

**BAD LANGUAGE BAD LANGUAGE BAD LANGUAGE BAD LANGUAGE BAD LANGUAGE VOLUME**

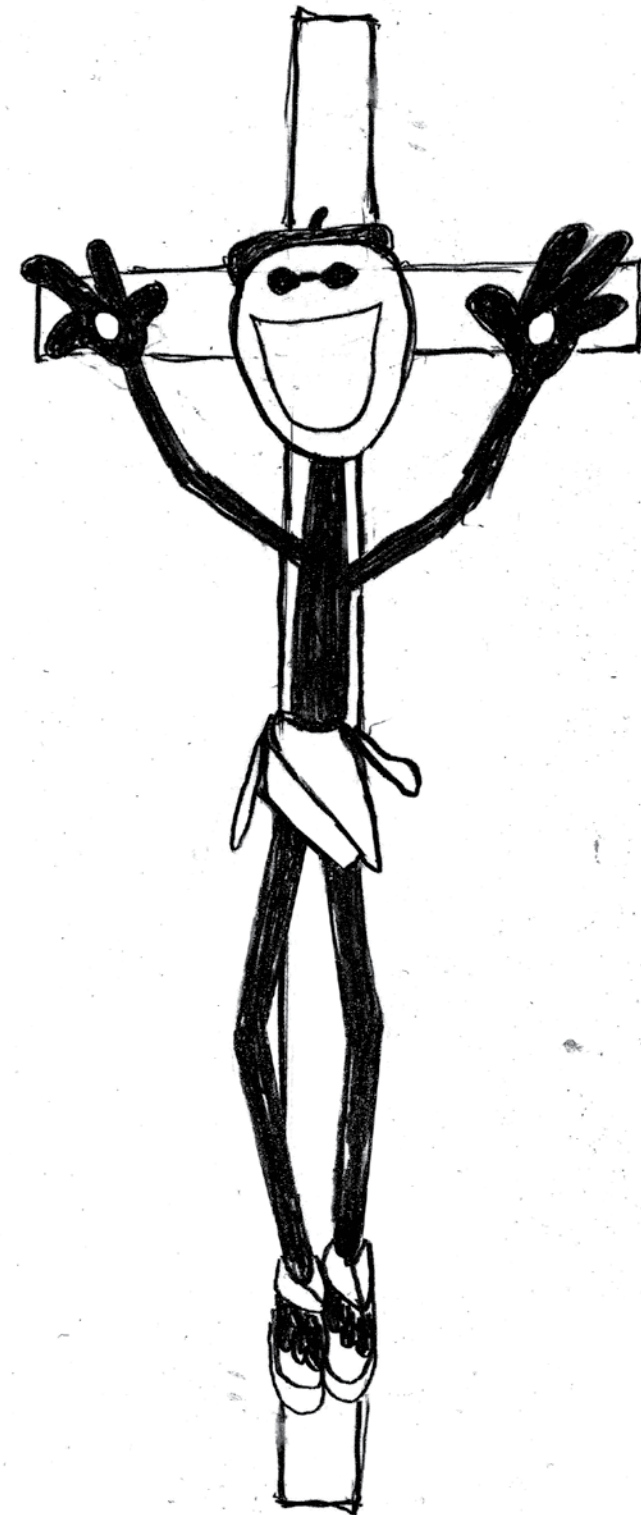


**BAD LANGUAGE, VOLUME II**

In Order of Appearance

**TROY KREINER  
GRACE HAN  
KYLE RICHARDSON  
RYAN SCAILS  
ALEX TATUSIAN  
JESS KURONEN & MICHAEL BUCHER  
DAVON HOWARD  
SIMONE MELTESEN & CLAUDIA GERBRACHT  
PARTY OF ONE STUDIO  
LEANDRA SOLOVAY  
LINNI KRAL  
TAYLOR WOODS  
KRIS FELICIANO  
EMMANUELA SORIA RUIZ  
SEMANTHA RAQUEL NORRIS  
ANDY OLLOVE  
JASON WONG  
DWAYNE READ  
SIMÓN SEPÚLVEDA BRAITHWAITE  
CLEMENS POOLE & VALLERIIA BURADZHYIEVA  
OLIVE PANTER**

**BAD-LANG.COM  
2020**



The Korean word **하나님** was co-opted by  missionaries

during the 1800s<sup>1</sup>. The  missionaries were so successful that

when you look up **하나님** today it exclusively means  <sup>2</sup>.

The word's usage is still divisive. Many feel  about it<sup>3</sup>.

Because why should **하나님** only mean one thing?

<sup>1</sup> These French missionaries of the Paris Foreign Missions Society arrived in Korea in the 1860s to proselytize to a Korean flock. They also came as retaliation for an earlier Korean execution of several French Catholic missionaries in the 1840s. This incident was known as "The Western Disturbance of the Byeong-In Year." <sup>2</sup> The representational visage of Jesus Christ as a white man is still used in contemporary Korean churches internationally. <sup>3</sup> Both Christian and non-Christian Koreans protested the usage of **하나님** in the Korean Bible translations. In response, the 1961 KRV Translation of the Old and New Testament for Protestant denominations coined and used the word **하느님** instead. The distinction being that **하느님** means "of the sky" and has no fraught history with westernization.

**It used to mean**



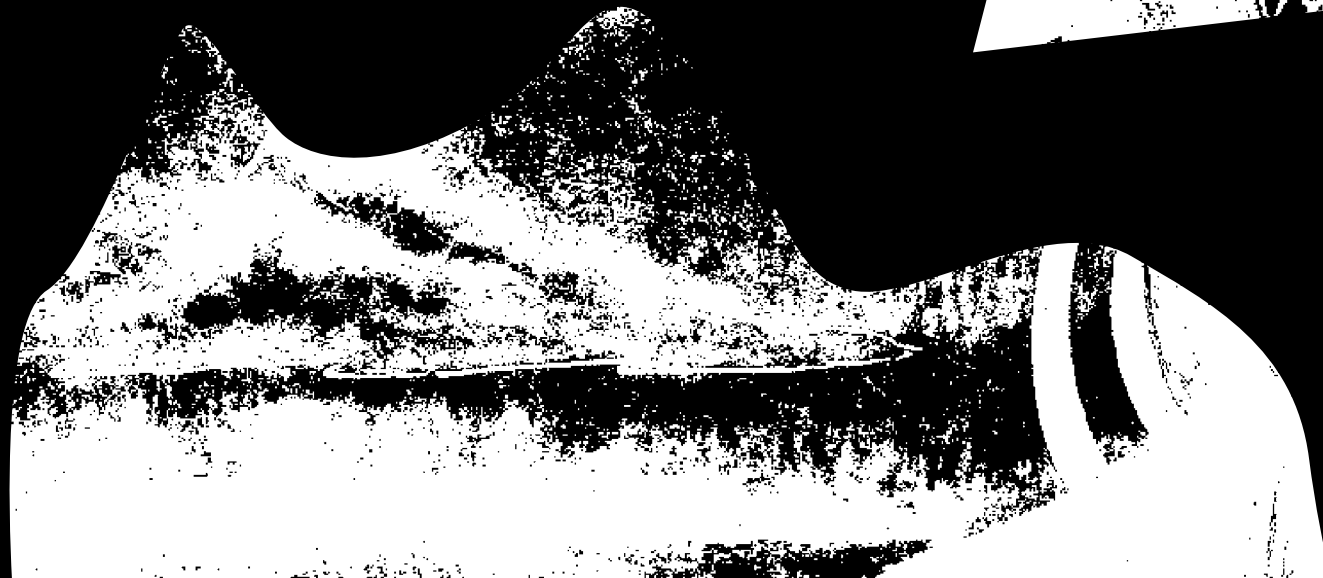
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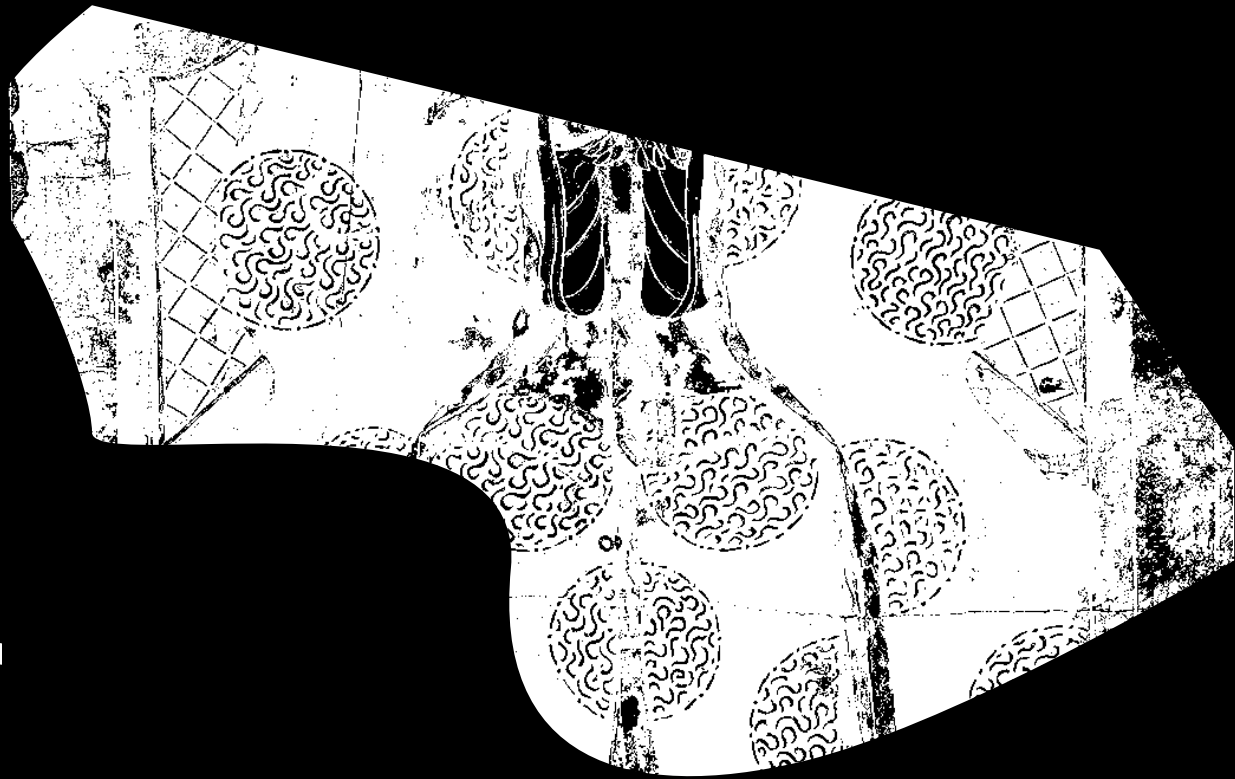


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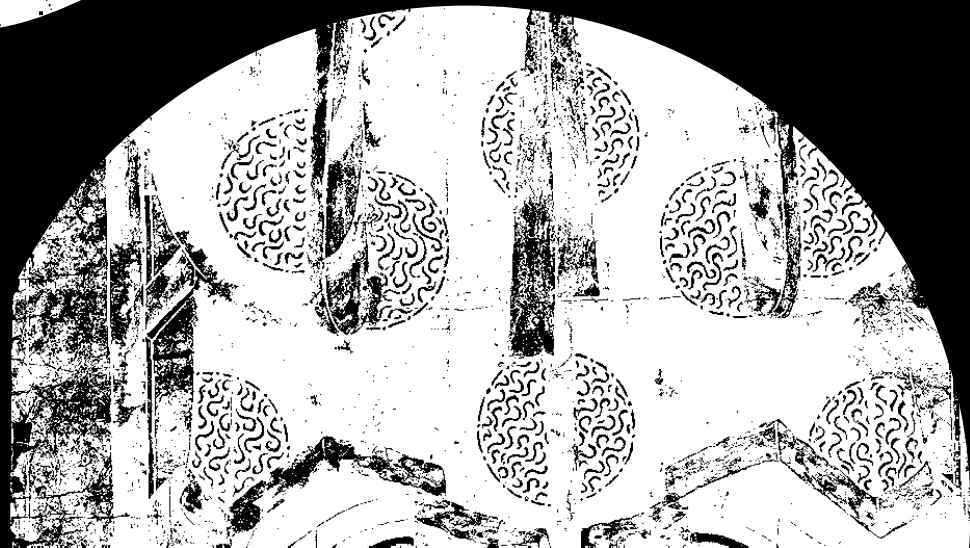


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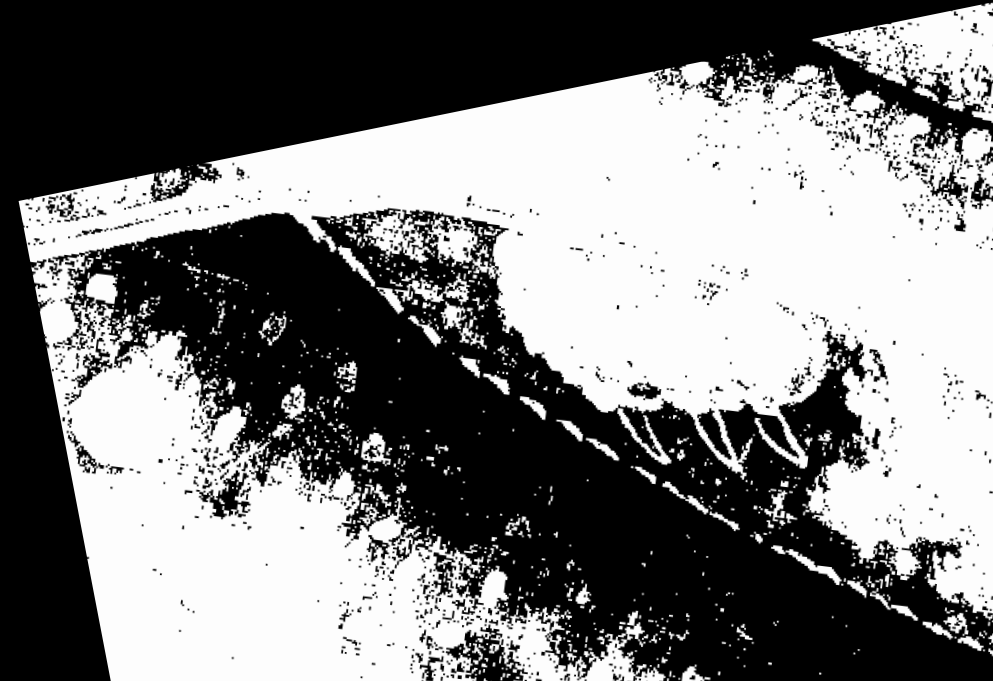


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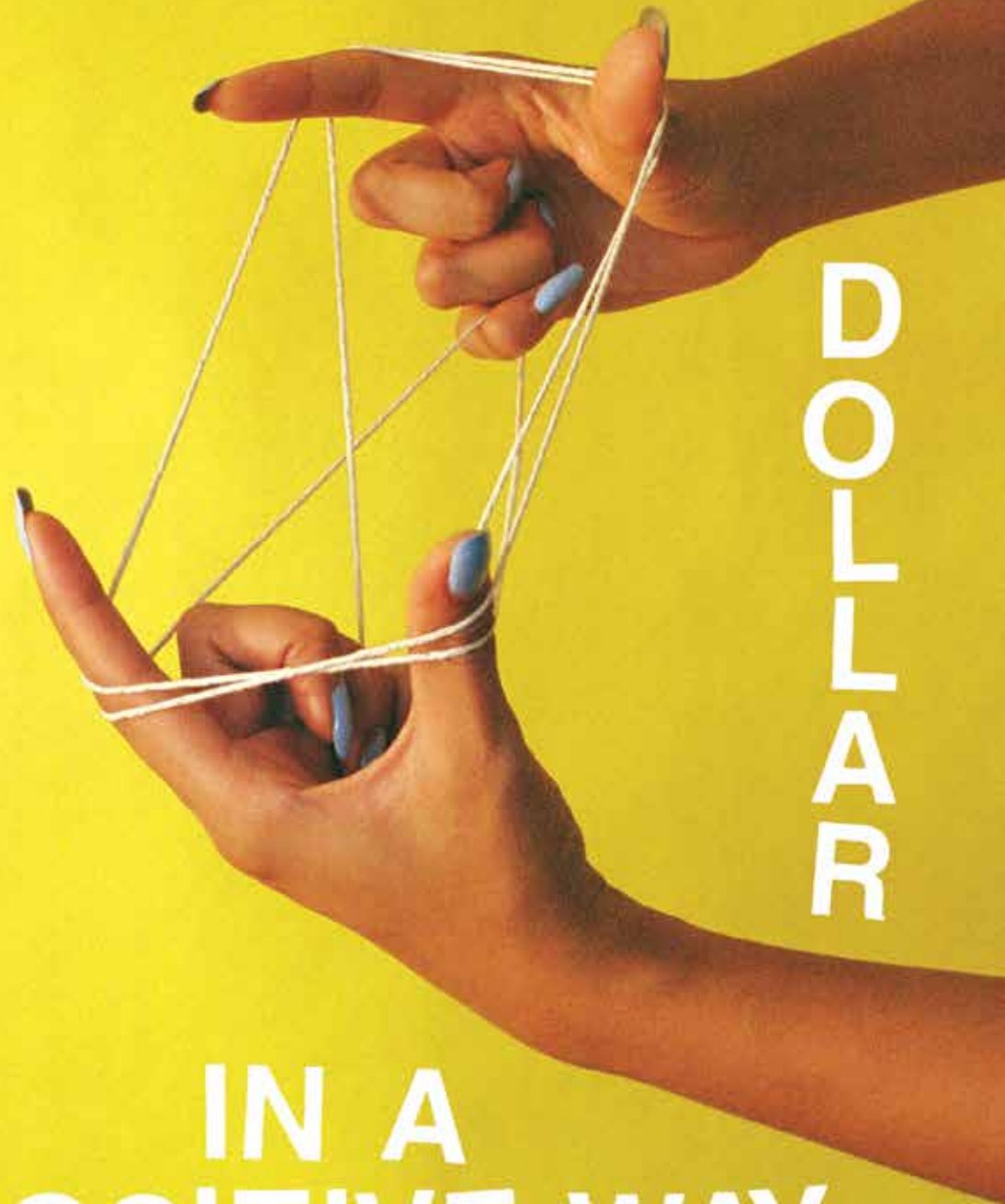




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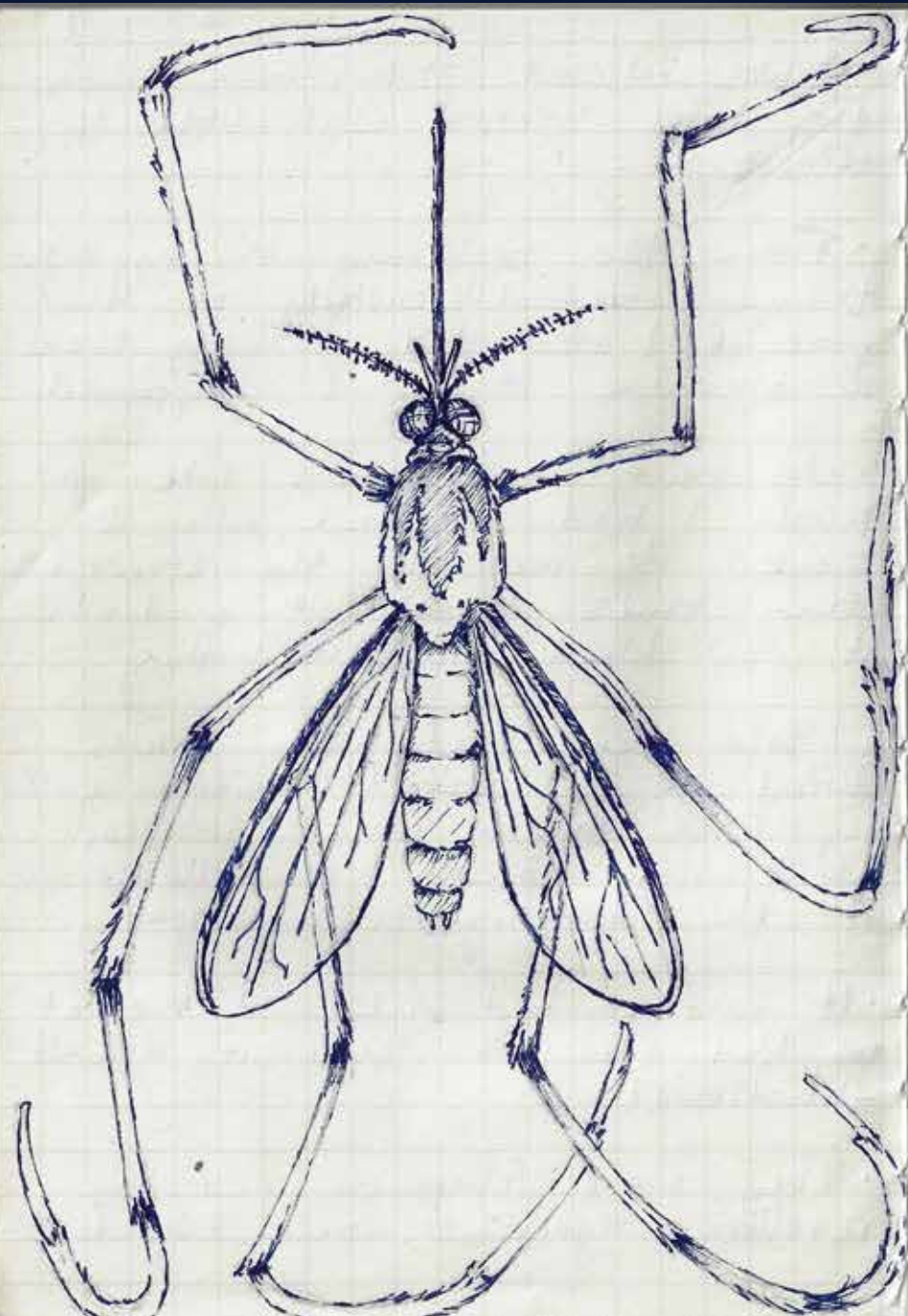
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- They left after about 30 minutes and I was locked back in my cell.

- I laid there for another hour or so before being placed in a squad car headed for Community court on Visitation Pl. back down in Red Hook.

- Once we arrived I was processed and put in a holding cell with a bunch of other men who broke the law the night before.

- There was a range of offenders in my presence. I sat next to a family (uncle/nephews) that got into a physical altercation with the cops over their fireworks routine for the 4th. It was the first time they were caught for something they'd been doing for years.

- Pacing just in front of me was someone who had long been embedded in the system. This time he had been arrested for stabbing his girlfriend.

## WHAT I DID INSTEAD\*

by Alex Tatusian

*\* The full version of this text will be available as a future issue of Bad Lang.*

When Bad Language approached me to submit to this volume, I loved the open-ended eponymous prompt. I think a lot about how speech is exercised—who gets to talk, and what about—and the ways in which design adds to or subtracts from that power. My work has always orbited politics, especially what gets said in civic and social spaces, both of which seemed relevant.

Besides—what’s said in the public sphere that isn’t bad these days?

Circuitously, Issue 2’s prompt led me to a recent email exchange with a friend’s dad—a fervent right-winger, evangelical Christian, and Trump supporter from Orange County, California. Under the subject line “Thoughtful Analyses”, he’d emailed my friend and me a series of videos of talking heads from far-right think tanks promoting “The Case for Trump” and various conspiratorial spins on recent events, which he offered as “fresh perspectives on and objective assessments of the current state of US public affairs.”

I explicitly refused to get involved. But the email chain evolved into a discussion of the merits of “dialogue” in America, what it means to listen to one another, and to talk in good faith, despite this man offering the common racist, xenophobic talking points of the far right in bad faith, disguised as questions for probing conversation.

Of course, in fury, I pounced. Over the course of a few hours, I attempted to decouple the dramatic conversation about race in America from politics so that we could find some common ground. It didn’t go great.

I had been thinking about this exchange because it crushed me. I hated myself for having thought there was a chance with this guy, despite swearing I wouldn’t even try to talk it out. I was drained of all faith in mutual understanding, and of any respect for this person I had known half of my life.

I saw this prompt as an opportunity to invert the profound racism I had encountered: I conceptualized all sorts of projects: a manual, a script, a play, a document of what had happened, replete with notes for people in similar situations—exits, outs, from ever having to have conversations like this one, or people like this one, in one’s life.

But I never got there.

For almost two months, I fidgeted and fumed, sat down at my desk, got up, talked to myself, drew, and redrew. I went out, I came home, I opened InDesign, I closed InDesign. I drank, and I quit drinking. I went out late and got up early.

My anger about my own block only compounded my anger about the emails. I only began to cool down when I thought hard about what I was doing when I wasn’t working. Just to try to jog my process, I started keeping a list of the things I was doing instead of writing a manual on how to (or not to) confront racists.

When before I had felt powerless and empty, I now saw on paper a lush life. One that continued to encounter complexity, experience joy, treasure diversity, and scrutinize wrongdoing. Nothing in my project’s drafts, no matter how funny or sad I made it, could offer any meaningful advice for—nor any good reason at all to actually bother with—a conversation as profoundly difficult as the one I had had. But while failing, when not working, I had been happy. Even successful. I had moved to a new city. I got engaged to a wonderful person. I grew a lot. On paper, I could see how much was going on in my life while I failed at this project about a failed conversation: in fact, nothing was lesser, nothing was diminished, for my having tried. With deference to my own guilt, I hadn’t even blocked out the struggle. I hadn’t, as I’d feared, hidden from the complicated world around me in fear of new adversaries.

Without further adieu—**What I did other than meaningfully engage in a complex project about race, willful ignorance, and the “power” of dialogue:**

Ate magnificent leftover carnitas

Read the news online indiscriminately,

Looked at the new LA Times wildfire maps

Took off my clothes

Put my clothes back on

Went to the Kibitz Room—a bar attached to Canter’s, LA’s famous 24-hour deli and diner—with a notebook and two pens, hoping to think through some of my blocks with the project. I had a Rueben and a gin martini while the Nationals reasserted themselves in the World Series, and a man set up a microphone stand for something.

That something turned out to be a horrific open mic for amateur comics. The participants, mostly men in their late thirties, told joke after joke as if none of us were there, as if they were practicing for a mirror again. Not a single one elicited more than a titter. Most declared they had recently becoming single, which, after these jokes, surprised nobody. As I watched comic after comic bomb, I began to feel inured. Even Hell, it seems, cools down eventually.

This was probably the worst joke, surpassing another that cast the American bombing of Japan as an effective radiation treatment for cancer:

“I met a girl who’s ten years older than me and it was incredible. I think there’s something to these old iPhones... you have the charger, you know where the auxiliary cord is, all the same ports, you know how to work ‘em... I think I like these older iPhones.”

I recently spent a month (well a few weeks) not drinking, and the thing I missed most was not liquor, but bars. What is that special something about great bars that makes you forget not only what time it is, but when it is? What is it about that endlessness, that vacuum of ordinary energies, that timespace completely outside of the continuum, where anything could happen, but probably—delightfully—nothing will?

As I’m paying, a waitress shakes her head at the current performer and recommends I watch *Chingo Bling: They Can’t Deport Us All* on Netflix instead.

Read the Wikipedia page for “development hell,” when a movie or other project “remains in development (often moving between different crews, scripts, or studios) for an especially long time before it progresses to production, if it ever does.” Sounding familiar.

For some reason, I open Netflix and find one of the most famous movies to ever get stuck in development hell, *American Psycho*. Feeling really over fiction about rich white people and aggrieved contrarians like Brett Easton Ellis... but the satire does feel prescient, so I scan a few key scenes. (N.B.: Patrick Bateman shouts out DJT during one of his limo rides.)

The scene in which his Wall Street bro squad compares business cards is

still so funny (Also: name another classic movie with jokes about typography!)

All of the business cards in the movie feature a misspelling of “mergers and acquisitions.”

This movie is a one-note satire, for sure, but the protagonist does deliver these lines after confessing to a lawyer about the movie’s titular murders: “My pain is constant and sharp, and I do not hope for a better world for anyone. In fact I want my pain to be inflicted on others. I want no one to escape, but even after admitting this, there is no catharsis; my punishment continues to elude me; and I gain no deeper knowledge of myself. No new knowledge can be extracted from my telling. This confession has meant nothing.” There’s something here worth thinking about: what does it mean when someone deeply needs to offer their (clearly contentious) thoughts to interlocutors he knows will take offense? Is there a self-flagellation at play as you confront the kids, a kind of confession in bad faith that attempts to presage becoming obsolete by staking out *something*? Grasping at a little land as you drown? Knowing you’re drowning, but Instagramming it?



# THE BODY SHOP

## REAL MEN LOVE A TUNE UP

- RENEW AND BREW FACIAL.....\$125
- POWER CLEAN AND RINSE  
EXFOLIATION.....\$160
- RHINO REFLEXOLOGY.....\$245
- EL TORO BODY WRAP.....\$225

WARM GOLF BALL MASSAGE.....\$225



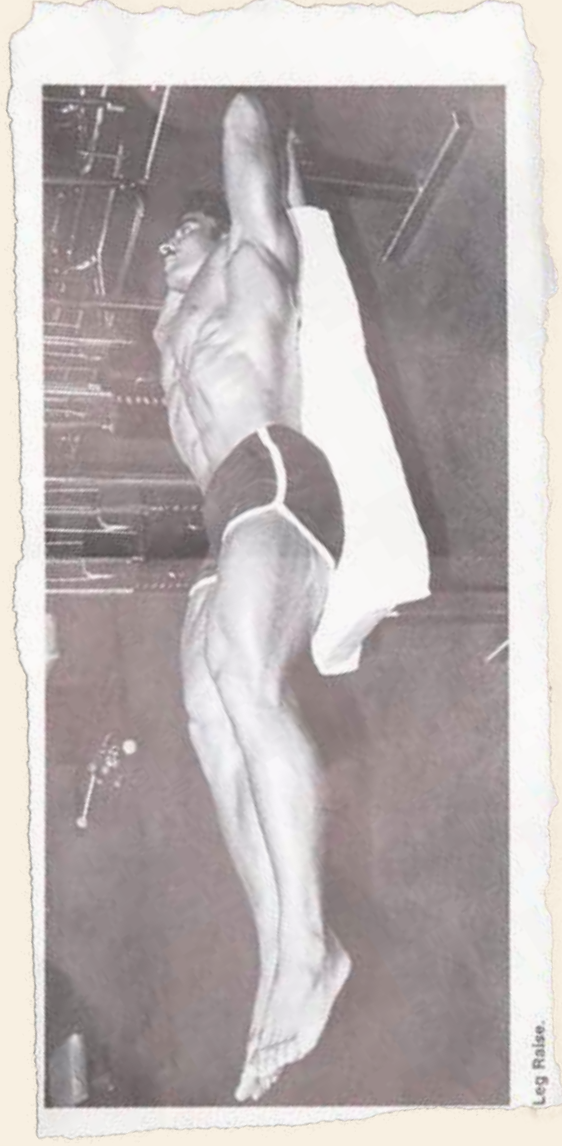
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Turf-toe-tip with  
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Maintenance  
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## FACE-TO-FACE POSITION

(Man Supine)

Particularly suitable for women who have difficulty reaching an orgasm, this position may be used as a preliminary to arouse her desires. By pushing herself away from the man beneath her, their sex organs are placed tightly against each other, serving to increase her passion. She should keep her legs closed so as to insure the maximum benefit. This posture can also be taken when the man is tired and needs to rest before assuming a more strenuous position.





# BI

I. THE USELESS DAWN FINDS ME IN A DESERTED STREET- / CORNER; I HAVE OUTLIVED THE NIGHT. / NIGHTS ARE PROUD WAVES; DARKBLUE TOPHEAVY WAVES / LADEN WITH ALL THE HUES OF DEEP SPOIL, LADEN WITH / THINGS UNLIKELY AND DESIRABLE. / NIGHTS HAVE A HABIT OF MYSTERIOUS GIFTS AND REFUSALS, / OF THINGS HALF GIVEN AWAY, HALF WITHHELD, / OF JOYS WITH A DARK HEMISPHERE. NIGHTS SACT / THAT WAY, I TELL YOU. / THE SURGE, THAT NIGHT, LEFT ME THE CUSTOMARY SHREDS / AND ODD ENDS: SOME HATED FRIENDS TO CHAT / WITH, MUSIC FOR DREAMS, AND THE SMOKING OF / BITTER ASHES. THE THINGS MY HUNGRY HEART / HAS NO USE FOR. / THE BIG WAVE BROUGHT YOU. / WORDS, ANY WORDS, YOUR LAUGHTER; AND YOU SO LAZILY / AND INCESSANTLY BEAUTIFUL. WE TALKED AND YOU / HAVE FORGOTTEN THE WORDS. / THE SHATTERING DAWN FINDS ME IN A DESERTED STREET / OF MY CITY. / **YOUR PROFILE TURNED AWAY, THE SOUNDS THAT GO TO / MAKE YOUR NAME, THE LILT OF YOUR LAUGHTER: / THESE ARE THE ILLUSTRIOUS TOYS YOU HAVE LEFT ME. / I TURN THEM OVER IN THE DAWN,** I LOSE THEM, I FIND / THEM; I TELL THEM TO THE FEW STRAY DOGS AND / TO THE FEW STRAY STARS OF THE DAWN. / YOUR DARK RICH LIFE ... / I MUST GET AT YOU, SOMEHOW; I PUT AWAY THOSE / ILLUSTRIOUS TOYS YOU HAVE LEFT ME, I WANT YOUR / HIDDEN LOOK, YOUR REAL SMILE — THAT LONELY, / MOCKING SMILE YOUR COOL MIRROR KNOWS.



## FACE-TO-FACE POSITION

(Side)

This position will create a much deeper insertion of the man's penis into the woman if she will bend her right leg further with the right thigh pulled closer to her body the left leg is folded in the same direction as she holds the lower part of the man's weight on her left thigh. If the man pulls away from the girl, increasing the angle of their intertwinning, he can thrust his penis even deeper.

II. WHAT CAN I HOLD YOU WITH? / I OFFER YOU LEAN STREETS, DESPERATE SUNSETS, THE / MOON OF THE JAGGED SUBURBS. / I OFFER YOU THE BITTERNESS OF A MAN WHO HAS LOOKED / LONG AND LONG AT THE LONELY MOON. / I OFFER YOU MY ANCESTORS, MY DEAD MEN, THE GHOSTS / THAT LIVING MEN HAVE HONOURED IN BRONZE: / MY FATHER'S FATHER KILLED IN THE FRONTIER OF / BUENOS AIRES, TWO BULLETS THROUGH HIS LUNGS, / BEARDED AND DEAD, WRAPPED BY HIS SOLDIERS IN / THE HIDE OF A COW; MY MOTHER'S GRANDFATHER / — JUST TWENTYFOUR— HEADING A CHARGE OF / THREE HUNDRED MEN IN PERU, NOW GHOSTS ON / VANISHED HILLS. / I OFFER YOU **WHATSOEVER INSIGHT MY BOOKS MAY HOLD,** / **WHATSOEVER MANLINESS OR COURAGE MY LIFE / I OFFER YOU THE LOYALTY OF A MAN WHO HAS NEVER / BEEN LOYAL.** / I OFFER YOU THAT KERNEL OF MYSELF THAT I HAVE SAVED, / SOMEHOW — THE CENTRAL HEART THAT DEALS NOT / IN WORDS, TRAFFICS NOT WITH DREAMS, AND IS / UNTOUCHED BY TIME, BY JOY, BY ADVERSITIES. / I OFFER YOU THE MEMORY OF A YELLOW ROSE SEEN AT / SUNSET, YEARS BEFORE YOU WERE BORN. / I OFFER YOU EXPLANATIONS OF YOURSELF, THEORIES ABOUT / YOURSELF, AUTHENTIC AND SURPRISING NEWS OF / YOURSELF. / I CAN GIVE YOU MY LONELINESS, MY DARKNESS, THE / HUNGER OF MY HEART; I AM TRYING TO BRIBE YOU / WITH UNCERTAINTY, WITH DANGER, WITH DEFEAT.

"TWO ENGLISH POEMS" // JORGE LUIS BORGES





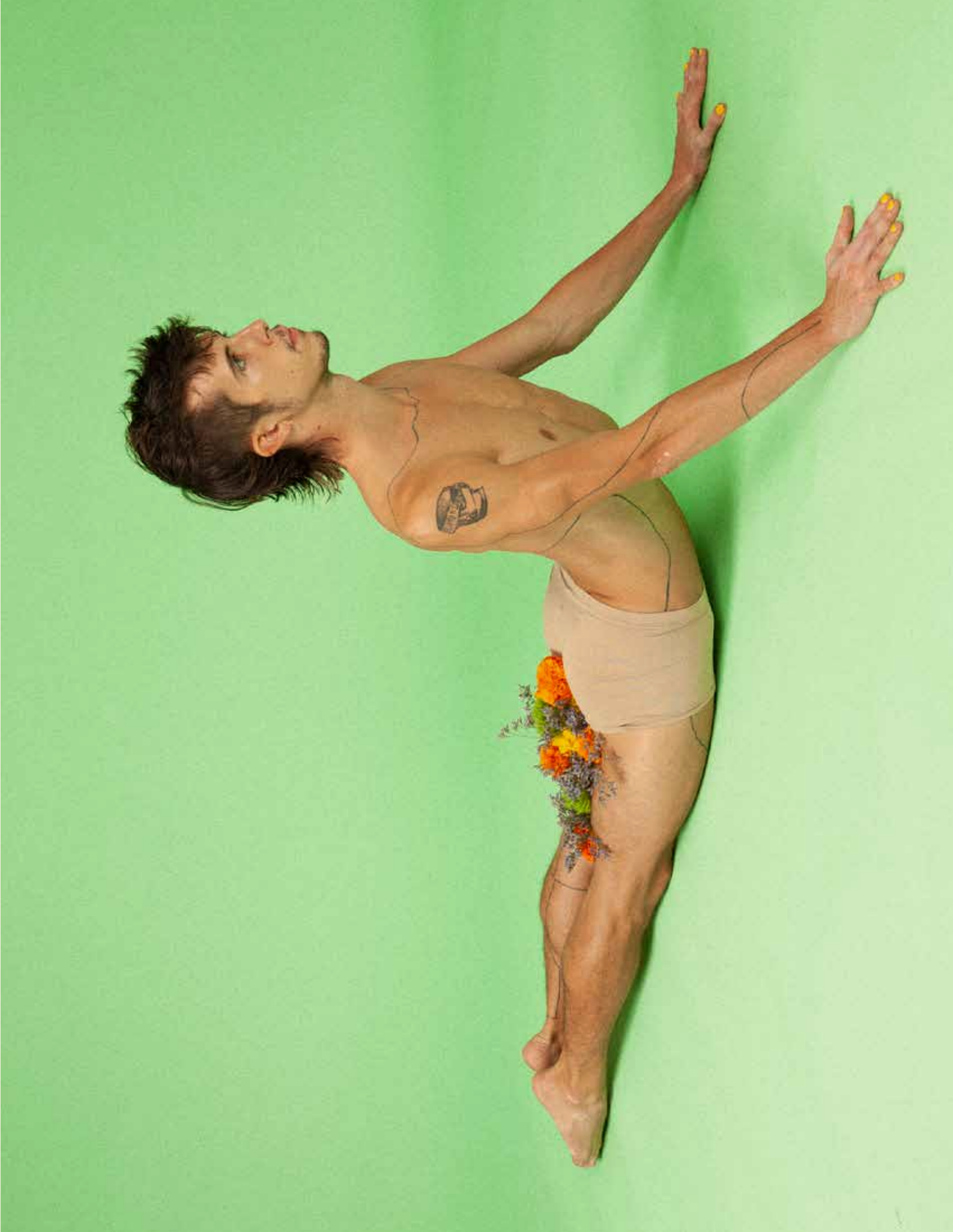
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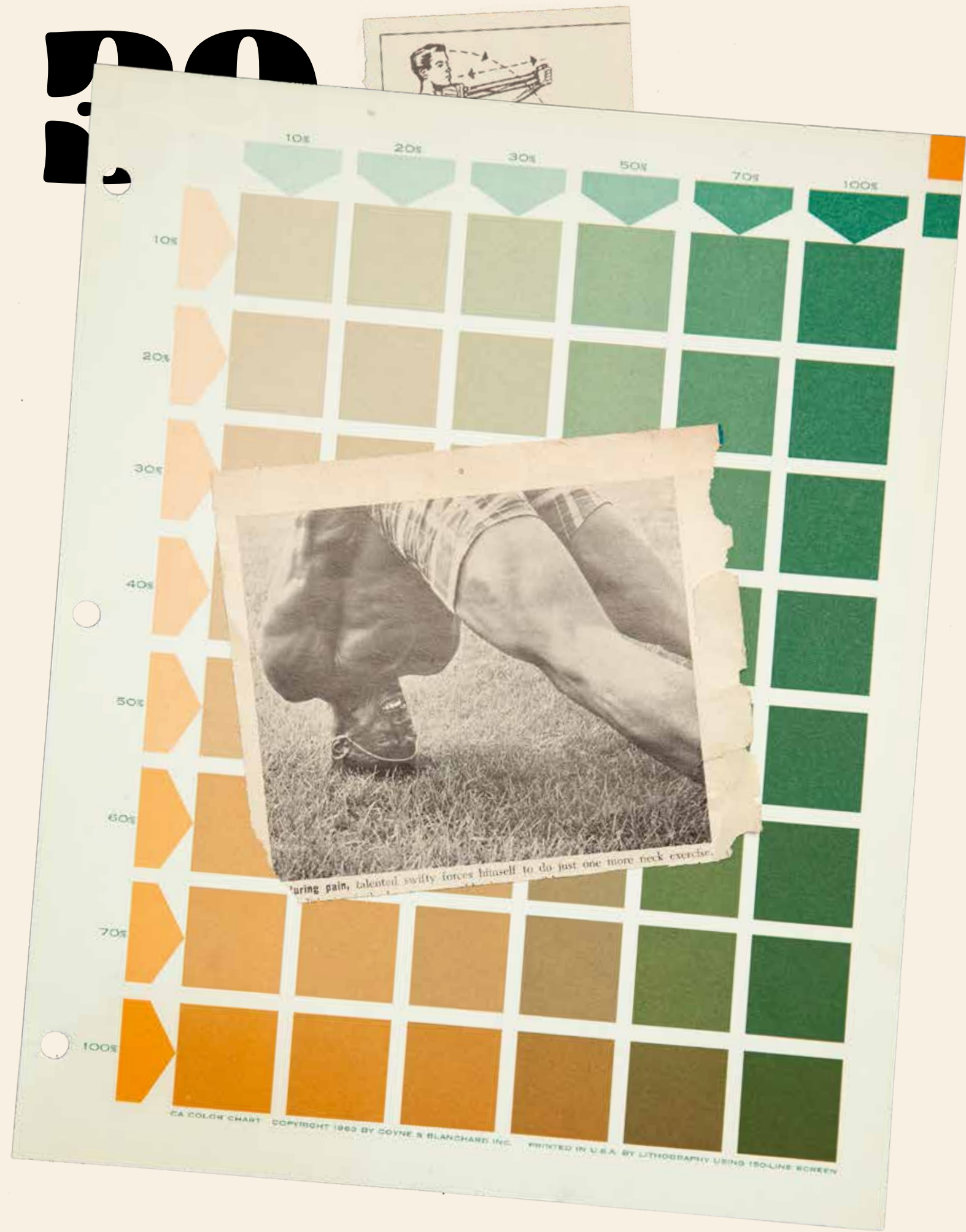
## FACE-TO-FACE POSITION

(Man Sitting)

Much like Position 26, this method has the woman throw her legs over the man's shoulders! Insertion of the penis into the vagina is much deeper with this position giving both much more satisfaction. Back-forth movements are easy and very stimulating to both partners<sup>2</sup>. The woman however could become easily tired because of the heavy load on her arms and hands. Sometimes a back support for the woman can be used to eliminate this drawback but the man must have support<sup>3</sup>.









# Three Questions → for ← Fuji Yamamoto

1

Have you ever asked yourself: why am I enamored with someone else's conciet when I can not see myself in it?

If so, is the attraction about your transposition of inclusive concepts onto otherwise exclusive spaces or in appropriation as a form of transgression?



2

Did you hope that there'd be someone who'd see whimsy in your clinical language or virility in the supposed affect of your cupids?

You almost seem trapped in affect...had that served you well? Did it make your message more palatable?



3

As you fall asleep each night from the exhaustion of nuance for euphemism, do you tell yourself the raunchiest joke you know?

...and does it still make you laugh?



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I'd Rather Be Shopping



honk if you're fluid

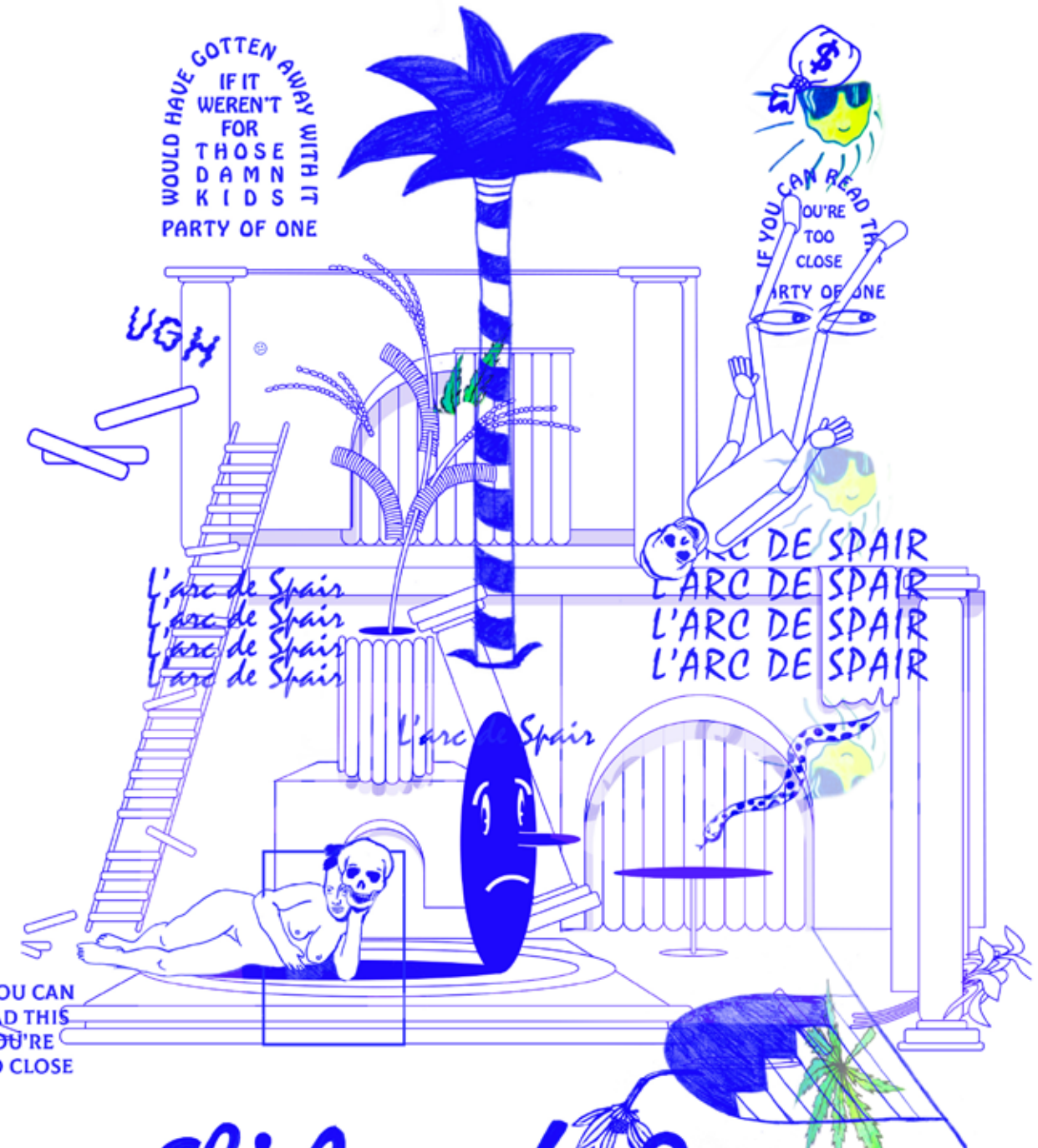
LEZ COAST

Dusty Dyke



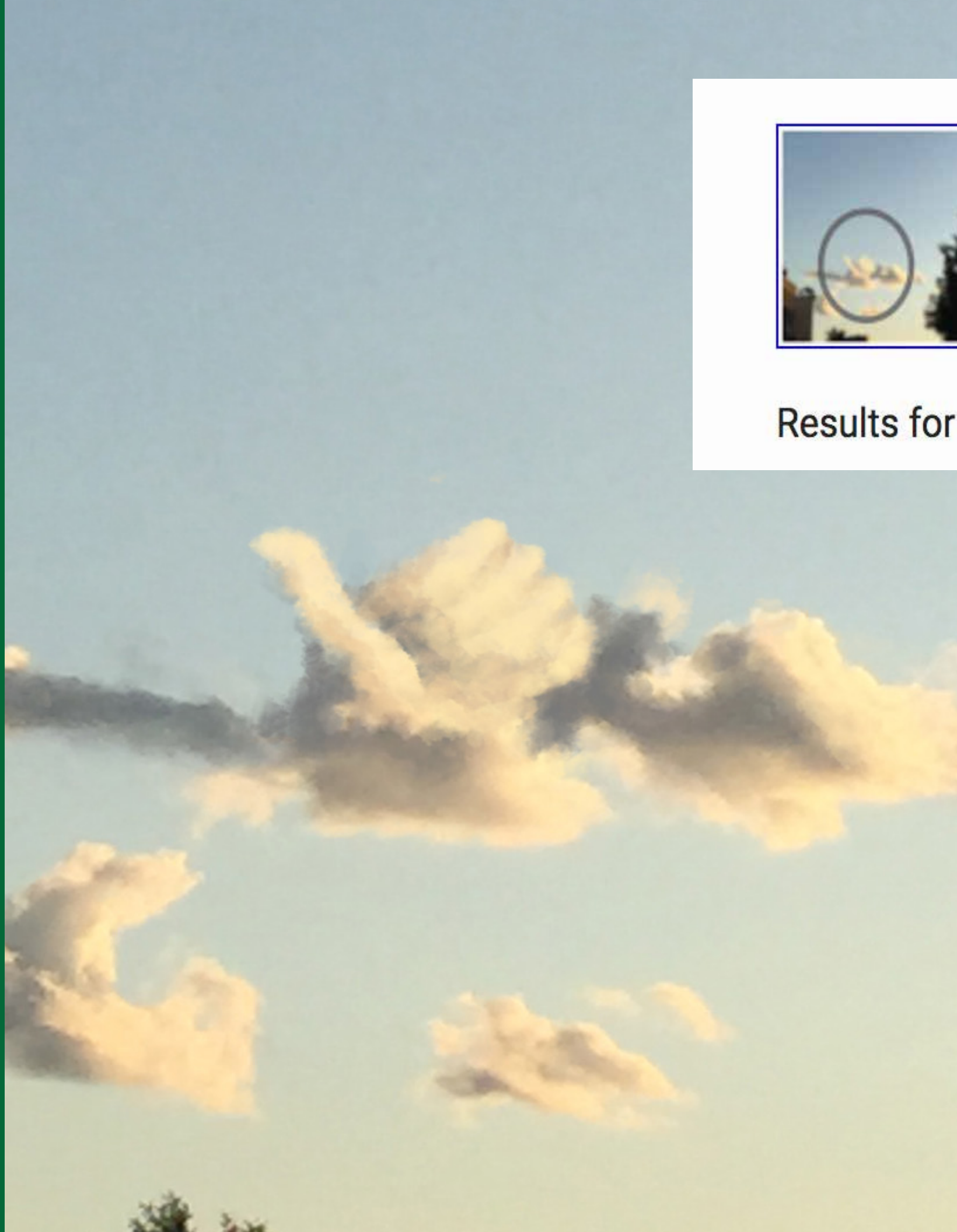
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MAMA'S DANCING ON THE TABLE



L'Arc de Spair





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*Vocabulary self-portrait, 2019*

Sometimes words are walls. Fortifications—*ramparts, castellations*. I collect them like it's *philately*, in notebooks around the house. Someday I'll perish and someone clearing my effects will find these pages everywhere, loose and lost like the tumbled-smooth pieces of limestone *entablature* all over the ancient world. Pieced together they'll create not a *frieze* or a temple, but a portrait of a desperate woman. These pieces of wall were constructed to protect, though I know not from what.

Conrad, McCarthy, Stegner, Pynchon, architecture books, horticulture blogs, *New Yorker* articles, all read with a pen to circle words I don't recognize, or recognize but can't define. I write my own definitions, try to use it in a sentence—another brick in the *battlement*. Words are what I have—I know little else. I want to know them fully.

Where do these writers get their words? I feel dirty employing a synonym I didn't already know, try to learn every word so as to never encounter one I need but don't feel I have adequate permissions to use. From each new word I am supplied a unit of capability I take into the world, further able to identify what I see. *Sumac. Quoin. Anemone. Grawlix. Anhedonia*. There are things I know with names I don't, and so I can't sleep; a Merriam Webster glow lights my dark room.

I have borne a love of words along all these years, tasting each delicious unknown as it comes to me like a juicy fruit snack, bursting with sweet hydration I feel on the sides of my tongue, between my ears, fulfilling some untold thirst. When I try to come up with language for this I find myself stretching out my hands involuntarily, electricity tightening my spine and clenching my fingers, *rapacious*. Words make me dizzy. I wake up famished and read greedily, compelled into each new paragraph like a hunter who catches dinner or else goes hungry. Each word further fills the *armory* I go to when I feel tongue-tied, misunderstood, falsely articulated, which is all of the time.

I don't often use them; memory fails, most of the time. They stay in my notebooks, a record of effort if not victory. I have not yet succeeded in naming the universe—it is vast, my understanding patchy—but I have to try.

**Abnegate:** Deny or reject something considered valuable. *Because I felt guilty, I found myself abnegating indulgences on the trip.*

**Apotheosis:** The ultimate/quintessential form or part of something; culmination. *My life had reached its apotheosis—I didn't know what to do next.*

**Apotropaically:** Used to ward off bad things. *Not at all superstitious, he nevertheless believed in using certain things—facial hair, attire, companions—apotropaically during playoff season.*

**Apollonian:** Cold, rational, self-disciplined; antonym of Dionysian. *She kept an Apollonian household, where rules prevailed over feelings and hedonism was rarely succumbed to.*

**Auscultation:** The practice of listening to someone's organs using a stethoscope. *I yearned for a way to understand her, some auscultation to let me see her inner world.*

**Alacrity:** Enthusiastic eagerness. *I found myself embracing homemaking with alacrity, despite a feminist urge to reject it.*

**Autochthonous:** Indigenous; native to or formed in the location where found. *None of us were autochthonous in that city—everyone had left some other home behind.*

**Avuncular:** Affable, patronizing, uncle-like. *For lack of any male role models, I sought out avuncular figures where I could—film, literature, the workplace.*

**Bacchanalian:** Drunken, revelrous; given to wild partying. *Now content to stay in most nights, we'd lost touch with the bacchanalian impulses of our youth.*

**Badinage:** Banter. *Sorkin's characters engage in a fast-paced badinage.*

**Defenestration:** Throwing something out the window; firing someone abruptly. *Cancel culture bears witness to the frequent defenestration of former heroes and beloved stars.*

**Gallimaufry:** Jumble, mixed bag. *The book was a gallimaufry of poems, essays, and lists.*

**Gasconade:** Swagger, bravado. *This tendency toward boasting only got worse at parties—his gasconade became nearly intolerable when he drank.*

**Gnomic:** Aphoristic, pithy. *Though I spent days cutting extraneous words from others' writing, my own projects were far from gnomic.*

**Masscult:** Culture as disseminated by mass media; culture that has been mass produced. *Widespread embrace of "indie" has rendered the moniker—now attached to many masscult products—meaningless. Related: **Midcult:** Middle-brow culture.*

**Mellifluous:** Pleasant or sweet sounding; honeyed. *My neighbor sings all day, but I don't mind her mellifluous voice echoing across our shared wall.*

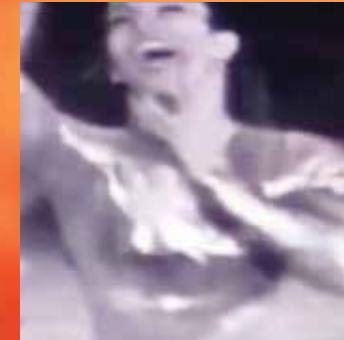
**Sybaritic:** Extravagant, indulgent, sensual. *My therapist and I discussed my struggle to embrace sybaritic pleasures.*

**Syzygy:** Occurrence of three celestial bodies aligning to form a straight line, as in an eclipse; also used metaphorically to refer to trifectas. *We saw the holy syzygy of sesame, honey, and feta in many forms all over Greece.*

**Tatterdemalion:** Run down, dilapidated; a person who is in a sloppy state. *The house had a tatterdemalion quality that would make it hard to sell; I was unshowered and didn't want them seeing me looking like such a tatterdemalion.*

**Zugzwang:** A situation in which you must take an action that is ultimately to your disadvantage; the need, in chess, to move even when it's to your disadvantage. *She put me in a real zugzwang; During the cold war, the threat of mutually assured destruction put the U.S. and Russia in zugzwang.*





I love, love,  
love a good cheese  
Danish.



So one morning this  
week, after dropping  
off Bugsy, at Canine  
Glamour Club for  
his monthly bath,  
I wanted a treat.



I remembered Olde  
Hearth Bread Company  
was open at 8 am in  
East End Market.



It was a nice  
surprise to see  
Danishes when I  
walked in.



And not just any  
Danish, but the holy  
grail of Danish,  
CHEESE.



Lots of cheese  
filling and plenty  
of soft tender  
Danish.

## The Donkey

I will never have enough mastery of either language to be able to pun on purpose. The back and forth does allow for some happy accidents. Which reminds me of the donkey:

Compadre Burro is old, fat and tired, which is why the farmer kicks him out. After walking for many km he finds a quiet place to spend the night. Compadre Burro does not know that he is sleeping in the Lion's den.

The next morning Compadre Leon wakes up and finds a donkey sleeping peacefully in his den. Compadre Leon looks at this donkey and thinks about how to proceed. He decides against devouring him (old donkey meat is tough).

With greater malice, Compadre Leon wakes up Compadre Burro and challenges him to a difficult feat. If Compadre Burro wins, Compadre Leon will not kill him. The contest is to jump over the tall fence that divides the Compadre Leon den with his neighbor the wolf's.

Compadre Leon goes first, and jumps clean over. Compadre Burro, cogiendo much carrerilla, jumps with all his might. His jump takes him to the top of the fence but no further. His big belly gets him stuck smack in the middle of the fence, neither here nor there.

He doesn't lose.



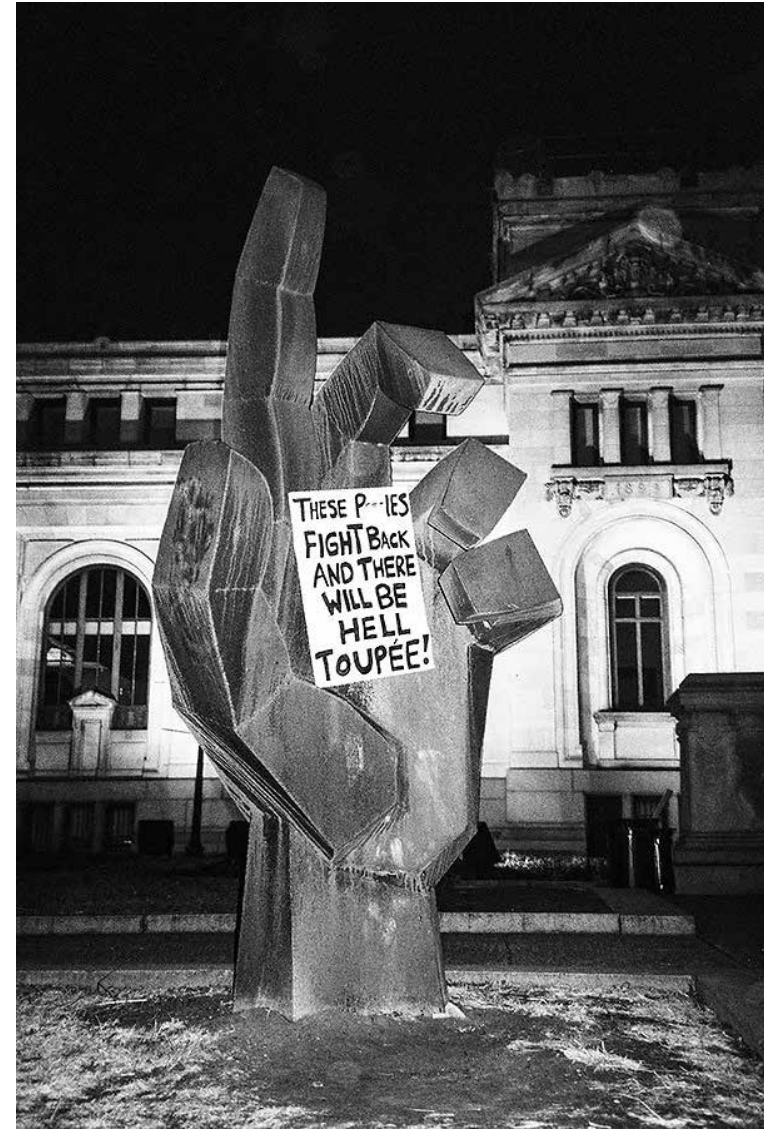














# Two Years Ago, Today

I sit down and begin writing. I am in a boutique brewery with pink walls and potted palms and ferns. I am at the bottom of my first beer and soon I will order another one. I am here because I told my friend I would write something for her, it will be about language, it will be a working essay showing the working of an essay: the writing, the editing, the rewriting, the cutting, the second beer, the third beer, the fourth.

But, I will not write that essay after all. Not because I don't want to or that my ambition is less, but because I did start that essay, I wrote two pages, but when I read them back, out loud and in my head, the words went nowhere. And so herein is a course correction, another essay, this essay, not about language so much as through language. And if there is anything about this essay that is similar to the other one, the one that will not come to exist, it is that right now, inside this pink walled place where I sit amongst afterwork people and their afterwork drinks, I do not know where it is going.

What I do know is a small truth and one I am ashamed of: I have not written in five years and I do not know why I stopped and I do not know how to begin again. All I know is that right now there is something stirring and it feels alright. And hopefully the next beer will feel alright too, the one I will order at the closing of this sentence, marked by a period.

\*

If I am honest with you, I am not writing in a pink walled brewery anymore, although I am drinking a beer and there is a plant next to me. I am at home and it is another day. Has everything changed? Would this essay be different had I written longer that evening? Into a third beer, a fourth? Probably. But I am not in control, the language moves through me in its own ways, often as an ocean—a tide in, a tide out, a shoreline in motion.

The writing feels sluggish, but less so than before. There is a hangnail on my right index finger and I have just finished hacking at it for the umpteenth time, as far down to the skin as I can handle. I have never in my life had a manicure, but the root being so deep, I am open to a professional.

But I can carry on now regardless, on this other day, the thoughts in my head not ceasing, my hand not pausing. I once thought it was God pushing the pen, I am not so sure anymore, but there is still the feeling that I am a vessel, an ark discarded for a million generations and suddenly unmoored again, the oceans rising.

Ten years ago, they put me in the hospital because I was speaking too often and too wildly. Two years ago, I put S— in the hospital because she wasn't speaking at all.

We were together then and living in Vallejo, a place in the San Francisco Bay where nearby there is an island named after a swimming horse. During WWII the Navy built ships on that island and stored ammunition there. Today, it is a bird sanctuary and a place to see a sunset, Mt. Tamalpais right across the water, the whole island wild with fennel. We would go there in the evenings to walk near the marsh and listen to the songbirds, spy for foxes, watch the shadows grow long, watch each other watching.

If the entire course of S—'s depression could be distilled to a single memory, it is of us driving through Sonoma County farmland on a beautiful, sunny, gold-hilled, blue sky day. She is in tears and says, *I just want to be normal*.

In the months before the hospital, her anxiety was worse every week. It became so bad she couldn't leave the house, she couldn't drive, she couldn't talk to anyone but me. There was a panic attack always beneath the surface. On the crying spectrum, she and I were on opposite ends; I shed none, she filled swimming pools.

One day, a week before July 4th, I came home, and at first it wasn't unlike other days, there was saltwater on her face, on her t-shirt, on the floor at her feet. She greeted me at the door and smiled smally and I knew that small smile was an apology for another day she hadn't bested it, for another month she hadn't bested it, for all the mopping up of water I'd done. Looking back now, I can see how pale her skin was that summer, how disappeared of the Italian and the Moroccan in her family, even in those months of high tanning.

But it wasn't like other days. She hadn't slept all week and now she wasn't talking either. She smiled to let me know she was okay, but of course she wasn't. She began pacing the house, from room to room, back and forth. She paused long enough to start a sentence and not complete it. She moved again.

So far in this essay I've deleted five sentences for every one I've written. I go back and forth myself, unsure of what should be said and what should be left unsaid. Maybe I have not written in so long because I knew if I did it was this story that would come out, it would be S—'s tears I'd mopped up but never wringed out, had welled inside myself. I do not know how to cry, but maybe this will do.

We go<sup>1</sup> to the emergency room because she needs to sleep. It is late and we wait an hour amongst the others, a sick child, a schizophrenic. She is not talking but also not panicked, I am grateful for that. We are brought in and I help her change into a gown. She gets a bed and a doctor visits, it is maybe 1 am. I do the talking because she cannot. He asks questions and she starts answers but cannot finish them, she looks to me for help, she speaks with her eyes: *I am confused, I love you, something bad is happening, I am sorry*.

The doctor prescribes a deep sleep and I find a late-night pharmacy that can fill the order. We go home and I wait up until she falls asleep. Eventually she does, but restlessly, and only for a couple hours. She is up in the morning before I am, I call in sick.

\*

Again, a new day, this essay's refrain. I have a Band-Aid on my finger now because this morning I cut too deep, blood dripping in the shower, there is a gouge that I am not sure will heal, maybe I need a doctor.

I have drinks in front of me: black coffee and a Bloody Mary, a truth serum cocktail if there ever was one. The Mary is spicy, the bartender told me he made the mix himself. Again there are plants around, a terracotta pot with giant palms on a high wooden table, cacti in the window, a fig tree at the door.

I read back what I've written so far and correct words here and there, delete and add, massage and tighten. This essay is not what it once was and is not yet what it will be.

I am in two places at once now, man writing words in a café and man sitting in a folding chair on a summer evening at a car wash watching men vacuum the trunk of a black SUV. S—'s mom is at the house half a mile away and helping her pack. We found a bed in a psychiatric hospital in Santa Barbara and are about to drive there, five hours down the 101 after a full day at work. I like S—'s mom a lot but she is not like me, she thinks the car is too dirty for the occasion. And so, I am here, watching it become clean.

When they are done I tip and go back to the house. They are ready to go and we pull out of the driveway as traffic ends. S— still hasn't slept and is in the front seat next to me, her mom is in the back behind her. S— is calm and

says it feels a little like she is on acid. Maybe that's true, but it's also the most lucid she's been in days and I credit that to the front side passenger seat, a place she is always calm. Or maybe she's calm because she doesn't know where she's going, not like I do.

At a truck stop I buy coffee and it charges me to full, I have not had a cup for months. We meet night fully at Gilroy and it is a deep dark in the mountains East of Big Sur. I talk to S—'s mom and listen to her story, it is an American epic I swear to God, I tell her it should be a novel. I will not recount it here, but at least a snapshot: a Jewish refugee from Morocco who falls for and divorces a chef in the US army, a backwoods Montana boy who becomes a Los Angeles fashion titan, a CIA operative under cover in Bosnia at the outbreak of civil war, a Franco-Jewish family with assumed mob ties, a shrinking woman with Alzheimer's wandering lost on bus lines in Santa Monica.

S— being calm and the story amazing, the mood somehow lightens against the mountain silhouettes. But then we come to the beach past San Luis Obispo and remember where we are going, it is close now. The ocean is calm under a half-moon.

It's 1 am when we arrive at the hospital and they see to us quickly. S— gets another gown and another visit from another doctor. We tell the intake doctor she hasn't slept in a week and the doctor says of course they will get her something and then they'll get her to a room upstairs. It is an hour later when her mom and I leave, we do not want to, but we have to, there are rules.

It was a decade ago and also past midnight when my parents followed the same rules and watched their son wheeled down a dark hallway and into a locked place where they could not follow. I do not know what my parents felt then, and now that I'm back in the right time with an empty coffee and an empty Bloody Mary, I do not know what I felt myself leaving S— that night. And besides that, I do not know what I feel right now, drawing the memory first into thought and then into statement.

I watch a pizza arrive for a little girl at the table next to me and across from her an older woman moves her shoulders to Otis Redding on the speakers. I am hot and fidgety, my own shoulders slouch. Why am I telling this story and why I am I telling it this way? In starts and fits, on different days and in different moods, with plants and drinks, with

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<sup>1</sup>Why has my tense changed? I have fallen out of time.

backwardness and forwardness. I do not know, but clearly this is the middle, and not the end.

I set to leave now, emptied of beverages and of anything left to write.

\*

I begin every day reading back what I've written so far and correcting course. If I am crew on this ship, it is only as attendant to the wheel and never navigation. I make the morning adjustments and wait for the wind to rise.

I am at my desk again, with the front door open to let the heat in. My face is flush and palms sweaty as I listen to the occasional truck pass by. I listen too for the wind in the apricot trees outside and note how the tiny orange fruits have given way to pink flowers in the course of summer. It is fall soon and in my California life, going on three years now, I mark the seasons by my nostalgia for east coast seasons, autumn chief among them.

S— was in therapy back then and I am in therapy today. I can list many reasons why I've come here and they'd all be true: I am here because last winter I lost my joy; I am here because I have walls within myself; I am here because I do not know how to cry; I am here because I've forgotten how to write.

In therapy we talk, much as I write here, meanderingly. I go in week after week, and talk about the things one talks about in therapy: relationships, goals, sex, parents, Oedipus, fears. I tell my therapist I am writing this essay; I try to explain it, I falter.

I was in there yesterday, legs crossed on the couch, fidgeting. More so than usual, I unguarded. I unpacked and unpacked and unpacked, and while so doing, I felt something stir: my body ballooning and my mass amassing, I became suddenly the size of a sumo wrestler, and still I was growing. I sat there leaden, with an image recalled from a childhood spent lying awake in bed, not sleeping: there is a beach at night with a billion grains of sand and the moon upon it and nobody, nobody, nobody around.

I stopped the unpacking and told my therapist about the beach and about how as a kid the same ballooning happened every night and it wouldn't stop until I went to my parent's room and climbed between them. I told her this, forgetting what I'd been talking about just before, and when I stopped we were both quiet as she waited for me to say more. When she decided I wouldn't, she said, I think you are having a feeling. I said, I do not like it.

I know that writing S—'s story—and mine within it—is still ahead, but I cannot go there just yet. Endlessly I am in the present although my work is to go elsewhere, forget that I am like the cursor in this document, caught between what was, what is, and what will be. Eventually the three will meet and the essay will close, I will have gone from somewhere to somewhere else and the route between the two will be for you as the crow flies, but for me, I will have taken the backroads.

\*

Life is endlessly finding new tables on which to write; this one is outside, on a patio. There is a pair of women next to me talking about infidelity and in front of them is an unopened textbook about Wildlife Law. There are rosemary bushes along the patio perimeter and small trees with waxy, oblong leaves. I am becoming tired of this essay and the tables on which I write it, the plants nearby. If I am letting go of something, it is not letting go of me.

S—'s mom and I wake up in the hotel we room we share, it was the only one available. If it was uncomfortable for me, I am sure it was equally so for her. It is a five-minute walk to the hospital from the hotel and we arrive on time for visiting hours. To get into the psych ward we have to first pass through a double door system designed to keep some people in and others out. We come to the outer door and buzz on the wall and speak through an intercom. We say our names, who we are here to visit— S—. The first door opens and we step into a vestibule, it closes behind us. We are between two doors now, both heavy, both metal, both closed. We wait for the oxygen to vacuum out—it doesn't, the second door opens.

We are inside the psych ward now, but also I am at this table still, headphones in to quiet the sound of nearby conversations, about wildlife law, about adultery, about whatever else. I look around the patio and watch the people, one typing on her computer, another standing to get a coffee. I smell for rosemary and grasp hold of the present—it is sunny now, but it was cloudy when I began this.

What I can write easily about is everything outside the hospital, about the clean hospital lawns and the wild bunnies hopping in them, about the hamburger I ate alone in my hotel room, about the neighborhood walks I took in the evenings admiring the architecture of Santa Barbara bungalows. What I cannot write easily about is how we pass through the second door and stop at the nurses' station to receive our badges, about how we walk down the hallway and find S—'s room and her still awake inside it, crying. I cannot write about how she's lost ten pounds in a

week and how everything that goes down comes right back up, medicine included; I cannot write about laying down beside her and holding her until she falls asleep and how when her eyes finally do close I count one by one the 90 minutes it takes a human to reach a REM cycle. I do not know how to write about ten minutes. I do not know how to write about twenty minutes. I do not know how to write about her eyes blinking open just short of forty.

And when I do try to write about those things, about visiting hours and how I came for every one, my tense becomes confused, I am there but more so I am here, coffee empty in front of me, notebook open, blue ballpoint in hand. I call for memories by way of words but something else comes instead, a vacuuming, not between doors but between lungs, a heaviness in the cheeks below my eyes. What is this welling? Am I going to cry?

There is more to say, but I cannot right now.

\*

I am back, writing in a garden, almost a week later. I am at a picnic table beneath a redwood tree and there are plant beds all around me. I have taken a motif and followed it to its most exaggerated end. I see basil, squash, amaranth, ginger, sunflowers, eggplant, hibiscus, poppies, magnolia trees, apple trees, plum trees, and so many more, some I can name, and some I cannot. I didn't mean to find all these tables and all these plants, it just happened this way. I suspect it could endlessly happen this way, some days writing in familiar places, some days writing in new places, some days not writing at all.

I began this essay in July, it is September now. In the writing I have hidden the full process. I have written more days than I've admitted, I have changed course a dozen times. I read back what I've written so far to try and see how it will end. If this were fiction, I could write about how S— got better and how happy we are together still living in Vallejo. If this were journalism, I could write about how in a few days S— could speak again and in a few months we broke up.

But this essay is both of those things, it is part myth and part truth, created as much by omission as by statement. I could scrap it all right now and start again as I do every week in therapy, without any direction except for whatever words come on the wind.

But how does an essay with endless beginnings ultimately end? Maybe it doesn't. Maybe it is a map with moving landmarks. Maybe it is a man who knows he will leave this garden but he does not yet know how or when. I am that

man truly, listening to the wind in the trees, listening to the birds chattering in their branches. I hear a disembodied voice through an open window, I hear myself whispering these words out loud in the same moment as I write them.



FLABBERGASTED

FURIOUS

FRUSTRATED

SHITE



The best thing I ever got from dave and busters was a giant ass glass jar with a handle on the side.

Everything you ever win at a fair is trash. That's part of the deal. You don't go there for winnings, you go there to show your ability to get winnings.

Or lack therof.

If you don't have a good throwing arm, you're not knocking down the rigged milk bottles. If you can't swing a cartoon sledgehammer, you're not winning the strongman prize. If you can't will a red plastic ring around the neck of a glass jug, you're not leaving with a stuffed kermit. And this is the way of the traveling neon jungle: indifferent to loss, underwhelmed with success against all odds. It didn't strike me as fair, as much as the name would have you believe otherwise. Made me feel like I didn't want to try and suckle off the sour teat anymore. You can't grow a tree from a rotten root anyhow.

I wanted justice. And not in a pulp comic, caped crusader way. I just wanted a fair shake from the jump. It seemed like that wasn't a real thing anymore. I felt like i was walking through the echo of nostalgia for a time that never really existed. Living on a monopoly board about the promise of tomorrow from 50 years ago. Hollow. A weak lie. A death-bed cough that's half-confessional and half apology.

Well I dont accept it.

I wish things could even be profound anymore, but all that energy already got spent before we got here. Nothing matters. That's what we came in to. People want to talk about the great beyond, the sprawling plains of promise that we inherited, and how lucky we are to be at this particular intersection of time and geography. But we're coming to age at the end of someone playing house who had no idea what the consequences would be. We showed up after the colorguard finished their routine and held their hand out for a fucking cookie.

All the things we aren't, but are framed as all the things that they hate, and that they hate us for not

having fixed. They ask, "Where are our Jetsons? Where are our teflon homes?" We ask, "Where is the sense of unimpeachable purity that you told us was our birthright? Where is the sense of immaculate security that you insist you sacrificed so much for?"

They can't be angry about Vietnam because it never happened to them. In fact, to the people shouting the loudest now, it truly never did. They're just citing shadows of some sacrifice that was never theirs, underscoring a theoretical suffering that they profess they would've made if they were ever called to do it.

They've never been.

What they purchased, they bought with our future struggles—not their past toil.

Inherited trauma is real. To call attention to any fault of theirs is a somehow a shortcoming on our parts, but inherited trauma is never more real when it's a deal that's struck and a debt to be paid and you're the one who needs to come to account. And when they strike the deal, and we have no say, and we're the ones who have to square the bill, then we have a right to say that you queered the whole set.

I can rant, and say fuck you until my throat is raw. I've done it many times, and each time I still think it's warranted. But I suppose the question now isn't whether or not my anger is justified—it's, "what do I want now? The plate is broken, what's next?"

I think that's where we're all at.

And I think that's why we're all in such disarray. Everything feels like a final chance. A brief gasp for air between generations where we might actually be able to keep living here on earth. And in some ways, I think that's a good thing. I like the earth. And as obvious as that may seem in print, it's not really a common or agreed-upon sentiment.

I want to live on the earth. I want to keep this stupid, futile, frustrating experiment going as long as we possibly can. I want to have a child, or a couple,









# WHO IS RUSLAN SYNHAIEWSKY

CLEMENS POOLE

WITH VALERIYA BURADZHYIEVA



<sup>1</sup>“How do you transliterate Сингаєвський?”

<sup>2</sup>No one in the office knows for sure. It appears variously as Syngayevski, Synhayevskiy, Sinhaievskyy. And everyone in the office is certain that even Сингаєвський himself wouldn't know off hand.

<sup>3</sup>It's not just a question for all the Сингаєвськийs. The murkiness is everywhere.

<sup>4</sup>Ukrainian transliteration rules have a logic. They are published online by the Ukrainian government. However this is relatively new, and in spite of this resource, there is deep uncertainty among the increasingly educated and multilingual public about these standards.

<sup>5</sup>It took us days to make your work email, do you remember? You had to find the correct spelling of your name in your foreign passport. A Ukrainian's foreign passport is often the only personal document that includes an official transliteration of their name. Валерія Бураджіїва—is it Valeriya Buradzhiyeva, Valeria Buradzhyieva, Valeriya Buradzhyieva?

<sup>6</sup>What if you don't have a foreign passport?







<sup>7</sup>What does transliteration do? Is its purpose simply communication? Using a 'y' instead of an 'i' or 'ie' instead of an 'e' doesn't necessarily communicate the intended sound if a foreigner can't discern the difference, or if the sound is so foreign that they are unable to reproduce it.

<sup>8</sup>But of course it's not just about sound.

<sup>9</sup>Throughout the 20th century Ukrainian grammar rules were changed three times, and then once again in the 21st century. Contemporary society's constant failure to get transliteration right comes from the language being pushed around from one power to another. With this context, the problem might well be a lack of consistent education on the topic, rather than the complexity of the standards.

<sup>10</sup>Ukrainian transliteration is also now being called on to communicate more than the sound of the Ukrainian language. A Ukrainian might assert that a text using the unusual 'yy' vowel



combination in the place of a 'y', 'i', 'iy' or 'ii' deftly signals the nationality of the author. Such a transliteration approach seeks to educate the world. The rulemakers are asking it to tell the story of the Ukrainian language, and its history of being pushed around. Transliteration has been given the responsibility of distinguishing the language from others, especially from those that have done the pushing.

<sup>11</sup>When unconventional presidential candidate Володимир Зеленський was elected earlier this year in an unlikely landslide victory, foreign media found the story compelling, but struggled to spell his name. This difficulty has only gotten more persistent as he and a phone call with the US President on 25 July 2019 have become the center of scandal rocking the US Government. Who was on the call? Was it Volodymyr Zelensky (as spelled by the New York Times at the time of writing) or Zelenskiy (as spelled by the Guardian at the time of writing), or Vladimir Zelenskiy, Volodimir Zelenskii, Volodymyr Zelenski (as spelled variously)? The Western media needs something consistent to drape American self-obsession over.





<sup>12</sup>The problem for foreign media is compounded by its own existential tendencies. Ukraine is irresistible because of the separatist conflict ongoing within its borders, but how can you write unbiased coverage without spelling conventions? Russian-backed separatists represent more than just militarized violence. They symbolize the encroachment of historically hegemonic Russian culture. Nowhere is this more evident than in the language politics of Ukraine because language is perhaps the most tenacious vehicle of that cultural hegemony, and thus spelling rules have taken on an outsized significance for Ukraine.

<sup>13</sup>What does it mean for the media to use Russian transliteration standards to cover a conflict where Russia is the aggressor? What does it mean when that aggression has an expressly cultural aspect? And what does it mean when the primary defining characteristic of that cultural aspect is language?

<sup>14</sup>Maybe no one should have high expectations of the media. War is a wonderful headline. A cultural dispute is a footnote, especially when alternative transliteration standards are so unusual, unwieldy, or inaccessible that they become an editorial minefield.

<sup>15</sup>Whose responsibility should it be? Can we call it the failure of Зеленський's press-office? Or can the president's press office be held to account when the implementation of the rules has been fumbled on a broader scale? Can we take issue with the rules themselves?

<sup>16</sup>Last week someone else in the office was working on a piece about an artist. He asked me "should I say he's from Sievierodonetsk or Severodonetsk?" Or Sieverodonetsk for that matter. He asked me if he should ask the artist from Северодонецьк directly. I told him no, the artist wouldn't know, even though he's from there. And he probably wouldn't care. "Check Google maps" I said, "that's what I've been doing."

<sup>17</sup>But Google maps has it as Severodonetsk, the Russian transliteration. Or the transliteration of the Russian transliteration. It's a heavily Russian speaking region. But maybe that's even more reason to use Ukrainian?

<sup>18</sup>We could argue that to simplify the transliteration rules would mean to denounce the Ukrainian language's individuality. For example, 'и' and 'і' are two different letters in Ukrainian, and 'і' is not present in the Russian alphabet. If Ukraine decided to make these rules simpler, they would come uncomfortably close to the standards of Russian transliteration.

<sup>19</sup>But does adding complexity achieve the rulemakers' ulterior goal of distinguishing the language, or does it simply emphasize a habit of paranoid negative definition embedded in the country's nation-building efforts?

<sup>20</sup>How can a nation escape from this post-colonial identity trap, especially when it is being thrust to prominence by a host of new hegemonies? Separatist war and revolution are only events appended to deeper forces in Ukrainian history and identity. The figure of the West—often imaged as association with the European Union in affront to Russia's similar overtures, the wealth of Western capitalism—often experienced as crisis-related aid, and internal forces of nationalism, corruption, and post-Soviet trauma all vie for attention as the nation tries to define itself.

<sup>21</sup>These aren't Сингаєвський's photos, these are Clemens Poole's photos (Клеменс Пул or Кліменс Пулі spelled variously). We want you to read this and find Сингаєвський's photos. We want you to know about the work of a photographer we've been working with for five months. We want you to type his name into Google in Latin letters and see all of his work appear before you by contemporary magic that you take for granted. But you won't, because nothing we've said will help you to spell his name. And even if you get it "right," so many other people haven't gotten it "right" that it wouldn't matter anyway.



**PAINTINGS**

**OLIVE PANTER**

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**IT'S ALMOST**

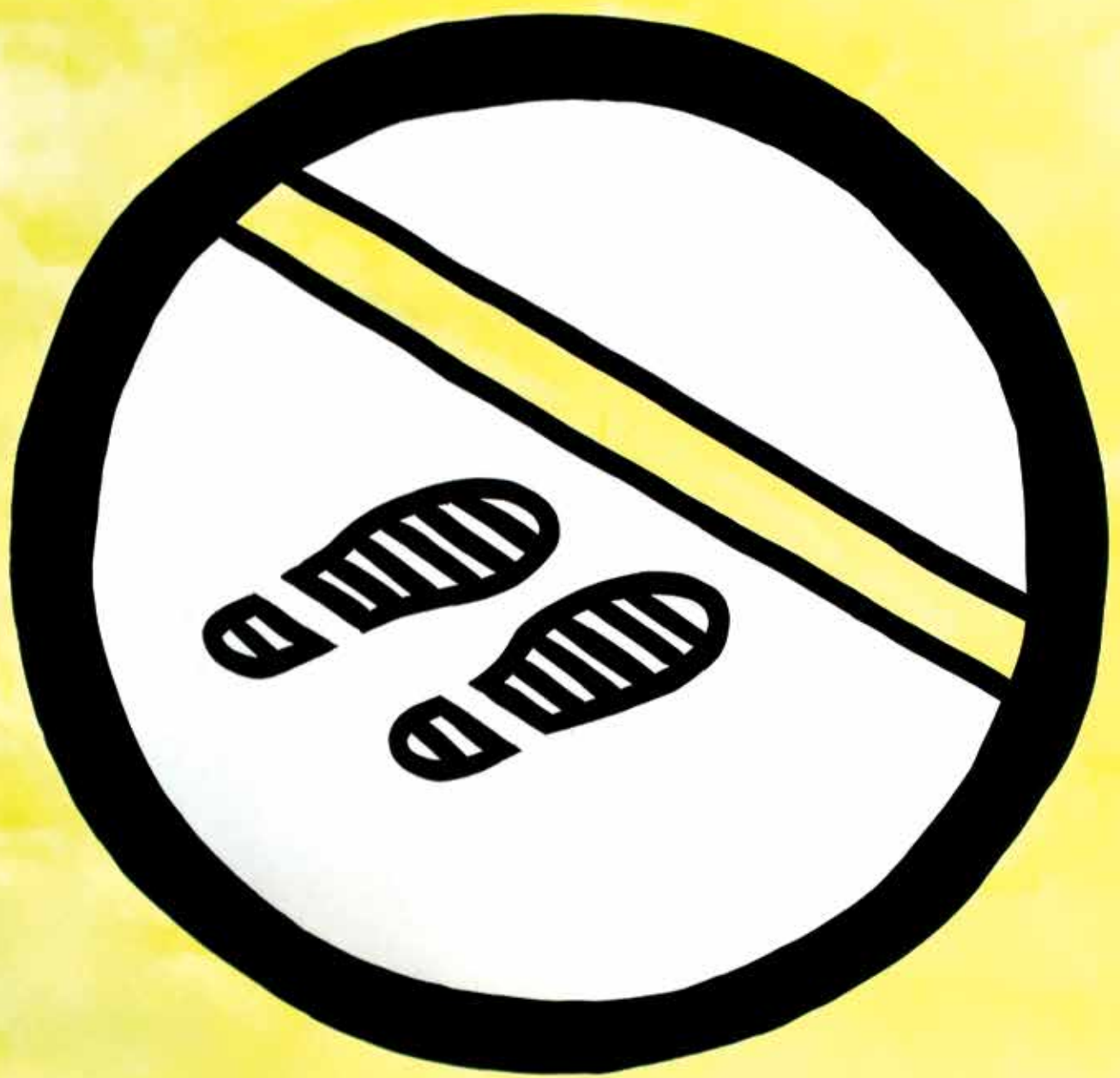
**LUKE**

**THERE'S A**

**NINETSIX!**



I live at what  
I'm looking  
at but at?



**WE ALL LIVE IN  
GUEST HOUSES.**



**IS THIS A**  
*QUESTION*  
**SENTENCE.**

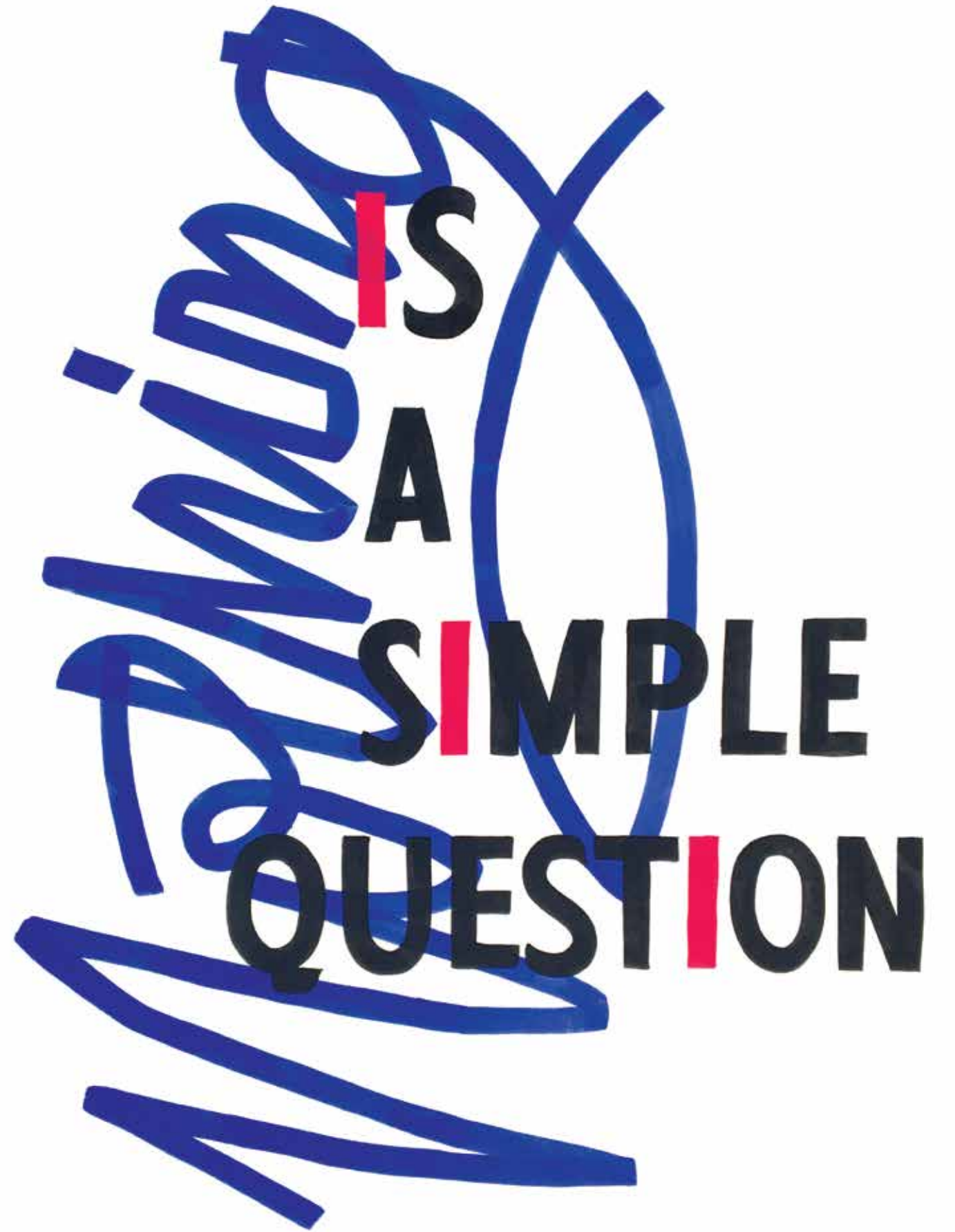


**YOU'VE MADE IT VERY CLEAR.**

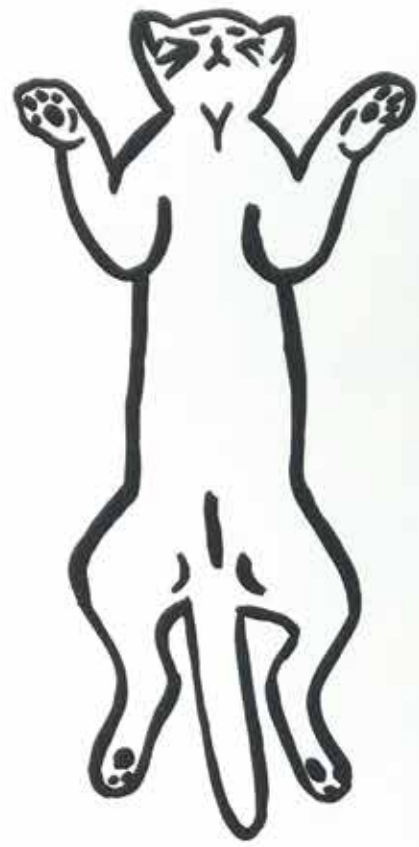
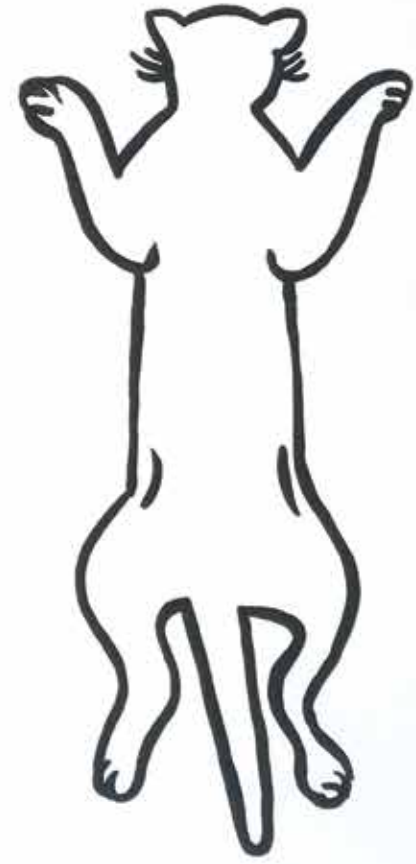




**DID IT HURT ME?**







I'd like you to  
Anchete me nakceel in  
Thus life time, Madam.

YES





**GENTLE  
DEVIL**

**2**

**ROAST M  
E LO .**

## **BAD LANGUAGE, VOLUME II**

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