- The guy with the tied-back ponytail firing two rounds from a sawed-off shotgun into the car that his pregnant girlfriend is in.
- Her when she finally takes a breath and realizes that he missed both times, makes eye contact with him, and projects all her fear, relief, and anger out into the world.
- A gathering around an old couch behind the laundromat with merengue music filling the air, a child dancing on a wobbly banquet chair, older folks cheering, and a woman yelling encouragement from her window.
- A boy being called home and pleading to stay out because there's still just enough light to see the ball and if they play a little longer, maybe his team can pull this one out.
- The couple who are always fighting going at it for the third time this week.
- A neighbor as she tells the man off and grabs the couple's kids to take them out for ice cream until the fighting stops.
- A party in the parking lot behind the convenience store running too late, voices getting loose, slurred, and just slightly menacing; bottles skittering across pavement.
- "People are trying to sleep. Shut the fuck up!"
- "No, you shut the fuck up!"
- "All of you shut the fuck up."
- A baby crying through a thin apartment wall.
- A mother saying, "Don't worry, I have you."



## Afterlife

Jess Whetsel

I did not learn your name until I was a teenager. It was an accident, a slip of another relative's tongue, something I wasn't supposed to hear – or at least not from their lips: my secret grandfather, the villain of the family story.

The rest came later, in pieces. You left because you fell in love with a man after three children with your wife. You left because you could no longer pretend you were the man you claimed to be. But I am the author of the family and I am rewriting this story. You left because you had the audacity to choose yourself.

I doubt my father meant to  
keep his queer daughter  
from her only living queer kin,  
but that is what he did. And now  
you are dead, your ashes interred  
in a scenic cemetery states away  
from this hole in my heart and  
the corn fields and country roads  
you left behind. But that is not all you left.

When I miss you the most, I look  
in the mirror. Here is your Mona Lisa  
smile on my mouth, your blunt-tipped  
nose on my face. I place my hand on  
my heart and feel the swagger of your  
footsteps. I reach out, skin on silver,  
to stroke the arch of your cheekbone.  
No one can take you from me.  
You are still here because I am  
still breathing, and I promise  
you will not be erased.



baby steps  
with mother's help  
*the toddler leaps*  
*into father's*  
*arms*

Uchechukwu Onyedikam / *Christina Chin*

banishing  
his blood brothers  
*the usurper*  
*inclines towards*  
*the treasury*

Christina Chin / *Uchechukwu Onyedikam*

trickster  
at the crossroad  
a grandma imposter  
*begging*  
*for alms*

Christina Chin / *Uchechukwu Onyedikam*

cannibal witch  
offers the siblings  
her bed  
*an unexpected event*  
*prepares a feast*

Christina Chin / *Uchechukwu Onyedikam*

# The Lord Lady

Alan Berger

She was always praying or reading all over the place.

In the living room when she was 14, teen idols, boys and girls were on T.V. She would not notice them, or look at them, or listen to them. She would just pray, and read, and cross herself from morn till midnight.

She is twenty one now and still living at home which is fine. I like her. She's good company and it's just me and her. Oh, and of course Him, she would remind me between her milk and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches.

I was not was ready for this. The most her daddy thought might be coming down the pike was that she was gay, and now since Cheney is hopping around selling books with his lesbian little one, he thought he might be able to live that down after a while, but that wasn't the case.

She told him she met the right guy. The guy she will be with in this life and the next. She told her farther that he knew him but not well.

Really? A guy from the neighborhood? He asked. Every neighborhood she answered.

What's his name? Is he Italian? He asked.

Jewish, she confessed.

Jesus. What the Hell is his name? He asked. You just said his first name. She said His last name is Christ. I'm going to become his bride. She beamed. Don't you have to be a virgin? One last Hail Mary he prayed

I am a virgin, I have been waiting for the right one. Are you proud? Asked the penguin future wife of The Son Of God. Shit, said the father of the bride.

Well, it was better news than her joining Isis, rehab, jail, depression, cancer, and, well I could just go on forever and ever.

I do love her and should want what she does and support her.

There, it's all settled and accepted, he said to the universe at large. Sure it is.

You can't fight City Hall, or my kid.

I guess before we go any further, let's put it this way. I love being in love with the golden rule and how I feel I live my simple life. After life sounds great too but I still don't know what original sin is and why I have to believe in anything at all except live and let live.

But I didn't make waves on my daughters' maiden heaven voyage.

At the corner bar the un-holy father thought he would stick his head in the Lions mouth and get the news out before he had to hear about it. He had already heard enough.

The father of the bride hesitated a bit before entering the local watering hole. He headed right to the bar smiling loudly.

There were about 20 others in there including the waitress and bartender.

The Nuns dad headed over to the bartender.

Burt, I am a lucky motherfucker I'll tell ya. Drinks on me. One round max. No take out, he announced.

They all bellied up to the bar and collectively wanted to know what the theme of the Celebration was. So he just went on and told them

My little girl found Mr. Right and is getting married and I don't have to pay for a wedding or buy them a house, or give them any money.

I hit the jack-pot and I am going to turn her bedroom into my bowling alley trophy room. Cheers. He knocked back his drink, and started to think how to handle the questions about the who, what, where and when.

He slammed his glass down on the bar so hard it almost broke

He looked up. Way up.

And said, Dear God, in this piece of shit world with all of the pieces of shit in it, Present company excluded, he said to the audience.

You have seen fit to brighten heaven thru my little girl. Be good to her as I have. There was an immaculate un-pregnant pause.

They must think she died or something he thought.

My little baby is going to be a Nun, I am blessed. He proclaimed.

You could hear a prayer page drop on a cashmere carpet.

It's a good thing. He demanded.

And lo and behold, Jesus Christ, they all went for it.

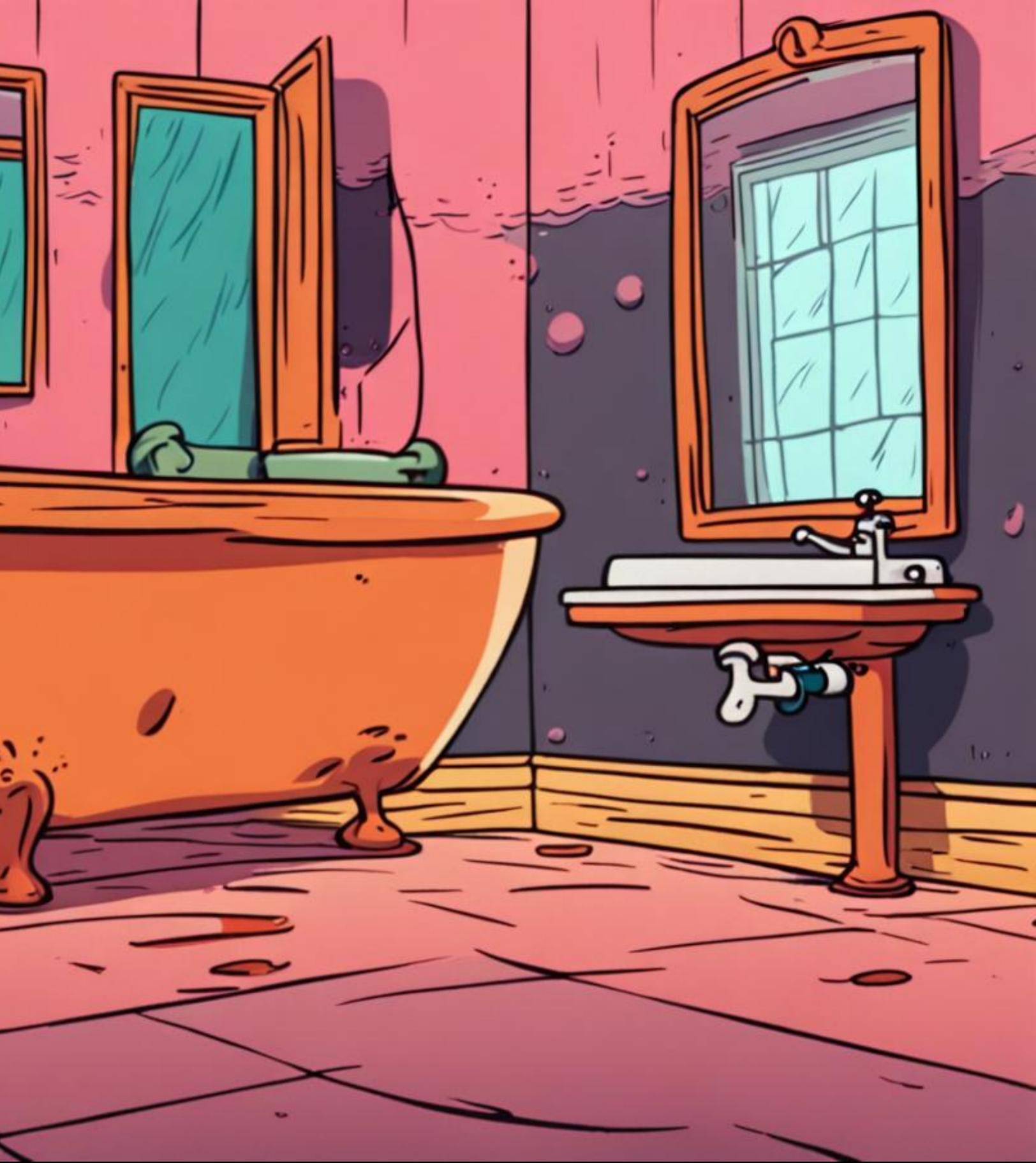
Then, Burt behind the bar yelled, another round on the house.

Booze and the Bible got along great as always.

For a second he thought it was his fault because he named her Christine and it went to her head and heart. Then, he let it go.

Oh, what the hell, heaven is lucky to get this employee. He figured.

The daddy of the betrothed took a breath and realized everything will be fine. And everyone will get to the church on time.



## Remembering my Nan, Badly

Lucy Rumble

Disconnected  
fragmentation.

Senseless  
remembrance.

Silent mind can't  
picture her face,  
gone, it kills me.

## Caput Mortuum

A. R. Tivadar

Old books from second-hand shops  
From a defunct printing press  
A collection of colourful chaps  
By authors I never heard of before  
I've been collecting them:

In "Învingătorul lui Napoleon"  
A thin, turquoise volume  
On the last page is written  
In the dark ink of a pen  
A lengthy dedication  
In fanciful, unreadable handwriting

In "O poveste cu o scară"  
A green collection of Bulgarian authors  
On the front page is written in pencil  
The date when it was bought  
*"13 August 1973, in Satu Mare"*  
It made its way to Bucharest, then to me

Also inside it  
In between the pages  
Is A Happy New Years card  
An illustration of carolling kids  
Red ink wishes I can read  
All except for the name

In "Voiaj de nuntă"  
One of my favourite books  
I found between the pages  
A tram ticket, faded and flimsy  
With washed off black ink  
*"Y d 91505"*

In "Umoriști de altădată"  
A rose pink volume  
On the front page, in blue,  
*"Oradea, 19.08.1969*  
*Ștefan Taliam*"  
Or maybe *"Ștefan Taliau"*

In "Cu săniile spre Polul Nord"  
A pale, sombre, dark blue  
Also on the front page  
*"Drăghici Agneta*  
*Fifth grade*"  
I wonder where she is now

In "Carnetele Maiorului Thompson"  
A dark red like wine  
A dedication also on the front page  
Must have been a doctor  
By their incomprehensible writing  
All I can glimpse is *"Jan '7"*

I bought old books for my sister too,  
And for my brother-in-law,  
Vintage detective stories  
In one I remember  
The red stamp of a dentist  
*"DR. M HAI EL N "*

I hope my niece will like books too  
I hope she will be very happy  
My dad crafted her a table and chair  
And I painted them colourful  
Underneath I wrote, in green,  
*"For Bubulina, from Anca"*





new border—  
on the bed a couple  
draws a line  
*they sleep*  
*back to back*

Uchechukwu Onyedikam / *Christina Chin*

a stranger  
outside the house  
barbed fence  
*they speak*  
*the same dialect*

Uchechukwu Onyedikam / *Christina Chin*

insurgence—  
north of the Borno  
borders  
*a military intervention*  
*spurned by the senate*

Uchechukwu Onyedikam / *Christina Chin*

# The Tibetan Numerologists of Appalachia

Toni Kochensparger

\*\*\*Continued from Issue80\*\*\*

It was August and still all kinds of hot, outside, but the school year had started. When the bell rang, most of the kids bee-lined for the local pool, including Arthur, who would have preferred to just go home, except his mom was still at work and his grandmother volunteered at the church. He was told to wait at the pool until she was free to pick him up.

Arthur waded in the shallow water, surrounded by kids who were half his age, watching as the boys from his class took turns on the diving board and played rough with the girls in the deep end. Arthur knew most of them from school, but didn't really talk to anyone, there. He sat in the back of any class that he could get away with, any time that the seats were unassigned, and avoided eye contact whenever a teacher called out for volunteers. The kids who actually acknowledged him called him gay or stupid or weird and, consequently, he spent the better half of his energy focused on trying to appear invisible.

“What are you doing over here?” a voice asked Arthur. Arthur turned. Standing on the ledge behind him was a boy he didn’t recognize. “Why do you still have your shirt on?”

Arthur looked down at his extra-large t-shirt with its picture of Reba McEntire, a shirt his grandmother bought him at a concert Arthur vehemently believed to be the best night of his whole life.

“I, uh,” Arthur said, searching for words.

“I’m Peter,” the boy said, slipping into the water beside him.” “Um. My name is Arthur,” Arthur said.

“Well, it’s certainly nice to meet you, Arthur,” Peter said. “We just moved here from Logan. Me and my family. I don’t know any of these kids.”

Arthur looked at the boys in the deep end. Zachary Morrison, who had bullied Arthur on-and-off since the third grade, did a jack knife off the diving board while Ashley Thompson watched.

“Well, um. All the popular kids are on that side,” Arthur said.

“Yeah, well,” Peter said, looking out at all the elementary school kids, surrounding them, “you didn’t have anyone over here to talk to. So I thought maybe *I* would talk to you. And then you wouldn’t be alone.”

Arthur blushed, embarrassed at his social inadequacy.

“And those guys are all just performing for the girls down there,” Peter said, nodding toward the direction of the deep end. “They don’t exactly strike me as smart.”

Arthur looked from the deep end of the pool to Peter. “I mean, I’m not really smart at all, either,” he said.

“I’m sure that you’re smart about *something*,” Peter said. “What’s something you’re smart about?”

“Um,” Arthur said.

“Everyone’s smart about *something*.”

“Well,” Arthur said, “uh, I guess I know a lot about TV. And my mom’s really into astrology. So I kind of know some stuff about that.”

“That’s so cool,” Peter said.

“My grandma says all that stuff’s evil,” Arthur said. “Like she really believes in the Devil.”

“My dad’s like that,” Peter said. “He doesn’t let me listen to certain music. And he doesn’t really let us watch TV.”

“Oh, man,” Arthur said.

“So see? There you go: two things you’re smarter than me about. I don’t know *anything* about television,” Peter said.

“What do you do in your free time?” Arthur asked.

“I don’t know. Read, I guess. At my old school, I used to play football with some guys in my neighborhood, in this one guy’s backyard. Mostly, I help my dad fix up the house.”

“For fun?”

“Oh *God* no,” Peter said. “That’s just. I mean I have to. Like he makes me.”

“Is he mean?” Arthur asked.

“Who, Dad? He isn’t..I mean, yeah, I guess. He’s strict. Like he used to be in the military and it kind of seems like he still is, or something.”

“Do you get scared?”

“Sometimes,” Peter said. “Like, he isn’t. He doesn’t do it too-often, but sometimes he hits me. Like but only if he’s been drinking.”

“I’m sorry,” Arthur said.

“It’s okay,” Peter said.

“It’s not.”

“No,” Peter said. “No, it’s not, probably.”

A car horn, before Arthur could say something. He looked up to see his grandmother, leaning her head out of the window, staring at him.

“It was nice to meet you,” said Peter. “Maybe I’ll see you, around.”

“Yeah,” Arthur said. “Maybe.”



url: minimag.space  
subs: minimagsubmissions@gmail.com  
substack: minimag.substack.com  
twitter: @minimag\_lit  
insta: @minimag\_write

“The Tibetan Numerologists of Appalachia”  
by Toni Kochensparger  
Insta: @gothphiliproth  
Twitter: @gothphiliproth  
Website: <https://linktr.ee/gothphiliproth>

“Neighborhood Yells” by Brenden Layte  
Twitter: @b\_layed  
Website: [https://linktr.ee/b\\_layed](https://linktr.ee/b_layed)

“Afterlife” by Jess Whetsel  
(Afterlife first appeared in [Sage Cigrattes](#))  
Insta: @jesswhetselwrites  
Website: [www.jesswhetsel.com](http://www.jesswhetsel.com)  
Book: [A Softer Kind of Audacity](#) (2023)

Tan-Renga Cycle by Christina Chin & Uchechukwu Onyedikam  
**Uchechukwu Onyedikam**  
Twitter: @MysticPoet\_  
Insta: @MysticPoet7  
**Christina Chin**  
Twitter: @Christina\_haiku  
Insta: @Christina\_zygby22  
Website: <https://haikuzyg.blogspot.com/>  
Book: [for dreams take one space capsule](#) (2022)  
Blog: <https://christinachin99blog.wordpress.com/>

“Remembering my Nan, badly” by Lucy Rumble  
Insta: @lucyrumble.writes  
Website: <http://lucy.smlr.uk/>

“The Lord Lady” by Alan Berger

“Caput Mortuum” by A. R. Tivadar  
Twitter: @artivadar  
Insta: @a.r.tivadar  
Website: <https://linktr.ee/ARTivadar>  
Bluesky: @artivadar.bsky.social

edited and ai art by Alex Prestia