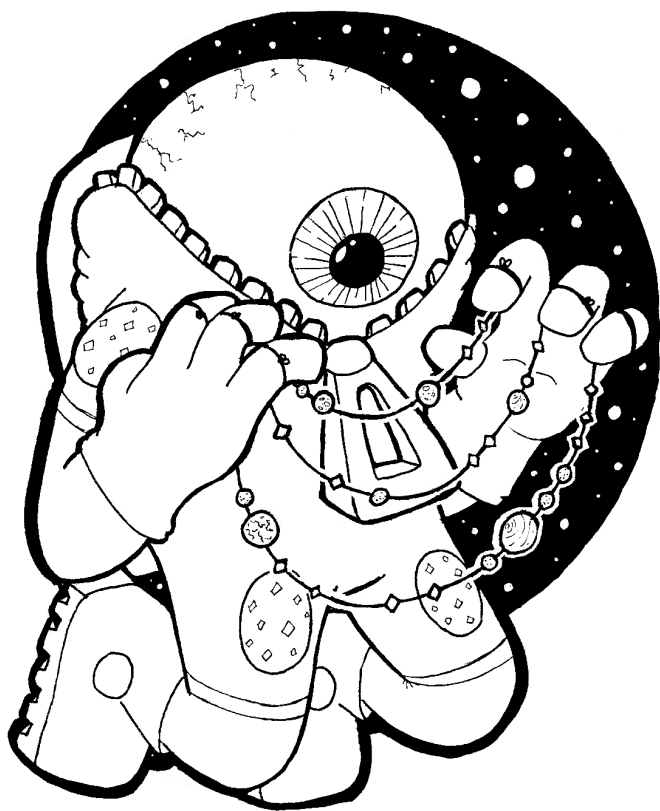


There I Was and Here I Am



A Variety of Works Originally by
Patrick "Rowan" Roughan

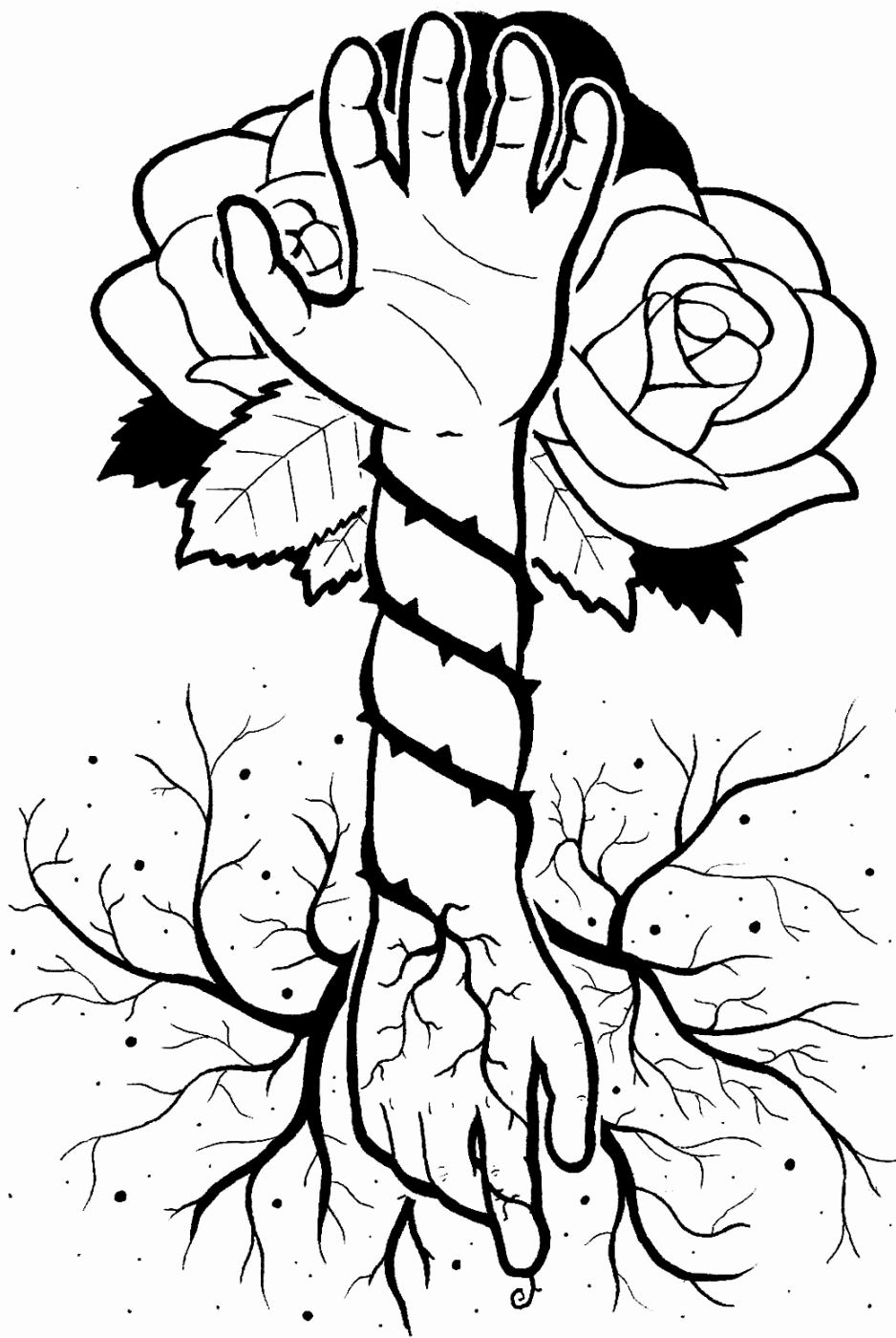
To You,

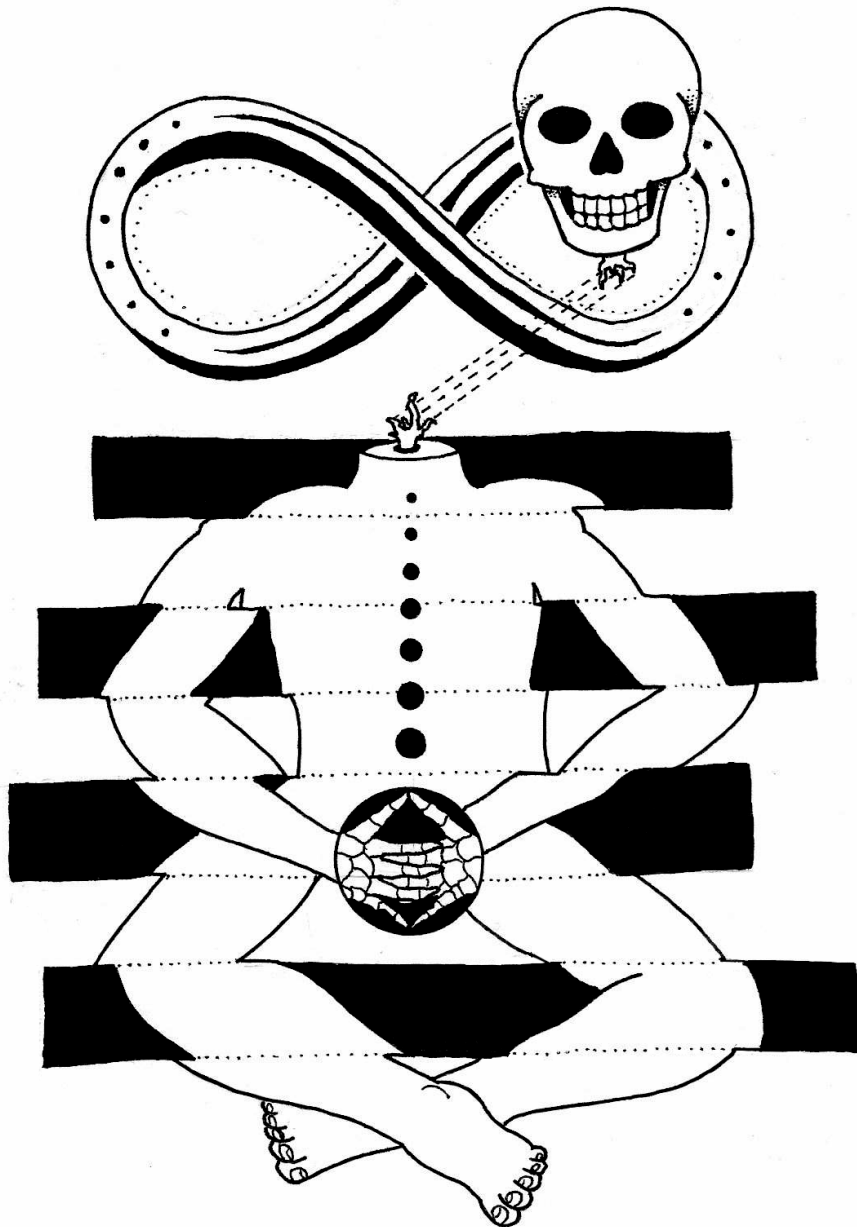
Thank you for owning my zine! Whether you bought it from me, or it was a gift, or you just found it on the side of the road, I greatly appreciate you taking the time to open this zine up and check out what's inside.

You may be wondering why the cover says "originally by." That's because this work isn't necessarily finished; I've completed my part, but you, zine-owner, are free to do with it what you wish. You bought it, after all, so make it yours! Color the inkwork, make blackout poetry from the words, rip the pages apart if that's where your inspiration leads you. There's no need to keep this zine exactly how you got it; I can print more of these, but I can't replicate your personal creativity and experience.

I've already put myself in this work.
Add yourself to it, too.

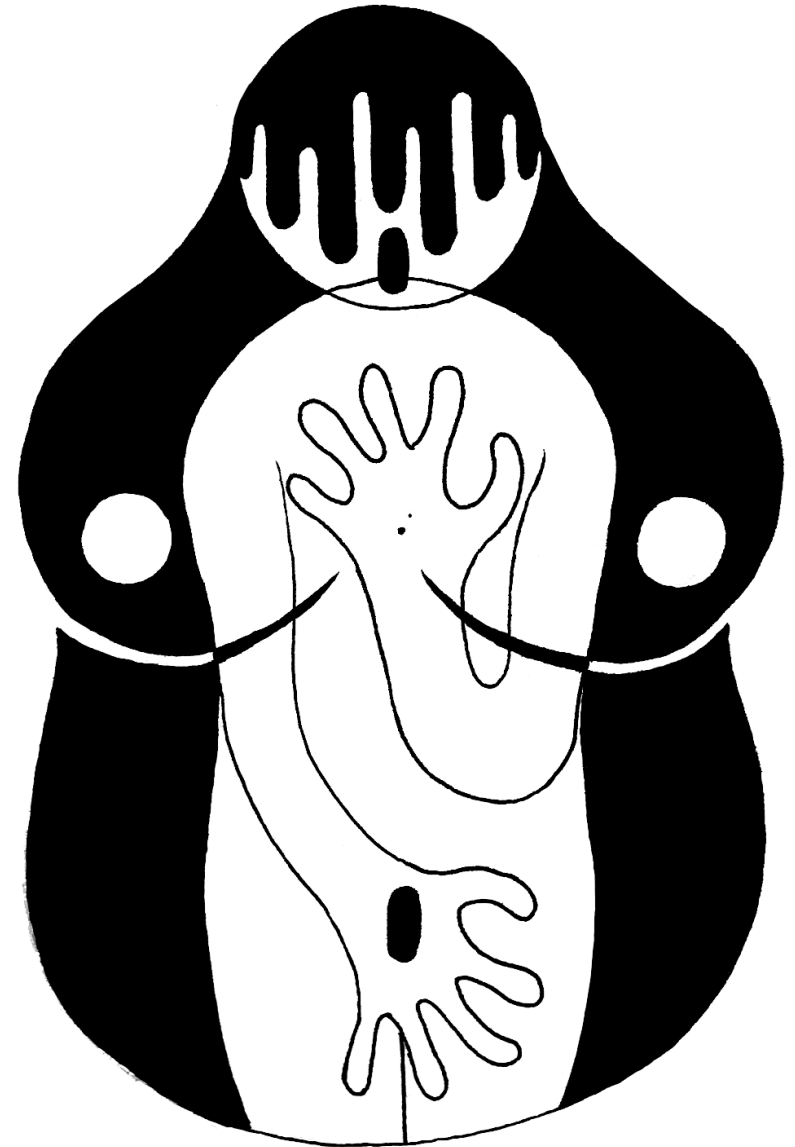
ROWAN





Out of all the universe existing
 And all the pieces rearranging
 We've been assembled into something
 Unusual and unbecoming

A speck obsessed with what's surrounding
 And whether there's a deeper meaning
 But perhaps the information missing
 Isn't found by knowledge seeking
 But lies in honestly perceiving
 The selves we are by our own making



I built a kingdom, impenetrable and complete.

First, I dug deep into the earth to find
The stones of truth buried down beneath.
I subjected each fact to deep scrutiny
Before I placed it down between the rest,
Laying them layer by layer, higher and higher,
Until they became great walls of stone.

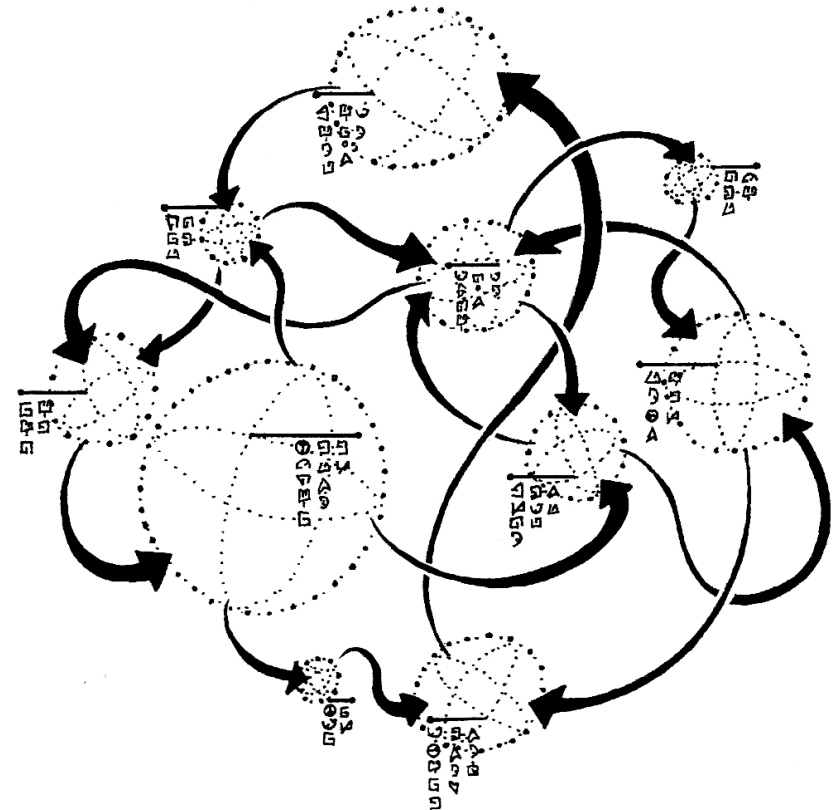
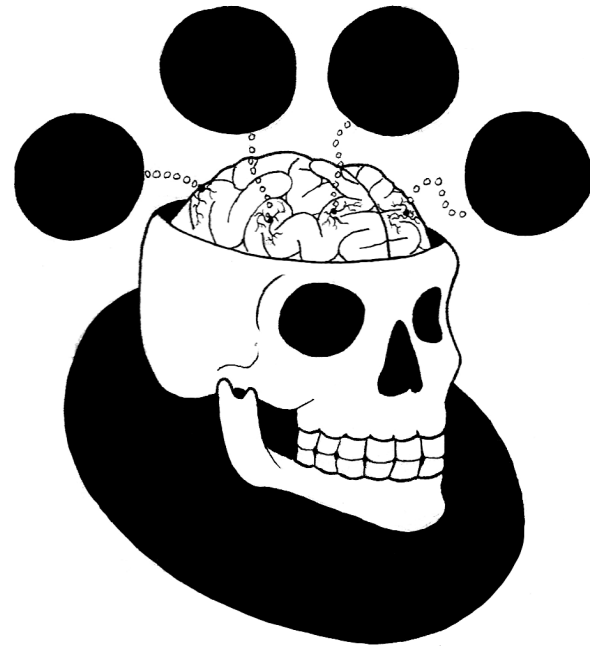
I added doors, and roads, and signs, and more,
Constructed from the logs of my memories,
Adding more definition to the stonework
And giving structure to what I had created.

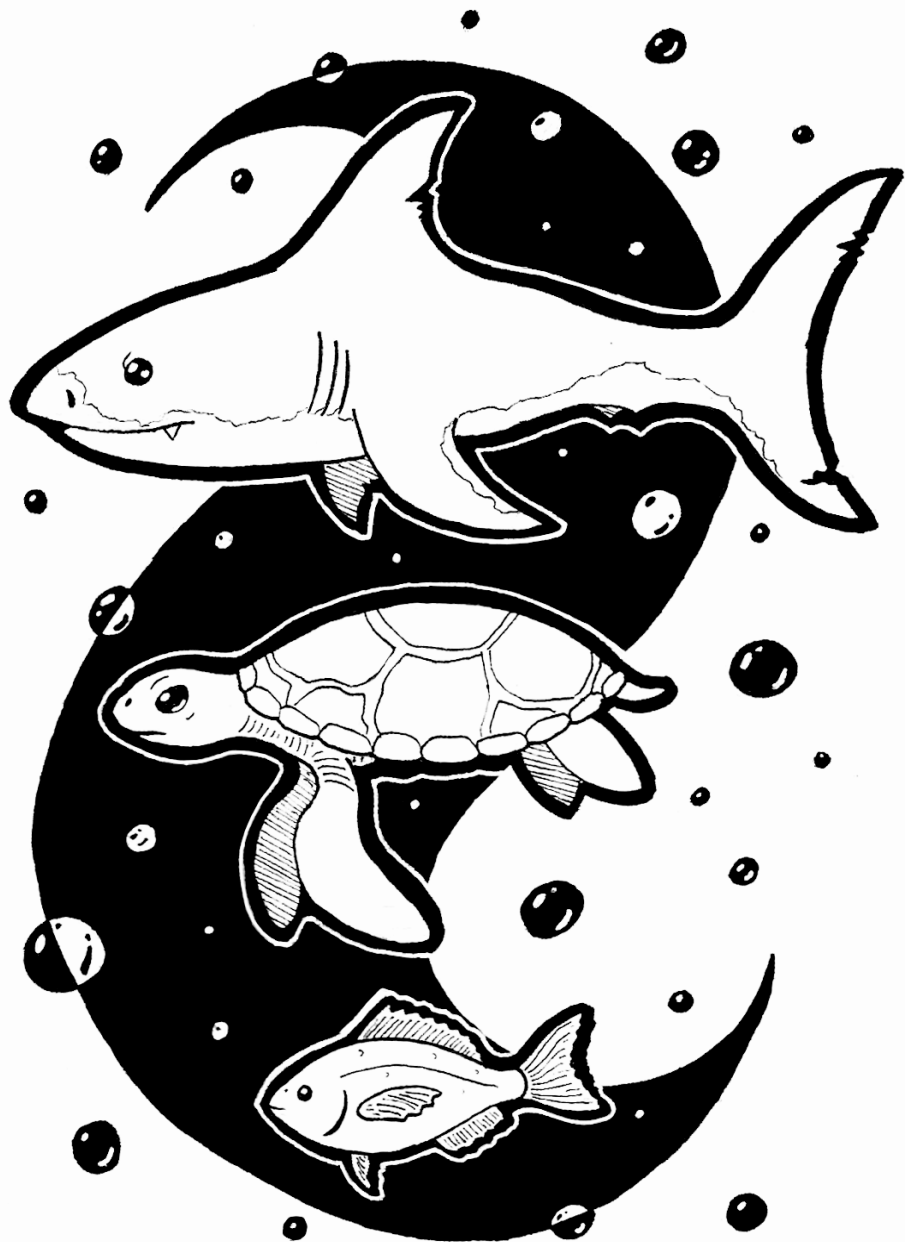
Each fact obtained, each memory solved,
I sat upon the throne of my finished kingdom,
And watched as my thoughts found their homes
In this impenetrable space I had made.

Until one day, a new thought entered the gates,
And whispered two words inside the walls.
The earth shook. Cracks grew in the stone,
Until they could no longer support each other
And fell into rubble, the woodwork smashed
Between the pieces of earth and stone.

The thought walked the ruins of my kingdom
Until it found me, still sitting on my throne,
And leaned in close, repeating those words
That had brought all my work down around me:

“What if?”





Did a few bad apples

Destroy the lot

Or was the whole batch rotten

From the start

I'd heard stories of a monster's den,
Hidden somewhere in the wilderness,
And if you saw a creature within,
Your life would be forever changed.
I'd stumbled on it once, by mistake,
And though I didn't see a beast,
I saw a shadow, and that alone
Had shifted my perspective more
Than I ever thought was possible.

So I sought out that monster's den,
With the warnings from travelers past
At the forefront of my mind.
I went there time, and time, and time again,
Sneaking my way into that same entrance,
Each time seeing glimpses of a beast,
And feeling my mind grow and shift
With each new sight my eyes collected.
The warnings I heard began to fade
As the monster's den became familiar,
A desire path carved through the woods
From my home to that same entrance.

Then, one day, on my way to the den,
I noticed an entrance I missed before.
The warnings I heard used their last strength
To whisper their cautions into my ear
Before they faded from my mind entirely.
Their whisper did nothing. I entered this den,
Ready to see something not seen before.
Without the warnings, with all my experience,
I thought myself immune to the dangers within.

I was wrong.

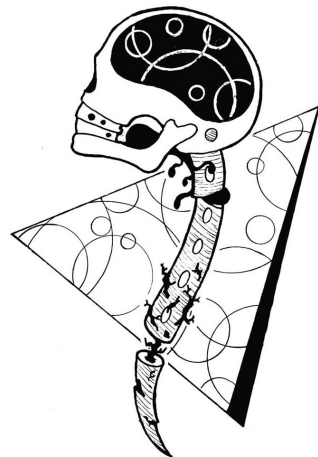
I found a beast, and the beast found me too.
In moments, the beast was atop me,
Claws ripping my flesh, fire torching my skin,
And murderous rage glowing in its eyes.
I thought I would die in the grip of that beast.
I didn't. I got away, but not unscathed;
For the heat I feel reminds me of those flames,
And the sounds I hear remind me of those roars,
And the places I go remind me of those eyes.



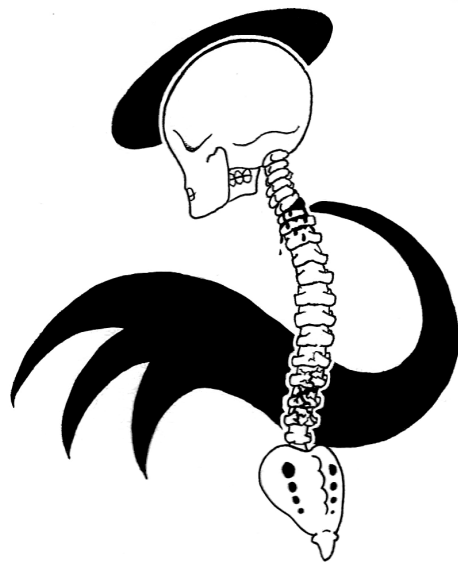
I've been back to the den, but not that entrance,
And the warnings that had faded previously
Have returned a thousand-fold to ensure
That I never feel so callous again.
My glimpses of beasts prior taught me wonder,
But this beast, the one I wish to never see,
Taught me caution, and taught me fear
Of what would become of me without it.

It's true, the stories of the monster's den:
It's hidden out there in the wilderness,
And if you go to see a beast within,
Your life will be forever changed.
Of course, those stories never say
Whether that change will be for the better.
That's up to you, fellow traveler.
May this tale be a warning in your ear,
Whispering caution into your mind
Should you go seek that monster's den.

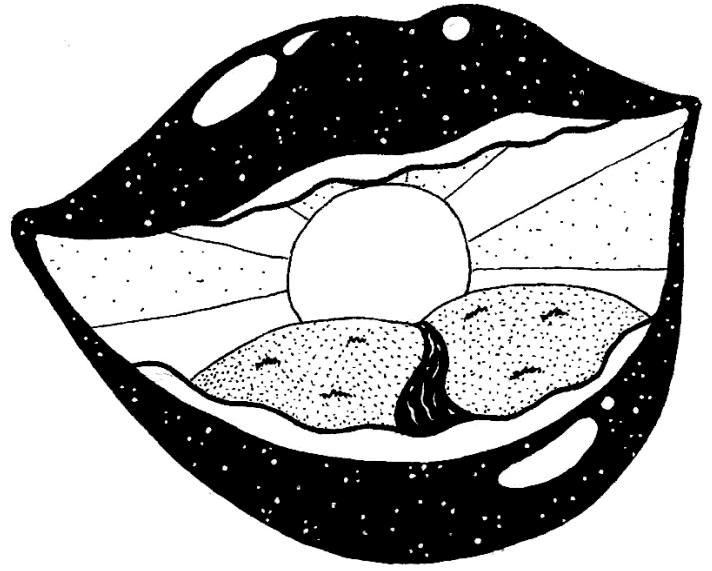
Personhood is a gift I've not been granted.
 Instead I am a set piece, a decoration,
 A flicker of diversity in the background
 Of a world ruled by the majorities.
 My existence is an inspiration to them,
 For they can stare as I pass them by
 And think, "I'm so thankful that's not me."



If they choose to grant me their attention,
 They approach, words already on their lips,
 Demanding the tale of how I became "this way."
 I, a machine within their world of persons
 With no right to its own privacies,
 Must respond on cue and with a smile
 To satisfy their every curiosity.
 Once they've squeezed out every drop
 And every detail is splashed on the floor,
 I'm force-fed their fake platitudes
 Before they go on their way, self-satisfied
 With the knowledge that my nameless self
 Is the one in hardship, instead of them.
 In minutes, I fade into their memories.



But I remain. Nameless, exhausted, violated.
 The guilt and shame seeping in once more
 For not fighting for those rights they flaunt
 That "politeness" strips away from me.
 Next time, I think to myself, next time,
 I'll break free of the "peaceful" programming
 That leads to this war inside of me.
 And next time, maybe, when I do fight back,
 I won't be a set piece with a cane,
 I'll have a name instead.

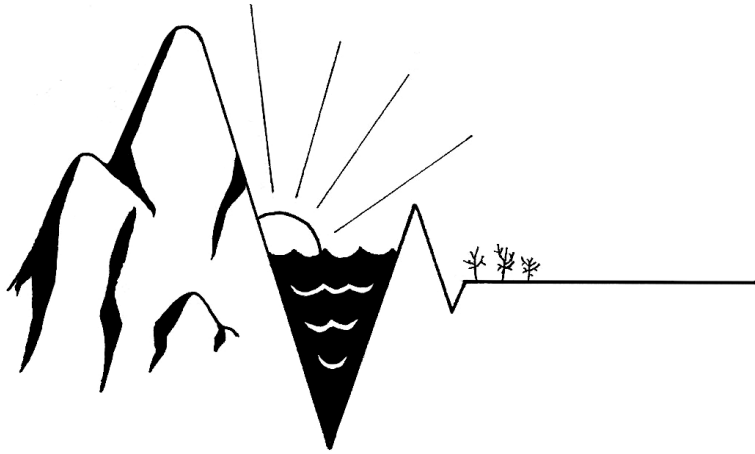


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Deep in the woods, there were once three cats
born in the shadow of a lion's statue.
The statue towered high above them,
A protector, an aid, and a savior.
They hid from the rains between its paws,
Scouted the horizon for food atop its mane,
And scared off beasts with its mighty face.
The cats were safe, and fed, and happy.
All was as they needed it to be, for a time.

But as the cats grew, they changed.
The space between the lion's paws did not,
And they could no longer fit between them
Without contorting their growing bodies.
The lion's curvy mane did not,
And what once had space for every cat
Was a balancing act spaced just for one.
The fearsome lion's face did not,
And the gaze that once kept threats at bay
Began to frighten the three cats as well.

As the cats changed, so, too, did the world.
The storms above the wood grew stronger,
The trees around the clearing grew taller,
The beasts among the shadows grew braver,
But the statue held still all the same.
The cats first found it a show of strength,
But as the rains hit their exposed skin harder,
And the food hid between the branches better,
And the creatures crept in the darkness closer,
The cats needed something new from the lion.

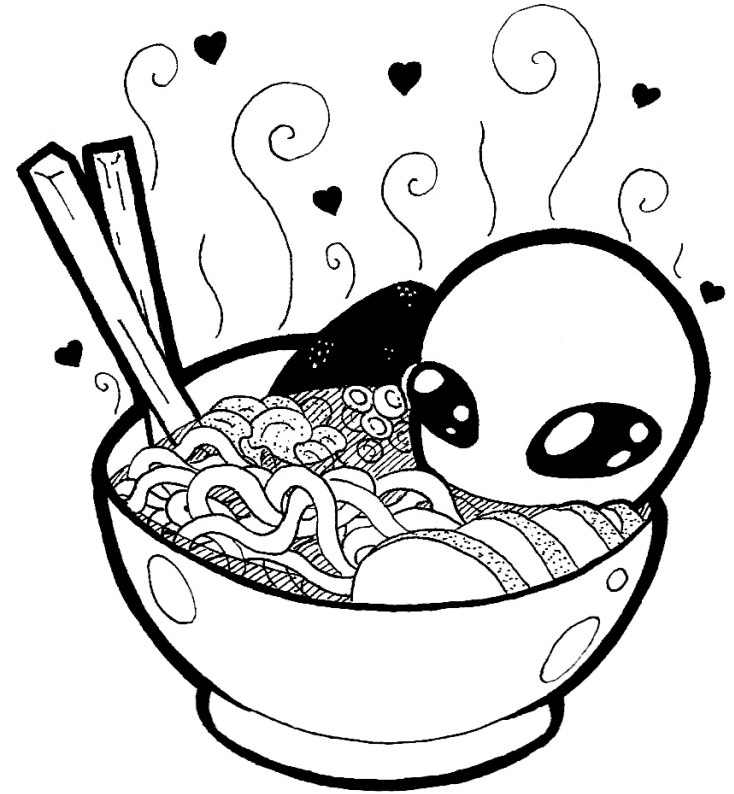
Despite these things, the three cats stayed.
The first ignored the statue's faults,
And forced itself between the paws
To the point where its tail grew in crooked.
The second pleaded with the statue to change,
Obsessed so deeply with the joys of the past
That it never tried to discover new joys.
The third yowled and scratched at the statue,
Working itself into such a righteous anger
That it attacked anything that crossed its path.

They stayed, and they grew, and they hurt,
Until one night, during a terrible storm,
A bolt of lightning shot from the skies,
Striking the foundation the statue stood upon,
Sending it, and the cats, falling to the ground.
The three cats spent days just lying by the lion,
Not bending, or pleading, or yowling,
But just lying there, in a deep silence.

The lion statue now sat crooked in the dirt,
Fallen from the heights it once sat upon.
And yet, despite that, it looked the same.
Paws placed down, mane curved, teeth bared,
As though nothing had happened at all.
The three cats, after days of silence,
Looked at each other, and in that moment saw,
In the crooked tail of the first cat,
And the teary eyes of the second cat,
And the bloody paws of the third cat,
Just how much they had changed themselves
For something that itself could never change.

And so they left the clearing they called home,
The statue fading in the distance behind them.
They were aching, and crying, and angry,
But they now understood that the joys of before
Could only be found in the past within their minds.
Their hesitation had changed them for the worse,
But now, together, walking into the changing wood,
They were finally free to change for the better.

The new
adds flair
to the
familiar



The familiar
adds spark
to the
new





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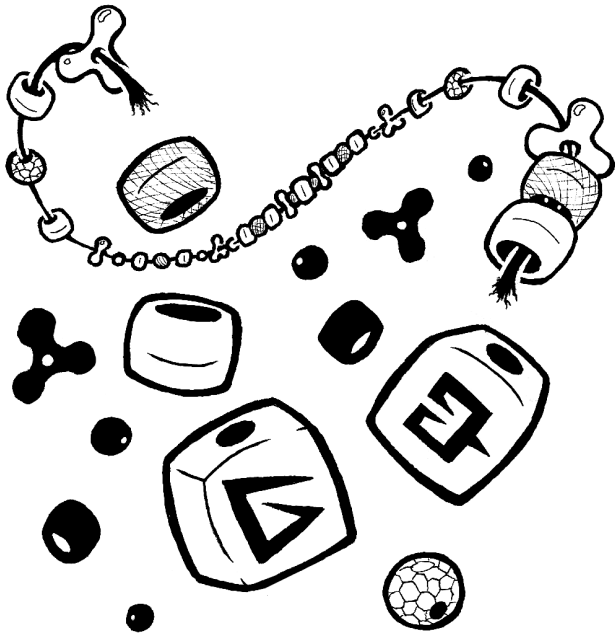
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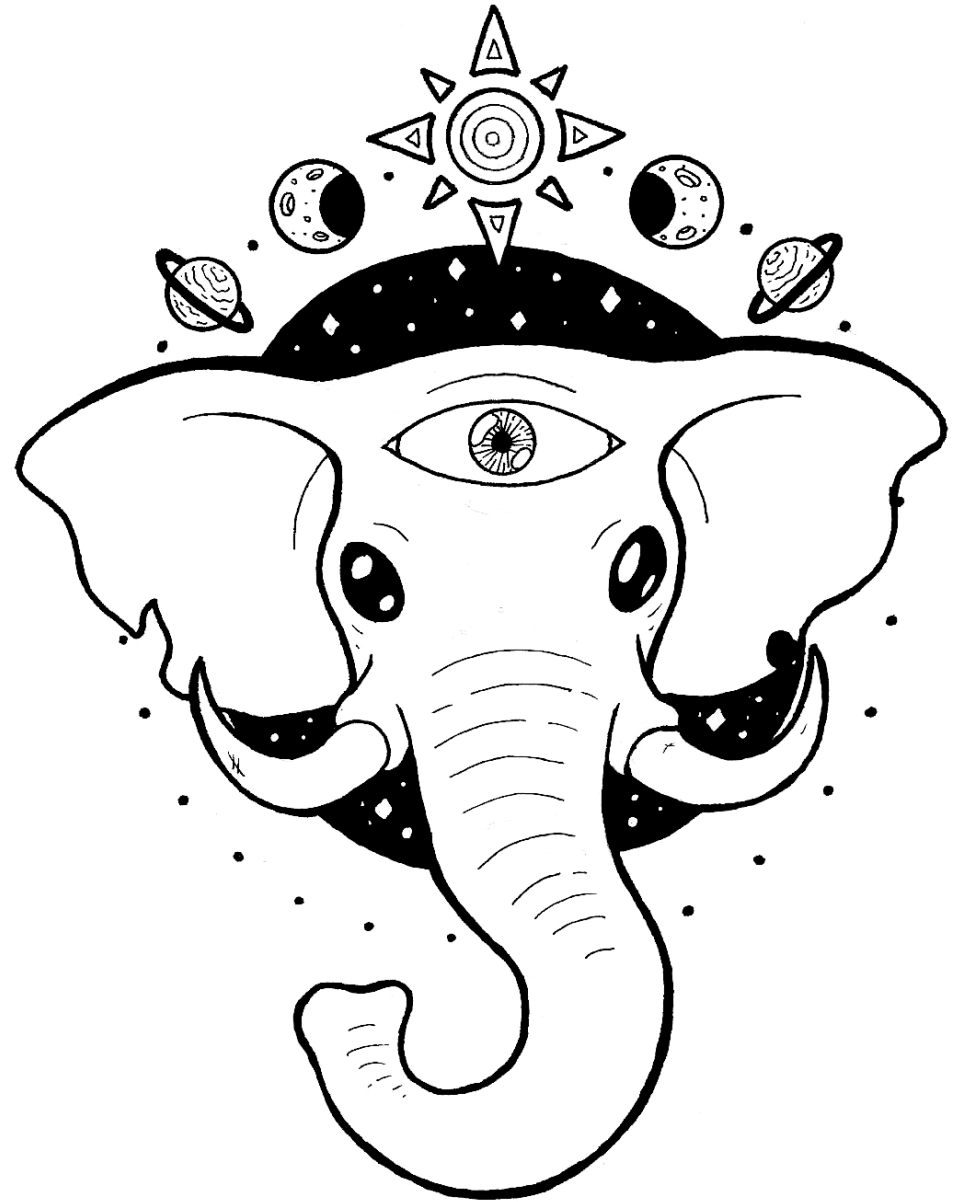


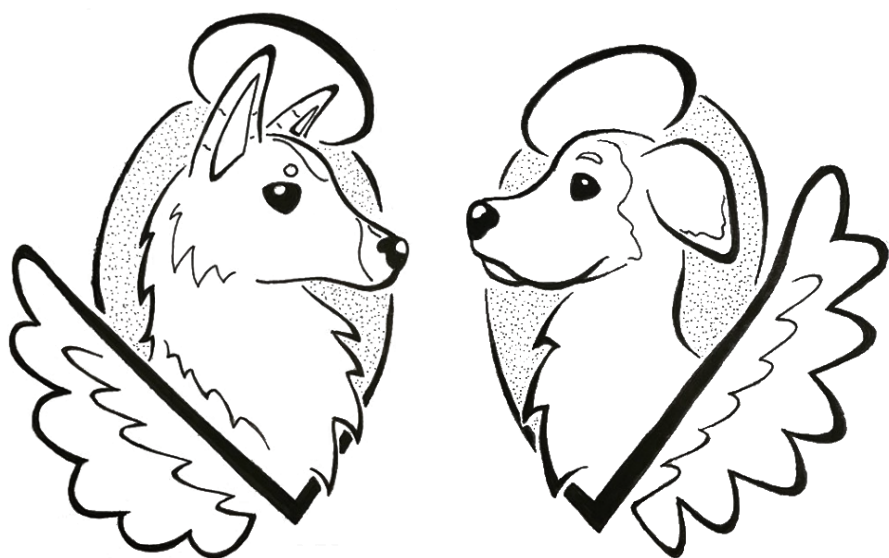
I saw a stranger in the woods,
between the shadowed trees.
I turned and fled, but still that form
left me with such unease.

I wandered back into those woods,
now basked in the light of day.
I saw him, and he saw me too,
but I could only slink away.

Years passed and I returned to see
woods lit with neon lights,
I met the stranger there again,
and danced for four full nights.

I know the stranger fully now,
as we wander through the trees.
And when I leave, I'm not alone,
for the stranger there was me.





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