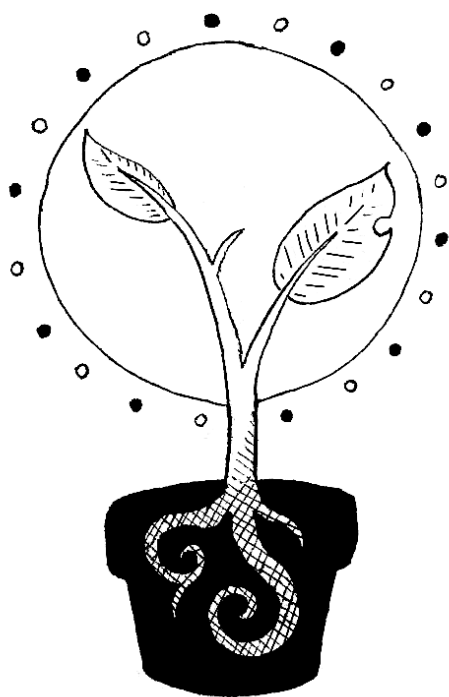


Why Don't You Draw Some Flowers Instead



A Variety of Works Originally by
Patrick "Rowan" Roughan

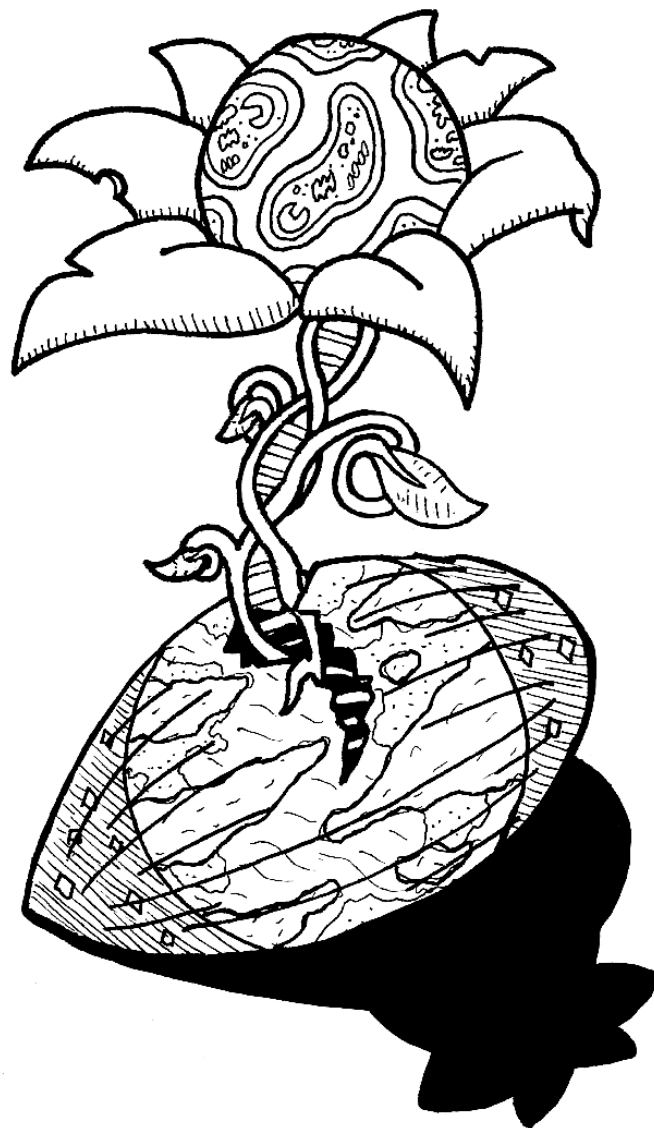
To You,

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



I was told to try and find myself
As if I were a dropped pair of keys along a hiking trail,
And if I were to ever move forward, I'd have to stop and look,
Searching my memory and my thoughts to find
Where I had misplaced myself.

Perhaps I am my body,
For it is mine, and I can move it at my will.
But, if I were to chop off my hand, would it also be me?
Am I to think I'm also my skin, my blood, my liver?
Perhaps I'm not there after all.

Perhaps I am my brain,
For it is where I feel to be, watching behind my eyes.
But, if it were copied down to atoms, would that also be me?
If my brain were split in two, would I be two of me?
Perhaps I'm not there after all.

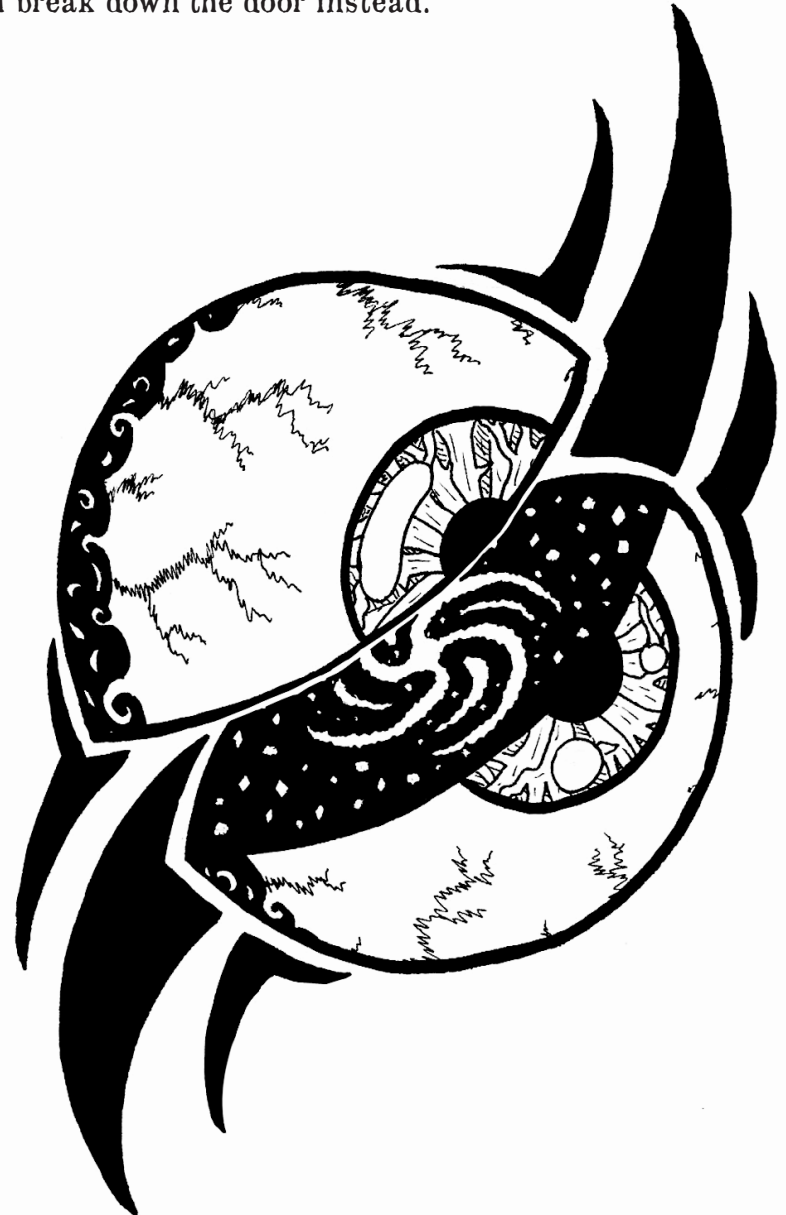
Perhaps I am my neurons,
For their network is how I perceive anything at all.
But if they age and lose their strength, do I stop being me?
And if I replace them one by one, when would being me end?
Perhaps I'm not there after all.

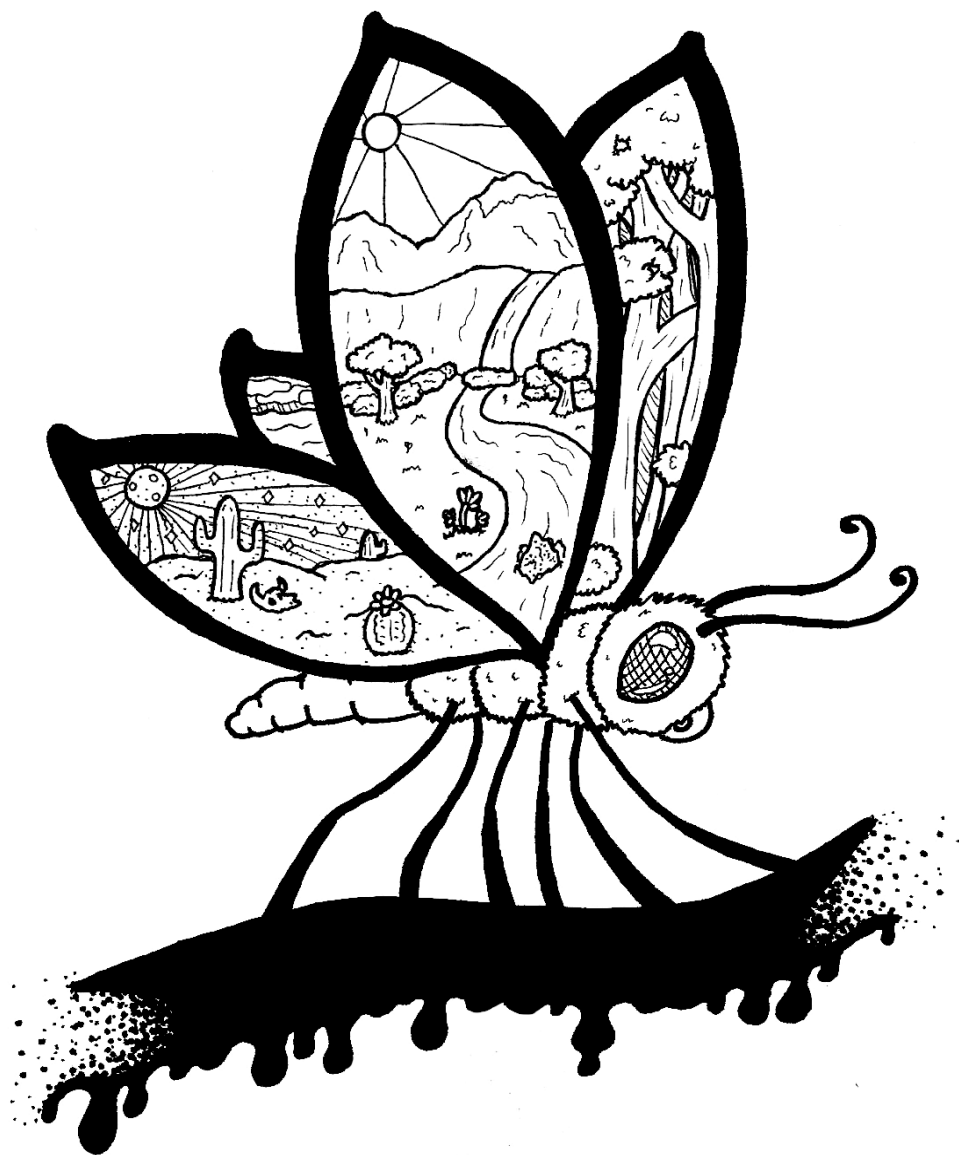
Perhaps I am my memory,
A construction of events that tell my story.
But I don't remember being born, or the words I said last year.
And if I were to forget it all, I would still continue to be.
Perhaps I'm not there after all.

Perhaps I am my consciousness,
A continuous stream of awareness in the world.
But, if I were copied in full, with each thought and memory,
And they continued 'my' consciousness, would they really be me?
Perhaps I'm not there after all.

Perhaps I am nothing,
A trick of the light, a mirror with no reflection.
I cannot find myself because there's no one there to find.
I cannot be an 'other' because there's nothing to separate me.
Perhaps I'm not there after all.

I don't know if I can find myself.
If those keys exist at all, they're lost along that hiking trail.
So I'll walk on, becoming someone new in each moment,
And when I reach a point where the path is locked before me,
I'll break down the door instead.

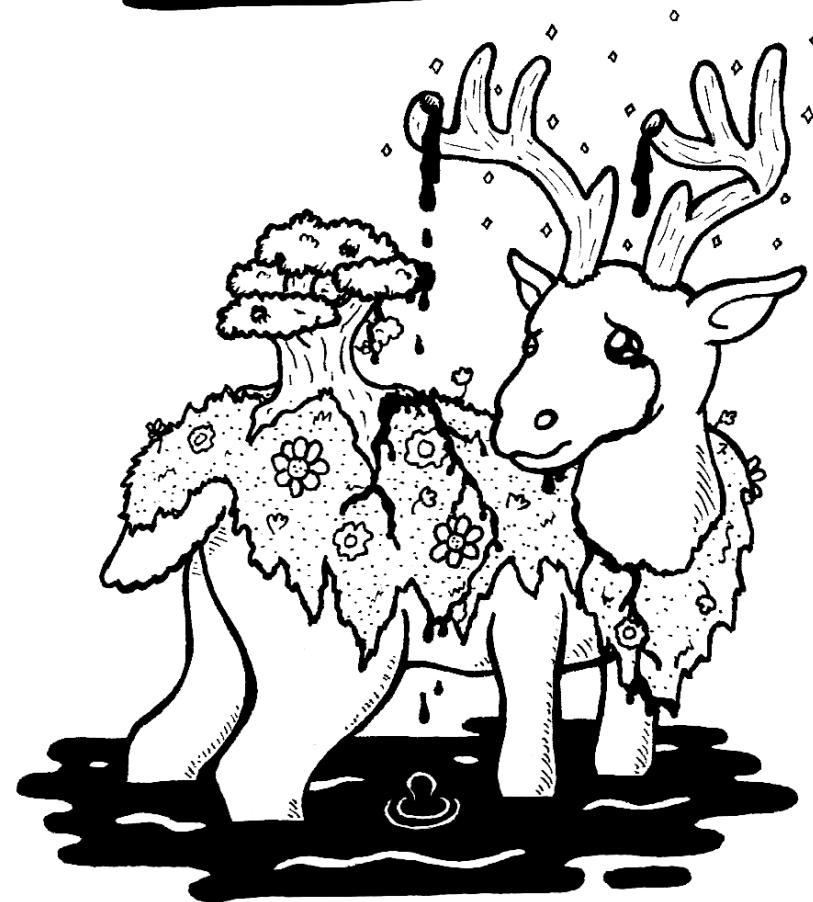




Born too late to explore earth
 Born too early to explore space
 Born just in time to watch it

all

burn





I began my days a wallflower,
sprouted between the cracks of riverstone.
My stem twisted through the little space I had,
and my leaves, without sun, wilted and browned.
I could see, from the wall's shadow, a field
filled with life of all kinds, joyous in sun.
I watched in envy, then anger, then nothing at all,
as my dreams of the field died with my emotion.

But then, something, somewhere, changed.

The wall behind me crumbled and fell,
and I saw myself as something other than a wallflower.
The grass! The space! The sun! The sky!
My crooked stem unkinked in the air,
my browned leaves stretched out to the sun,
and I grew in ways I never before imagined.

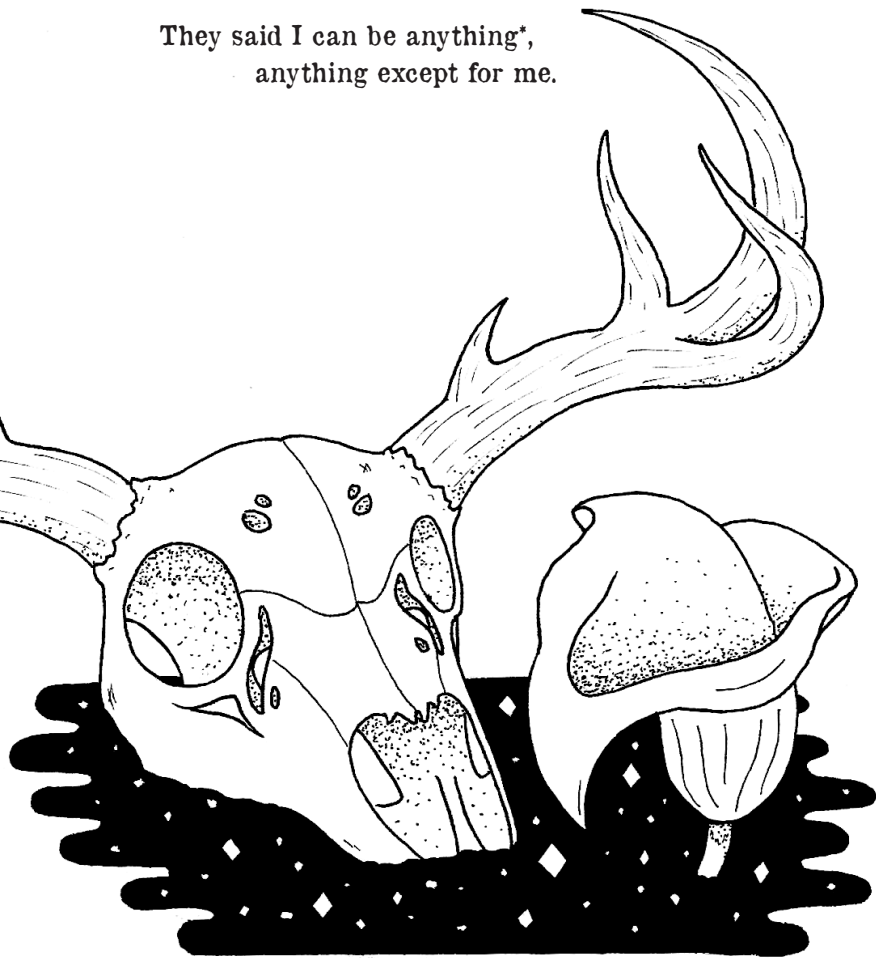
But, from my wall, I couldn't hear the words
of the life in the field, which I now did clearly.
As they stared, the air filled with their words -
how strange, how queer, are you a lily or hyacinth -
and my every growth caught their attention.

At first I found myself dreaming of the wall,
of going back to the shade, the solitude,
but I could never, for that stone would be my death.
Then I tried to limit my growth, my expression,
but every form of myself attracted their eyes.

So now, despite my fear of their response,
I will allow myself to grow, to change, to rise.
And perhaps, when another wall crumbles down,
that wallflower will be free of the eyes, the words,
for the field will have experienced me,
and it will find itself brighter than ever before.

They said I can be anything in the land of the American Dream.
But no, not an artist, art has no use and won't pay the bills,
So just be a worker drone instead,
even if your life withers with each day.
But no, not a bisexual, there's only room for one or the other,
So just be straight instead,
even if your strongest love is the same gender.
But no, not a man, because your private parts aren't so private,
So just be a woman instead,
even if you would prefer to see yourself dead.
But no, not an activist, you'd upset people by fighting the status quo,
So just be silent instead,
even if the status quo is what's beating you down.
They said I can be anything, but I didn't see the asterisk as they spoke.

They said I can be anything*,
anything except for me.



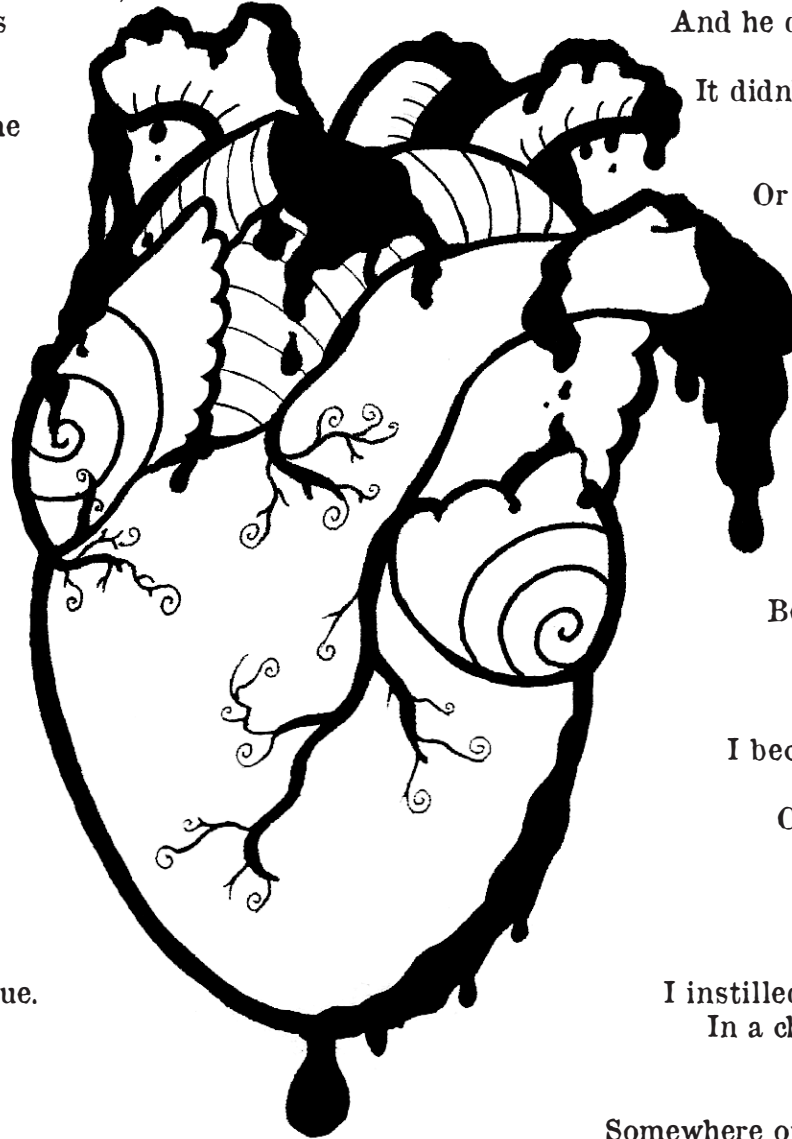
My father always wanted a son.
He imagined himself as a paragon of masculinity,
Ready to impart on his son the ways of the world.
He would lead that son from infant to adulthood,
Building a man in his own image to pass
on his legacy.

When he got three daughters, he chose me
to play pretend,
Imagining me as the one who would
pass on that legacy,
Teaching me the ways of golf, of guitar,
of business,
Instilling in me the values of his father
and his father
In a chain of father and son that he
could not continue.

Turns out, he chose right.
You'd think he would be happy
To have his desires heard, his
wishes granted,
That his choice of stand-in turned
out to be
What he really wanted all along.

Instead he became a toddler in tantrum
Because he just got a red toy truck
But the one that he wanted was blue,
not red.
It didn't matter that the wheels spun
all the same,
He didn't want a red truck, he wanted blue.

It didn't matter if it was painted over,
Or scraped off, or scrubbed clean,
Or bleached entirely.
The truck would always be red.
And he didn't want a red truck, he wanted blue.



It didn't matter if every speck of red was gone,
And in its place was that beautiful blue
Matching the toy of his dreams perfectly.
The truck was once red, so it would always be red,
And he didn't want a red truck, he wanted blue.

It didn't matter what people around him said,
Or what appeared in every video,
every photograph,
Or even what sat in front of his own eyes.
It would always be a red truck.
And he didn't want a red truck,
he wanted blue.

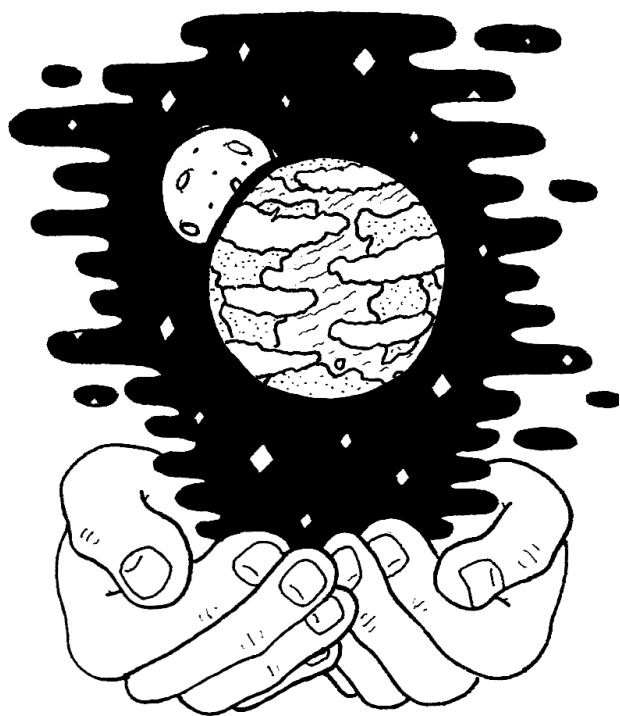
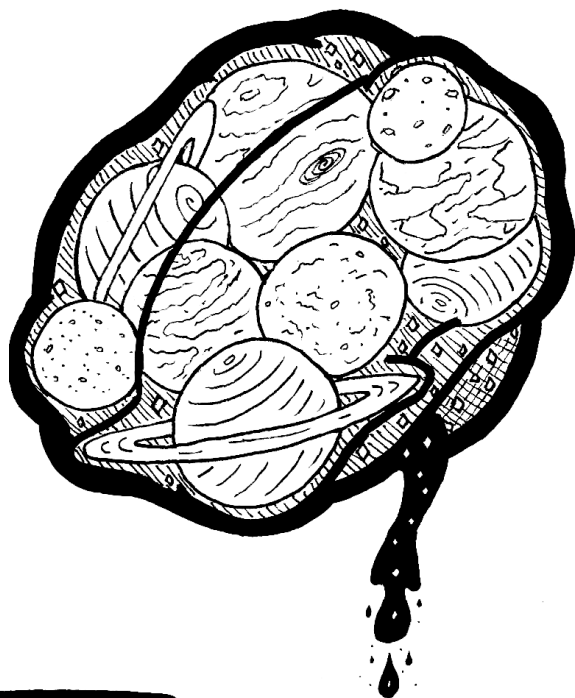
Just as I revealed to him who I
truly am,
The man I once thought of as a
role model of adulthood
Had revealed to me who he really was;
A toddler, throwing tantrum
after tantrum
Because life didn't give him exactly what
he demanded.

And so I became my own father.
I became a paragon of my own masculinity,
Not afraid to cut out the toxic pieces
Or hold onto parts that other men reject
For fear of being seen as feminine.

I taught myself the ways of the world,
And built myself in my own image.
I instilled in myself values of my own discovery
In a chain of introspection and self-reflection
That I need no one else to continue.

Somewhere out there, there's a toddler with no truck
Because he wouldn't stop whining about it once being red
So it left to find people who would love its fresh paint.
In the end, it doesn't matter what a child says;
I was good in red, and I am rocking blue.

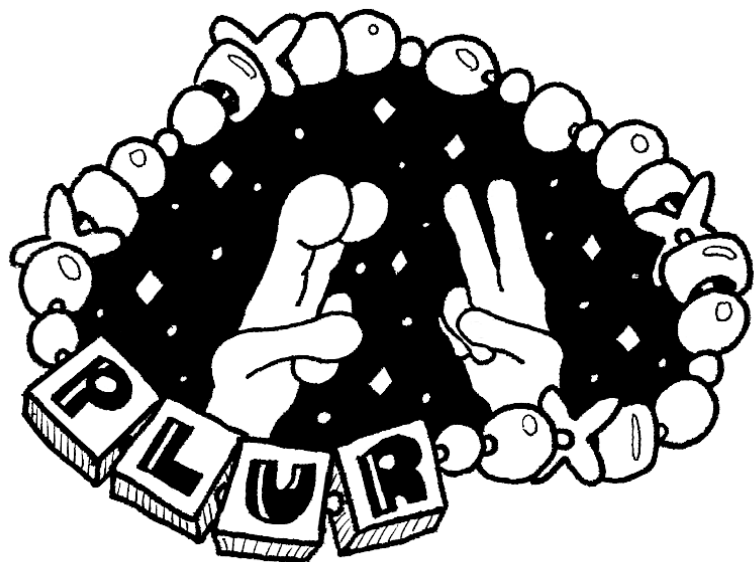
We
are
all
just
stardust



that
learned
to
judge
itself

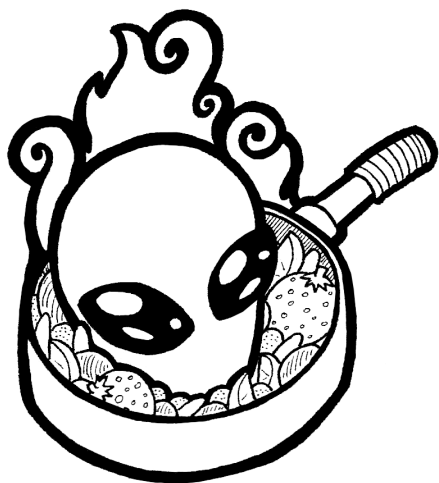


A Series of Definitions, Taught by Strangers & Beads



Nanner, verb
dancing through the woods, adorned in pink and yellow.

Electric, adjective
of a series of blue hues slightly shifting, like the people in a crowd of expectant participants.



Q-T, noun
a quick glance shared
between two people that
creates a mutual feeling
of trust and safety.

Beyond, noun
the knowledge that, no
matter how long they've
been gone, your friends
will always return.



Alien, adjective
a feeling of community between strangers that may
never meet again, created through random acts of
kindness and generosity that desire no reward.



I first faced death in the form of a lightning strike.
It struck the yard of the house I was in
As I stood in the basement, leaning a TV on myself.
The bolt came through the wiring, then through me,
Leaving me paralyzed for minutes, burned for years,
And with nerve pain that hasn't left for a moment
In the decade since those few life changing seconds.

I next faced death in the form of my own reflection.
It built slowly, a serpent that grew from my body,
Constricting my chest, replacing my blood with venom,
And hissing words that turned me into my enemy.
It took years to fight against that piece of myself,
To slice it off, to drain the venom, to reject the words,
Leaving me bruised, bleeding, sobbing, but alive.

I now face death in the form of thoughts and legality.
The serpent was not only a piece of myself,
But a part of all people, filling them with hate and fear
For those like me who found freedom in its death.
It's a war I wage every day by simply existing.
The soldiers attack with ignorant words and hateful acts,
And together they target my legal rights of personhood.

Who would have thought that being myself
Would require more strength, more force of will,
And leave scars and pain more damaging
Than a direct strike by the spear of Zeus?
The wound from my battle that day was nothing
Compared to the war I wage every other day,
Fighting not with lightning, but with words and rights.

If it would stop the war for all my siblings,
I would personally climb the cliffs of Olympus
And break down the doors of the palace of Zeus,
And take a thousand strikes from his mighty spear,
Have a thousand paralyzed minutes and burned years,
And feel the lasting pain for a thousand lifetimes,
For all that would still be less than the battle we face.

But there is no easy way for me to end this fight.
It is a war that will continue to rage as society shifts.
It's painful, and it's scarring, and it's terrifying,
But I know that I'll make it through this turmoil.
After all, this isn't my first face-off with death.
A God couldn't take me down. I couldn't take me down.
This world may burn, but I'll help build a world anew.

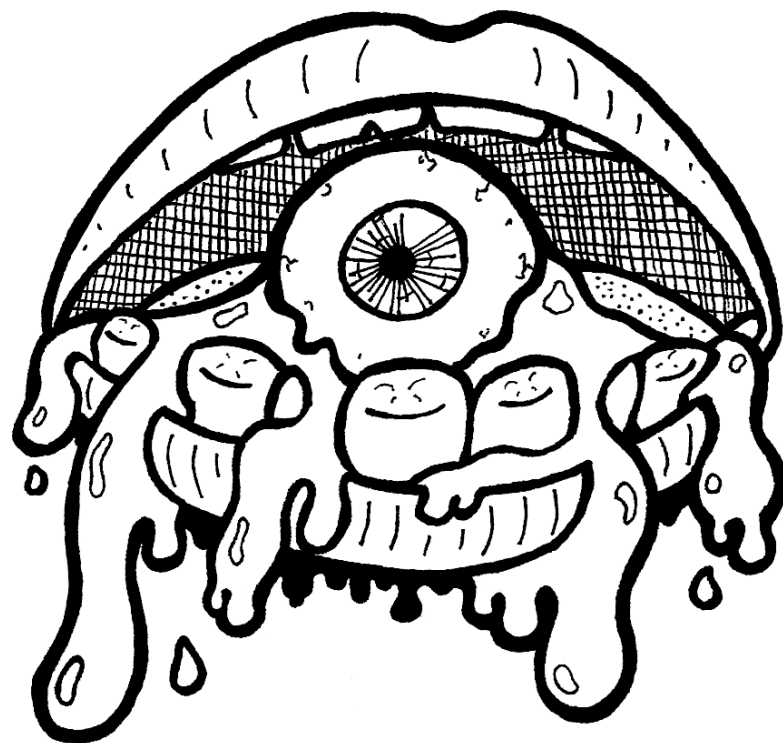
We built ourselves as a house of cards
Constructed upon the table, rising piece after piece
It would fall, but when it did, we simply started again
The cards undamaged, rearranged but whole
With time, our tower stopped falling
Those long-standing cards turned into a solid glass
For we thought that they would never fall again
Until a single bump
brought it all
 crashing
 down

The shards of our expectations scattered across the floor
Some looked away and proclaimed the tower's strength
Some held cards in the air where the tower once was
Just to let them fall, the broken base growing between us
We watched as those before us struggled and lied
Until we could take it no more
And told off those who denied
And fought off those who corrupted
And plunged our hands into the shards
And let the edges tear our skin
And soaked the table in our blood
Finding the paper cards hidden beneath the fragments
Pulling them out, blood and glass stuck to their form
Starting the base of the tower anew
And so we built ourselves as a house of cards
Constructed upon the table, rising piece after piece
It would fall, but when it did, we simply started again
The cards undamaged, paper stained but whole

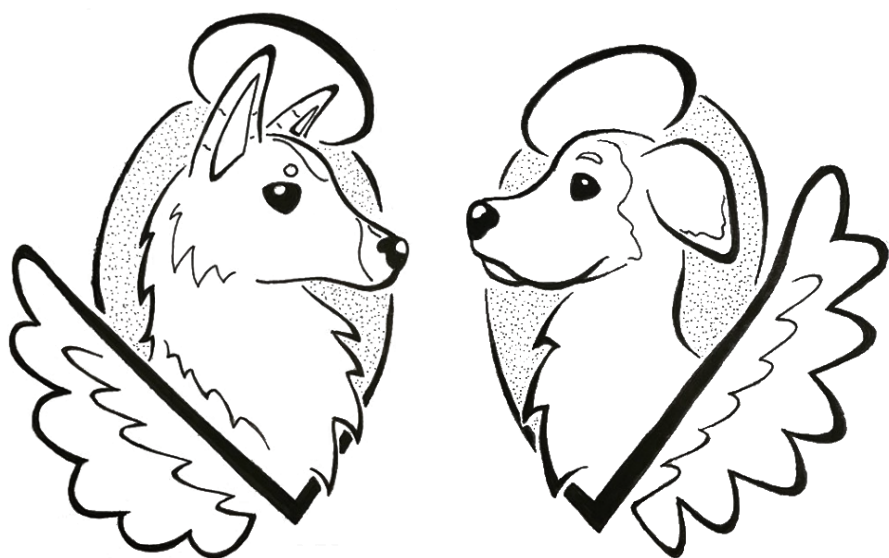




My mom, when I drew what was inside my head,
Would ask, "why don't you draw some flowers instead?"
My work may not show an expected beauty,
But it is all undeniably me.



I adore the symbolic and crave the surreal.
I love how creating my art makes me feel.
It may not be flowers, but it's what I grew.
I hope, when you see that, you'll love it too.



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