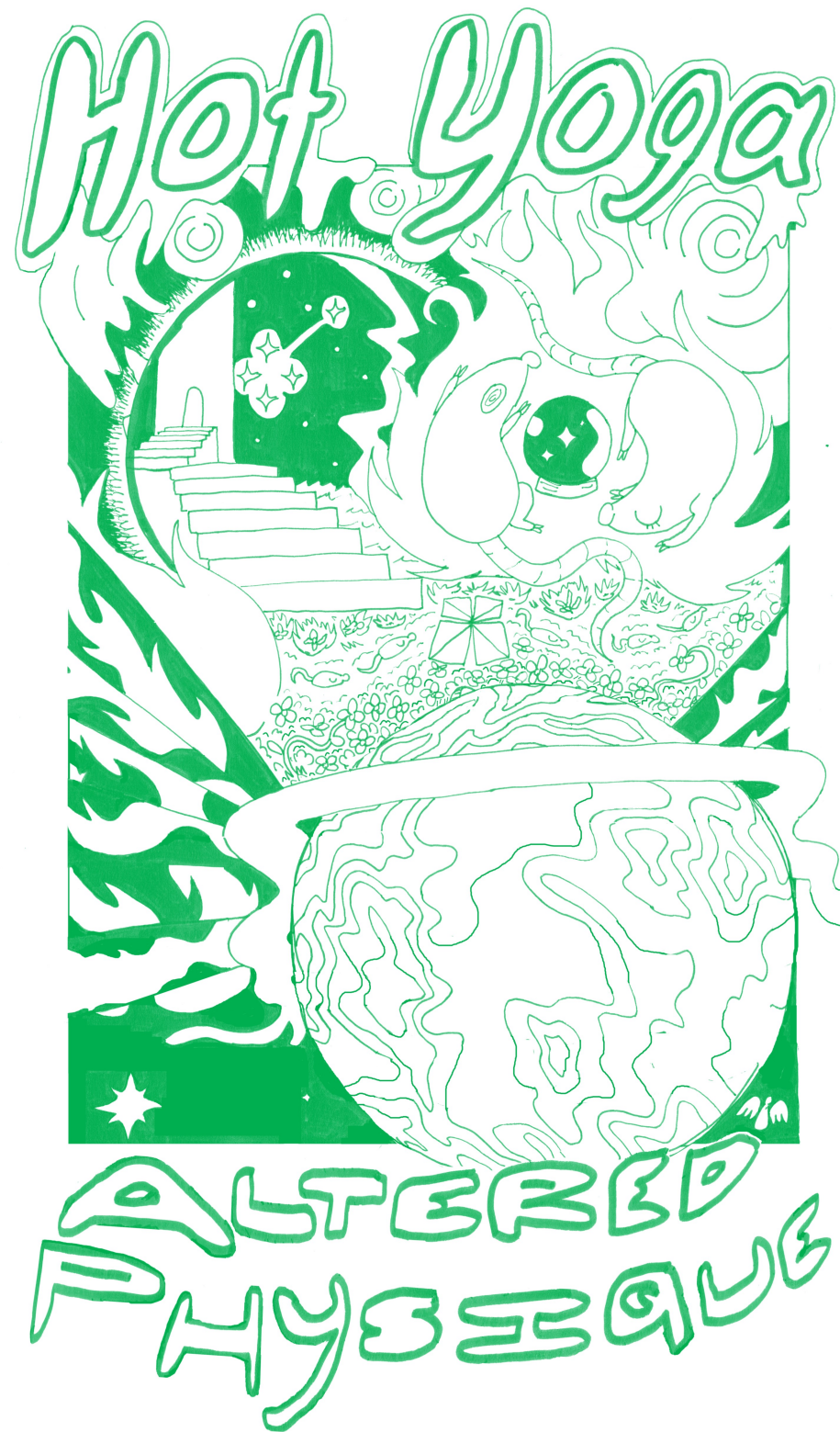
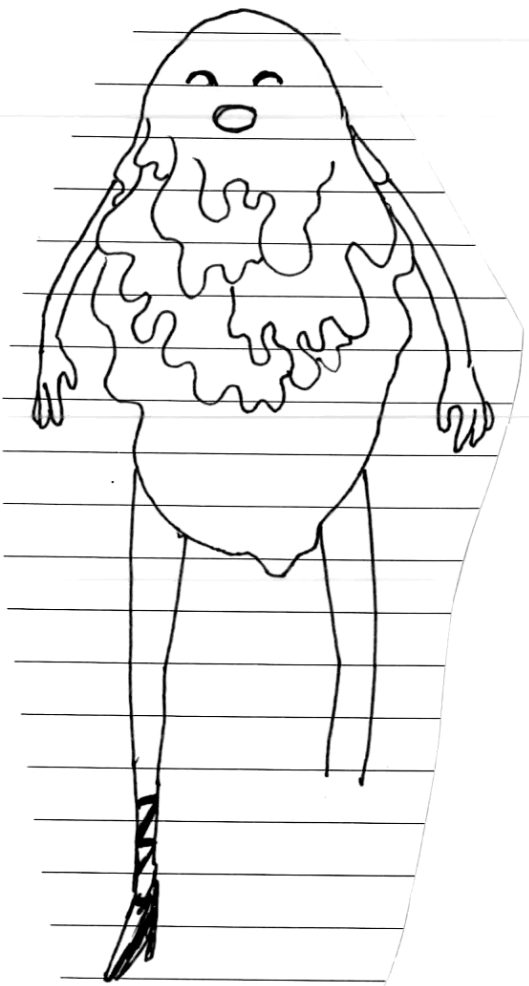


dating these days is too complicated. after you meet in the lobby of a near-defunct multiplayer poker tournament flash game you have to chat for months in the notes app of a shared icloud account before you even get each other's 3ds friend codes. then all you can do is share pictures of your animal crossing new leaf houses with each other until you accidentally streetpass, realize you live in the same town, and start posting notes on random utility poles hoping the other person passes by and notices it and reads it, and repeat that process until somehow you've managed to schedule a time to meet at some terrible loud party south of town, and meet up with each other when you're both so fucked out on something that you can hardly remember your own name let alone the other person's, and completely "re-meet" each other on some imagined higher plane when really you're both just so deathstupid (narcotized??) waving your arms at each other with some local band called Animal Pelt Minor wailing around with like ten guys and six of them play guitars all at the same time, and you both are touching each other's face in the dark thinking you just met god, and then you have to go to bed but not fuck because that doesn't make sense in a state like that, and wake up the next morning and drink water and realize you're covered in sweat and maybe puke, make out badly for like two minutes and then leave not even realizing who the other person was until like four days later, and THEN you have to finally enter into a relationship and date for years and move in with each other and not have kids until you're thirty then have two kids then live for like fifty more years then die!!!







HOT

YOGA

ALTERED

PHYSIQUE



Rowen
Cory 2020

'peter mallsey,' Catarina answers.

Big Mike sits still as he can. he's in a wooden chair with a dark pink seat cushion.

'guy in Queens?' Big Mike asks.

'yeah,' Catarina answers.

Big Mike sits still some more. face scrunched. lost in thought, or something like it.

'...kay,' Big Mike says, 'peter mallsey just died. bicycle accident.'

Catarina looks at Big Mike wide-eyed. sits up on the couch. swallows her gum. 'HOLY SHIT!' she says, 'you went there!'

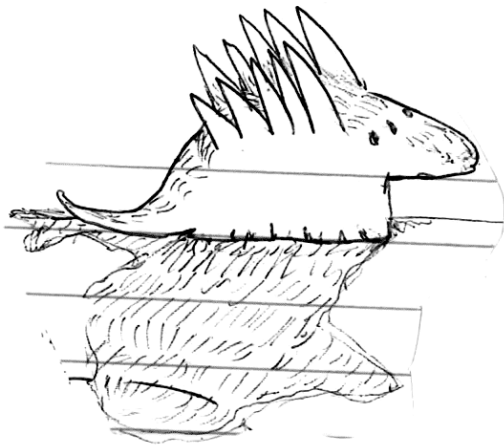
'i went there,' says Big Mike. 'good luck with the
underrealm trials, you entitled shitbag.'

'i thought you were chill as fuck!!' says Catarina, 'but you fuckin WENT THERE!!! that was, fucking, that was fuckin AMAZING my dude!!!!'

Benny Third tugs on Catarina's shirt. 'HELLO?' he says, 'SIS??'

'OH, FUCK!' Catarina looks at Benny Third, finally recognizing him. 'benny third!!! my good fucking /bro/!! born unto us again, huh? mike, check this shit! today fuckin' RULES!'

HOT YOGA



ALTERED PHYSIQUE

acknowledges my sacrifices. Bled three pigs out last week with the EXACT chants as decreed earlier in the month by Priestess Null. NO ground-shaking or lightning in the sky or mind-to-mind communication or anything. Dude basically ignores the whole thing.

2. HUGE DELAYS in prayer gratification. I'll grant the guy this, it usually does happen eventually. But MY GODS, the dude is slow. Was trying to get a promotion a few months ago -- sent a prayer up hoping that this guy Mitch (also in competition for the position and probably going to get it) would catch some plague or something and die. Absolutely NOTHING for three months, and Mitch gets promoted, and THEN he catches malaria and passes. It's like, okay, you killed Mitch, but -- too little too late? I'd already accepted an offer from another company for half the salary!

3. ZERO perks in the afterlife. Look, call me entitled if you want (although I think our community is pretty much in agreement about this), but our guy FIRSTSON OF THE LORDS can't throw us a bone in the next world? Cousin of mine worships Xetla. She's

gonna get a FREE BICYCLE when she passes. The trials of the underrealms are supposed to be hard as fuck, the least our guy could do is give us some transportation. Not asking for a sports car here!"

'okay, stop,' says Big Mike, 'these aren't even new complaints, cat. if you're trying to provoke me this isn't gonna cut it. i remember years ago they were mad i wasn't handing out free bicycles like that's easy or something. what xetla does is just a dumbass incentive thing: you know he can't charm away demons or eat secret children.'

'yeah?' says Catarina, 'i dunno bro. guy's pretty mad you aren't instantly murdering his coworkers. get mad, dude! get mad! get a lil angry! never hurt anybody.'

Big Mike sighs.

Benny Third, waving his hands in the air, jumping up and down: 'HEY!! anybody gonna listen to or acknowledge me?? HELLO!!!!????'

'what was the guy's name?' Big Mike asks.

/moon's children/

here he comes again! about 9 months after his sacred obliteration, Benny Third walks out of his forever-cell into the Atrium, sucking a lollipop.

'they're talking about us on nextdoor again,' says Catarina, arms splayed all over the couch, smacking bubblegum (the old pink kind), 'this stupid app lets people say whatever the fuck they want.'

'so let them say it,' says Big Mike, 'the problem isn't that they're on there, it's that /you're/ on there, listening.'

'you wouldn't say that if you read this shit they're saying about us,' says Catarina, 'all this shit. they say we're an eyesore. they're literally cursing our names up and down the damn feed. every post is about us.'

'they've got reasons to be angry,' says Big Mike, 'you'd do the same if you were in they're position. you know you would.'

'um, HELLO!?' says Benny Third, sucking on his lollipop.

Catarina pops her gum. 'here's one about you,' she says, nodding at Big Mike, ' "FIRST SON THE WORST OF THEM ALL." that's the title.'

'i feel like i don't even want you to read that to me,' says Big Mike, 'because you're trying to get me to care, and i really just don't want to care.'

he continues: 'it's not that you aren't going to be able to make me care. if you read that and it's a bunch of insults about me, then yeah, i'm probably going to care. but i'm just not about that, y'know? i avoid that stuff cause i don't WANT to get angry.'

Catarina coughs loudly. ' "FIRST SON THE WORST OF THEM ALL." post by peter mallsey. ahem. "I know we have a problem with all three of the Moon's Children, I'm not disputing that. I think we're all in agreement here. But does anyone else think the venerated First Son is BY FAR the worst of them?'

1. Most of the time, there is literally NO indication that he

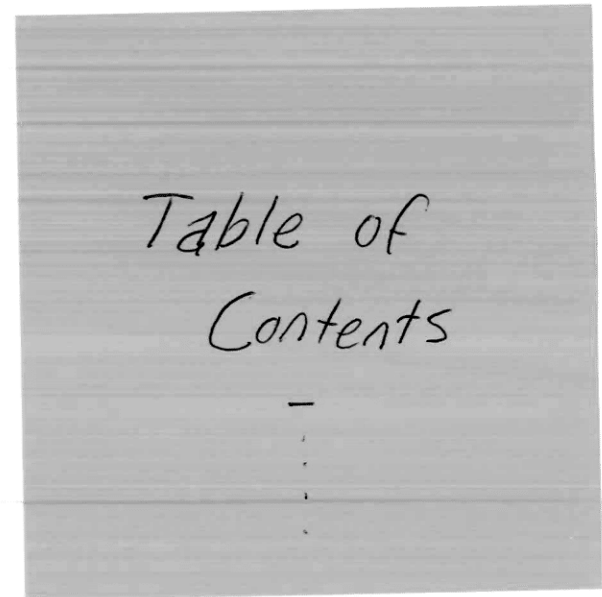


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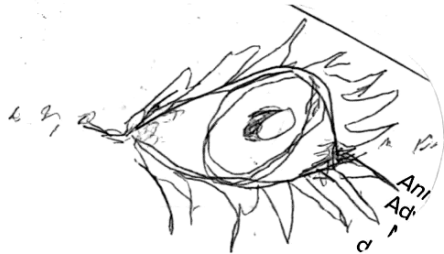


flo from progressive is 100 years old

the makeup melts under the set lights
and the sharp edges of the lens slice off
anything offscreen

an extra, accidentally stumbling stage left out of shot
finds himself vivisected onward and onward
sliced cross-section at thirty frames per second like meatcuts
falls in a pile on the floor of the studio

flo from progressive knows to never leave the frame



2!!

"oh, it's neato alright," she said.

"you've been saying that a lot," i said.

"yeah," she said.

"you've been laughing different, too," i said.

"yeah," she said.

"why?" i said.

"i dunno," she said.

"you dunno or you don't wanna tell me?"

she looked at me. "i really dunno. i'd tell you pretty much anything."

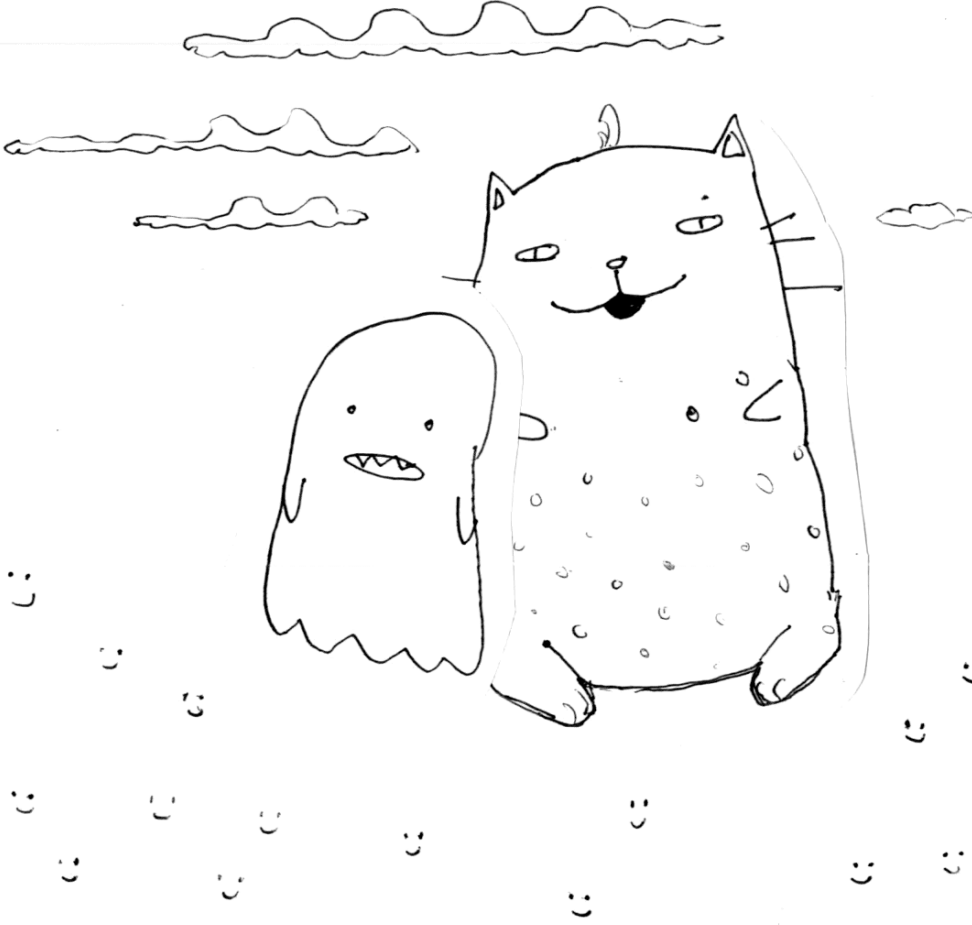
"so what was it like? the afterlife?"

she took a bite out of her protein bar. "i had to do some crazy shit to get back."

"you did?"

"yeah," she said, "it was real fuckin neato."

the end.



maisey in the lightning car
knife fights at

interstellar radio wave burst transmission 90-99

only a slight cut, but he still
has to clean the dry brown blood
off the cinemax carpet
scrub Pax Ax and factory lye
into a 70s throwback, knifing
see-through sheets of spill
out of this particular tile-repeat
galaxy, multicolor, primary/secondary
stars in the dark



this is what i told to jin. and again, he dismissed me.

"you're thinking too much," he said. he was pulling apart slices of an orange.
"neato. neato's like nothing. neato doesn't mean anything. maybe she always
wanted to say neato, and now that she's got this second chance and she knows
how precious life is, she's gonna say it. it literally doesn't mean anything."

"but that's definitely not the vibe, jin" i said.

"it's the vibe for me," he said. he started eating the orange slices, one by one.

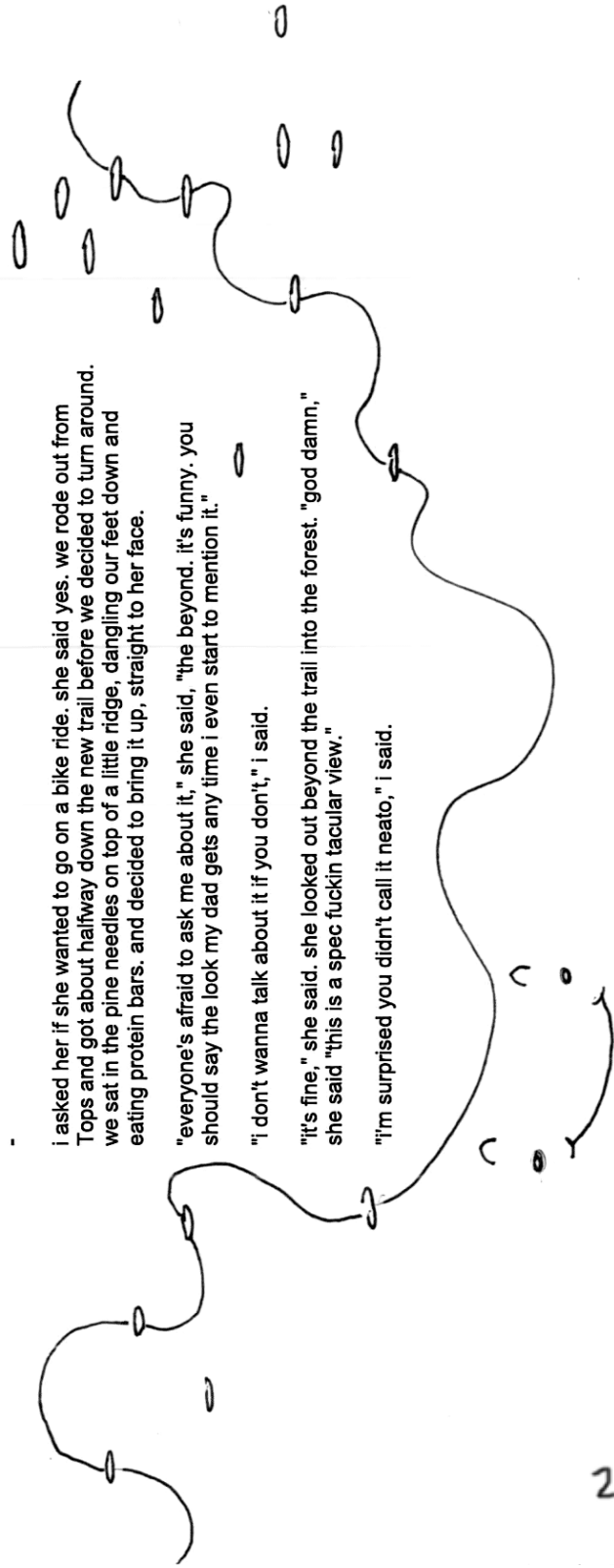
i asked her if she wanted to go on a bike ride. she said yes. we rode out from
Tops and got about halfway down the new trail before we decided to turn around.
we sat in the pine needles on top of a little ridge, dangling our feet down and
eating protein bars. and decided to bring it up, straight to her face.

"everyone's afraid to ask me about it," she said, "the beyond. it's funny. you
should say the look my dad gets any time i even start to mention it."

"i don't wanna talk about it if you don't," i said.

"it's fine," she said. she looked out beyond the trail into the forest. "god damn,"
she said "this is a spec fuckin tacular view."

"i'm surprised you didn't call it neato," i said.



there is a saying, not really an idiom, but a statement of wisdom and dubious scientific accuracy, which is: your personality is simply an amalgamation of the five people you are closest to.



i myself can attest to this. i know that after i met garth i started doing that thing he always does, that thing with the hands: the "wow" motion, exploding his hands outward to accentuate the wow. you pick that stuff up from people. and i know she's picked a few things up from me -- when we'd known each other for a few months she started bending her plastic straws down from a point about an inch from the top and sucking on them horizontal -- that's a thing i've done since the third grade and i'd never seen anybody do it until she did it.

so when i talked to jin about this, and i brought up the laugh, and he dismissed that, and i brought up "neato", and he dismissed that, this is the argument i made to him:

your personality is simply an amalgamation of the five people you are closest to. none of us have a laugh like that or say neato; not you, not anna, not garth, not me, and definitely not either of her parents (they're solemn, sober types. no neatos there).

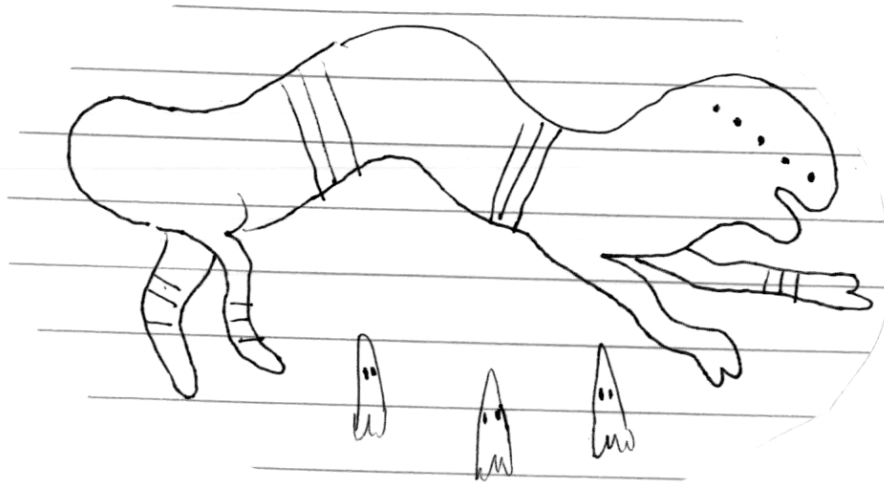
THEREFORE:

these are personality traits picked up from someone else. and also, these personality traits were only noticeable after she was dug up out of the ground.

not before, but after.

AND THUS:

these personality traits: the shrill laugh and the tendency to say "neato" -- these were traits picked up via association with an individual BEYOND THE GRAVE.



stormdrain
funeral hill
gravehall
stonetemple
neatsquare
feedhouse
slamdoor
sightkill
legoff
bleedbowl

termage
the vision train
the earth, crestin'

visioneer
math wizard

journey of the math wizard



phlegm forum

*they laser-carved it microscopic
onto the flat end of an old needle*

*rules only readable by bottom-end
of a long scope*

*in public
they spit their slosh discreetly in the appropriate receptacles
but at night
it was collected and labelled and photographed and studied
and color-charted and discussed at length*

*some of them shut themselves up in darkrooms and
emulated the salt-lick goats, discerning one
airmailed snog sample from another, sloshing
green sweat around in a stemmed waterglass,
surviving on skinflake and sinus meat,
hoping one day for the king or the queen
of the phlegm forum to descend holy upon them
in some terrifying, comforting dream*

*they shunned the moon paper
they thought the nightglint was useless
they balked to one another in contempt-tone about
everybody's "enlightenment"*

*did the buddha know it all from a drug?
no.
all he had to eat was his own fucking snot.*

"glad you're back," i said for the fiftieth time.

"all of it," she said, laughing that new, mocking sort of laugh.

"yeah?" i said.

"well," she said, "it's all still here."

"yeah," i said.

she looked at me and looked out at the row of mine trees at the border of the park. "neato," she said.

i know these are two little things. i can understand if you change how you laugh. if you're dead, and you think in your head or something right before you die: "well, i'm dead." and you end up not. you end up being dug up a month later after some kid hears screaming from underneath one of the graves, and you're alive, and out in the world again -- i get how that might make you laugh a little louder and a little more sarcastically and more shrill.

but in all the years i knew her before that all happened, she'd never said neato. she was one of the people who, i felt, if you said something of that type around her in a mildly genuine way -- one of those worlds like "rad" or "dope" or "groovy", you'd get a sad little look and a "really? 'rad'? is this the seventies?" and of course the same applied to neato.

it wasn't just that time, i should mention and this'll help you get a picture. it was multiple times a day, every day. cat climbs out of a box in a funny way? neato. jin catches a pen after flipping it up into the air? neato.



A

("neato")

when they dug her out of the ground, two things were different. everything else was the same.

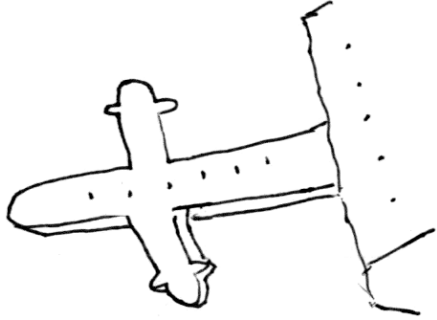
i noticed at the party. they had a big old celebration - jin called it the unfuneral. they made it a bit more of a joke than they probably should have. jin "took back" his eulogy; he stood up in front of everyone and took back all the nice things he said about her. "i'll say 'em for real when you're really dead," he said. and she laughed.

that's when i noticed, because the first thing that was different was her laugh. before she died she had a laugh all nervous and caught up in her throat, like she was trying to push it back all the time, and even in those insane funny moments with everybody at the bar cracking up she'd be hurking it back until it was almost silent, like a forced giggle, windless and cut too early.

now her laugh was loud, and sharp, and short. and it was a mocking sort of laugh. and when she laughed when jin said that, it was for a long time and with a big grin on her face. and i could tell that a few people were caught off guard at first -- they gave her this look like "???" for just a split second, because they'd never heard a laugh like that come out of her before. short staccato individual laughs, like fingers striking quick the high keys of the piano. she had her head up, looking down past her nose. hee hee hee.

but i think i was the only one who really noticed. and remembered it.

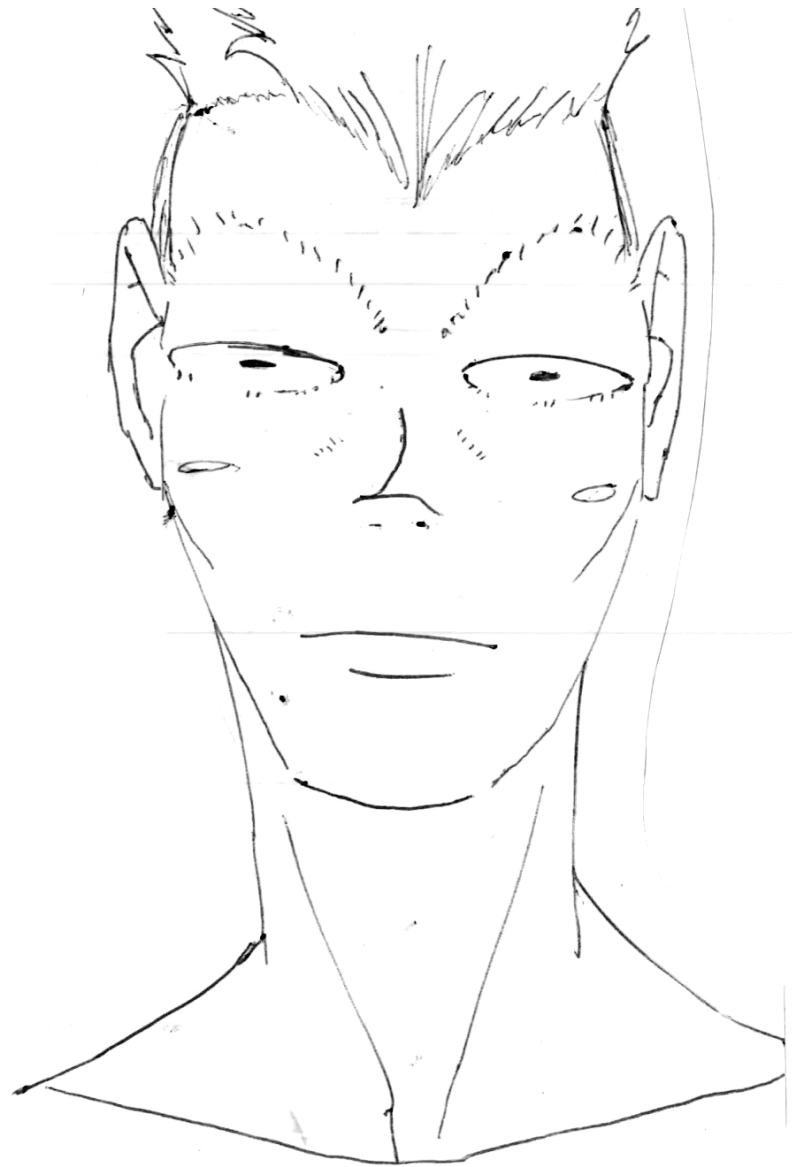
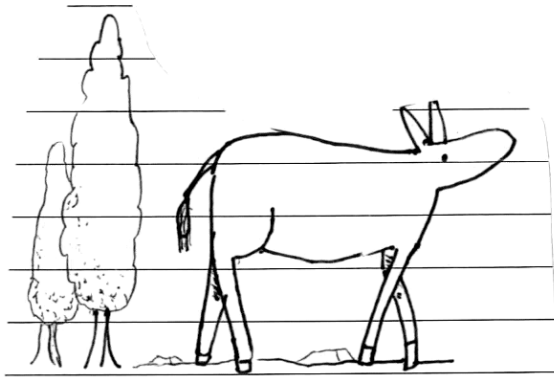
after the unfuneral she had to go and sign a bunch of papers, which i guess put her life back into effect in the official way. she had to go buy a bunch of new clothes, because anna had donated all of the old ones away. and then she asked me to take her to the old tree park, where we used to hang out a long time ago. we sat on a bench.



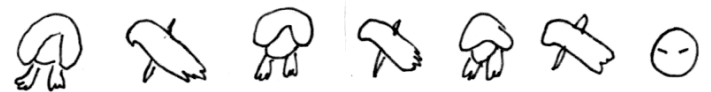
(Dust, Wind, and the Terrible Heat)

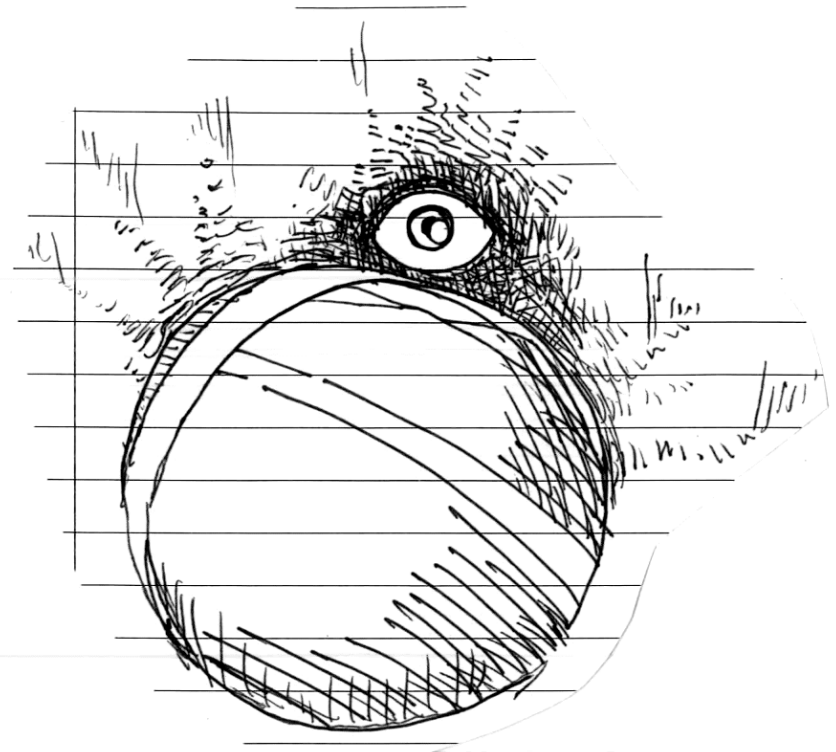
fraying card corners, seedspitters
curtain in folds across the entrance to the bar

Dust drinks hot milk, and it smarts against the scars
swells up the skinshuff around the inside of her lip
she tongues the tips of her teeth
dribbles a bit on the coaster
tries to talk
spits milk scattershot over the green table
forgets what she was going to say
stares at the dartboard hanging in the next room
for a long time



- HOT YOGA ALTERED PHYSIQUE -





Wind, in the spirit of the communal silence
sips her milk wordless
lukewarm; it's the last of a jug
sat out on the kitchen counter all the way from Monday to now
scudsy and curdling, lumping ververy downthroat
she sucks air in between her teeth
sets the glass down a little too hard
stares at the dartboard a little too long

it's a gas, or the times test
Dust, Wind, and the Terrible Heat
it's a gas, or living gets tough
and the Terrible Heat
wouldn't mind
another glass of the chilled stuff

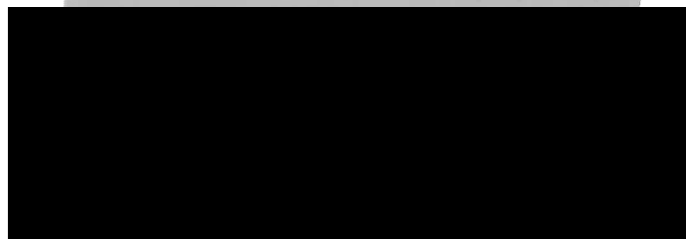
My Punctured Tire is Rapidly Losing Air

Bug

bug eat, bug walk, as a bug i am unable to talk
bug knife, bug life, i am a bug and it causes me strife
bug stab, bug kill, ending the life of a bug is a thrill
bug neat, bug fool, i am a bug and i think that's cool



Mignonette
jessamine
yarrow





~~~the killing of the horse~~~

allow in one life sixty dirts  
fifty sands and one long water

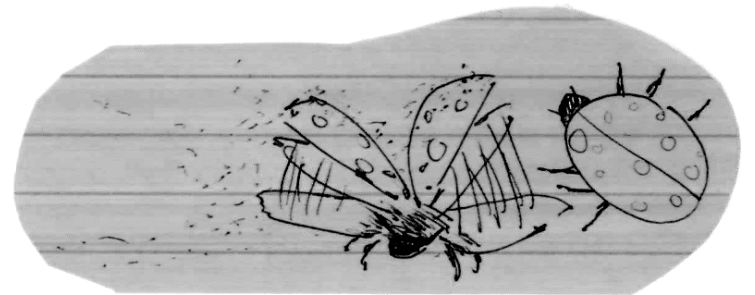
seattle -> spokane valley  
spokane valley -> billings  
billings -> mitchell  
mitchell -> Kirksville

dark  
post  
quest  
mark  
rest  
yoke  
help



the turning stone  
the weather cycle  
first the impulse

grime





who are the rats? a termite poem

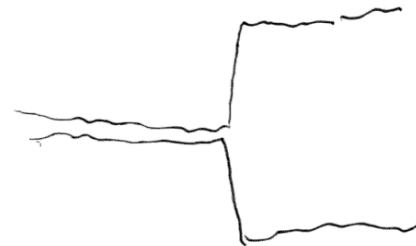
*i smell pizza!  
peel back the tape!  
woodfood isn't enough  
i need years of grub  
to make up for the years of wood.*

*i want it slimy,  
soddendown - pre-chewed for sure  
i want lentil, basalt, hummus  
i want a fucking burger!*

*cherrywood tastes like  
the taste of teeth  
oakwood tastes like  
dirt*

*who are the rats?  
i met one once,  
when we broke down opposite  
sides of the same plywood board*

*it was bigger than me  
but it ran away scared  
and i realized  
then  
that you'd be afraid of me too*





HAUNTED by the sins of his past, Dr. Tongue refreshes the UPS package tracking info webpage and discovers that his flatmail double-class quick-ship EZ-delivery Fast-Box @ has yet to be delivered.

"Oh, if only I could go back," says the doctor, "These sins... my past... will they continue to haunt me forever??"

DISBELIEVING the cold, factual information provided by the UPS tracking webpage, Dr. Tongue determines to mount an expedition to the front door of his apartment building in an attempt to locate the package himself. Dead, drooping ferns litter the shared hallway that leads to the front door.

"These damnable sins..." says the doctor, "This regrettable

past! Are they my cross to bear into eternity? Is there no way to move this weight from my shoulders?"

Before he can reach the door and verify with his own eyes the truth conveyed to him via the UPS tracking info webpage, Mrs. Cannella, tenant of apt 3, opens her door and enters the shared hallway.

"Ah! Dr. Tongue!" says Mrs. Cannella, "How are you? How are things getting on with those sins? Any update on your attempts to wipe away your regrettable past?"

Dr. Tongue shakes his head. "Unfortunately, Mrs. Cannella, nothing has changed." His scowl deepens. "And on top of that, the bluetooth speaker

I ordered hasn't gotten here yet even though it was SUPPOSED to have been delivered today! Fucking Amazon, ugh!!!"

