

# Getting Lit: Round 12 with Sarah Gerard

written by Sam Slaughter | October 14, 2015



## About Sarah Gerard



Sarah Gerard is the author of the forthcoming essay collection *Sunshine State* and the novel *Binary Star*, which *NPR* calls a “hard, harrowing look into inner space.” Her personal essays, criticism, interviews, and short fiction have appeared in *The New York Times*, *Tin House*, *Music & Literature*, *The Los Angeles Review of Books*, *Joyland*, and *BOMB Magazine*, among other publications. Visit her at [Sarah-Gerard.com](http://Sarah-Gerard.com).

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## Round 12

Sam Slaughter: Can you tell me a little bit about how you came to *Binary Star* (*Two Dollar Radio*, 2015)?

Sarah Gerard: I began to write a novel called *Binary Star* as my thesis for The New School. In that iteration, it followed the story of two girls in the summer after they graduate high school, as they’re grasping for some life direction. It was a fine novel, so I turned it in as my thesis, but it had ceased to be interesting to me, and the binary star metaphor wasn’t really working, so I scrapped it. Later that year, I published an essay in the *New York Times* about my recovery from anorexia and an agent asked me if I was working on a memoir. I wasn’t, but I suddenly felt I’d been given permission to do something I hadn’t known I’d wanted to do for years. So I started, and it quickly became a novel.

What drove you to write the book?

A sudden velocity.

If you could have one person read your book that you don’t think would, who would that person be? Why?

I don’t really know, honestly. I’m perfectly thrilled that anyone reads it at all and I don’t really have idols. I also don’t believe there’s anything special about the book, above other books, that would demand some—well, I suppose I’d like Kraft executives to read it, or Hydroxycut executives. Not that I think reading the book will affect any kind of change in the way they do business, or design products, but I’d love to horrify them.

It’s a fairly intense book. Can you talk about how you as the writer deal

with that? Is there any psychological blowback after writing a scene or giving a reading?

I think I'm not alone, as a writer, in seeking out topics that demand a certain emotional pitch—if I don't care intensely about what I'm writing, and if it doesn't hurt, to me there's just no point in writing about it. Who wants to read a story about how life is always wonderful?

But you're right that there's a lot of psychological work that goes into writing. If I didn't enjoy that kind of work, I probably wouldn't be a writer.

Can you give me 5 adjectives you think best describe *Binary Star*?

Fragmented, fast-paced, binary, codependent, white

What drink would you say best characterizes the work?

Can I pick two? Red Bull and beer.

What are you working on now?

A collection of essays called *Sunshine State*.

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## The Falling Star

*Inspiration:*

Just as Gerard says she was driven by a sudden velocity, I wanted to make something that had a similar speed to it. Using the two ingredients mentioned above, this is a take on any number of "classic" beer cocktails, with the added boost from the Red Bull.

*Ingredients:*

- 6 oz Pilsner
- 6 oz Cider
- 3 oz Red Bull

*Method:* Pour pilsner and cider into pint glass. Float with Red Bull.