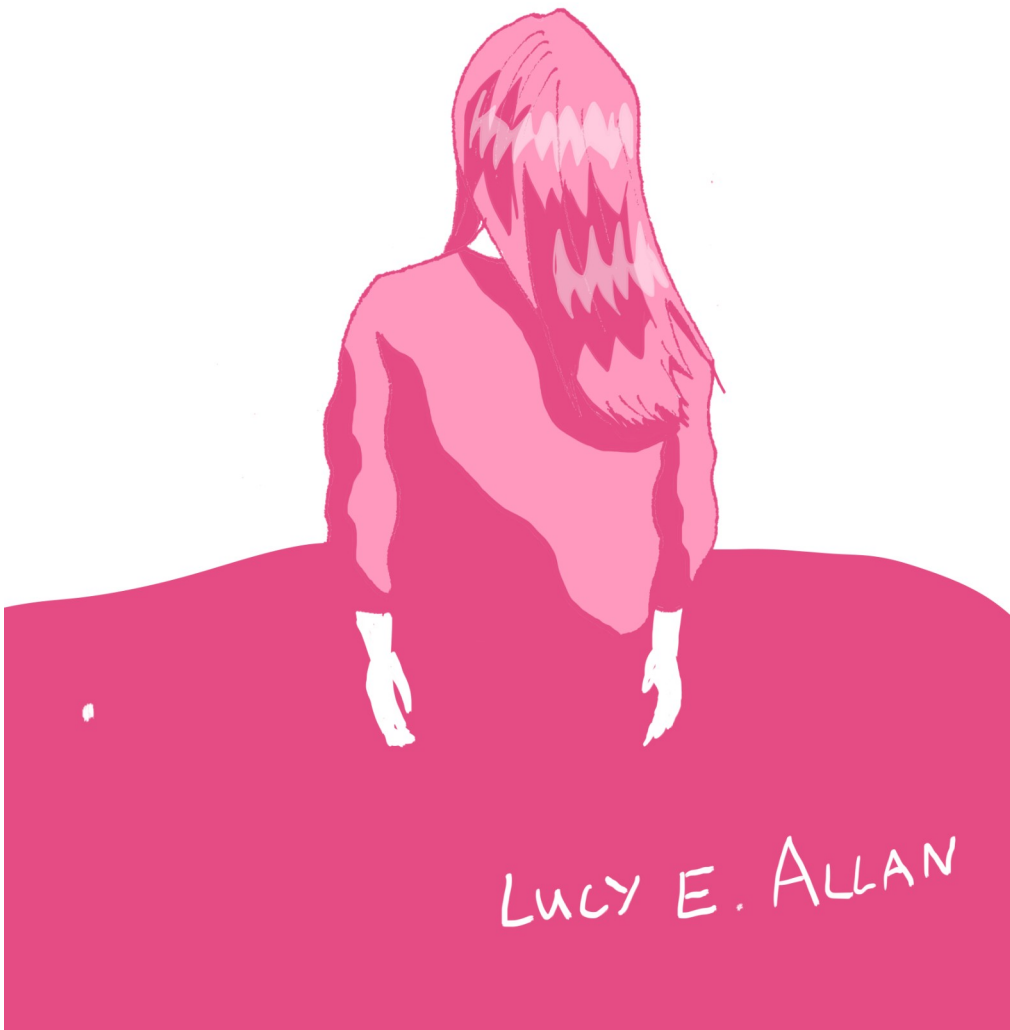


# BOUNDARY





**There's a joke about boys who get too close to one another.  
They stray too far into intimacy, cross some line,  
reveal themselves as something other.**

**The boundary between boy and boy is a solid thing.**

**But girls wear their guidelines differently.**



**Girlhood defines itself by its intimacy.**

**We stray into  
each other's space.**



**We overlap.**

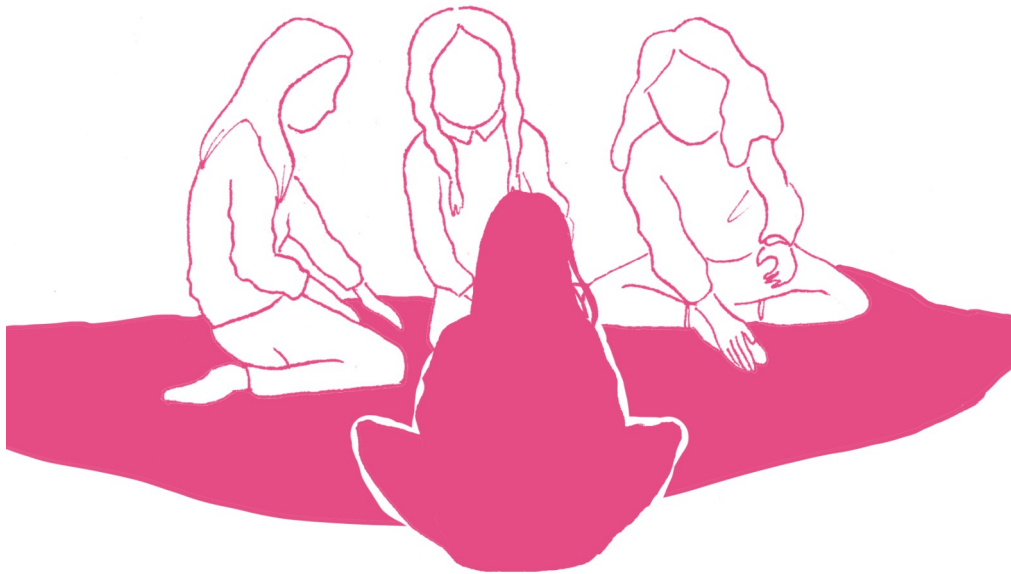


**Growing up, I couldn't trust that intimacy.  
Not when that girlhood closeness stirred shame  
and panic in me I was too young to understand.**

**Seeing no boundaries, I forced boundaries on myself.  
I drew police tape around me because I knew  
my actions needed to be policed at all times.**

**I didn't understand why yet, but I knew.**

**I remember the mistake I made.**

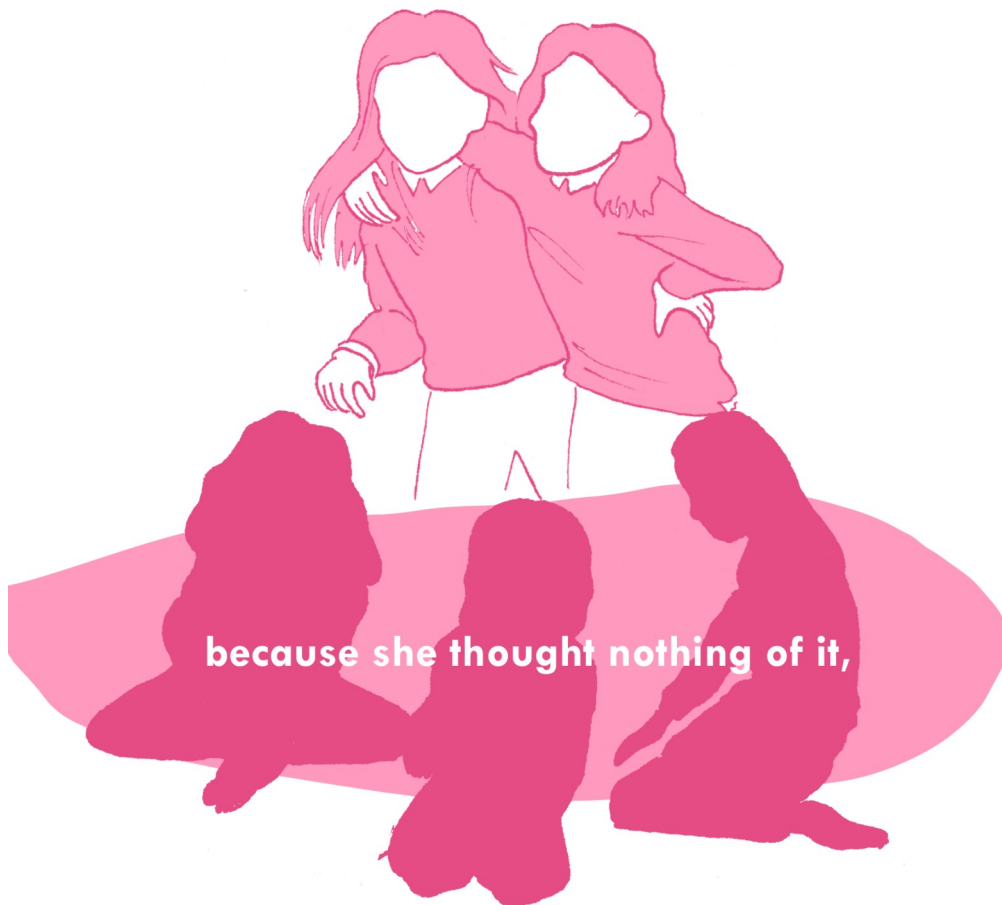


**I remember my friend - blushing, giggling -  
telling us the story of a boy who tried to  
kiss her on the cheek.**

**And then,**

**because she wanted to demonstrate,**

**because I was nearest,**



**because she thought nothing of it,**

**She leaned in to kiss me as he had kissed her.**

**And, like an alarm triggered by a trip wire,  
my instinct kicked in.**

**I pulled away.**

**And that's how they knew.**



**By holding back, I had strayed too far.**

**My friends had seen me mark a boundary between  
myself and them, and all of us knew then,  
without understanding what,  
that something wasn't a secret any more.**



**And no one ever said anything.  
No one ever acknowledged what had changed.**

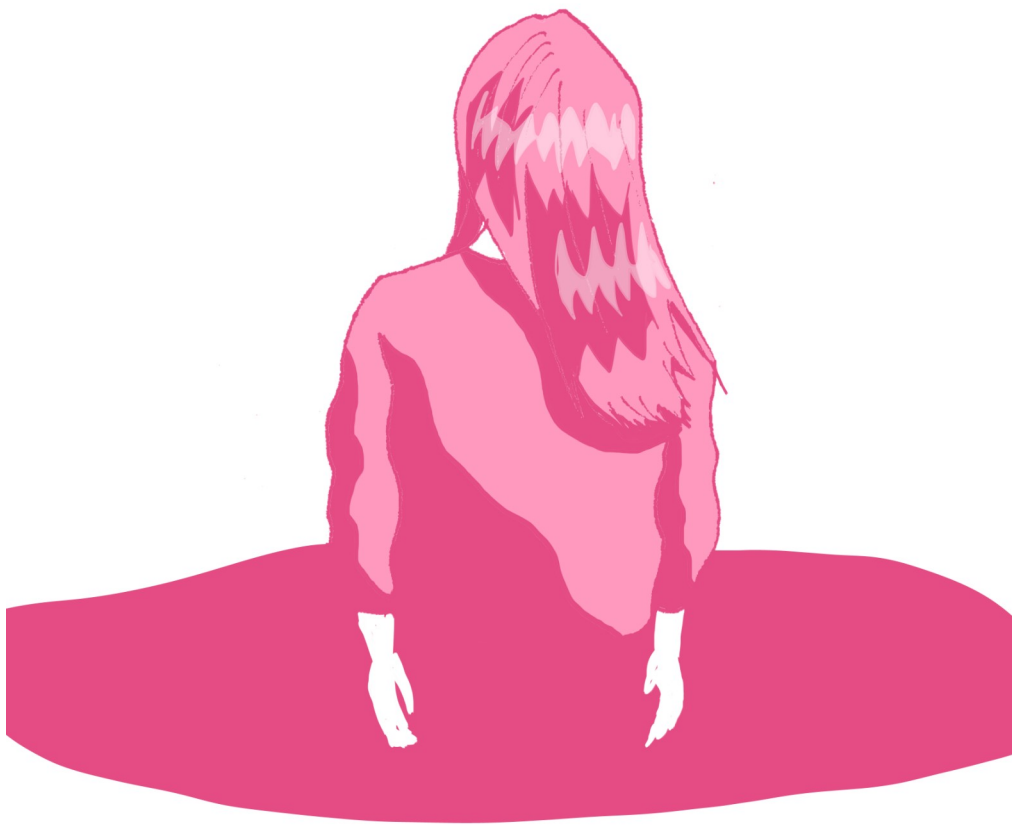
**But I caught them, every now and again, glancing at me  
out of the corner of an eye, with something not as cruel  
as suspicion, but not as kind as concern.**

**Looking back at me over their shoulders  
as they began to grow and change**

**and take their places  
in the world.**

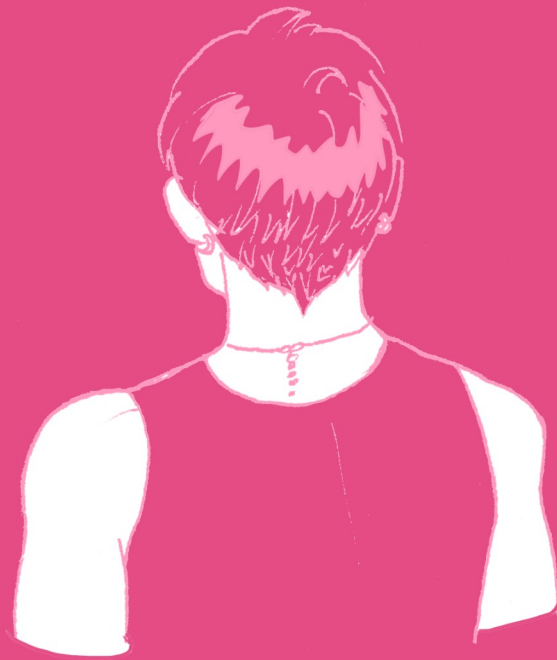


**leaving me in their wake to scramble after them,  
tripping,  
stumbling,  
scraping my elbows and knees,**

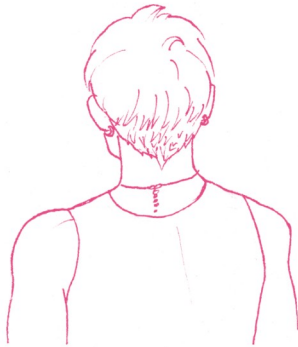


**but never quite falling...**

**...one way,**



**or the other.**



**Lucy E Allan is a Frankenstein's monster apologist with a creative writing Master's. Her published work can be found in Thomond Comics, Riot Grrrl Press and Gothic Funk Press. She can be found on twitter at [@BitchHomunculus](https://twitter.com/BitchHomunculus)**