

Untitled (Unicorn & Cheetos Poem)

Flaming Hot Cheetos and a Sprite: what I ate each day for lunch in high school. The silk of two dollars—that rubbed, dirty silk. And how I learned about addiction. What I learned teenage and craving. I have always liked to probe at addiction. To near its dirt-surface and tongue at its seeds. Even now, thirty and whole. In any public high school—in any high school—a terrain of what dark crouches there. I ate the hot Cheetos in class—French class was after recess and I remember asking myself how quietly I could crunch. It was a lie, I knew they could hear. But I don't think art is addiction. When people say they are addicted to writing: I don't know. How gray a classroom and how flame-gold like the core of a sun what hides in a bag. It was lined with silver, I think—mirror-lined. I cut myself later but only a little. Why didn't I know about cutting, asked my partner years ago—then not my partner but the sting in my longing and also its balm. Then more broken than now. I have rarely hated brokenness as I should. I have rarely hated ruin. I remember everything about eating Cheetos. How carefully I could pull at two sides of a bag so they made a night-opening mouth. But it was day, remember. It was day. And how the flame was a refuge—like some faraway dark breaking ocean. How the flame was a trance. And the guilt after. How the guilt from the first bag lasted my life. I am wary of too much interest in trauma. I spent my twenties making a spectacle of what I think I remember. But the guilt from the first bag lasted till now. I am whole now, I think, but I come late to wholeness. The burning mist in my stomach, and how the mist lasted. I would swear off hot Cheetos sometimes and then break my promise. In the tunnel of bright chemicals I wanted more. My boyfriend never hit me but I wished he would. I have hated mass culture for a long time. I have hated it senselessly. But I have always loved corner stores—shitty little stores with

the prices too high. For whoever wants a glittering instant alone with desire. Knowing that what follows is shit. In the tunnels of eating there is flame. I have ruined myself again and again by asking the question: what do I do with my finger-stained flame. What do I do with the tunnel. Of the days that felt like night. I rarely eat Cheetos now but not never. I want you to speak too. This matters to me still: sadness matters. I cannot find the white rage sometimes and other times I can.