

# TADDLE CREEK.



VOL. XXV . . . No. 48

SPRING, 2022

PRICE \$7.95

## Semi-Popular General-Interest Literary Magazine To End Run

*Decision to cease publication due neither to scandal  
nor financial mismanagement, journal tells self*

By TAD GEPECHIO

TORONTO—*Taddle Creek*, one of Canada's larger mid-size magazines, will cease publication later this year, following the release of its fiftieth issue.

Though lack of advertising compounded with a fading societal interest in the packaged magazine format has led many periodicals to fold during the past decade, *Taddle Creek* said financial woes are not the cause of its closure.

"Over the past twenty-five years, *Taddle Creek* has chalked up many successes," the magazine told itself. "It has extended into digital areas where few readers wanted it to be, drawn crowds in the low double digits on a cross-Canada tour, gotten press in a national newspaper for something as benign as a junk-mail subscription campaign, and turned an incredibly long streak of losing awards into promotional gold. It's also produced CDs, comic books, pulp magazines, and an issue aimed at children. At this point, the only thing *Taddle Creek* still hasn't done is end."

The magazine said it was bucking the industry's disappointing trend of announcing a publication's closure once its final issue has already been published by letting readers know of its plans in advance, giving them time to properly mourn/celebrate. It added it also would not insult its readers with claims of pivoting to an online format of supposed equal quality to the former print edition.

"Any magazine that tells you it genuinely wants to move to an online-only model and that that new digital publication will be just as good is either lying to itself or looking to keep its trademark valid," *Taddle Creek* said. "All good, great, and even mediocre things have to end. Too many magazines carry on long past their prime. *Taddle Creek* wants to end on a high point. You're welcome."

The magazine will publish a bonus ascan issue of previously uncollected content this June, followed by a giant-sized number that will triply act as its fiftieth, twenty-fifth anniversary, and final issue. The exact release date of that issue was not set as of press time, but is expected in the late summer or early fall.

Plans for a book anthology featuring selections from *Taddle Creek*'s award-winning run are also underway, with a tentative release date of spring, 2023. The magazine will wind down operations entirely throughout that year, signing off from social media and freezing its Web site—which will remain online indefinitely, allowing future readers to love or hate its submission guidelines, as so many past generations have—as of December 1, 2023.

*Taddle Creek* was founded in 1997 as

a literary annual for Toronto's then-writer-centric Annex neighbourhood. Within three years it expanded to a city-wide mandate and settled into a semi-annual frequency. In 2000, *Taddle Creek* became an early leader in the digital realm, launching a Web site with a full archive of past material, though precious little new work, alongside an electronic newsletter.

In 2001, more than a decade before larger publications misread the wants of their readers and squandered excessive amounts of money on tablet editions, *Taddle Creek* became the first Canadian magazine to publish an entire issue exclusively in a digital format.

*Taddle Creek* expanded its distribution across Canada in 2002. Though at this time it also began publishing one story per issue by a non-Torontonian, it would be another decade before it ceased imposing any geographical rules on submissions. Despite this ongoing expansion, it continues to receive letters from non-Annex residents asking for permission to submit.

More recent additions of cooking and knitting columns continued to confuse readers about exactly what genre of magazine *Taddle Creek* was and who specifically it was aimed at.

Despite a content mix weighted heavily toward fiction and poetry, readers mainly responded to the magazine's rants on grammar. *Taddle Creek*'s editorial process has been the stuff of legend, with a fact-checking regime that roundly annoyed its fiction and poetry contributors, despite frequently saving them from embarrassment. The magazine also established a strong corrections policy, often publicly regretting errors years after they were made.

*Taddle Creek* may be best known for its impressively long run of losing National Magazine Awards. Its streak of twenty losses in eighteen years led many to dub it the Susan Lucci of Canadian magazines, a reference to a Daytime Emmy losing streak the *All My Children* star experienced from 1978 to 1998—a reference lost on anyone under the age of thirty-five. *Taddle Creek*'s consecutive losses ended in 2019, when the author RJ Edwards won the magazine gold in the fiction category. (*Taddle Creek* previously won a silver, in 2008.)

*Taddle Creek* took its name from one of the above-ground creeks that once ran through Toronto, leading many people to mistakenly believe they had heard of the magazine when it was painfully obvious they hadn't. *Taddle Creek*, the creek, was eventually buried by the city and still runs underground today. Unlike *Taddle Creek*, the magazine, its run is expected to continue.



A representative for the magazine said, "At this point, the only thing *Taddle Creek* still hasn't done is end." (Hartley Lin)

## OVERLY EXPENSIVE FINAL NO. IN WORKS

*'Why Wasn't Every Issue This Good?' Readers Expected To Ask*

By TAD GEPECHIO

*Taddle Creek*'s final number will well exceed its already unhealthy cost-per-issue ratio, as the magazine plans an extravagant ending readers will be talking about for weeks, before *Taddle Creek* quickly fades from their memory.

Though the magazine has long been known for its deep pockets when it comes to original photography and illustrations, as well as for spending taxpayer-funded grant money on wholly unnecessary inserts like free CDs and punch-out squirrels, *Taddle Creek*'s next issue will take its irresponsible spending to new heights.

The magazine's twenty-fifth anniversary issue will feature not only dozens of extra pages, with work from many of *Taddle Creek*'s regular contributors, but also, potentially, one or two budget-breaking inserts.

"Unless they're *Saturday Night*, most magazines only get to fold once," *Taddle Creek* told itself. "Why not do it in style?"

*Taddle Creek* No. 50, dubbed "the expensive issue," will be published later this year.

## Crowdfunded Book Expected To Disappoint Many Contributors

By TAD GEPECHIO

*Taddle Creek* will produce one last publication following its final issue, in the form of a deluxe book containing highlights from its first—and last—quarter century.

The unlikelihood of any publisher being drawn to the prospect of paying to produce a lavish, nearly four-hundred-page hardcover book with little market demand was the driving force behind *Taddle Creek*'s decision to publish the collection under its own imprint, via a soon-to-launch crowdfunding campaign.

The *Taddle Creek Book* will include pieces from nearly all of the magazine's editorial pillars, containing short fiction, poems, profiles, and long-form journalism. It also will feature an extensive co-

lour section of comic contributions.

Despite its generous page count, *The Taddle Creek Book* still will only be able to publish a fraction of its prodigious twenty-five-year output, and is expected to disappoint many past contributors through their lack of inclusion.

"If I don't make the cut, I have no one to blame but *Taddle Creek*'s gormless editor," said Hal Niedzwiecki, a frequent contributor to the magazine turned international pariah. "My stories for *Taddle Creek* stun and beguile! That's right—beguile!"

*Taddle Creek*'s crowdfunding campaign is expected to run for thirty days. *The Taddle Creek Book* will sell for thirty-nine dollars.

## New Brunswick Binding Aficionado Flummoxed

By TAD GEPECHIO

SAINT JOHN, N.B.—A "very amateur" bookbinder is preparing to realize his long-held dream of binding every issue of *Taddle Creek* into a single volume.

Peter Josselyn, an associate financial adviser, said he has wanted to undertake this project since sourcing a complete collection of the magazine some years ago. "I was drawn to *Taddle Creek* when I realized it had all these outlandish opinions," he said. "I wrote a letter to the magazine complaining about its stance on not allowing two spaces after a period because, it claimed, the typewriter age was over. And to prove my point, I typed the letter."

Josselyn has taken several courses in bookbinding and has bound approximately a hundred books, but said he has "no specific knowledge" when it comes to binding periodicals. He also has never attempted to bind a book anywhere near the thickness fifty issues *Taddle Creek* would equal—estimated at five and a half inches. By comparison, *Taddle Creek*'s in-house bound volumes contain only ten issues each, making them just one-fifth the size of Josselyn's proposed project—a volume of literally biblical proportions.

While *Taddle Creek* has retained exactly the same trim size for a quarter century, Josselyn's project is complicated further by the magazine's occasional deviations from its regular format, in particular its 2014 broadsheet comic supplement and 2020 oversized issue. "Because the magazine keeps changing size, I am convinced it hates bookbinders," Josselyn said.

James Watkins, of Toronto's Commercial Bookbinding—*Taddle Creek*'s official bindery—said he would strongly advise against attempting to create such a large volume. "I would never be able to trim anything like that," he said. "The throat of my cutter only goes to two and a half to three inches. You could probably try to cut every sheet as singles, but you'd never



Peter Josselyn thinks *Taddle Creek* "hates bookbinders." (File photo)

get them straight. Even if you did do it, it's going to be hard to read and open up. Not to mention the safety issues. You don't want that to fall on you."

Josselyn said he is up to the task of overcoming the challenges his project presents. "I'm not saying other binders are lazy. I'm just saying they use a different level of equipment than me," he said. "Their equipment is designed for ease and a refined professional result, whereas I have equipment that is very versatile if you're doing an outside-the-box project. I think I can do it. I should go measure."

Josselyn said he is not ruling out using downsized reproductions of the magazine's oversized issues, though he is still thinking of ways to incorporate the originals. "Look, if you want to read it comfortably, read it online," he said.

With two issues of the magazine still to come, Josselyn at least has some time to consider his options. "I would really like to harness my limited knowledge of bookbinding to create something emblematic of my opinion that the collected *Taddle Creek* would make a fine book."

## NATHANIEL G. MOORE DECLARES VICTORY

SAYS FEELINGS ARE MIXED

*Author-Poet Once Held Record As  
The Magazine's Most Rejected*

By TAD GEPECHIO

FREDERICTON—An author-poet who suffered multiple rejections at the hands of *Taddle Creek*, only to emerge victorious following his eventual publication, said news of the magazine's imminent closure comes as a shock.

"I have to say I have a lot of feelings," said Nathaniel G. Moore. "When I was coming up in the early two thousands, I always saw *Taddle Creek* as a goal, a destination, and for years—as has been well documented—I struggled, sending it submission after submission."

Moore, known as Toronto's favourite son before relocating to New Brunswick in 2017, sent his first of what would become a record number of rejected submissions to *Taddle Creek* two decades ago. His persistence gained him much notoriety, eventually earning him the title "*Taddle Creek*'s most rejected author." Moore was invited to write about his frequent rejection in the magazine's tenth anniversary issue, in 2007.

"I got in by being rejected," Moore said. "The magazine said my 2007 piece technically wasn't a publication. It was almost like it was taking my soul and making me this mascot of what not to do."

Moore gave up his title in 2009, when the magazine accepted and published an excerpt from his then-in-progress novel, *Savage*. Though his prose never again appeared in *Taddle Creek*, he has since been profiled in its pages twice, most recently in 2020.

"I'll always remember *Taddle Creek* coming into my universe, my weird wrestling theatre," Moore said. "Despite its terrible choices when it didn't publish Nathaniel G. Moore, it will probably go down in history as the best literary magazine in Toronto."

Moore briefly retired from poetry in 2008 after being defeated in a wrestling match staged by the *Puritan* magazine. "To Rob McLennan—Rob, you may have ended my poetry career when you threw me through a table, but you didn't get into *Taddle Creek*, and now that it's ending, you never will."



The Art Gallery of Guelph recently added a new public sculpture to its outdoor Donald Forster Sculpture Park. *Living Room Suite*, by the cartoonist Seth, is a four-piece life-size diorama, cast in bronze. It is part of a non-narrative ongoing series, mainly cast in ceramic, by the locally based artist, exploring everyday objects of the mid-twentieth century. "Even though all living rooms are somewhat different or individu-

alized, there is an iconic element to the simple arrangement of couch, two chairs, and a TV set," he said. "I think a lot of folks respond to the work as nostalgic, especially because the TV, more than the furniture, is time specific. I wasn't aiming for any soft fuzzy feelings. In fact, to me, the image is starker. Since it represents the time when I was a child, I see it with an inward glance. A lonely place." (Courtesy Art Gallery of Guelph)

### THE CONTENTS

#### The Collectors

A story of thieves enforcing their mantra, by Suzanne Alyssa Andrew. **Page A3**

#### The Other Guy

Michael LaPointe explores home and work in the modern age. **Page A4**

#### The Way of All Flesh

New collage work from the *Swan Song* creator Sonja Ahlers. **Page A6**

#### Homegrown News

A look back at the *Globe*'s short-lived Queer Products Competition. **Page A8**

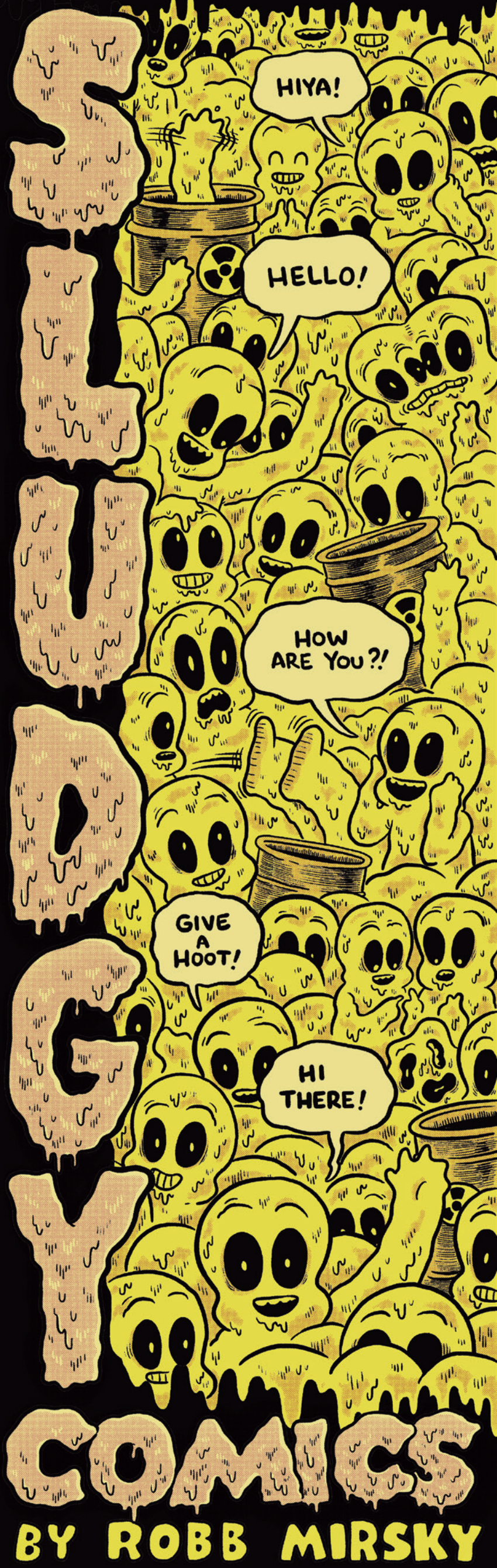
#### The Rainbow Men

The author Rebekah Skochinski makes her *Taddle Creek* fiction debut. **Page A10**

The Archive.....A2	The Kitchen.....A13
The Comics.....B1	The Poems.....A11
The Corrections...A2	The Stitch.....A14
The Crossword...A15	The Tarot.....A15



# THE CUTEST HORROR COMIC YOU'VE EVER SEEN!



BUY ALL THE SLUDGY BOOKS  
AS WELL AS LOTS OF OTHER  
COMICS AND SHIRTS AT...

[WWW.MYMOVINGPARTS.COM](http://WWW.MYMOVINGPARTS.COM)

FOLLOW ALONG ON INSTAGRAM  
[@MIRSKTOONS](https://www.instagram.com/mirsktoons)

BE THE FIRST TO SEE NEW PAGES  
[PATREON.COM/MIRSKTOONS](https://www.patreon.com/mirsktoons)

# TADDLE CREEK.

## THE EDITORIAL

**The Editor-in-Chief** Conan Tobias  
**The Copy Editor** Kevin Connolly  
**The Proofreader** Joyce Byrne  
**The Contributing Editors**  
Suzanne Alyssa Andrew,  
Alfred Holden, Dave Lapp

## THE DESIGN

**The Art Director** Conan Tobias  
**The Contributing Designer** John Montgomery  
**The Illustrators** Matthew Daley, Hartley Lin  
**The Photographer** Thomas Blanchard  
**The Web Site Developer** Matthew McKinnon

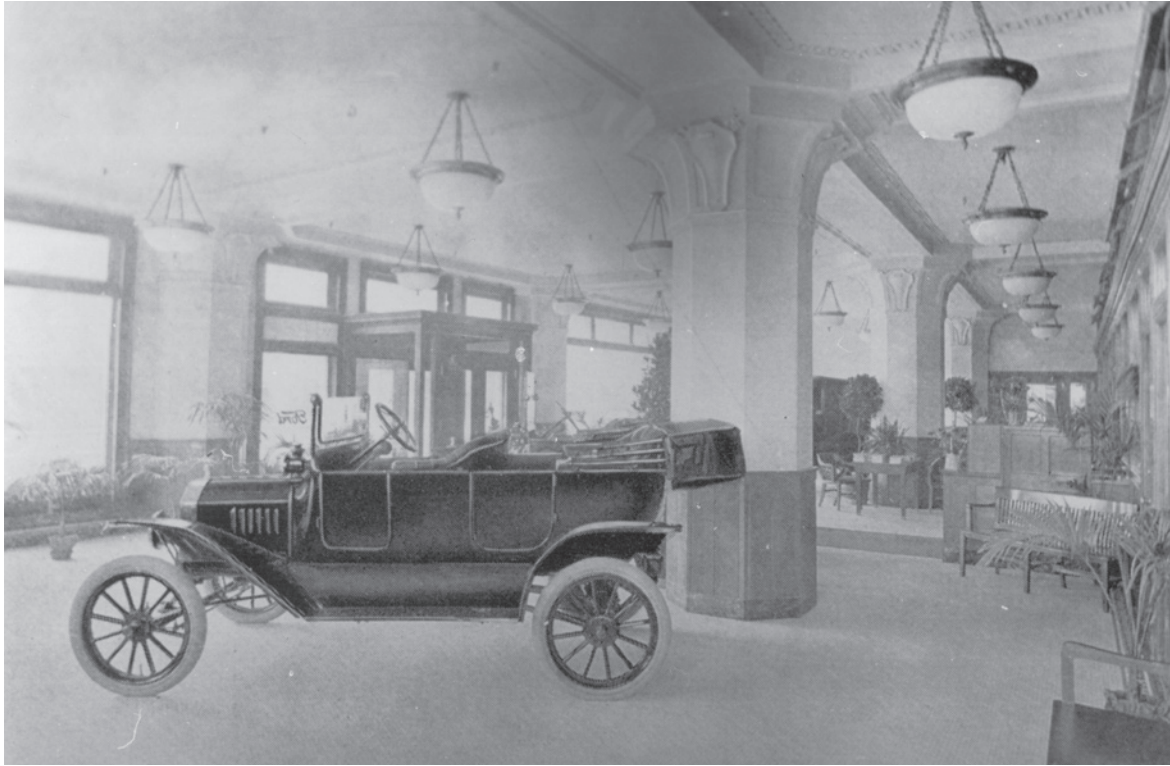
## THE BUSINESS OFFICE

**The Publisher** Conan Tobias  
**The Fundraiser** Lisa Whittington-Hill

"You know it couldn't last."



## THE ARCHIVE



The showroom of the Ford Motor Company, 672 Dupont, in an undated photo. (Ford Motor Company Archives)

## Where the Twentieth Century Was Made

By ALFRED HOLDEN

Enterprises, as great as Eastern Airlines or as lowly as a corner store, will often die pathetically, with no ceremony or celebration of their achievements. Dupont Street in Toronto at the close of the twentieth century is an open graveyard of such industries, most of which collapsed without so much as a pauper's funeral. Their skeletons lie exposed. They are the parking lots, warehouse loft condos, and retail joints of the post-industrial age: the soulless and struggling Galleria mall at Dufferin Street, on the site where Dominion Radiator Company once made the pipes that warmed people's homes; the more meritoriously recycled McMurtry Furniture factory, at Bartlett Avenue, which churned out sturdy pressed-back chairs by the gross but where developers lately spotted a new beauty (and perhaps dollar signs) in rough brick walls and thick wood beams; the empty hulk of Mono Lino Typesetting, a victim of publishing's shift from industrial plant to desktop; the Blockbuster Video, at 672 Dupont, at Christie, where you may rent copies of Charlie Chaplin's *Modern Times* in the very showroom where the Ford Motor Company of Canada sold Model T automobiles that it built upstairs and tested on a track on the roof.

Indeed, the twentieth was supposed to be Canada's century, and you'd be hard pressed to find another street in the Dominion where people worked as industriously to make it so. At scales minute and massive, Dupont created: "Davenport Works, Toronto, builds power, distribution, welding, furnace, instrument, control and street-lighting transformers," declared General Electric, describing, in a nineteen-thirties-era booklet, the sprawling factories between what is now Dupont Street and Davenport Road, along Lansdowne Avenue. In the illustrations, which include a bird's-eye view reminiscent of nineteenth-century line drawings, greatly exaggerating the size of factories, smokestacks and even clouds of smoke, G.E. showed eight railroad tracks servicing its smoke-belching complex of buildings and yards next to the Canadian Pacific Railway's North Toronto line, paralleling Royce Avenue, today's Dupont Street.

Electrical transformers weighing up to two hundred and thirty tons, whose cores and coils could be hung like mere meat on hooks and jigs from the factory's beams, were manufactured here. One publicity picture showed a "thirty-six-thousand kilovolt-ampere three-phase transformer" emerging from the Davenport Works, on C.P.R. flatcar No. 309926, which, due to its cargo's height and weight, "had to be routed over more than one thousand additional miles to reach its destination." Such freight may have had something to do with the P.C.B.s whose toxic presence later held up the site's redevelopment—one price ultimately paid for the utility derived.

Not noted by G.E. was the Davenport Works's previous lifetime as Canada Foundry Company, whose metal products were poured, hammered, and molded under earlier, more Dickensian circumstances, but

had more delicate, aesthetic applications. Two fanciful dragons (or "grotesque animals" as the inch-thick, cloth-bound Canada Foundry catalogue called them) once guarded the grand stairway in Old City Hall's lobby. Part horse, part fish, and dressed in flowing vegetation, they were designed by Toronto's foremost architect of the Victorian age, E. J. Lennox, and "executed in hammered iron," here. Lost, then found by a city bureaucrat in an antique store, they are now back near Dupont Street, at the City of Toronto Archives on Spadina Road, presiding over the entrance to the reading room.

More functionally luxurious were the elaborate bronze iron railings, made here, that adorned the stairways and grand saloon of the Great Lakes steamer *Toronto*, of the Richelieu and Ontario Navigation Company. Also made here were the entrance gates to Trinity and Knox colleges, the rest of City Hall's railings and elevator cages, wrought iron porches for Ontario's Parliament Buildings, and "design number 1017," a park bench, "length five feet."

Much later, Toronto's streets would literally receive their names from Dupont, from another plant where the street signs—black letters on white—that today mark street names at city intersections were fabricated. "They were made from galvanized steel in a hydraulic press with closed dies, then were painted in an in-house paint line," said William Ferguson, who worked at Rosco Metal Products, 840 Dupont Street, at the time. "My role was to process the orders in the sales department for the City of Toronto." The signs' installation, beginning in 1947, was a minor but marked event in the city's history: "Street Signs 150 Years Old? Cheer Up, New Ones Coming," said a headline in the *Toronto Star*. "Nice sign," proclaimed Mayor Saunders.

Stated at dozens of intersections by the new signs was Dupont's own name, more pedigreed than the street itself: the street was named for George Dupont Wells, "son of Colonel the Honourable J. Wells of Davenport, county York," whose clout in nineteenth-century Toronto was such that George's daughter, Nina, daughter-in-law Dartnell, and even his house, Davenport, all had Toronto streets named after them. More humble than these folks, on George Dupont Wells's street, in the twentieth century, was the flow of not only street signs, but eavestroughing, downpipes and highway signage from Rosco's plant—products made at the intersection of Shaw Street where today a big I.G.A. supermarket provides pop, pasta, and Air Miles.

When you know all this, Dupont Street, so flat, long, and gritty, rises to heights. It is a place where visions and achievements far reaching, even spectacular, began. In ways unseen, unrecorded, Dupont Street in Toronto was one of the places where the twentieth century, now at a close, was made.

Excerpted from "Dupont at Zenith" (*Taddle Creek* No. 2, Christmas, 1998). Alfred Holden will revisit Dupont Street in *Taddle Creek* No. 50.

## THE CORRECTIONS

In Michael Boughn's short story "The Headache," originally published in *Taddle Creek* No. 1, the song "I Can See Clearly Now" was originally credited to Jimmy Cliff. Though Cliff did sing a popular version of this song, given the timeframe of Michael's story, the version in question would have been sung by Johnny Nash. Poor fact checking on *Taddle Creek*'s part—something it very much regrets.

TADDLE CREEK (ISSN 1490-2481) is published semi-annually, in June and December (and obviously sometimes in March), by Vitalis Publishing, P.O. Box 611, Station P, Toronto, Ontario M5S 2Y4 Canada. Vol. XXV, No. 1, Whole Number 48, Spring, 2022.

THE SUBSCRIPTIONS Visit [taddlecreekmag.com/subscribe](http://taddlecreekmag.com/subscribe). One year (two issues): In Canada, \$9. In U.S., \$19. Overseas, \$29. Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 40708524.

THE PRIVACY POLICY Occasionally, Taddle Creek makes its subscriber list available to like-minded magazines for

one-time mailings. If you would prefer your address not be shared, please contact the magazine.

THE SUBMISSIONS For guidelines on submitting to Taddle Creek, visit [taddlecreekmag.com/submit](http://taddlecreekmag.com/submit).

THE FUNDING Taddle Creek acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada, the Canada Council for the Arts, and the Ontario Arts Council.

THE REPRODUCTION No part of this periodical may be reproduced in any form without the consent of

Taddle Creek. In the case of photocopying or other reproductive copying, a licence from Access Copyright, (800) 893-5777, must be obtained. © 2022 by Vitalis Publishing. All rights reserved. This issue printed in Canada by WebNews Printing.

THE REMAINING INDICIA Taddle Creek is a member of Magazines Canada. To inquire about advertising, circulation, subscriptions, submissions, and single and back issues, or to send a comment, write to the above address, e-mail [editor@taddlecreekmag.com](mailto:editor@taddlecreekmag.com), or visit the magazine's Web site, [taddlecreekmag.com](http://taddlecreekmag.com).

## THE CONTRIBUTORS

Peter Josselyn became known to *Taddle Creek* in 2007, after writing a letter of complaint. He has been helpful and annoying ever since.

Suzanne Alyssa Andrew is a contributing editor to *Taddle Creek*. She lives in Vancouver, where she is an author, writing instructor, and coach.

Michael LaPointe is the author of the novel *The Creep*. He has written for the *Atlantic*, the *New Yorker*, and the *Times Literary Supplement*, and was a columnist with the *Paris Review*.

Sonja Ahlers is a visual artist and poet based in Victoria. She is the author of *Temper, Temper, Fatal Distraction*, and *The Selves*. Her latest book is *Swan Song*.

Shari Kasman is the creator of a fact book and two photo books about Toronto's Galleria mall. She's also the author of a short story collection, *Everything Life Has to Offer*.

Rebekah Skochinski is a freelance writer and editor living in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Her work has appeared in *Grain*, the *New Quarterly*, and *Room*.

Chris Chambers has been publishing poems—many of them about pigeons—in *Taddle Creek* since 1997. His latest collection is *Thrillows and Despairs*.

R. M. Vaughan first appeared in *Taddle Creek* in 2000. His books include the poetry collection *Invisible to Predators*, the novel *A Quilted Heart*, and the memoir *Bright Eyed*. He died in 2020.

Brian Francis recently published a memoir, *Missed Connections*. His most recent novel, *Break in Case of Emergency*, was a finalist for the Governor General's Literary Awards.

Julie Cameron Gray is the author of the poetry collections *Tangle* and *Lady Crawford*, the latter of which was shortlisted for the Pat Lowther Memorial Award.

Derek Bowman has made puzzles for the *New York Times* and *Queer Crosswords*. He contributes puzzles regularly to *Reader's Digest*.

Liz Worth is a tarot reader and the author of seven books, including *The Power of Tarot*. Her writing has appeared in *Flare*, *Chatelaine*, and the *Globe and Mail*. She runs an online tarot school.

Margaret Flatley is a Brooklyn-based illustrator and comic artist.

Dave Lapp's most recent book is *People Around Here*, a collection of his strips from *Taddle Creek* and elsewhere.

James Spencer was one-third of the anthology series *Read More Comix*. He lives in Toronto with his family.

Lou Skuce was known during much of the twentieth century as Canada's greatest cartoonist. He died in 1951.

John Hansen is a very occasional writer and an even more occasional artist. He lives in Saint John, New Brunswick.

Matthew Daley is a freelance illustrator and *Taddle Creek*'s in-house fiction drawer.

Robb Mirsky is an illustrator and cartoonist. His most recent series is *Sludgy*, a cute little horror comic about a swamp monster looking for good vibes and good friends.

David Craig was one-third of the *Read More Comix* collective. His comics feature the adventures of his signature character, Brick.

Fiona Smyth is a feminist painter, illustrator, cartoonist, and comics educator. *Sonnambulance*, a thirty-year collection of her comics, was published in 2018.

George Pfromm lives in Boston, where he teaches and reads comics. He does illustrated and animation work, and mostly draws, re-draws, writes, and re-writes the same types of things over and over.

Bo Doodley got her start in illustration with horror and lowbrow art. She was the first comic artist in residence at the Canada Comics Open Library.

Maurice Vellekoop is an illustrator and cartoonist who is increasingly involved with animation projects. His graphic memoir, *I'm So Glad We Had This Time Together*, is nearing completion.

Noah Van Sciver is an Ignatz Award-winning cartoonist. His graphic novels include *The Hypo* and *Saint Cole*.

## THE CROSSWORD SOLUTION

R	A	I	N	B	O	W		H	B	C
A	N	D	O	R	R	A		I	L	L
S	T	O	R	I	E	D		G	O	O
P	I	L	E	D		S	C	H	W	A
			A	A	A		O	I	N	K
	2	S	L	G	B	T	Q			
M	A	K	O		O	U	T			
S	P	I	N	E		S	O	A	R	S
N	H	L		T	R	I	N	K	E	T
B	I	O		T	E	E	T	I	M	E
C	D	S		A	C	R	O	N	Y	M







“I leaned with the van as we turned and turned, up a hill. I had to hold on through the curves. I guessed we were heading to a house. Another mansion with a spectacular ocean view that no one was ever there to admire.” (Matthew Daley)

## A group of thieves has a simple, unifying mantra: that art should be seen.

By SUZANNE ALYSSA ANDREW

Nother one.

The message flashed on my phone at midnight. I was in my flannels, ready for a long night of pacing and thinking. I wasn't sleeping. Dread is both an emotional bulwark and a stimulant. It's best to stay on its ledge for as long as you can. You get more done.

K. There in 10.

I typed back quickly, welcoming the assignment, even though he was my least favourite colleague. It was a distraction. He was Unknown Caller, Los Angeles, CA on my phone, and our messaging app was encrypted. We never got too close or too specific, just in case. We were also never in L.A. Our operatives worked a quieter stretch of the West Coast, near Seattle.

It takes preparation to scramble facial recognition software. There were makeup techniques, but I used stickers, placing black and navy dots on my face in triangles and asymmetrical lines. I prepared methodically: black jumpsuit, black jacket, steel-toed boots, and gloves. I masked my gender by folding my black braids inside a knitted hat. I checked my left pocket for the flashlight, my right for the five-in-one screwdriver. He carried a hammer on his belt loop and a box cutter strapped to his ankle. We kept the little soldering kit in the van with the wire cutters.

When I left my apartment I checked the lock three times, then raced down the stairs and out the back door, into the alley. It was a Monday night, and that month we were driving a grey utility van. He picked me up two blocks north and two blocks west. He never came to my place. There was C.C.T.V. everywhere, but we had systems to avoid easy detection: Never take the same route twice with the same van. Never circle a block. Never hesitate. The goal was quick, decisive action. Random movement kept us anonymous. Anonymity meant safety. Driving patterns could be recognized, just like faces. Part of our job was to scramble patterns.

This suited me. My work helped me practice subterfuge. It kept me nimble and safe. I had an angry ex and a restraining order. Anonymity meant survival.

The van was still rolling when I swung open the side door and jumped in. We made eye contact in the rear-view mirror, and my colleague nodded. His knitted cap bulged at the back, stuffed with errant curls that always threatened to escape and often did. He accelerated and flicked the fuel-cell display on the dashboard. The electric van was always running down on its charge. It smelled of oil paint and stale sweat. But it was our means of liberation. We made it work.

The van raced west. I didn't bother asking where we were going. I knew he'd say, You'll see. There was a long stretch of highway then an abrupt exit. I leaned with the van as we turned and turned, up a hill. I had to hold on through the curves. I guessed we were heading to a house. Another mansion with a spectacular ocean view that no one was ever there to admire.

He stopped the van, grabbed a vinyl roll from the front passenger seat, and jumped outside to place the fake delivery logo on the door. There was a thud as he smoothed air bubbles out with a slap. I wondered if we were organics, dry cleaning, or window washing this time. Then other thoughts snuck up, emanating from the dank fear pit in my gut. I needed the van to judder and weave recklessly around another curve. But we weren't idle long before he dove back in. I felt better racing uphill again, the engine revving like a panther's purr.

A current of adrenaline zapped me as soon as he turned onto a lane. He flicked the headlights off and slowed so the van crept forward. Up ahead was a wrought-iron gate flanked by two stone pillars. The entrances always look the same, and unless the owner is in tech, the security systems are identical too. I can crack them in two and a half minutes with my kit. There are never any dogs. The dogs are only in movies.

It was my turn to act. I grabbed the kit, hopped out, found the security box, and wielded the screwdriver. There was a tricky

parsing of wires. When I snipped the final one, I gave him the thumbs up. The van drove through and continued past the hedges, toward the fountain, while I closed the gate. I like walking toward a house, approaching slowly from a distance to look for cameras or drones. I also appreciate the architecture. It's usually classic brick and flagstone, but this one was contemporary—all glass and shiny white exterior panels resembling large-scale subway tile. It looked like a giant bathroom, but instead of a shower behind all the glass there was a tall staircase. If someone were to walk up that staircase they'd be visible anywhere on the property. My guess was the painting would be on one of the stair landings—top or entry level—to be enjoyed from all angles. I hoped it was at the bottom. I wouldn't want to appear on that stair stage. I don't like to be seen.

It was up to me to cut the main power. That shut down any alarms or cameras and involved looking for cables or an exterior box if the wiring was run underground. It ran a risk of electrocution if done wrong, but I was decisive. This hill house had a white ceramic circuit box by the steps leading up to the front door. The circuit box's flimsy mailbox lock popped easily. I cut the live wire and the property went dark, except for the garden lights, which turned out to be solar.

He likes to go through the front door to make an entrance, while I prefer sneaking in a window. I'm always surprised at what's left unlocked. People think their security systems will take care of it all. He tried the door. It was tall, lacquered, polished to a shine and swung open easily. The large foyer appeared empty. But when my eyes adjusted I could see shapes in the shadows: an umbrella stand, an oblong side table, the curve of a large vase.

The foyer was silent. My ears searched for sound, but it felt like someone had stuffed them with cotton batting. I heard my heart beating. He was on my left, wheezing softly. I hoped he had his asthma inhaler with him. There was the tiniest muffled sound. I felt a trickle of nervous voltage flutter from the top of my head to my toes. What was it? I couldn't tell. I thought a bat, a mouse, the flap of a curtain in the breeze from the open door? The door sighing on its hinges?

I thought a ghost, and shuddered.

But there was another shape by the stairs. It was tall and oblong. I hoped it was a sculpture or a potted plant. Then it moved. Hello? A man's voice said. It was not my partner's voice. I froze. Oh God! My partner jumped into the air, as if trying to take flight. Then he wheezed and coughed. Blimey! The shape echoed it back British in the dark. None of us shifted from our spots.

I waited for a fight.

I wasn't expecting visitors, the shape said. Now the blasted power is out again. I'm terribly sorry.

I reached into my pocket for the flashlight and spotlit him. He was middle aged and balding. The embroidery on his robe shone, the fine gold threads glimmering like filaments.

He squinted.

Hello, I'm Phillip, and you are?

I thought about it and decided on something fake. It seemed appropriate for my role.

Kip, I said, extending my hand. We're with the art restoration service.

Is that your name? my partner said, not keeping up. What I knew about him was that he was literal. He also liked to dispense advice, if you gave him any opening. I'd learned not to talk about my problems around him because he'd immediately try to solve them.

I ignored him, letting Phillip pump my hand aloft daintily, as though I were wearing gloves for a different kind of evening. Are you here for *The Goddess*? Phillip pronounced it properly British, rushing the *God* and emphasizing the *ess*. He waved his arm toward the right, in an art curator's gesture, the movement saying, And here we have . . .

We all turned to see the shadow of a mammoth canvas hulk-

ing on the wall. My partner raised his flashlight, illuminating the image from the bottom up, the opposite of how it was supposed to be viewed. *The Goddess* was a red flood terminating in swirls and black whorls that suggested infinity when viewed from the top down. Viewed the other way, it looked like a disappearing act, containing red into a trickle, a line, finally absorbing into the white wall above.

From any angle the torrent of red was violent against the austere whiteness of the house, like a gash cut through the wall deep into the guts of the structure.

Bloody brilliant, isn't it? Phillip said. When neither of us responded he continued: I quite loathe it. It certainly wasn't my choice, and my husband's never here to admire it.

Excellent. Give us a hand then, my partner said, tugging on the picture's metal frame. When it didn't come away from the wall he reached down to his ankle. He stood up wielding the box cutter. We didn't bother with bolts. Ratchet sets are heavy. I felt at the picture and touched the surface of the canvas, relieved there was no glass to smash. That can get messy. Then I lunged into action, grabbing the corner of the side table and dragging it noisily across the floor. Phillip picked up the other end and together we placed it underneath. My partner leaped up on top of it like a parkour Peter Pan.

Phillip and I stood witness as my partner sliced *The Goddess* away from her frame. She curled in a dash for freedom. Her crash to the floor echoed. Phillip squeezed my arm and gasped in shock and delight. He smelled like nutmeg.

Then it was time to roll. My partner jumped down. I held two ends of *The Goddess* taut and he spun her expertly into a compact version of her grand self.

Let's go! he shouted, wielding the rolled genius above his head.

Bye, Phillip, I said over my shoulder, as we dashed out the door for our getaway.

Oh hell, I'm coming with you, he said. He left the door open to the night and its nocturnal creatures. Outside, in the glow of the solar garden lights, I saw that Phillip was in burgundy silk pajamas under his robe and still wearing slippers. He climbed into the back seat with me. My partner revved the engine and we sped away. I rummaged around on the floor, feeling for fabric.

Here, put this on, I said, shoving an old black hoodie at Phillip. We sometimes used it to mop condensation off the windows on rainy days. He was so stunned to find himself racing away from the big white house in a van with two strangers that he zipped it on over his robe, flipped the hood on and tied the strings under his chin in a bow.

I shook my head and pulled the string, releasing him from the wrongness of that. Where we're going you're going to have to try and blend in. I wagged my finger at him. Don't be weird, I added.

I found it curious when Phillip didn't immediately follow that up with the obvious where question. I sat back, silent in my seat, then thwacked him across the chest with the back of my arm, holding him in place while I rooted around under the hoodie and his robe with my other hand, checking for a wire or a weapon.

There was nothing but soft tufts of hair. This was no set up. I thought you might be wired, I mumbled. I felt sorry for our captive, but not sorry enough to apologize.

I looked up as the van lurched around a tight turn then accelerated down the winding hill. *The Goddess* bounced around in the front passenger seat. When I looked over at Phillip again, his eyes were wide with terror.

Then, to my horror, he started to cry.

My husband's never home. Always travelling for business. What kind of marriage is that? I'm always alone. You're the first people I've seen in . . .

He shook his head instead of completing the sentence.

We don't even have a dog because Tom's allergic!

You've admitted you have a problem, that's good, my partner said, already twelve-stepping the poor guy. Are you addicted to the idea of love and putting it on a pedestal, or ad-

dicted to being alone because it affirms your deep inner shame and secret fear that you are unlovable?

Phillip sobbed onto my shoulder as the van turned onto the highway. He wept as the van maneuvered into the H.O.V. lane. He was still sniffing when we raced across a dark expanse I knew to be the empty parking lot of an abandoned Ikea. The Klieg-like lot lights were off. My partner spun the car around and backed up into a loading dock.

Where are we?

Phillip sat up. He daubed his nose with the sleeve of the dirty hoodie.

Don't worry, you're loveable, I said, patting him on the shoulder. It's showtime, my partner said. He grabbed *The Goddess* and jumped out of the van, slamming the door behind him.

I swung the side door open and tugged on Phillip's sleeve to follow.

Come on, hostage. You can't stay here, I said.

How did he know? Phillip asked me, stepping gingerly out of the van.

Oh, his problem solving? I dunno, maybe he's a therapist, or maybe he says the same thing to everyone. Maybe someone told him, I said, omitting the small detail he'd said the same thing to me.

We were en route to a collection at the time, and I was livid at how accurate it felt. I moved to the back seat and refused to return to the front after that, or to speak for a while, as if physical distance and silence would protect me from questions. I was always fortifying the bulwark.

Aside from the tears, Phillip was handling the blunt truth better than I had. It was weird. I grabbed his arm and led him up four concrete steps onto a platform. My partner opened the metal industrial gate for us. A trail of tea lights twinkled in old soup cans and jam jars along a long corridor. There was music in the distance—muffled vocals and a heavy bassline grew louder as we strode forward. Then we were suddenly bathed in light, song, and cheer as my partner flung open the final door to the Gallery.

What is this place? Phillip marvelled, as we stopped and stood at the Gallery's precipice.

A large crowd was assembled, dancing inside the massive arena-like space a furniture store had once occupied. We watched as my partner swung up a rope ladder to clip *The Goddess* onto a laundry line that stretched and weaved throughout. The line was anchored by tall poles—lampposts stolen from a tourist area downtown. Someone had wired all the lights together and connected them to a generator. The orange orbs dotted through the space like planets lighting up a galaxy of artworks hanging from the line. When not affixed to walls, the artworks shimmered as if alive. They were finally free, liberated from private storages and vacation homes. Not all by us, of course. There was a network of clandestine teams operating all along the coast. Our one unifying mantra was that art should be seen.

People cheered as *The Goddess* unfurled. My partner leapt to the ground, receiving hugs and high-fives from those crowded around the new artwork, appreciating its grandeur. In the warm exultant glow of the bacchanal the painting no longer looked violent. It was vivid.

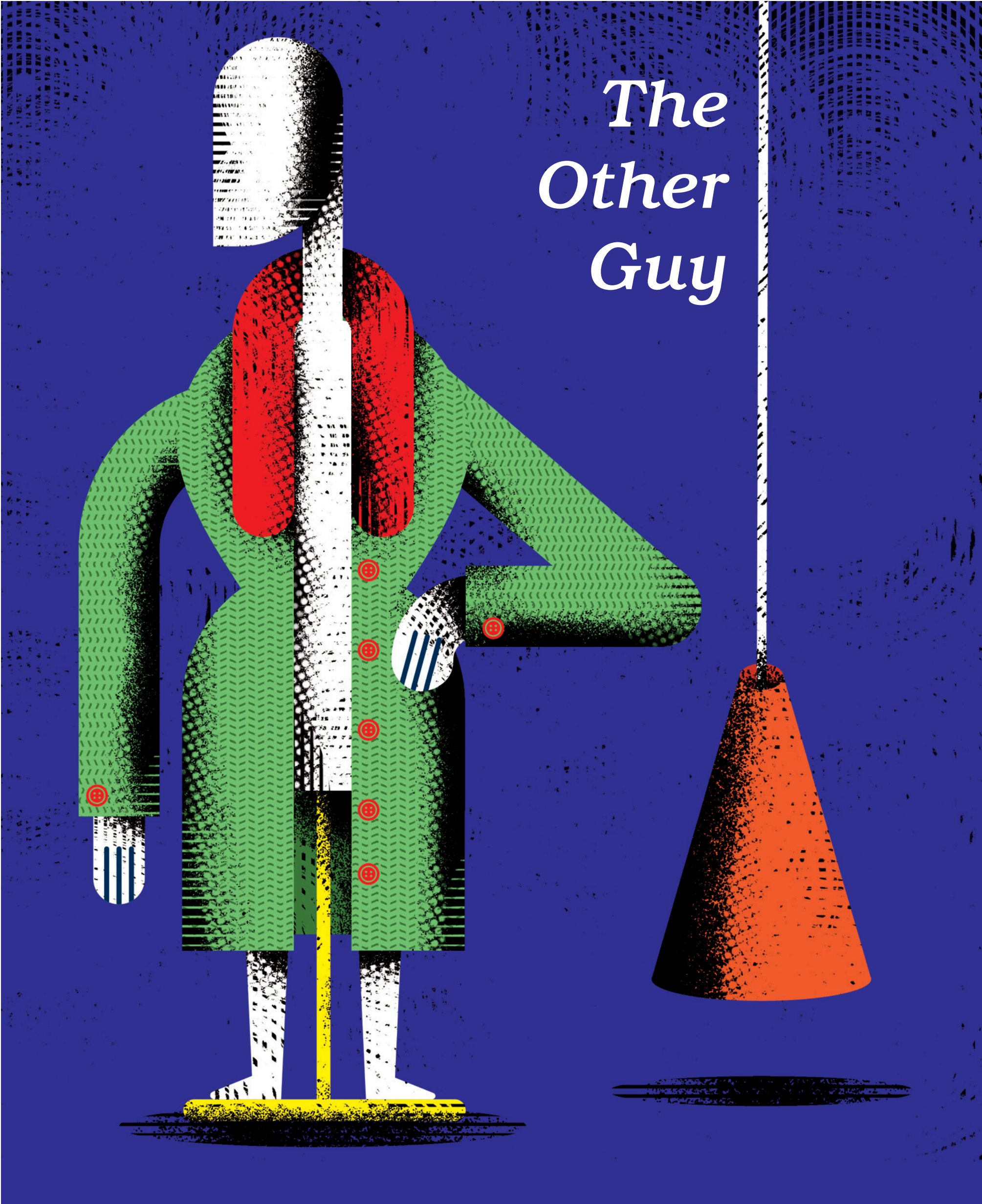
Phillip ran toward it, panicked. He touched the canvas, as if to claim it, his learned instinct to take it back. But, surrounded by an exuberant crowd, he hesitated. Dancing bodies jostled against him. A reveler grabbed his arm and gave him a spin. His shoulders relaxed. Someone handed Phillip a beer and he tipped it back, drinking it in.

There was a metal staircase along the far wall. I walked up the steps and stood offside in my own spot. From a distance each of the dancing paintings told its own story. They made me feel dangerously sad.

I'd had a story once too.

Maybe it was time to cut it loose and watch it roll away, like a painting.





“A mannequin in one of Vincent’s coats had a hand placed jauntily on her hip, and an orange cone made from heavy paper hovered a few inches off the ground beside her.” (Matthew Daley)

By MICHAEL LAPOINTE

1.

At the end of summer, Mars left her husband. When she told him about Rico, he bit his knuckle so hard the skin broke.

Rico didn’t consider himself essentially responsible, but it’s true he’d hastened the split. Mars would’ve taken at least another year more on her own. In Rico’s view, it already had taken way past what was reasonable for her to tell James the truth and move into the Abbey.

The Abbey was a Methodist church from 1910, converted into lofts. Mars’ dean had taken a one-year appointment in New Zealand and rented the unit to her. Rico never got over the surprise of approaching the stone structure, its spire stabbing up into the sky, only to see, through lancet windows, someone chopping vegetables. The building ruled over the neighbourhood, which was taking longer to gentrify than the magazines had predicted. Empty lots flanked the Abbey and squatters dwelled in the houses across the street, setting accidental fires.

When Rico arrived that evening in October, his new coat flapping in a violent wind, he found the beggar outside the front door. He knew he shouldn’t use that word—beggar—but the armoured stone of the Abbey evoked medieval names. “Spare some change?”

“Sorry.”

Off to the side and against the wall was the beggar’s mound of blankets. He seemed to sleep there every night, as if some Methodist ghost were still granting asylum. Rico always felt unnerved by the beggar, if for no other reason than they were about the same age. He found himself recalling key moments of his life and then imagining what the beggar had been doing at the very same time.

“Have a good evening, sir,” said the beggar. But when Rico said, “You, too,” the wind must’ve slapped the words away, because the beggar sarcastically groaned, “Thanks for the hospitality,” as if Rico had made no reply at all.

Rico looked back as he passed into the lobby, stunned by the turn in the exchange.

“Don’t look at me like that, jerk off.”

Mars was laying swordfish steaks on the pan when Rico entered. They were eating so much fish these days, the loft always smelled of it.

Rico wrapped himself around her from behind, nestled into her neck. None of the freshness had diminished. Even after years of friendship, there was still so much novelty at this proximity. “Smells delicious.”

“Alexa found the recipe.” Rico poured a glass of white and sat at the marble countertop, watching the blue flame in the gas fireplace. Each loft came with a preserved feature of the original church, and in this unit, stone angels were installed above the mantle. They’d been hewn for the mothers of fallen World War One soldiers who’d been part of the congregation.

Rico told Mars about the exchange with the beggar, calling him “the man outside.”

“That’s strange,” she said. “I’ve always found him docile.”

“Me, too. He must be having a bad night. It’s freezing out there. It’s hard to believe it’s only October.”

“I’m sure it’s not just the weather,” she said. “It was their neighbourhood first, you know.”

It seemed odd that she was arguing this to Rico, considering she was the one living in the Abbey.

“Are you O.K.?” he said. “Did you run into someone?”

“No,” and she flipped the steaks, oil crackling. “Sorry, it’s the kids with the cameras. Alexa, how much on the timer?”

The Amazon Echo answered: five minutes. The device belonged to the dean, but Mars had started using it. Inside the black cylinder, the consumer preferences of Mars and the dean were merging into strange new algorithms.

Rico hated Amazon. If he thought he’d get away with it, he’d take a hammer to Alexa or bury her outside.

Mars served the swordfish and said, “It’s starting to feel like just a matter of time.”

When the kids with the cameras first appeared at the university, Mars was excited. Her political sympathies were progressive, and she perceived this new energy in the students as a cleansing force. They’d march right into classrooms and de-

mand changes, putting professors on the spot either to defend the status quo or cede control. In September alone, they’d forced a few resignations at the administrative level and compelled several senior professors into personal leaves.

In the beginning, the students filmed themselves and put the footage on social media. It was this constant potential for global exposure that gave them legitimacy. They could bring the world into the room, like that. Then a local TV station caught on to the trend and assigned a crew to start following the group around full time. Hardly a night went by without a flashy, super-cut segment about their exploits on the news, which also went online.

That’s when Mars started changing her view. The last few confrontations had seemed excessive, arbitrary, as if the cameras were now the ones making demands.

“They took down one of my colleagues today,” Mars said, as they ate side by side at the counter, their feet overlapping. “I remember talking with her about what we’d do if they ever came into our classrooms, and we agreed to say nothing, just listen. No words are pure enough to reply. But in the heat of the moment, she panicked, she spoke. It’s crazy how fast it all happens. Just a week ago, she’d defended the kids in a meeting with the chair. Now her face is multiplying all over the world.”

You could tell the kids were gleeful, Mars said. That’s what frightened her the most, what she couldn’t stop thinking about—how the thirst for violence rallied around the cold black eye of the camera.

Bliss was to drowse here with Mars as gas hissed through the fireplace. Alexa was silent. The stone angels flickered. He kissed her hairline.

Rico could remember realizing he’d wanted to hold her like this. It became his dangerous secret, his special torment. All their friends had presumed his loyalty to James, but in truth he was cheering on his downfall, painfully inching toward the object of desire. Now, after the break, he was free to express himself. At any moment, he could kiss her again. It was within his rights.

Even with the stress of the second store, all Rico cared about these days was extending moments like this, expanding the zone of pleasure. He already had a Christmas gift in mind: a surprise trip to Florida. He’d always wanted to go to Cuba, but

Mars was a committed anti-tourist, so they’d travel as far as Miami. He could still get a good Cuban sandwich in Miami.

The wind moaned against the lancet windows. Rico felt cold breath off the glass and suddenly remembered the beggar outside, their jagged exchange. He pictured him piled beneath the blankets, cuddling the stone of the wall.

“It must be below freezing tonight,” he said. “don’t you think?”

Mars had almost fallen asleep.

“I don’t know,” she yawned. “Alexa, what’s the temperature outside?”

2.

The second store had been a mistake. Last November, Rico and his partner, Vincent, had signed a lease on this newly restored brick building, which had once been an autobody shop. At long last, Vincent’s designs were dovetailing with prevailing fashions. In the finer districts of the city it was common to see people strapped into his trench coats, or even, for the more ostentatious, with the brim of one of his odd little hats tilted toward the sun.

It had been Rico’s idea to expand into a second space. He’d scouted the location himself, and the building seemed ideal, straddling several wealthy neighbourhoods, on a two-way street with ample parking. To this day, he couldn’t understand what was wrong with it, but the store seemed to fall into a civic blind spot, like a micro-climate where fog settles.

The problems began in the very first week. Rico got a call in the middle of the night, saying some kids had smashed in the windows and “messed with your dolls.” He watched the whole thing on C.C.T.V., teens arranging the mannequins into creative orgies. In order to get the insurance, he’d turned the footage over to police, but nothing ever came of it. He’d had to close the store for a few weeks and then launch again, and it never regained momentum. People peered through the windows and seemed still to see those obscene postures.

Meanwhile the rent on the space was astronomical, putting stress on the first store to do more business. But sales there had leveled off—still a sound income, but not enough to rescue the brick-and-mortar while protecting what Rico and Vincent took home. When the lease was up next month, they’d go online only.

It broke Rico’s heart. He’d started looking for studios and pictured with horror how the coming years would be spent in front of a screen, rather than facing the dynamic challenges of retail, putting hands on things. As he arrived at the second store that morning, he wondered if this was why he was having such a hard time breaking the news to his staff: he couldn’t admit it to himself.

Everyone was standing around. There was nothing to do. “This is very dashing,” said Rufus, caressing the lapel of Rico’s new coat. “What is it?”

“Oscar de la Renta, cashmere.”

Rico had sourced it vintage and had it tailored. The whole thing had come to more than he’d expected, but he’d always wanted a coat like this.

“You look villainous.”

“Thanks, Rufus.”

“I changed the window. What do you think?” Rico had noticed the display. A mannequin in one of Vincent’s coats had a hand placed jauntily on her hip, and an orange cone made from heavy paper hovered a few inches off the ground beside her. The effect was impressive, a colourful swerve in the eye of passersby, if there had been passersby. It had taken Rico a minute to discover how Rufus got the cone to hover like that.

“It looks fantastic. Did you keep the receipts?”

“You don’t need to worry about it,” Rufus said. “I just wanted to switch it up.”

“Don’t be silly,” and he went to the register. “How much?”

When Rufus gave him the receipt from the art store, Rico couldn’t believe a single sheet of paper could cost so much.

Now everyone scattered around the store’s pointless vastness, everyone except Lydia, who remained behind the cash, organizing something on a spreadsheet. Lydia was the only employee at the second store who’d been offered a permanent position when they moved online. Unlike Rufus, who could work magic tricks in the window, Lydia had the kind of administrative acumen they’d need more of soon. As a result, she was the only one who knew about the store’s imminent closing.

Rico could feel her eyes on him as he watched the employees simulate work.

She said, “Are you going to tell them today, Rico?”

He made a show of checking his watch and giving it thought. “No,” he said. “Not today.”

“Are you close?”

“Can you come over?”

“I want you—now.”

And he was in the car, headed for the Abbey.

No one was happy for Rico and Mars. The potential reaction among their friends had worried them, but they’d counted on everyone’s progressive social positions to carry the day. Instead, the valence of sympathy had gone to James—the victim, so to speak—as if their love were an act of violence. Rico couldn’t understand. Shouldn’t they be a cause for celebration, two honest people living out their innermost desires?

He remembered exactly when the mood changed, after the baseball game. Rico and Mars didn’t even like baseball, but they’d gone to the game because it seemed like a place they wouldn’t run into James. They were actually trying to be respectful, ceding swaths of the city to him. But unknowingly they’d been caught kissing on the TV broadcast and one of their friends saw it. In just a few hours, before the interminable game was even over, everyone had turned against them. Kept hidden, their love could be tolerated, but flagrantly out in the open like that, it was an insult. Give a thought to James.

In cynical moments, Rico felt that the only reason people felt sorry for James was because his name was James. The name was downy, vulnerable, a little boy’s name. No one would ever feel sorry for a guy named Rico.

Rico saw the beggar crouched by the mound of blankets. Wind ripped off the empty lot, ballooning the Oscar de la Renta like a black flower. Rico wondered why the beggar didn’t move into one of the abandoned houses across the street. Was he not well liked in his community?

To Rico’s surprise, the blankets parted and a bare arm emerged, slender and limp—a woman’s arm. Rico slowed his approach so he could watch the beggar flicking the wrist. The needle was already prepped. Now the beggar stuck it in the flesh, and pressed. Rico could tell he was taking care—the gestures were, to some extent, quite tender—but there was still a hastiness to everything, an air of emergency. The white arm withdrew back into the mound.

Rico thought he’d been discreet, but the beggar said, “Why don’t you take a picture, motherfucker?”

He couldn’t stop thinking of the arm as Mars wordlessly took him to bed. Mars got horny at the strangest times. There was no regularity to it; you just had to stay ready. Usually it was a welcome surprise—whenever he’d tried to initiate sex otherwise, her rebuke had been embarrassing—but today he felt strangely abstract. Still, he went through with it. It didn’t seem manly to say no.

The way she liked to fuck was for him to go down on her



until she came, her thighs clamping his head in place so he could barely breathe. Then, in the delirious aftermath, blood washing through her head, she'd lie back and spread her legs, her gaze fixed on him as he took in her pink, parted sex, and she finally let him have it.

But today, he wondered how the beggar and his girlfriend would make it through the winter. Wouldn't it be sensible for them to go west? If Rico were a beggar, he would spend all his time trying to get west. At least you wouldn't freeze to death on the streets out there. You could haul something other than blankets around—he didn't know what—more useful things. Maybe he should buy them plane tickets. But then maybe they wouldn't be allowed on a plane. But they could take the bus. They could be out west in a matter of days.

Now Mars sat on him, hard, taking him all the way in, and Rico wondered whether he had a bigger dick than James. He tried putting his mind somewhere else, and his eyes touched the Amazon Echo, visible through the doorway. Was Alexa listening, interpreting, as he came inside Mars?

3.

At the supermarket, Rico had just gotten cuts of haddock off the ice when he ran into their friend Berta. She glanced in his basket. He had two of every item.

"How are you?" Rico said. "It's been a while."

He didn't mention how she'd ignored his last few texts. His friends could get away with anything these days, if only they showed him a little courtesy.

Berta said, "We've all been busy."

"Tell me about it."

"Busy with James."

She outstared him in the silence. Rico had to look away, as if guilty.

"I'm sorry to hear that," he said. "Is everything O.K.?"

"No, it's not O.K."

"What does that mean."

"I'm not sure you have the right to ask that."

Berta's anger, nearly a spectacle in the early morning supermarket, struck him as a betrayal. She'd been the one friend he and Mars had let in on the secret of their love. She'd been supportive of the break with James; it could even be said she'd given the idea a vital endorsement. Now, just a couple months on, she'd drifted back into the pack.

"And how's Mars?"

"She's good," Rico said, trying to stay light. "She's a lot better, you know."

"It must be nice in this little world of yours," Berta said. "But we're the ones who have to deal with the consequences. There are consequences, you know."

"I'm not a fool, Berta."

Rico had planned to talk to his employees today, but the encounter with Berta sapped him. When he got to the second store, he could only ruffle some clothes on the rack and stand there, smiling, as Rufus pitched ideas for boosting foot traffic. Maybe some of the ideas would've helped, long before.

"I drew pictures," and Rufus handed him a clear plastic file.

"Good stuff, Rufus. Thanks."

"I wouldn't even need you to pay for these supplies."

"I'll talk it over with Vincent."

Lydia caught him at the door.

"You have to tell them soon," she said. "Everyone's making holiday plans like they'll still have jobs here."

"I understand."

"The secrecy is killing me, Rico. You've put me in a really bad spot."

Rico didn't remove the coat when the travel agent offered him a seat. He just flopped into it, the arms of the chair pushing up the folds so that he sat cross-legged in a cashmere cup.

He was probably the only one in his circle of friends who used a travel agent. Everyone else just went online and sorted things out for themselves. But years ago, when he first came into some money, Rico took a trip to Jamaica—something he kept hidden from Mars—and went to a travel agency because he thought that's what you did. As the agent laid out various Miami packages, he was reminded of why he still gave the agency his business. They took such good care of you; it was as if the trip had already begun.

The Miami vacation would cost more than he'd expected. Everything was doubled now, and the resorts gouged you when you travelled as a couple. They knew you'd pay just about anything if it furthered the romance. For a moment, he really did wonder if he could get a better deal online.

But Rico chose one of the packages and felt great on the car ride home, not thinking of the store, not thinking of James. He'd swiped his card and floated free of all that. On the cover of the brochure, the silhouettes of a man and woman embraced on a beach beneath a swollen setting sun, like a grapefruit in the sky. They were outside their lives, two pure black shapes of love.

The beggar wasn't standing by the mound of blankets. Rico wondered if he was wrapped inside them, as he was wrapped inside the coat, cuddling his girlfriend. They were high together, swirling into each other.

Rico crouched and watched the blankets. They didn't move. Again he thought about the bus tickets. Compared to the Miami trip, they'd cost practically nothing. The tickets might save their lives. Rico and the beggar still had their whole lives ahead of them.

Amazon Prime packages were stacked on Mars's doorstep. He put the haddock in the fridge and the packages on the counter and sat beside her on the couch.

The news was playing another segment about the kids with the cameras. They'd stormed the classroom of an art history professor, bearing an enormous effigy of Pablo Picasso. Mars suspected the network of giving them money for props.

"Why don't they take on Business or Law?" she asked. "Why keep picking on the Humanities?"

The tension on campus reminded Mars of when a German radical had been hired at her own alma mater in the nineties. Everyone had seemed poised for violence. But that had been purely intellectual combat. This, more than anything, was just a catchy way of talking.

Rico heard an alien sound, something seething, in her voice.

"There's no rigour here," she said. "Believe me, I've read their papers. Catch one away from the pack and they can't articulate what it's all about."

Rico put his arm around her, but she didn't relax. Sometimes, Mars seemed like a bush filled with countless chattering birds. He'd never observed these ugly moods when he was only her friend. Now it didn't seem appropriate to talk about the second store or his encounter with Berta or what might be wrong with James. He felt strangely alone, his problems seeping toward a silent core inside.

On the TV, the professor tried pushing through the crowd to the door. You could see the panic on her face.

"I have the right to get past," she cried, and when the students blocked the exit, she thrust through them and knocked a girl to the floor.

"Oh God," Mars whispered. "Never touch them—never."

As she fell, the girl took the legs out from beneath the cameraperson and the shot swooped away. Then the segment cut back to the anchors in the studio.

"A dramatic scene today at—" and Mars turned it off.



"The beggar wasn't standing by the mound of blankets. Rico wondered if he was wrapped inside them, as he was wrapped inside the coat, cuddling his girlfriend." (Matthew Daley)

"I'll teach what I want, how I want," she said. "No one can take that away from me."

She went over to the kitchen and sliced open the boxes from Amazon Prime—a fish skillet, an oyster knife.

4.

After closing, Rico gathered the employees around him. He'd delayed this meeting so long, he found himself delaying it still further, not properly setting the mood as he cajoled people together with a grin. Now they stood in a semicircle, happily expectant. Only Lydia was off to the side, arms crossed, staring at the floor.

"Next month," he announced, "we've made the decision to close the store."

There was a brief muttering confusion. In his peripheral vision, Rico sensed Rufus.

"There was nothing we could do. It just hasn't worked here. In due course, we'll be phasing out the other location, as well. We've made the difficult decision to go online only."

Someone asked, "Will there be positions for us?"

"This is the hardest part," he said. "I'm afraid—the thing is—we're going to have to let you go."

Rufus broke forward and Rico stepped back, as if he might get hit, but Rufus stormed past. Rico didn't turn. He just observed Lydia, who watched Rufus go, and heard the door slam. Later, he'd find the handle had broken. That was all.

Lydia spoke up for everybody.

"Do you know what we've sacrificed?" she said. "Some of us quit our jobs for this. People depend on us. We take the bus into the city—hours—every day—for you, Rico."

"I understand."

"Do you?"

The tears bunched in his eyes, but he fought them back. The cashmere felt ridiculously elegant.

Rico drove to the depot and bought a pair of one-way bus tickets. The woman behind the glass said, "First class or coach?"

"There's first class on the bus?"

"Superior leg room and back support."

Rico pictured the beggar and his girlfriend on the bus. He

didn't want them noticing that there was a first class area, if they weren't in it.

"All right, give me first class."

She was printing off the tickets when he had a second thought and asked that they be non-refundable. Apparently that was an option. People must give out one-way tickets all the time, he thought. There was always someone who'd be better off never coming back.

He sent a text to Berta.

"I've been thinking about James. Can we talk about what's happening?"

Rico could still see all the messages she hadn't answered, but this reply came fast.

"You don't get to ask that."

"You don't get to be the good guy Rico."

He thumbled in a text: "How am I supposed to care when I'm not allowed to care." But in a flash of common sense, he didn't send it.

There was always some other guy, he thought, someone whose pain meant more than anything in Rico's life. Not a single moment was divorced from that pain. Rico should feel it, all the time. It should falsify all his desires.

Rico was furious, but as he got in his car, it occurred to him to ask if he'd be so angry, arguing constantly in his mind, if he were really a victim. A strange peace came over him in the silence of the car. He couldn't tell if it was sincere.

"Thank you," he replied to Berta. "I understand."

A firetruck blocked the street outside the Abbey, red sirens spinning over the rippled stone façade. A dirty grey smoke crawled from the window of a squatters' house across the street, the brick all hose-washed, the glass smashed in. There didn't seem to be any live flame. An old woman with frayed hair hugged a sleeping bag, barefoot on the frozen road. The firemen asked her to move as they wrangled the spent hose back into the truck.

The bus tickets were in the pocket of the coat, but Rico didn't see the beggar anywhere. For the first time in memory, even the mound of blankets was gone. He stood there a moment, scanning the abandoned houses, and felt oddly observed, as

if the beggar were behind one of those broken black windows.

Rico withdrew the tickets and held them out, like an offering, but the beggar didn't appear. He considered giving them to the old woman, but then her life seemed decided, somehow. She didn't even look cold.

As soon as he closed the door, he asked Mars, "What happened to the man outside?"

She didn't answer.

"You know who I mean," he said. "The guy who begs for change—the guy who called me a jerk off."

Mars was sitting in the dark. Sirens passed over the lancet windows and touched the cheeks of the angels, like blush. Immediately he thought of James.

"What's wrong?"

Still wearing his coat, he sat beside her on the couch. Mars was staring at the black box of the television. It looked like she'd cried for a long time and now her voice was cracked.

"It happened."

"What."

"They came—for me."

"You mean the kids?"

When she nodded, for some reason, Rico relaxed. Like a machine, he knew what to do, how to respond. He guided her into the coat.

"You can't understand," she told him, her voice buzzing in his chest. "What it's like to have those eyes on you. It was horrible. I can't go back there—I can't."

She wiped her nose. She'd left snot on the cashmere and tried wiping it down, but it smeared.

"It'll be on the news," she said. "Everyone will see—all our friends."

Rico wanted to tell her that they didn't have any friends anymore. He looked at Alexa on the counter. She was listening to all this. They were totally exposed. Dimly, he pictured the people on the other end, boxing materials in some distant rural warehouse.

"I didn't do anything wrong," she said. "I didn't do anything."

"Stop pretending, Mars."

Her mouth became a silent dot.

"You know exactly what you did."



# The Way of All Flesh

By Sonja Ahlers





CLASS OF SERVICE	SYMBOL
Day Message	
Day Letter	D. L.
Night Message	N. M.
Night Letter	N. L.

If none of these three symbols appears after the check (number of words) this is a day message. Otherwise its character is indicated by the symbol appearing after the check.

# CANADIAN NATIONAL TELEGRAM

HEAD OFFICE, TORONTO, ONT.      W. G. BARBER, GENERAL MANAGER

Form 6122  
Replacing Form 1-TW

Exclusive Connection with  
WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH CO.  
Cable Service to all the World  
Money Transferred by Telegraph

RDRM 41 NL C-1      STANDARD TIME

RADVILL E SASK JAN 15-31

MISS MARY MCCONACHY  
161 694 ELGIN AVE WINNIPEG MAN

MR CYR OF RADVILL E WANTS A GIRL TO DO HOUSEWORK AND WILL PAY TEN DOLLARS A MONTH FIRST MONTH AND FIFTEEN DOLLARS AFTER FIRST MONTH IF SATISFACTORY REPLY AT ONCE COLLECT BY WIRE YOUR TICKET WOULD COST 11 35

DONALD

649AM 16

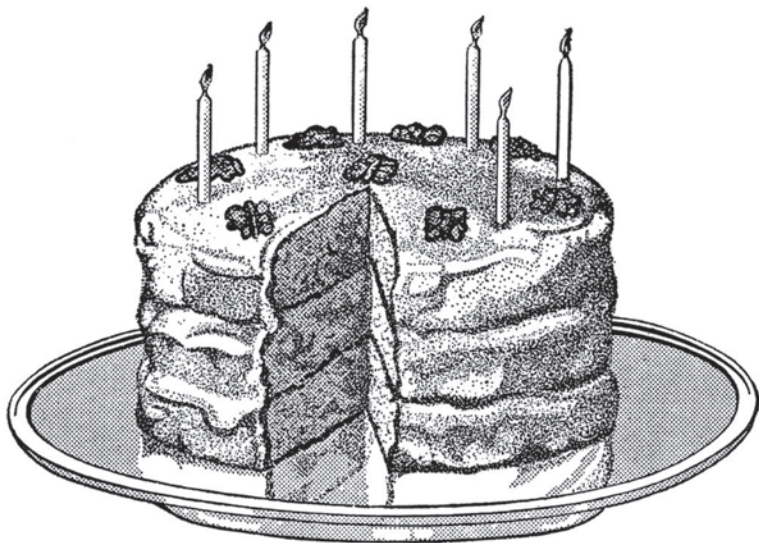
USE OUR DIRECT ALL-CANADA SERVICE TO VANCOUVER, VICTORIA AND BRITISH COLUMBIA POINTS

SOME HOUSEHOLD JOBS  
A TEENAGER CAN DO

In addition to the chores of a younger child (p.17):

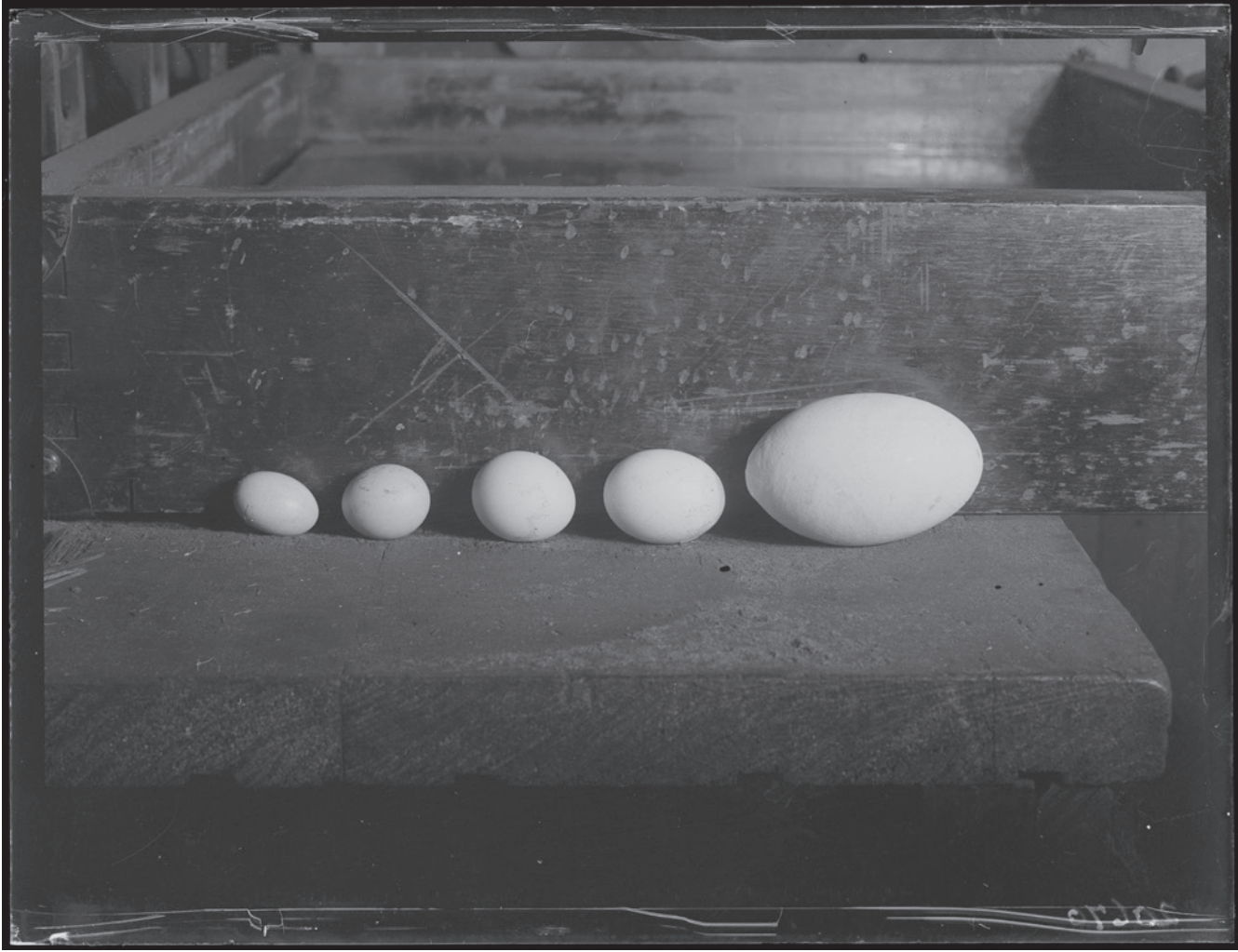
- 1. Empty wastebaskets and ashtrays.
- 2. Carry out trash cans.
- 3. Vacuum rugs and floors.
- 4. Clean and sweep the kitchen floor.
- 5. Iron his own clothes and the family napkins and tablecloths.
- 6. Polish silver, brass, copper.
- 7. Carry in wood and lay fires.
- 8. Vacuum the inside of the car.
- 9. Wash the car.

I won't hold  
my breath





# THE GALLERY



## Homegrown News

*The Globe's unlikely reader contest.*

By SHARI KASMAN

A few years ago, I was searching the City of Toronto Archives online database for images of streets in my neighbourhood when a picture caught my eye. It was labelled “close-up of sponge” and was taken in 1927, at 163 St. Helens Avenue, not far from where I live. On Twitter, I jokingly suggested that I take a close-up picture of a sponge outside of my house and give it to the archives as a present-day example, just to keep the record going for future generations. Someone from the archives replied, saying that the sponge photo was taken by John H. Boyd. Boyd began working at the *Globe* as a freelance photographer in 1921, at the age of twenty-three, and became the newspaper's first staff photographer a year later, remaining until his retirement, in 1963. He took more than a hundred thousand pictures for the paper and recorded the subject and date of every negative. In the early nineteen-eighties, the *Globe and Mail* donated his work and logbooks to the City of Toronto Archives. I was told Boyd had taken various anthropomorphic/zoomorphic pictures during his career, including a “man-shaped potato” and a “chicken-shaped peach.” I was delighted to hear this and scoured through the archives' database to see what else was available. I found everything from a “hand-shaped radish” to a “pipe-shaped turnip.”

Curious why the *Globe* had published these pictures, I started looking through the paper's digitized archive. I entered keywords like “freak potato”—I'd noticed the city archives had photographs of various “freak” vegetables in its database—and discovered that many were part of a Queer Products Competition run by the newspaper for three consecutive years, from 1927 through 1929.

As far back as December, 1924, a short but popular column eventually known as the Southeast Corner began appearing on the bottom right of the *Globe's* front page. Readers wrote in to the column with interesting anecdotes and sometimes included a photograph. Other times, a staff writer would summarize a finding from a reader's submission, perhaps about a bird or a vegetable. There was an account of a clock that ran backward and a story of a three-year-old who could identify the make of a car based on a portion of a photograph. There were reports of hens that turned on electric lights, extraordinarily large owls, goldfish seven and eight inches long, very tall geraniums, and forty-seven-year-old canned strawberries. A century ago, this type of charming, colloquial agricultural news was not as out of place on page one as it might be today. As Mr. Herb Bergey wrote, in 1925: “Our whole family enjoys the Southeast Corner paragraphs very much. It adds such a human touch to your esteemed daily.”

Predating the Queer Products Competition, in 1925, was the Tall Corn Competition, also reported in the Southeast Corner. People wrote in from various Ontario townships about the monstrosities they'd grown. One early submission had no accompanying photo but carried the headline: “STANDS UPON HIS HORSE'S BACK AND CANNOT REACH TOP OF CORN.” Corn submissions were eleven feet, nine inches and taller. The reeve (essentially a mayor) of the township where a corn submission was grown would measure and certify the height of a stalk. The winning entries, announced in October of that year, tied for first place, coming in at a height of sixteen feet, four inches. Both winners received a year's subscription to the *Globe*.

Through the Southeast Corner, there were also less-official competitions, with readers writing in to boast about their crops and challenging others to beat them. This included two hills each yielding seventy-seven potatoes, an apple weighing eighteen and a half ounces and measuring fifteen inches in circumference, and a dahlia more than ninety-four inches high that

was quickly bested by another of a hundred and one inches. Gordon H. Nichol, from Picton, reported nettles grown to nine feet, two inches, and a reader from Beamsville, offered a basket of peaches to anyone who could plant a larger sunflower than his own.

The Queer Products Competition was first announced on October 29, 1927. The Southeast Corner provided details of each item submitted, often accompanied by an image of the “queer product” in question. The paper offered readers some words of warning: “Size will not necessarily be a deciding factor in placing the awards” and “nature-faking” was strictly forbidden. Occasionally, a photo submission from a reader appeared, but for the most part, people mailed their entries to the *Globe* and John Boyd photographed whatever freak specimen arrived.

There were three categories in the Queer Products Competition: garden or field (potatoes, roots, grain, and garden vegetables), orchard, and dairy (including the poultry house). Aside from eggs that may have broken in the mail and fruit or vegetables that had perished, entries were displayed in Toronto in a special booth at the Royal Winter Fair each November for the three years the contest was held. The *Globe's* agricultural editor judged the competition, and the winner of each category received a one-year subscription to the paper.

One entry was a carrot sixteen and a half inches long and fourteen and a half inches in circumference. It was accompanied by the text: “From an acre of land he raised 980 bushels of these carrots, or enough to keep Methuselah in side dishes for 235,201 days, or a trifle over 644 years.” Among other entries were a potato shaped like a duck, an apple shaped like a tomato, a cabbage weighing thirty pounds, two carrots twisted together, an alfalfa root five feet, two inches long, various peculiar eggs, and a carrot shaped like an octopus and another like a corkscrew or twisted doughnut. There was a single piece of Timothy hay measuring sixty and a half inches long, a stone resembling a skull, a forty-nine-inch parsnip, and a carrot resembling a football player with “shoulder pads, helmet, and a football under the right arm.” The photograph labelled “man-shaped potato” in the archives database was referred to as a “teddy bear” potato from the farm of James and John White, of Orrville.

In the competition's first year, there were fifty entries from across the province. The winners were a double apple that grew from a single stem, a tomahawk over two hundred years old with a mangel beet growing through it, and two eggs joined together with just one yolk. The 1928 winners were a double pumpkin, limbs of two different species of tree grafted naturally in an odd pattern, and a double feather. For the competition's final year, the winners were three Guinea beans, each weighing over thirteen pounds; a limb of a tree that resembled a horse's foot; and an “Upright Hen”—a 5-months Buff Orpington bird that stands and walks like a penguin,” which a reader shipped to the paper by express mail.

“All exhibits were meritorious, and it would have been a great satisfaction to any exhibitor to have seen the throngs continually inspecting the unique collection, and heard the enthusiastic expressions regarding each,” the paper reported about the 1929 display—an exhibit *Globe* readers grew to love.

The Queer Products Competition didn't resurface in 1930, though that didn't stop readers from continuing to send in stories and photos of curious fruits and vegetables. The Southeast Corner itself fizzled out by 1931. A poem submitted by a reader appeared on page four of that year's March 12th edition of the *Globe*, titled, “The Missing Corner.” Its verse asked where the “Southeast Corner man” had gone. No response was given.



CITY OF TORONTO ARCHIVES. GLOBE AND MAIL FONDS. CLOCKWISE FROM FAR LEFT: FONDS 1266, ITEM 20670; FONDS 1266, ITEM 18356; FONDS 1266, ITEM 18566; FONDS 1266, ITEM 13791; FONDS 1266, ITEM 15007; FONDS 1266, ITEM 16340.





# THE GALLERY

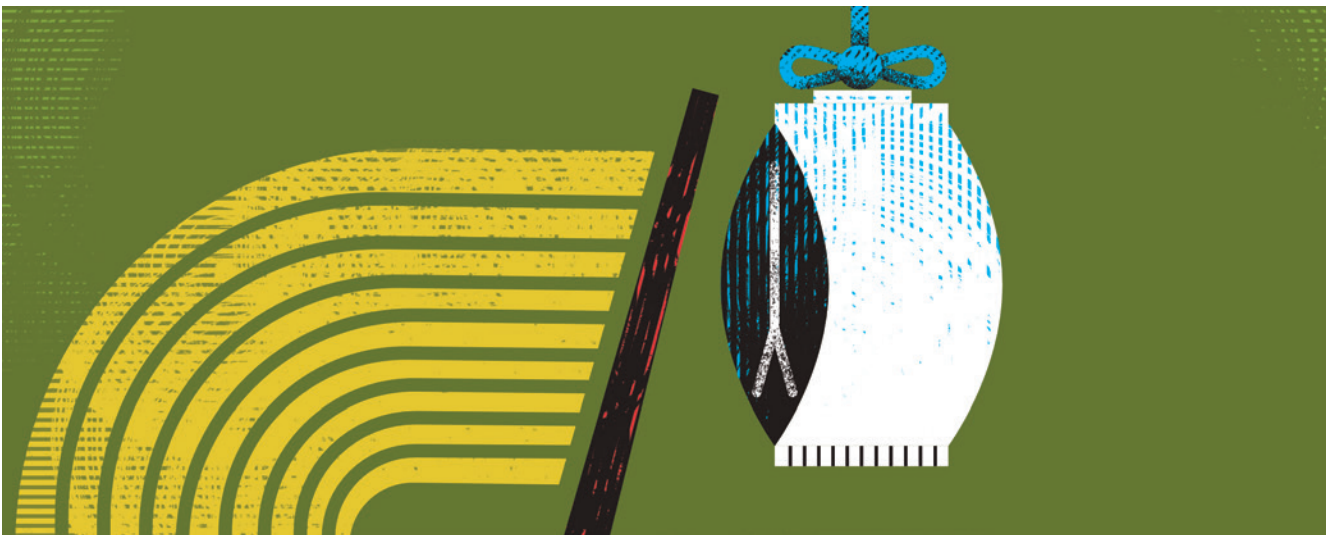


Among the photos sent to the *Globe's* Southeast Corner, as catalogued by the City of Toronto Archives (clockwise from far left): "5 eggs" (1930), "boy with beans" (1929), "horse's hoof" (in actuality, a piece of wood) (1929), "dog-shaped potato" (1929), "man-shaped potato" (1928), and "pine twig knotted" (1929).





# The Rainbow Men



“I’m always amazed how heavy the bag is,’ Mom says when it gets full. Once, I asked Mom if I could take the bag to the backyard and tie it up to the tree like a piñata and smash it with our broom and set all of the dust mites free.” (Matthew Daley)

## A machine that promises to grab everything—even things you can’t see.

By REBEKAH SKOCHINSKI

Two men are here to sell us a vacuum cleaner. It’s the kind that sucks all of the dust into a reservoir of water and that promises to save all of the allergen-ridden, puffy-eyed children from a life of doom every time the house needs to be cleaned. That’s what the men told my mom. She’s the one who let them inside. I’m the nice young man who wheezes and needs a stupid Bionaire in my room, and whose stuffed animals are suffocating in black plastic bags in the attic because when I hug them they try to kill me—except I won’t die. That’s what Mom says while she puts the dental mask over my mouth, looping the elastic around each ear before firing up the vacuum cleaner she calls Big Betty.

“You won’t die. You just need to wear this.” It’s snowing like a son of a gun outside, so when Mom opens the door and backs away to let them in the front porch, they charge at her with an incredible whoosh, scattering snow everywhere in big wet globs, shaking the snow out of their hair, stomping their feet. Everyone’s laughing like it’s a comedy. Everyone except for me.

I’m not shy. Mom says I’m wary. There’s an Elvis Presley song called “Suspicious Minds”; I definitely have one of those. The men remove the rubber protectors from their feet to reveal the kind of fancy leather shoes important people wear. There’s also a very large plastic suitcase sitting between them.

When people see the inside of our house for the first time, they say it’s “charming” and they make ooh and ahh sounds and say, “I used to live in a house just like this.” Not these guys. They don’t seem to have any interest in looking around, which is fine by me.

“You can set up in here,” Mom says. Once her back is turned I race up to my room to grab my *Knight Rider* notebook and my lucky pencil.

The best place for keeping an eye on things is from my spy spot in the space under the stairs. We live in a character home. I don’t exactly know what gives it character. We don’t have any ghosts or anything like that, but the floor creaks when you walk on it, our attic has a trap door and a drop-down ladder, and there’s a cellar in the basement containing potatoes that have eyes.

One of the men rips open the suitcase with so much force the buckles splinter off, like it’s a plastic toy. It breaks into a million pieces, scattering everywhere like snowflakes. Mom’s face is covered with a bridal veil, so I can’t see the fear in her eyes when the man grabs her by the wrists. She’s a turkey wishbone and he’s going to snap her. “Make a wish, Mom,” I whisper. They force her inside the suitcase, like that magic act where they saw a lady in half, except that I can’t see her legs, or any part of her, all I can hear are her screams.

I believe in taking notes on all subjects because even though

I think I will remember it’s surprising what I forget. Besides, Mom says it’s good for me to empty my head, because it gets really full. I’m using my secret agent eye trick. (If you need to see things far away you close your left eye real tight. Maybe if you’re right-handed it’s the other way around?) One guy is really short and round, but only when he turns to the side, kind of like the pictures I’ve seen of my mom when she was pregnant with me. The other guy is tall and skinny, like a piece of celery. They’re like Laurel and Hardy! I mind-message Mom, but she is staring at the man with the brown hose in his hand like her life depends on it.

“What type of vacuum cleaner do you have now, ma’am?” Our Hoover lives in the linen closet. It used to belong to Grandma, but we inherited a lot of “crap” when she got “shipped off” to an apartment. When Mom vacuums it smells like dried flowers and burnt hair. “Oh no, not again. Not the incinerator!” I yell, my arms swinging over my head, charging through the house with my blue mask pulsing in and out. I make like I’m Darth Vader from *Star Wars*. Eeehhhh. Oooohhh. Eeehhhh. Oooohhh. But Mom can’t hear or see me; she’s caught up in making patterns on the floor. Mom is very graceful. She used to be a dancer, before Dad left us and started on “family number two,” and now she works two jobs to make ends meet. The only dance partner she has when I’m not standing on her feet is the beater bar. She swings the hose this way and that, and I run through the house like a superhero until she’s done.

The unique thing about the Rainbow system is that virtually zero dust is emitted into the air, and there are no bags. It also has a powerful hurricane motor that grabs everything—including the things you can’t see.”

The skinny guy waves his hands around in the air like one of those Sunday morning TV preachers Grandma loves so much. Like Oral Roberts, but without as much hair.

“Dust is the devil,” but I love how on sunny days the sun lights it up so I can run through it, spinning it like those clusters of flies that hang around on really hot days in the summer. “Micah!” Mom yells. “You’re making it worse.”

I’m always making it worse. Not just at home, at school, too. At school my seatmate is Darcy. We’re in a split 5/6 class. She’s dumb. Like dumb dumb. Not just bad at fractions. We’re stuck at the back of the classroom—for our own good. There’s a box of tissues on our desk on account of her nose being so snotty. It’s a border: she’s in the U.S. and I’m in Canada. Sometimes the box moves and her elbow touches my elbow, so I put four small dots on the desk in permanent marker. Now we don’t fight about it anymore.

In the winter, Darcy’s nose boogers get crusty and block her nostrils and she breathes in and out of her mouth and makes me go out of my mind. Last Wednesday, when I was going out of my mind, I spied a piece of chalk on the floor. I rubbed it on the metal part of my chair and started sliding around. I was having so much fun, I decided to circle around

the desk, just as Darcy stood up. I crashed into her. She went down like Jesse Ventura in W.W.F. Except she was wearing a dress and I could see London and France. She didn’t know because she was down for the count, but when the rest of the class saw, they yelled gross things and said she was going to be brain dead. Mom got called at work to pick me up. She wouldn’t even look at me.

“Get in the car, Micah.” I wanted to rest my chin on my knapsack but I didn’t because I needed to be punished. Instead, I looked at the side of Mom’s face, tracing its edges like that silhouette art project we did. I would have gotten an A+.

All of the bad things get sucked up by the vacuum cleaner, but good things do, too: my Lego, the backing to Mom’s diamond earring, Cheerios. Mostly though it’s the stuff we don’t want to look at, like hair and spiders and little stones that get tracked inside on our shoes. “I’m always amazed how heavy this bag is,” Mom says when the bag gets full and the vacuum cleaner screams extra loud.

Once, I asked Mom if I could take the bag to the backyard and tie it up to the tree like a piñata and smash it with our broom and set all of the dust mites free. I know about dust mites because I had to go see a specialist because of how bad my ears get. Sometimes they ache and get so plugged I can’t hear, which means I can’t sound out words, and for a while I had to leave regular class for one-on-one study with a lady who tried to poke my eyes out because of how blue they are.

“She’s pregnant, sweetie. Being pregnant can make you a bit crazy,” Mom said. Anyway, the specialist showed us the scary-looking dust mites in the dark on a black and white screen and explained that they’re everywhere but “completely invisible to the naked eye.” Once I knew it was the bugs that were making me sick, I used an entire can of Raid in my room to fix it once and for all, but then Mom took me to the hospital because of all the poison. The doctor decided to keep me there and removed my tonsils and adenoids, and boy did it hurt to swallow. All I wanted was ice cream. The nurses were so sorry but all they had was Jell-O. It jiggled in my throat. They told me not to blow my nose but when they left the room my mom let me blow my nose into a tissue she found in her purse that had lipstick on it. Then we both cried because blowing made everything worse.

Some days Mom cries a lot and won’t leave her room. Hearing her crying makes my insides hurt, so I call Grandma. Grandma comes and whispers through the keyhole, and eventually Mom comes out. Her eyes look like they have balloons under them. They sit at the dining room table and drink tea. Grandma says things like, “It’s not the end of the world” and “Suck it up, buttercup.” After they’ve drunk all of the tea in the China, Grandma leaves and we have a quiet dinner. I like it better when it’s just the two of us.

“How much does it cost?” Mom asks one of the salesmen. The short man shifts from one foot to the other, resting his

elbow on the chair. The skin on his elbow is purple and cracked like a scab that needs to be picked off. His socks are also purple, with stripes. “Well, it depends if you get all of the attachments. I could give you a special deal if you like, little lady. Maybe we could throw in our all-natural air freshener, too.” This seems to make Mom feel better because I can’t see the line in the middle of her forehead anymore. She calls it her worry line, but it might as well be named after me.

I flip to the last page in my notebook and add “Little lady” to “Things People Call Mom”: Ma’am, Marcelle, Marcie, Mar-Mar, You little tart, Hey you, Ya dumb broad, Sugar, Lovey, Micah’s old lady.

The short man slumps to the ground. His head makes a dull sound as it hits the hardwood floor, rolling to one side. His hair is stringy and slicked with sweat. His eyes wide open, like aggies. HE WILL NEVER BLINK AGAIN. The other man scrambles to his side, yelling his name over and over: “Frank! Frank! Are you with me, boy? Don’t go, Frank!” and he throws himself down on the man’s chest and sobs and sobs and sobs until his head melts.

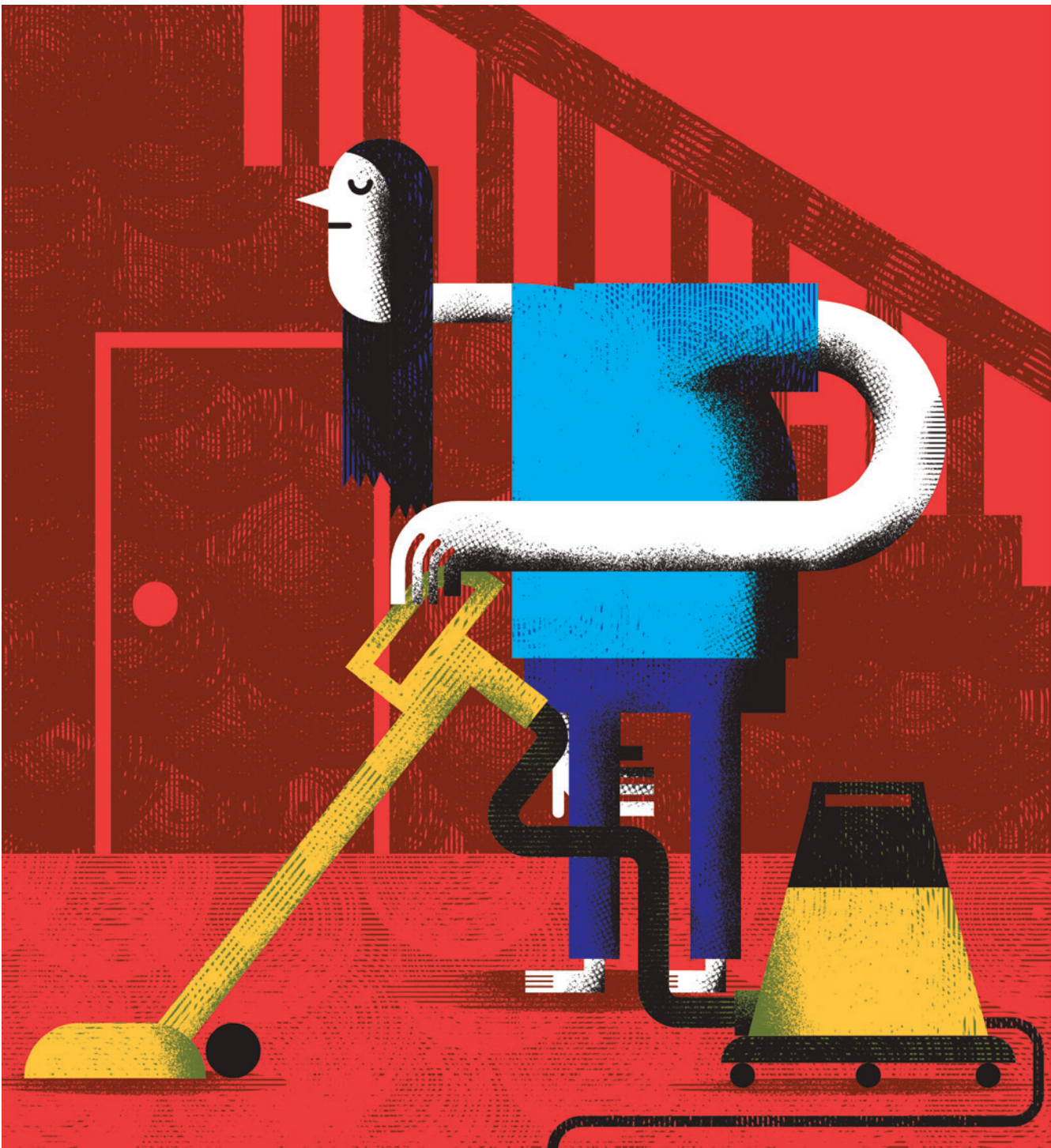
Because of what happened at school and what Mom calls “strange behaviour,” she took me to see the Boogie Man. The Boogie Man lives in a tall office building near the lake. We had to take an elevator to the twentieth floor. I held my breath the whole way up.

Guess what? He tells me I’m normal. He tells my mom I’m normal. He probably writes “Normal” on the yellow pad of paper sitting on his desk. “You have a bright future,” he says, clicking his pen. *Click click click*. Bright bright bright. What I don’t tell the Boogie Man is that at night, when I close my eyes, I see smashed-in faces with drooping mouths, jagged teeth, and skin hanging off bones. It’s like fast-forwarding that movie about sharks I saw at Luis’s house. I don’t tell him any of this because of what he’ll write down, because of what he’ll tell Mom when I’m sitting in the waiting room, counting the ceiling tiles to calm down.

I wish I could make the bad stuff stop, but all I can do is wait it out, like when my neck goes hard from pulling Gs on the Tilt-A-Whirl, at Chippewa Park. I’ll lay on the grass until the world stops spinning and my neck is soft again. Sometimes my imagination plays tricks on me. Like when I’m riding my bike in the summer and I get to the crossing two blocks from our house and I see the strange white van with no windows (Luis says it’s a raper van) and I imagine that it hits me. I’m flying but I never land.

For a while Mom dated a guy named Luke (I don’t know why, but he liked it when I called him Cool Hand Luke). Luke was hit by a car and has a prosthetic hand. He can’t feel anything. Even when you poke his fingers with sewing needles when he’s sleeping. I want to know what that’s like. The not feeling anything. He hugged me when I fell down the stairs





“Sometimes, she’s by herself, her long black hair swinging, her eyes closed, just her and the Rainbow.” (Matthew Daley)

on account of me wearing my super slippery sleuthing socks. That’s when he told me about his own accident with the car. About how he broke his shoulder and a couple of ribs, and tore the nerves and tendons in his hand. They had to amputate it. Which is just a grown-up way of saying they cut his hand clean off.

Luke always smelled of smoke. When he hugged me that time, I didn’t mind the smoke like I usually did—maybe because it didn’t give me a tickle in my throat. I do remember how hard his muscles were. They were so hard I could feel them through his thick denim jacket. Before that moment I’d only ever hugged Mom and Grandma. Hugging Luke was different. I never wanted him to let me go. I wanted him to carry me everywhere—to get groceries, to the baseball diamond, to see the stars light up the sky at Hillcrest Park. I knew he could do it. I knew he would never get tired. That I would never get too heavy. Everyone would think we were cool and not freaks, like a travelling ventriloquist duo at the circus. People would come watch us and eat cotton candy until their fingers and tongues were blue and sticky. I wouldn’t have to worry about how it sounded when I talked. I could just open my mouth and let all of his thoughts and words pour out instead of mine.

Mom dumped him. Luke didn’t dump Mom. That’s what Grandma said. I really liked Luke, but when Luke was around a lot so was Grandma. Mom would kiss me goodnight and in the morning Grandma was there asking me what I wanted for breakfast, which is a silly question, because I’m always going to say, “Thin pancakes with crispy fried edges, please.” If Mom still wasn’t home by lunchtime, we’d walk to McKellar Confectionary for Coney dogs, because I’m a growing boy. Sometimes we’d get them to go in a brown lunch bag, other times we’d sit in one of the booths and eat them from oval plates. I’d get mine without onions: n-o. They’re especially good with chocolate milk. The bad part about eating lunch with Grandma is having to make conversation with Grandma.

Questions Grandma asks that I will answer:  
1. How is your hot dog? Did they remember not to give you any onions? I hate when you ask for no onions and then you get onions anyway, even if it’s just a tiny bit of onions. I mean, what if someone was allergic to onions?!

2. Do you think it will snow today? It clouded over awfully quickly.

3. Those are nice mitts. They look handmade. Where did you get them?

Questions Grandma asks that I will not answer:

1. How is school? The last time I saw you, you were working on a science project. Did you get a good mark?

2. Has your mom been to see Rod?

At this point I shovel in the hot dogs like I’m in a hot-dog eating contest, bugging my eyes out and half-pretending that I’m choking.

“Micah! I wish you wouldn’t eat your lunch so fast. You’re going to have stomach troubles later in life.”

Works every time.

Did I tell you my name is Micah? Mom named me after a prophet. I think that’s why I can see into the future.

*The short man draws a knife from his pocket and slices it across my mother’s throat. A thin line of blood appears, like a paper cut. She goes paler than pale and the man catches her in his arms as she slides to the ground. She’s a goner. I scream, but it sounds like a squeak. They run and so do I, but they are faster because their legs are longer and that’s just the law of physics. Eventually we become outlaws together, riding off into the sunset in their beat-up station wagon. It’s as though my life before Mom never existed. Like using Wite-Out to hide a mistake.*

The big guy reaches into his pocket for his wallet, pulls out a card, and hands it to my mom.

“Give me some time to think about it,” she says, as I ske-daddle out of my spy spot and walk to the kitchen to get a glass of milk.

“Oh, hey, Mom.”

“Micah, there you are! Frank and Julian were just leaving.”

Up close the Rainbow Men look different. Their faces have more lines in them, like cracks in pavement. But their features

are sharper. Frank’s round belly is pushing against the buttons on his shirt and Julian’s leather belt looks like it’s been left out in the sun.

Once they’re gone, Mom takes out the broom to sweep the dining room. I watch the back end of their car, which is crusted over in ice and mud. I can’t make out the license plate number.

“APJ E6—.”  
“How about sweet and sour meatballs for dinner, Micah? Would you like that?”

Sweet and sour meatballs on white rice is my favourite. Mom’s got her back to me and I throw my arms around her in a great big bear hug. Grrrrrr. She is a bear and I am a bear. But really we’re only bears hugging in my mind.

We have dinner. We don’t talk about anything bad. We don’t talk about Darcy, or the Boogie Man, or Grandma. She keeps a Safeway flyer beside her at the table and writes on it between bites of food, before sliding the pen behind her ear. I sneak a look at the numbers but I can’t make sense of them, and not just because they’re upside down.

“How would you feel if we got rid of Big Betty?”  
“I don’t care,” I say. “But what about Grandma?”  
“Oh, she won’t be thrilled. You know how she can get. Maybe we’ll have a yard sale in the spring and try to sell it along with a few other things. It’ll help pay for the Rainbow.”

I like yard sales. I like browsing through records and 8-tracks, trying on leather jackets and smelly old shoes, and sometimes there are even stacks of girlie magazines. Luis says they’re worth their weight in gold.

The vacuum cleaner takes three weeks to arrive. It has a two-year warranty in case anything breaks. I was hoping the Rainbow Men would deliver it to us so I could see them again. Instead, Mom and I stand in line at the post office to sign for the parcel with our delivery notice. A nice man helps us get it to a shopping cart and says, “Anytime, sweetheart” to Mom after helping us push it through the slush, strapping it to the inside of the trunk because it won’t close. We don’t talk on the drive home because of the snowstorm, because of how the wipers are going a million miles an hour. I try to count the swipes, but I give up after a hundred.

We lug the vacuum cleaner inside. The edges of the cardboard box are soggy and fallen in like that time I tried to bake a cake for Mom’s birthday.

“Oh good, the warranty,” Mom says, lifting a limp piece of paper out of the box and stuffing it into our junk drawer.

“What’s a warranty?”  
“A warranty is like a promise.”

Then I ask Mom why the vacuum cleaner is called a Rainbow and she tells me about the flood in the Bible and how a rainbow is a symbol that God gave us to say he would never send another flood to wipe out the earth ever again. “The rainbow was his promise.”

What I want to know now, but don’t ask, is why there are still floods. Not where we live but in places I’ve seen on TV. The number of people who die climbs the higher the water gets. Trees bend over like they’re made of rubber, water goes from blue to brown, and people sit on the hoods of their cars with their dogs and cats.

Mom says our Rainbow vacuum means a new start for us. She looks happy. I know this because I can see all of her teeth when she smiles.

Now when Mom vacuums she insists on showing me the disgusting things in the water. “Micah, come here! Would you just look at this?” I’m surprised how much of Mom’s hair is in there—it’s wrapped around everything. Once we’re done looking at the water, we flush it down the toilet. It’s like a flood in our bathroom every Saturday.

And when she asks me how I feel now, I tell her that I can breathe better, and that I don’t see things that aren’t there. That yes, I would like to take a road trip, and no, if I fall asleep in the car I won’t scream about the ugly things that live behind my eyelids. I promise. I don’t tell her that, in order to make me feel better, instead of the scary flashes, I see her dancing. Sometimes the two of us together, my feet on her feet, my hands in her hands.

Sometimes, though, she’s all by herself, her long black hair swinging from side to side, her eyes closed, just her and the Rainbow. Nothing else.

## Suicide Bookshop

An old paper Faber *Colossus*—  
*A Leaving Las Vegas*—  
*A People One Knows*—

Now an *Infinite Jest*—  
we’re gonna need a bigger shelf.  
Watch a VHS film about Sylvia Plath. (Forgive nobody.)

This place is haunted by pale teens in overcoats  
with bags under their eyes  
searching for long sad books.

A dabble in Benjamin leads  
to six poems by Baudelaire  
and a thought for Camus.

Now Richard Vaughan and Kath Mulherin.  
Daniel Jones. Brat X.  
Al Purdy (assisted).

Death by drowning:  
Woolf by wading  
Spalding Gray by leaping in.

Or booze, drugs and guns:  
Hemingway in Idaho and Kurt—poor Kurt  
in those sad Converse One Stars,

wrecked, at home in suburban Seattle.  
O’ poor Kurt. Poor Richard  
Manuel—now who will sing “Whispering Pines”?

Don’t let’s get started on the musicians before a brief remembrance  
of Richard Outram’s own Tolstoyan ending, or—look!—  
up, up—*Trout Fishing in America*—poor Richard Brautigan—

“He created his own Kool-Aid reality and was able to illuminate himself by it.”  
Get me that small stool  
I need to reach the top shelf.

—CHRIS CHAMBERS

(With a line from the Richard Brautigan story “The Kool-Aid Wino.”)

## Uncollecting

“In the early universe it was light that formed  
the dominant constituent, and ordinary matter played

only the role of a negligible contamination.”

—From poem II of Elizabeth Arnold’s “Effacement,” paraphrasing  
Steven Weinberg’s book about the beginnings of the universe, *The First Three Minutes*, from *The Paris Review* No. 190, Fall, 2009.

Unearthed in the act of uncollecting.  
This month’s lockdown pastime:  
reading from every book and magazine in the house  
—not just props today!—  
dusting every CD and LP for its memories.  
Clearing a space in the house (and the head)  
for the home office.

The journey of things.  
That *Paris Review* is from the rack at This Ain’t the Rosedale Library . . .  
Some of the records arrived in bags from Sam’s  
or Sunrise on a twinkling Boxing Day twilight . . .

And loved—each one!—(or neglected)  
but here, today, still sitting on this shelf.

Some arrived anointed with the nous, at a minimum,  
of knowing and having them.  
What is the value today of these long-ago treasures  
now stashed in the attic? What do they all add up to?  
And in the meantime, how could we pass up the chance  
for another flip through *Paris Review* No. 190?

And miss out forever—to potentially “efface”  
Elizabeth Arnold’s take on Steven Weinberg’s ideas  
about the power of light at the dawn of the universe?

And miss out on that stanza break?

•  
“Let be be finale of seem,” indeed.  
Almost the longest day of the longest year ever  
and one of the prettiest, well, so far.  
It’s 5:30 A.M. and bright pink, June 12th, Year Zero.

On an extra long break from my first downtown job: usher  
at the Uptown Backstage, on Balmuto, 1979,  
I purchased *Reggatta de Blanc* at Records on Wheels.

In spring, 1989, that shop was gone  
and a new career as Book City bookseller had begun at the same address—  
working with three people who are today old friends—  
and that job, those people were vital.  
But *Reggatta de Blanc* on vinyl in some part also made me.

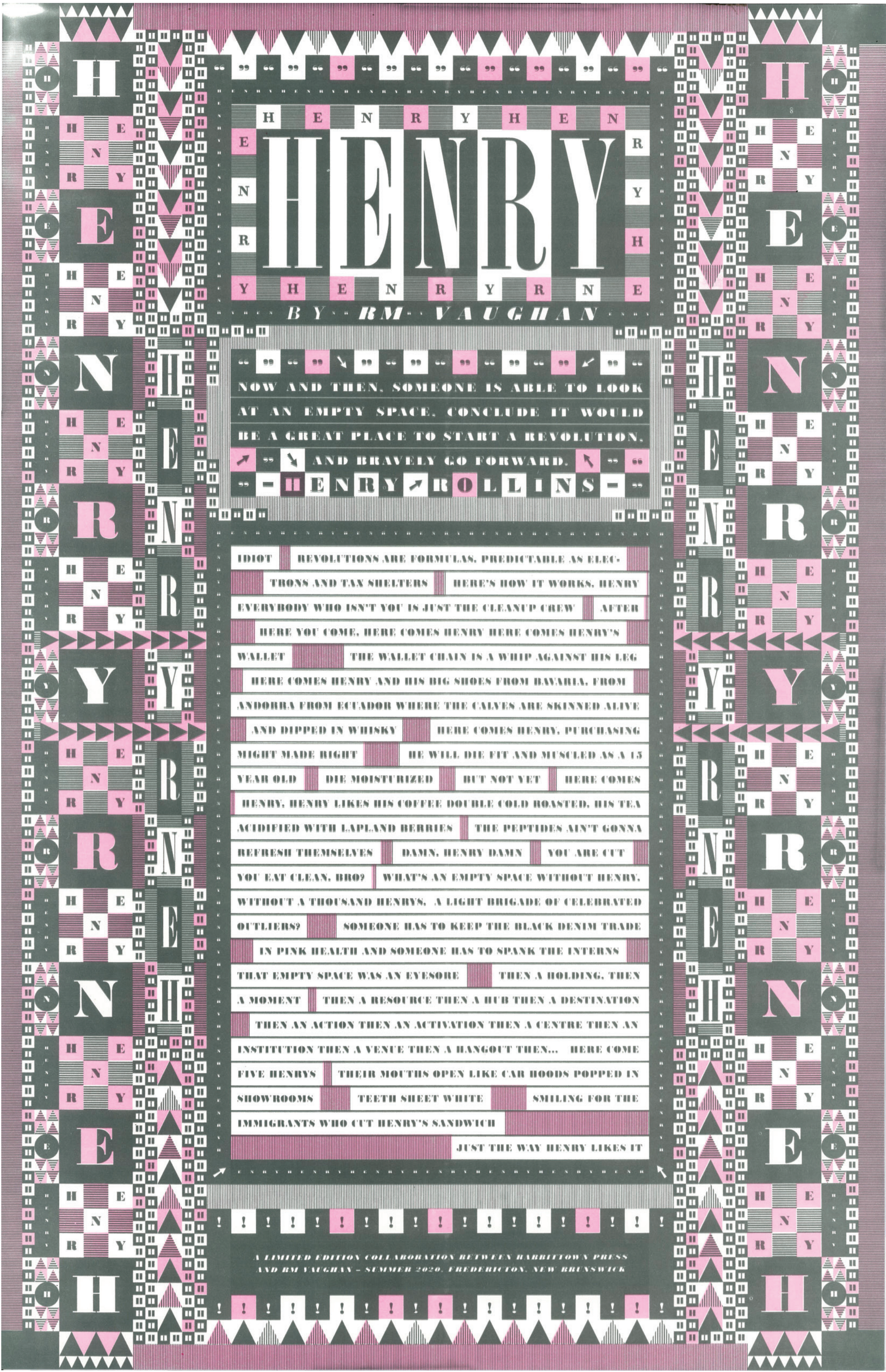
•  
“Negligible contamination,” indeed.  
The old Technics is slowing down.  
No new records are being brought into the house now.  
No used ones either.  
And into the box goes *Reggatta de Blanc*  
waiting for Sonic Boom to reopen for business.

Then we’ll know the value definitively. In cash or trade.

—CHRIS CHAMBERS

(With a line from the Wallace Stevens poem “The Emperor of Ice-Cream.”)





A few weeks before his death, in October, 2020, the poet and author R. M. Vaughan sent *Taddle Creek* the following note, via e-mail: “A few months ago I collaborated with Rabbittown Press (here in Fredericton) and made a poem-poster. It’s not a subtle work. It would look beautiful reproduced in TC. Yes it would.” Unfortunately, the magazine never had the opportunity to discuss reproducing Richard’s broadside with him, but is happy to be able to do so now, with Rabbittown’s co-operation. Richard initially contacted Rabbittown Press about producing a chapbook for the University of New Brunswick’s English department, where he was serving as its writer-in-residence. “It never came to light because of funding, but he was still interested in working with me on something, and it came up later that he had this one poem that he would like to make into a broadsheet,” Scarlett McAllister, the co-owner of Rabbittown Press, told *Taddle Creek*. “And so he showed me the poem, he told me about the poem, and he basically gave me full creative decision-making, which is wonderful.”

“Henry,” a critique of the singer and actor Henry Rollins, employs seemingly random space between words, a trademark of Richard’s that lends itself well to the cut-and-paste feel of Scarlett’s design. “I could be wrong, but I think Richard at one point idolized and eventually rejected Henry Rollins in terms of having double standards, being a figure who was revered but was, at the same time, problematic,” Scarlett said. “The poem, I think, had a lot to do with the ego and Henry Rollins, so what I wanted to do was create this image where all of the space was filled with graphic representations of Henry Rollins. The pink comes from a request Richard had early on. He wanted to print it on pink paper, but it was expensive. I think it had something to do with creating abjection to what was Henry’s obviously black-and-white style. So the idea was to subvert Henry’s style. I’m really grateful for the interaction I had with Richard, because it produced something we were both really happy with.”

—TADDLE CREEK



THE KITCH

The Joy of Sex (in a Pan)

It won't ghost you or complain about your family, and the finish is just as satisfying.



By BRIAN FRANCIS

As a middle-aged homosexual, I've had a few dalliances in some interesting places. But how many of us can say we've had Sex in a Pan? If you haven't tried this decadent dessert before, it's time to let go of those inhibitions and surrender to your desires. After all, this pudding-based five-layer creation didn't earn its name without good reason. In fact, Sex in a Pan has many things in common with actual sex, including nuts, gooey substances, and feelings of guilt after you're finished.

You'll find variations of this dessert in many community cookbooks. (The recipe here comes from my copy of the United Church of Canada's *Let's Break Bread Together*.) Depending on the community and its moral compass, you'll sometimes find it referred to by tamer, less suggestive names, like Ecstasy in a Pan (the recipe name in my United Church book), Heaven in a Pan, or The Thing My Husband and I Used to Do Before He Decided That Falling Asleep While Watching *90 Day Fiancé* Was More Desirable Than Me in a Pan. Call me a purist, but I think there's something so straightforward and relatable about the name Sex in a Pan. I remember my own mother serving this at Sunday dinners, which led to some nervous giggles and seat squirming on my part. She didn't seem to mind. She was, after all, a robust, adult woman. And she no doubt knew the benefit of a satisfying finish.

What makes Sex in a Pan such a classic? Well, in my humble opinion, it combines two textures I enjoy most in a dessert: crunchy and squishy. The pecan-studded shortbread crust provides the right amount of crispiness, while the soft and pillowy pudding and Cool Whip layers add an edible cloud quality that makes your eyes roll back. And let's not forget the cream cheese layer, which lends just the right amount of tang.

So does this dessert really live up to its name? That depends on your perspective. For those of us who have reached a certain age, hunkering down with a good dessert on a Saturday night can seem a lot more appealing than other activities. And you don't have to shower ahead of time, either. Best of all, Sex in a Pan won't ghost you or complain about your family, and will still be there in the morning, should you decide you need a little lovin' for breakfast.

**Sex in a Pan**  
*Ingredients*  
½ cup pecans, chopped  
1 cup flour  
½ cup butter or margarine  
1 250-gram package cream cheese, softened  
1 cup icing sugar  
1-litre tub of Cool Whip  
1 package vanilla instant pudding  
1 package chocolate instant pudding  
3 cups milk  
Grated chocolate or sprinkles (optional)

*Directions*  
1. For the bottom layer, mix pecans, flour, and butter together and pat into a nine-inch-by-thirteen-inch pan. Bake for seventeen to twenty minutes at 350 degrees Fahrenheit, until golden. Let cool.  
2. For the second layer, beat cream cheese and icing sugar together until smooth. Fold in half a litre of Cool Whip. Spread mixture on cooled crust.  
3. For the third layer, mix vanilla pudding mix with 1½ cups milk, according to package directions, and spread over cream cheese layer. Chill and allow to set slightly.  
4. For the fourth layer, mix chocolate pudding mix with 1½ cups milk, according to package directions and spread over vanilla pudding layer. Chill and allow to set slightly.  
5. Spread remaining Cool Whip over chocolate pudding layer to top it all off.  
6. Sprinkle with grated chocolate, sprinkles, or rose petals if you want to get romantic. Chill at least four hours, or overnight. This dessert can be frozen, but I'd be surprised if it makes it to the freezer.





## THE STITCH

# The Weight of Oranges

*The new world has left us trying to transform into something more like the selves we want to be.*

By JULIE CAMERON GRAY

It's been two long years of unravelling ourselves—pacing the same floors, eyeing the same views from whatever windows we have, clocking the small buds beginning on bare branches with the attention of amateur botanists, and carrying the heavy luck of those who are still here, still trying to do one right thing, then another, and then another.

We stumble, of course. Personally, I spent the winter addicted to the bad news that comes with doom scrolling. And when the news didn't seem *that* bad, I bizarrely felt compelled to keep refreshing, because surely something horrible had happened by now.

If nothing freshly terrible appeared, the news was only too happy to oblige my addiction by regularly posting articles about how the price of food was rising and climate change is going to keep getting worse. And only then, the fires of my anxiety suitably stoked, would I close my laptop and go outside to shake off the dread I had moments ago so willingly courted.

Needing a specific goal when I walk, I've rediscovered the small, luscious joy of visiting a local fruit shop. You know the ones—the small grocery stores that decorate main streets near residential neighbourhoods, with their waterfall displays of fruit and vegetables. They have painstaking set-up and take-down procedures every morning and night, positioning the most appealing items out front in tiered displays. Inside, the shop is bursting with the less-attractive root vegetables (I see you, humble potatoes, unbeautiful but scented with petrichor) and clusters of small flower bouquets—a garden's worth of petals and perfume crammed together in white buckets beside the cash register.

There's much to say and think about how, for most of us, the world we knew has been cracked open, and things that were harder to see before are suddenly on full display: inequality; the dark machinations of capitalism spinning at the expense of literally everything else; how each of us has been brought into the interrogation rooms inside ourselves and asked questions about who we are, what we love, and whether or not we can truly stand our own company. And how white supremacy seems to have got a rebrand that too easily sucked in those who simply could not handle putting strangers ahead of themselves, no matter how much greater the good.

We are not the selves we used to be, and in the quiet moments when we are alone with our thoughts and not trying to feed our anxiety with screens, we're aware that we are capable of changing, of transforming, of choosing new ways of being—new selves, if we want. Taking the parts of ourselves that are the hardest to carry and trying to transform them into something new, something more like the selves we want to be.

I like that, those choices. It's uncomfortable work, kind of like dragging yourself out of your warm rooms and onto the street when the season isn't ideal and you are, ostensibly, doing chores.

I'll stand in front of the crate of clementines that still have stems and leaves attached. Touching any fruit or vegetable is a big commitment now, so I run my eyes over all I can see before picking one up, the skin deliciously cold and smoother than I was expecting. I look over the small pyramids built of apples and oranges, the green baskets of strawberries that are out of season but shine like rubies. Will they taste like summer on the tongue or be anemic and sour? Doesn't matter. Into the bag they go.

Soon, the weather will improve. Like the bare branches that most certainly will bud and bloom in a matter of weeks, it's only the beginning. I'm going to the fruit and vegetable store not just to try to get more vitamin C, but to get more colour, more texture, more visual symmetry of grapefruits stacked in perfect lines in a way that soothes me. Something about the ground cherries in their small plastic containers and stacked like a temple of gold assures me all is well.

**T-Shirt to Tote Bag: Upcycle Your Old Favourite**  
Why not carry your wonderful new purchases in an upcycled tote bag? This is a great way to give new life to old favourites that perhaps are a little stained or that you've outgrown, physically or metaphorically. The sample shown is a men's medium T-shirt. Smaller T-shirts will yield narrower tote bags but definitely still work. Larger Ts will result in wider tote bags.

#### Materials

A T-shirt (Any size will work. The bigger the shirt, the bigger the bag. If you are trying to upcycle a really big T-shirt, you can take some of the length out in the sewing step.)

Sewing thread in a colour that matches your T-shirt

Sewing needle (if sewing by hand) or a sewing machine

Scissors

Washable marker (for light or medium-coloured shirts) or chalk (for black or really dark-coloured shirts)—many Crayola products and other kids' materials are good for this

Straight pins



"I'm going to the fruit store not just to get more vitamin C, but to get more colour, more texture, more visual symmetry of grapefruits stacked in perfect lines in a way that soothes me." (Guy Crawford)



**Step 1**  
Turn your T-shirt inside out and lay it flat on your work surface. If the T-shirt is a light colour, use a marker or chalk to draw where you will cut. Since you were smart enough to use a washable marker, feel free to adjust your lines if you don't like where they are the first time.



**Step 2**  
Cut along lines: you will be cutting off sleeves, cutting a big U at the neck, and shortening the T-shirt with a line at the bottom. You will now have something that looks like an eighties cropped tank top. Feel free to stop here and rock that crop top if that speaks to you.



**Step 3**  
Using the straight pins, pin the bottom of your tote bag together, leaving about a centimetre from the edge. Sew the bottom of the bag along the bottom line near the pins, either by hand (in which case use back stitch) or with a sewing machine. Smaller stitches make a more durable bag.

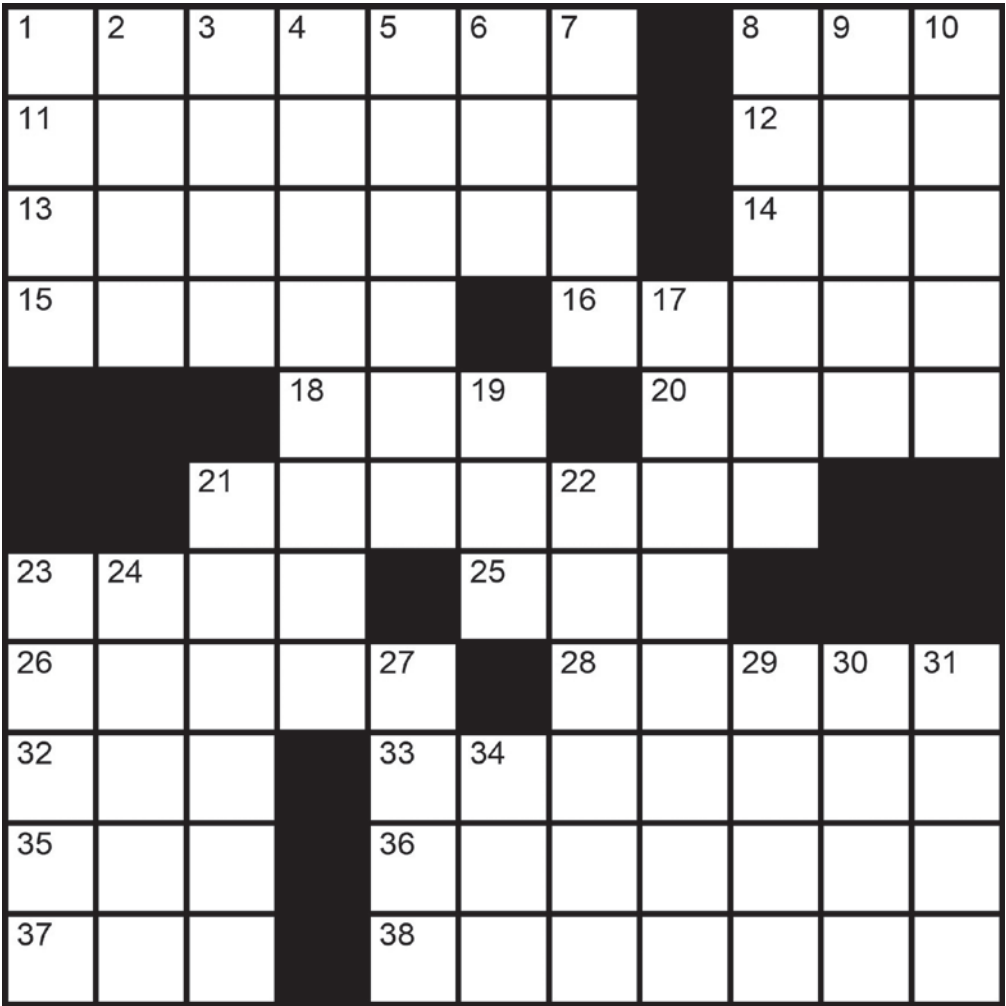


**Step 4**  
Remove all the straight pins. Be sure to wash your tote bag to remove any residual marker or chalk lines. Then, turn your new tote right side out and bring it with you to the store the next time you're running errands! (Please note: Cat not included.)

(Julie Cameron Gray)



THE TADDLE CREEK CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**

  - 1 Pride flag feature
  - 8 Initials in Canuck retail
  - 11 Country in the Pyrenees
  - 12 “\_\_\_ keep you posted”
  - 13 Legendary
  - 14 Sticky stuff
  - 15 Stacked (up)
  - 16 Symbol that sounds like “choices” in French
  - 18 Minor-league designation
  - 20 Noise from sties
  - 21 Pride letters, and number, often preceding “+”
  - 23 Blue-and-white shark
  - 25 No longer in the closet
  - 26 Place for a book title
  - 28 Flies like an eagle
  - 32 Organization for the Sharks and the Jets
  - 33 Souvenir at gift shops
  - 35 Someone’s life story
  - 36 When drivers come out?
  - 37 Passé car stereo inserts
  - 38 It stands for something
- DOWN**

  - 1 Gravelly voice quality
  - 2 Rihanna album with “Work,” featuring Drake
  - 3 “Canadian \_\_\_”
  - 4 “Why do you ask?” reply
  - 5 Like some showers
  - 6 Mineral deposit
  - 7 Rolls of dough
  - 8 Mensa requirement
  - 9 Tossed in the wind
  - 10 Keep under wraps
  - 17 Really start liking
  - 19 Back in time
  - 21 About 4.4 pounds
  - 22 More hectic, say
  - 23 *Morning Joe* channel
  - 24 Rose garden pest
  - 27 “At Last” singer James
  - 29 Strikingly similar
  - 30 2003 Juno winner Shand
  - 31 Support often seen in the time of flower power?
  - 34 Old camcorder button

(Crossword by Derek Bowman. Solution on page 2.)



Need a message from the universe right now? Here are some oracular offerings from the tarot to help.

**Aries (March 21–April 19):** The past is your teacher these days, Aries. The Queen of Cups encourages you to get nostalgic for the times you’ve had. Be tender to yourself even when memories feel bittersweet. Reflecting on where you’ve been is your key to deciding where you want to go next.

**Taurus (April 20–May 20):** You’re at a time in your life where so many things feel possible that it’s not always easy to know what to focus on first. The Magician card reminds you that you will make good of whatever path you choose. Let yourself play and experiment more often in the weeks to come. You’ll soon learn the depth of your capabilities.

**Gemini (May 21–June 20):** If you could give in to your brightest, wildest, boldest idea, what would you do, Gemini? What would you create? What would you reveal about yourself to the world? The Eight of Wands reminds you that your capacity for inspiration is your superpower. It’s time to give in to your creative impulses like never before.

**Cancer (June 21–July 22):** I had a friend who had an interesting way of making decisions. She would ask herself, “Does it make me feel rich?” If the answer was yes, the decision was a go. The Nine of Pentacles suggests that you might have fun with a similar approach, Cancer. Are the things you’re saying yes to adding to your life or draining the fun out of it?

**Leo (July 23–August 22):** Quiet time is quality time these days, Leo. The Four of Swords urges you to give your mind a rest. Put up whatever boundaries you need right now and beware of commitments that pull you in all directions at once. It’s not your job to keep the world turning.

**Virgo (August 23–September 22):** The Queen of Wands asks you to take charge of your path, even if it feels a bit risky sometimes. Stop worrying about whether every choice you’re making is the “right” one. You don’t need to have every detail worked out before you can make a move, and it’s not realistic to expect guaranteed success every time you go out on a limb. What calls to you has your attention for a reason. Answer it.

**Libra (September 23–October 22):** Let go of the guilt, Libra, especially when it comes to

taking time for yourself. Work on your art, write more poetry, or take that class you’ve been considering. Not everything you do has to be in service to someone else, and not every moment of your day has to feel productive. The Knight of Cups says it’s time to make more room in your life for things that are just for you.

**Scorpio (October 23–November 21):** The Ace of Wands suggests that it’s time to seek out new experiences, Scorpio. Don’t feel the need to stay stuck on old ideas of who you thought you were going to be. An unexpected path is calling to you. Don’t feel the need to explain a thing if anyone questions it—as long as you’re being true to yourself, you’re exactly where you need to be right now.

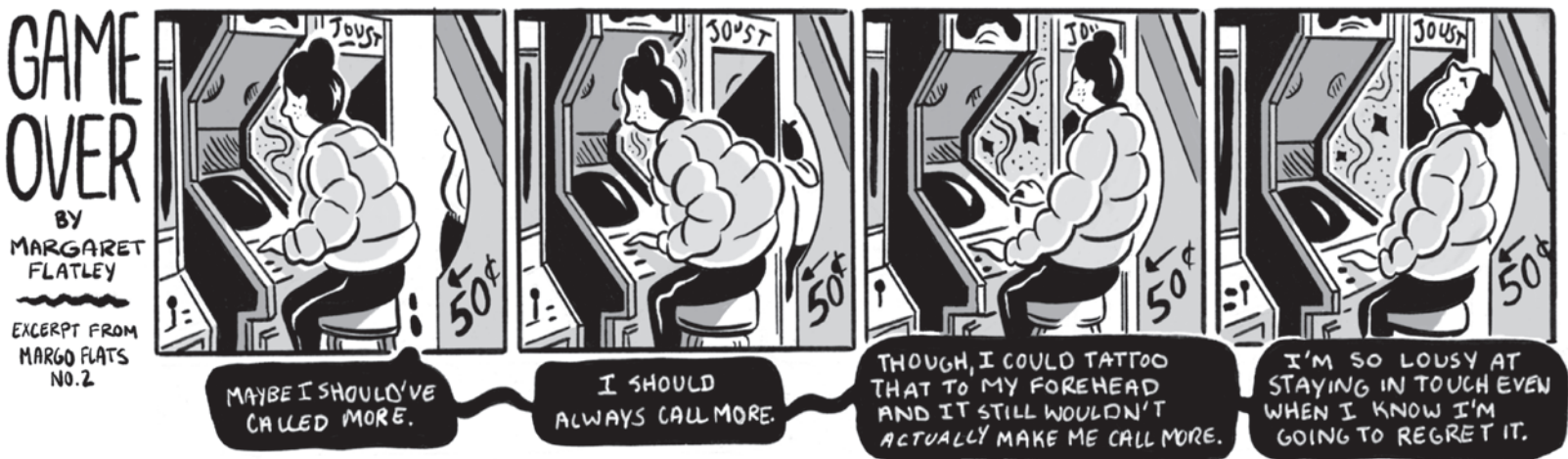
**Sagittarius (November 22–December 21):** Patience pays off. That’s the message the King of Pentacles offers to you, Sagittarius. What big dream of yours requires more time to cook? Where are you playing the long game right now? Don’t let go of something just because it’s not happening as quickly as you want it to. You’ve planted the seeds, and the harvest will come, even if you can’t always see what’s growing beneath the surface yet.

**Capricorn (December 22–January 19):** I know that when you commit to something, you like to go all in. Which is great, until it’s time to quit—and that’s where you tend to run into trouble. The Death card is your ally right now, Capricorn: endings are its expertise. Let this be a reminder to you that jobs, relationships, and other obligations all have life cycles, too. If something is no longer feeling alive to you, you have permission to lay it to rest.

**Aquarius (January 20–February 18):** You don’t have to be just one thing, Aquarius. The Temperance card invites you to make space for all of the different ways you want to live your life each day. You’re not here to conform to a single vision or path but instead to find ways to merge all of your ideas into one grand experience.

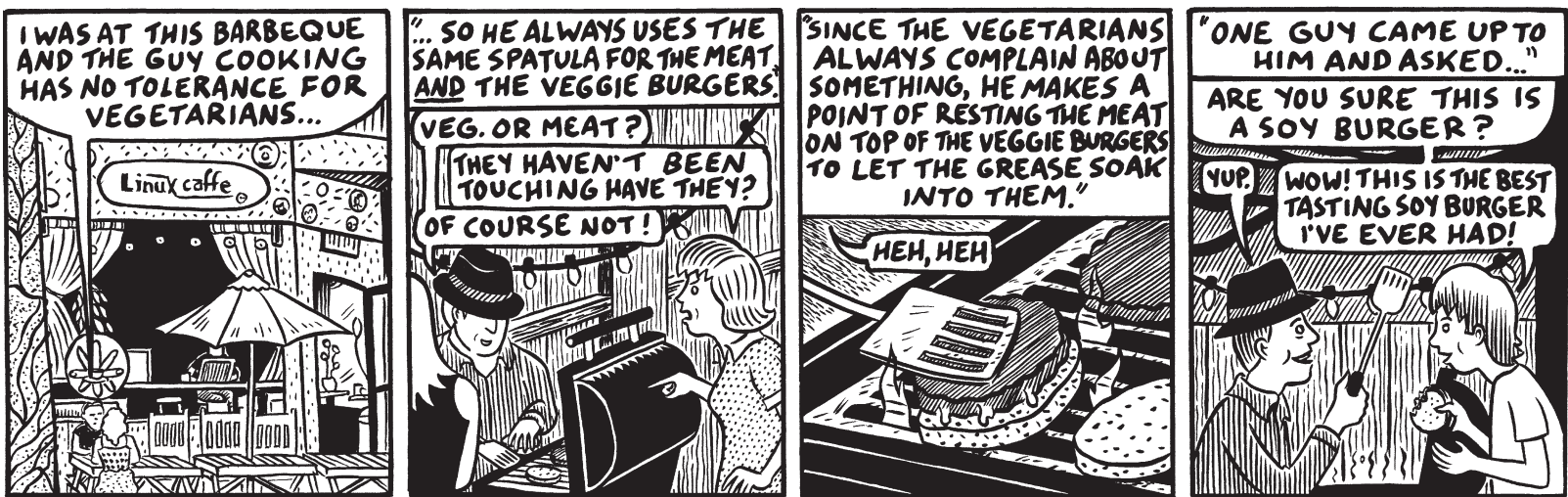
**Pisces (February 19–March 20):** Whatever has knocked your confidence in the past is losing its power in your life, Pisces. The Six of Wands shows you’re moving into a time where it’s imperative that you brush yourself off and keep moving. The world needs your words and wisdom. You have advice people can rely on and a presence that is needed. Show up for yourself and others will follow your lead.

GAME OVER



MARGARET FLATLEY

PEOPLE AROUND HERE



DAVE LAPP

THE DAILY PORTION



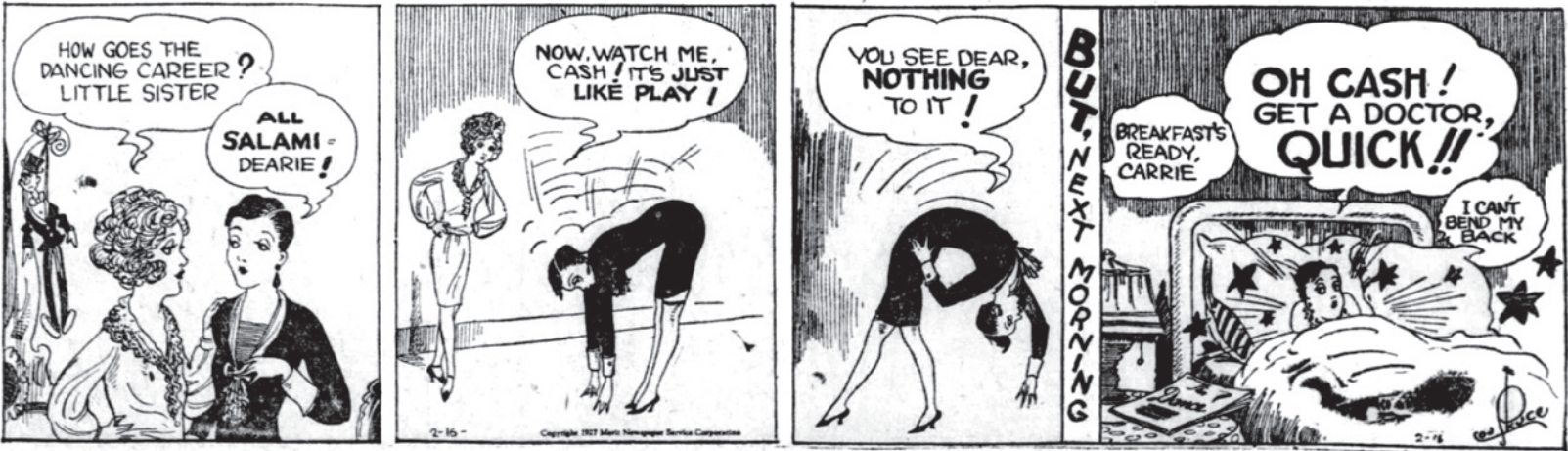
JAMES SPENCER

MARY ANN GAY



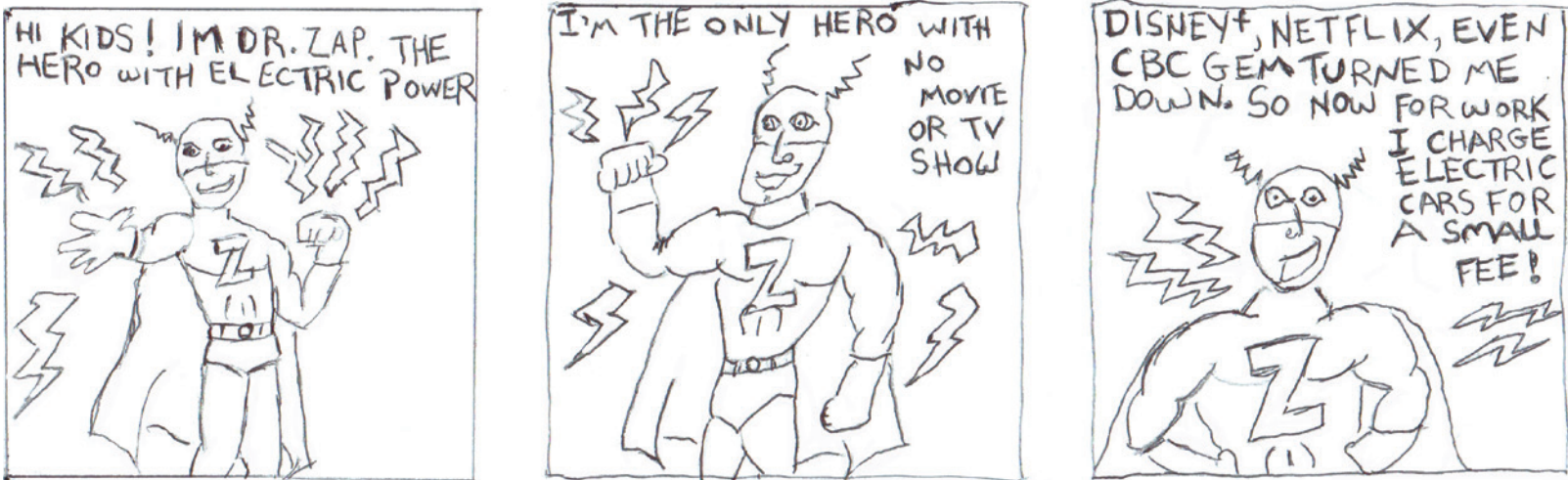
LOU SKUCE

CASH AND CARRY



LOU SKUCE

DR. ZAP



JOHN HANSEN





# STEAM WHISTLE

CANADA'S PREMIUM PILSNER



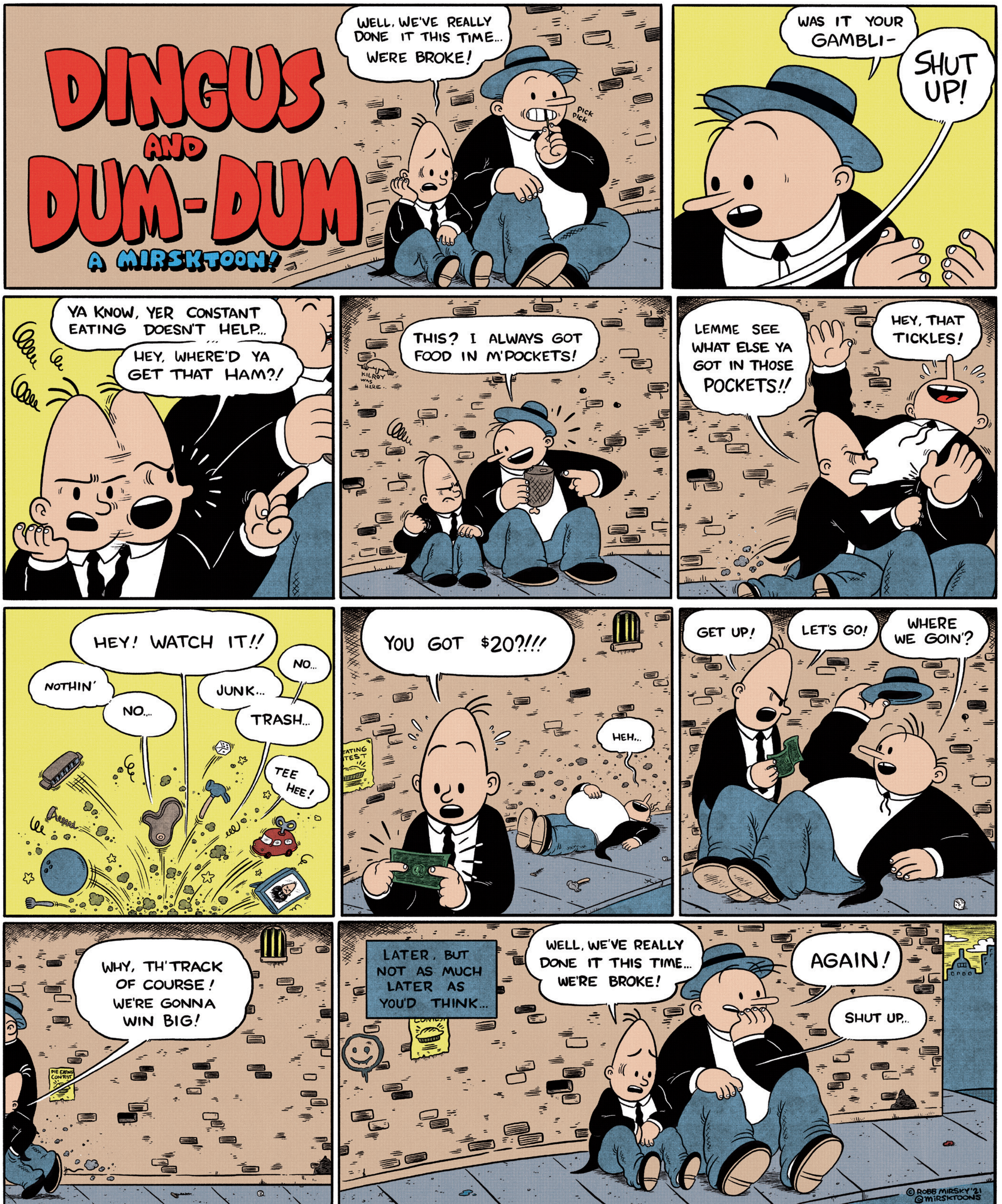
# THE COMIX.



VOL. XXV . . . No. 48

TADDLE CREEK

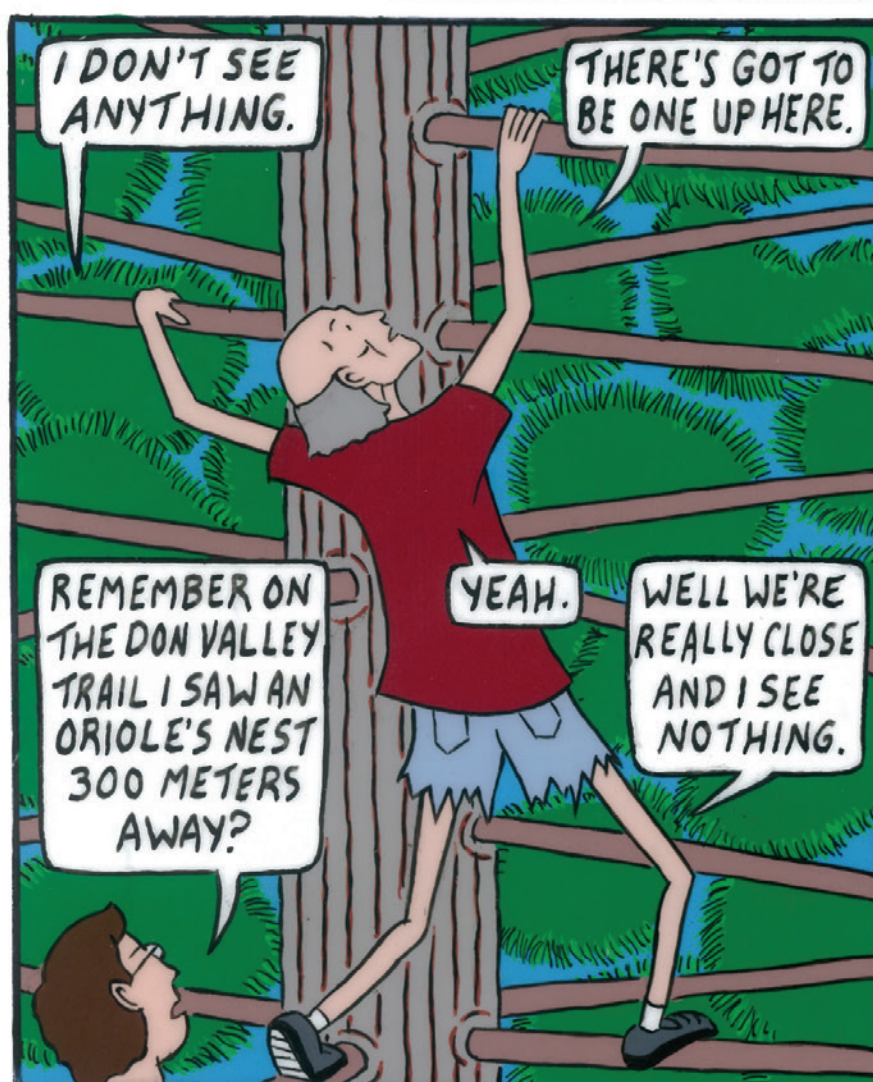
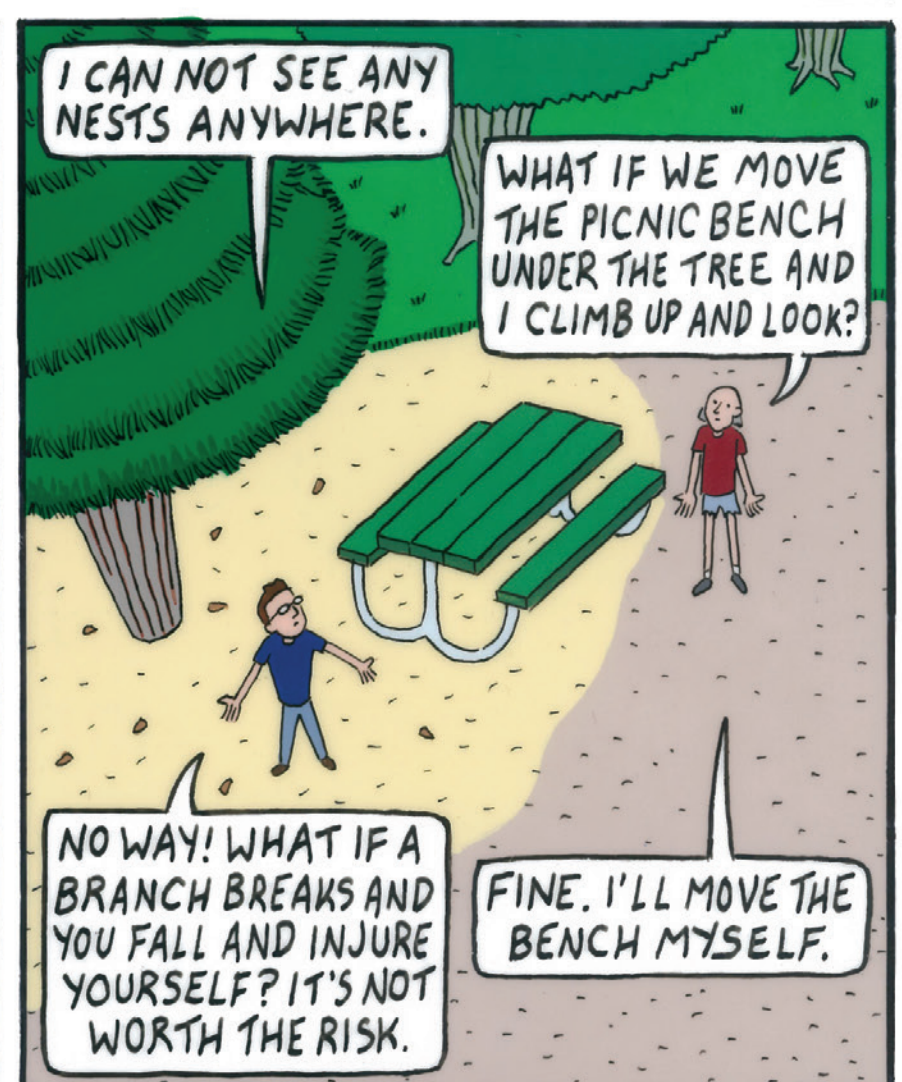
SECTION B





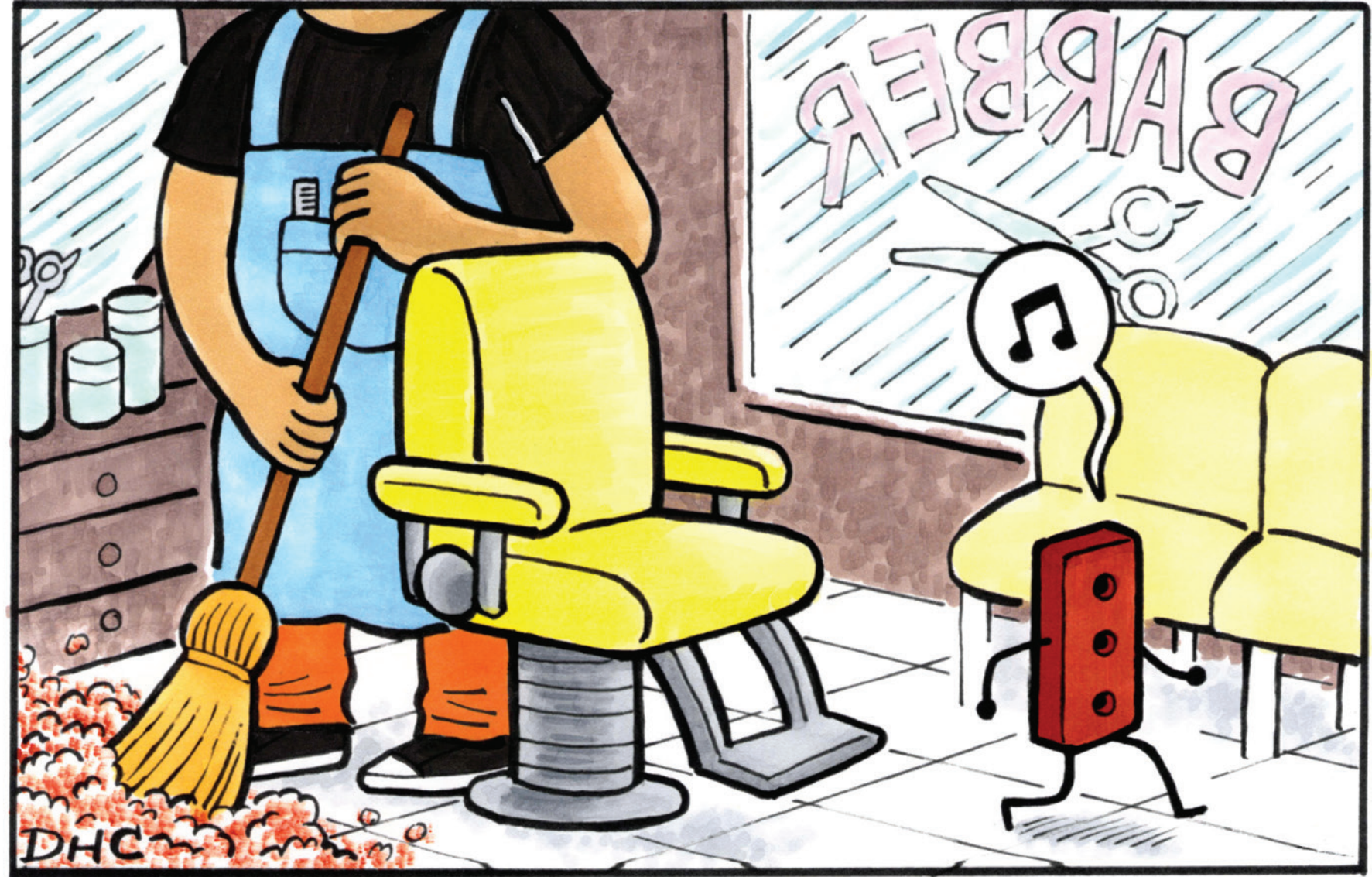
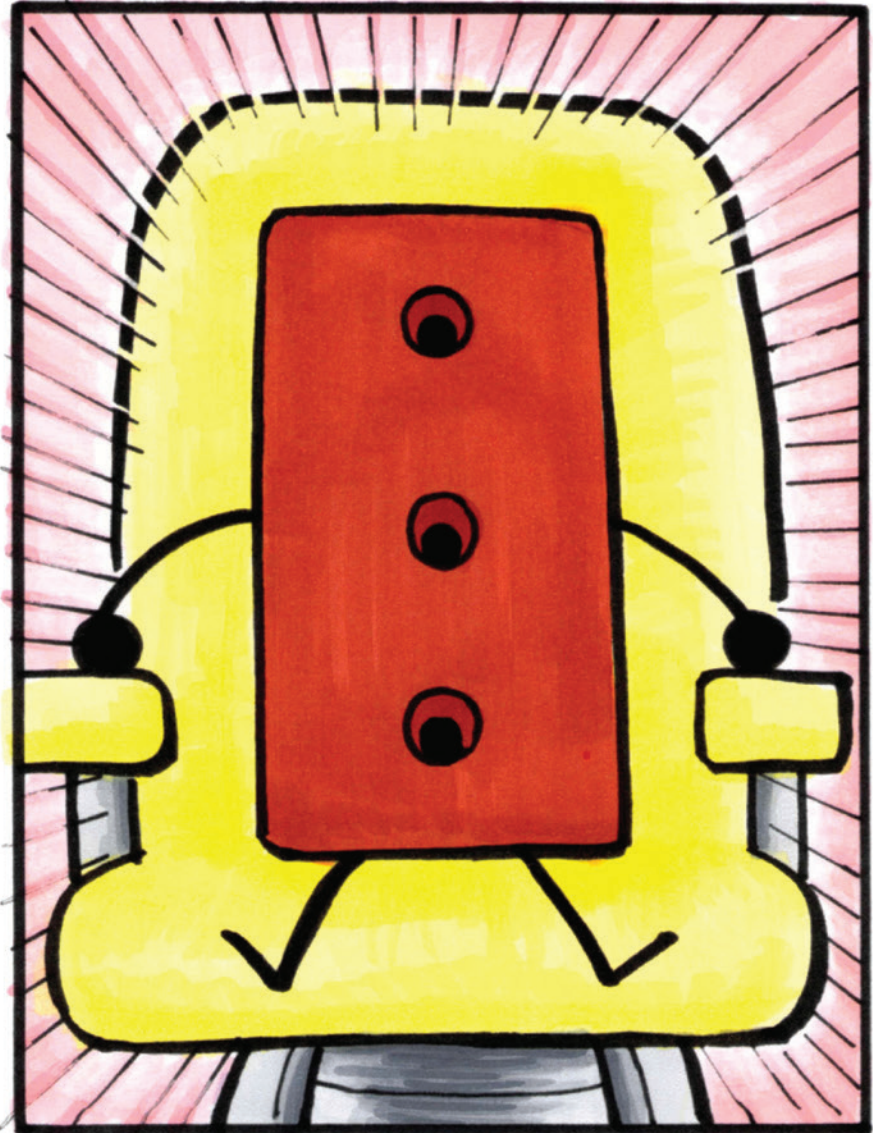
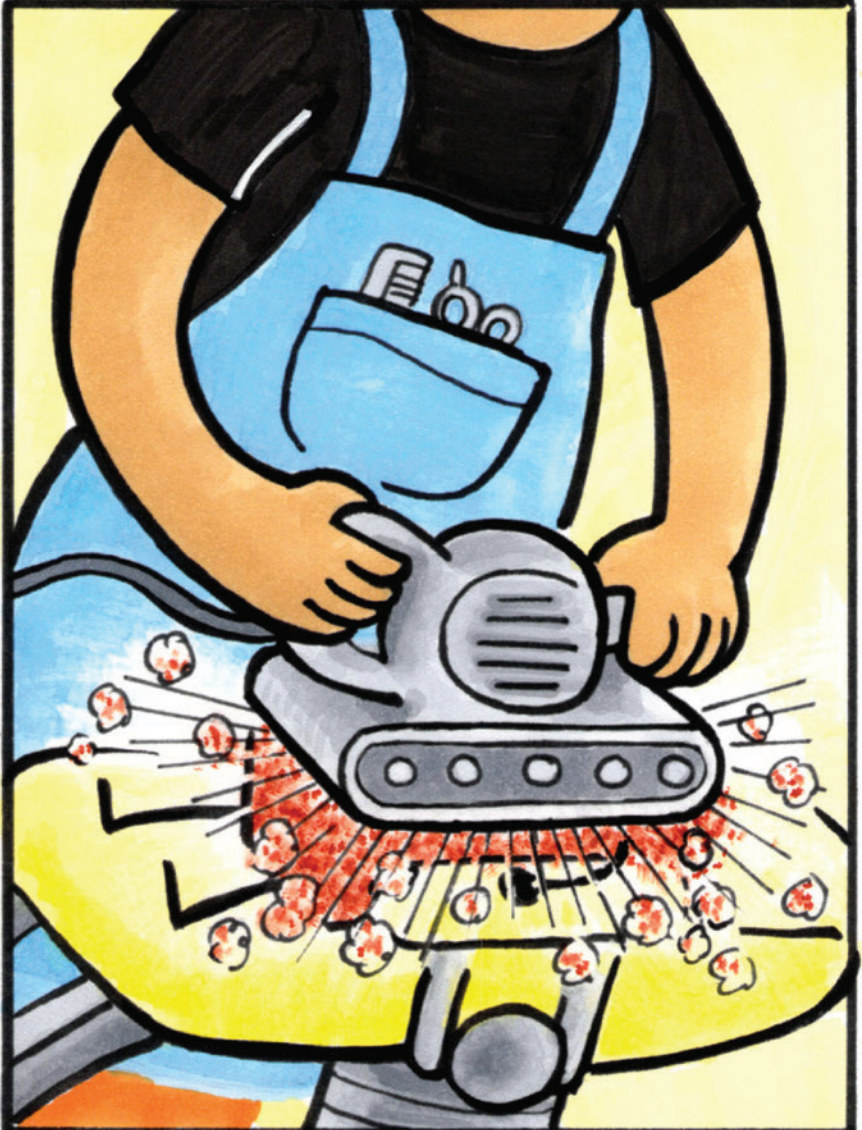
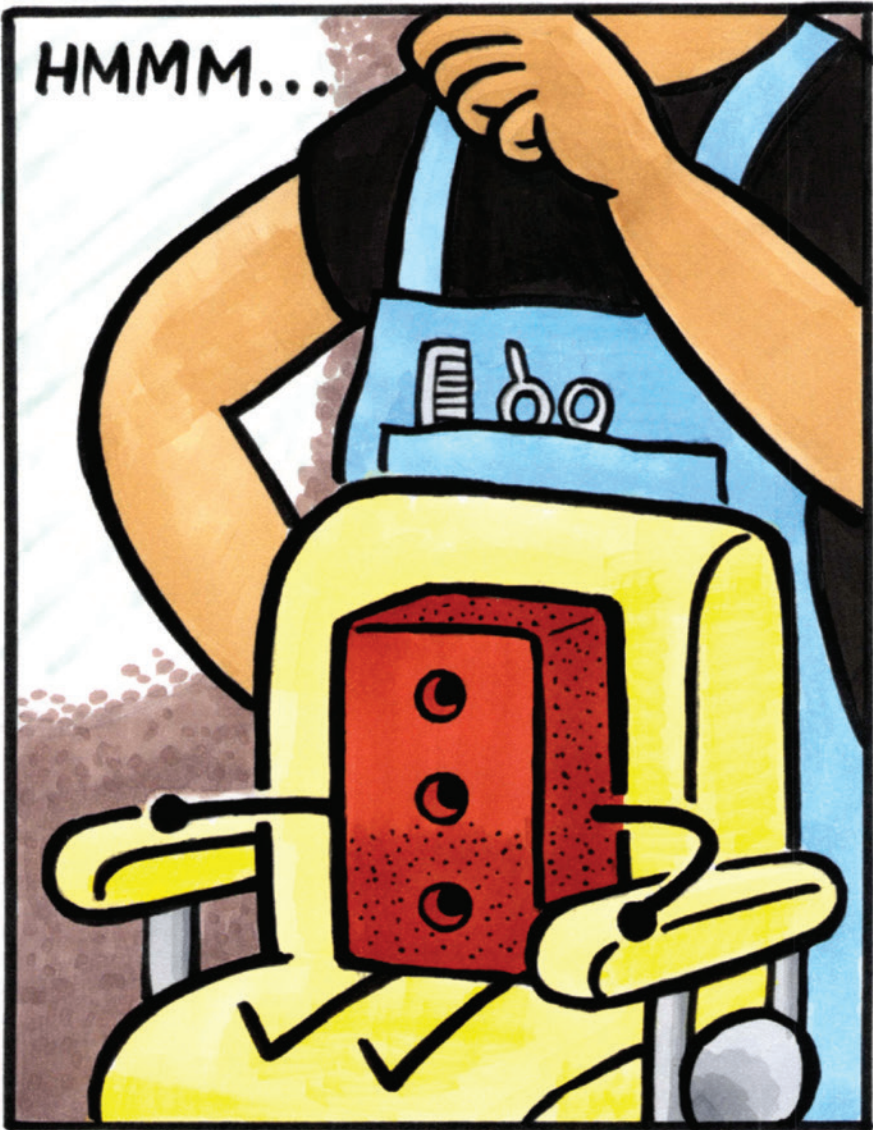
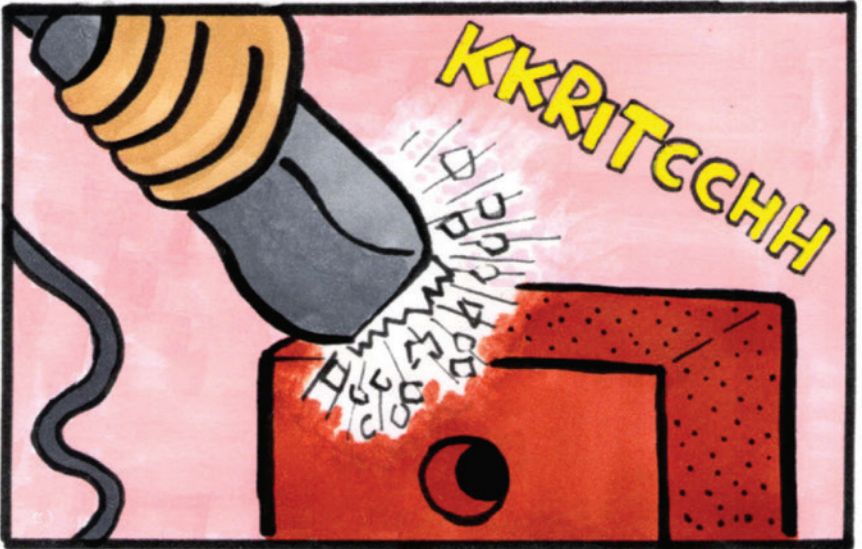
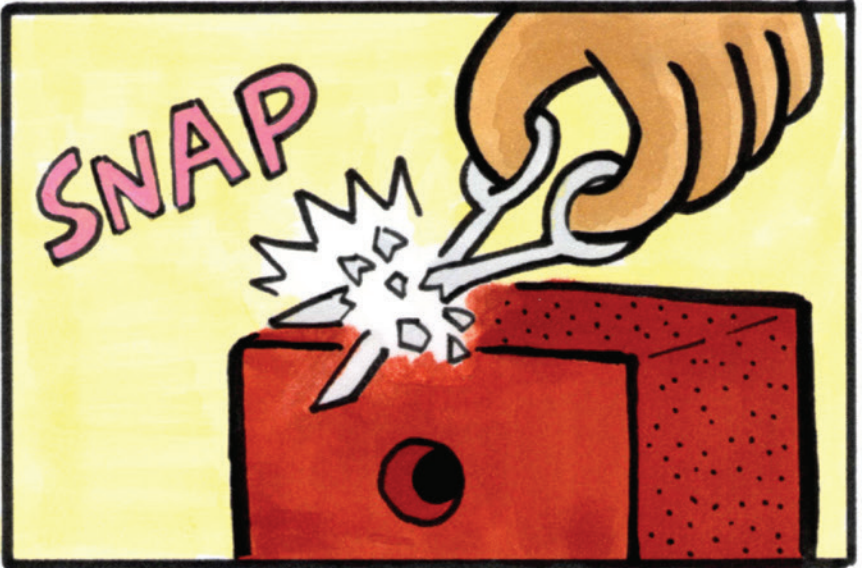
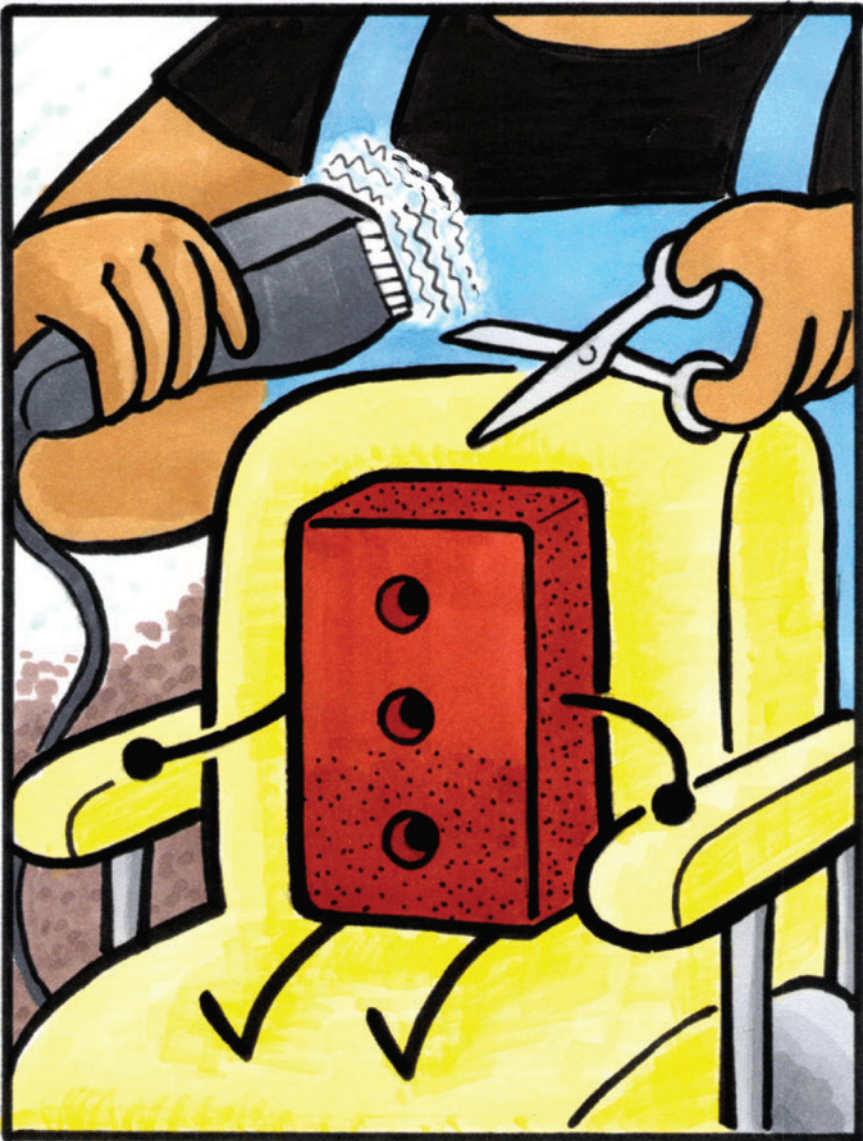
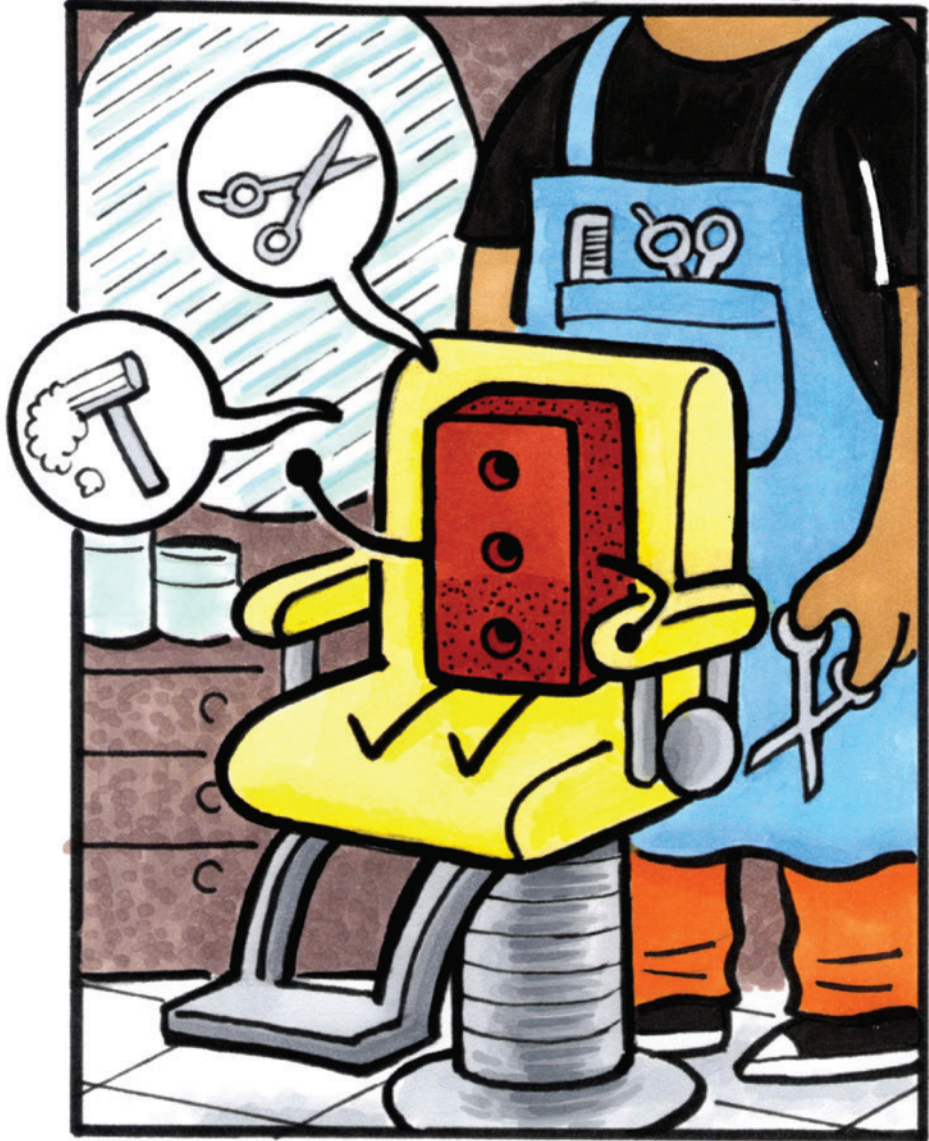
## Bring Myself

Dave Lapp



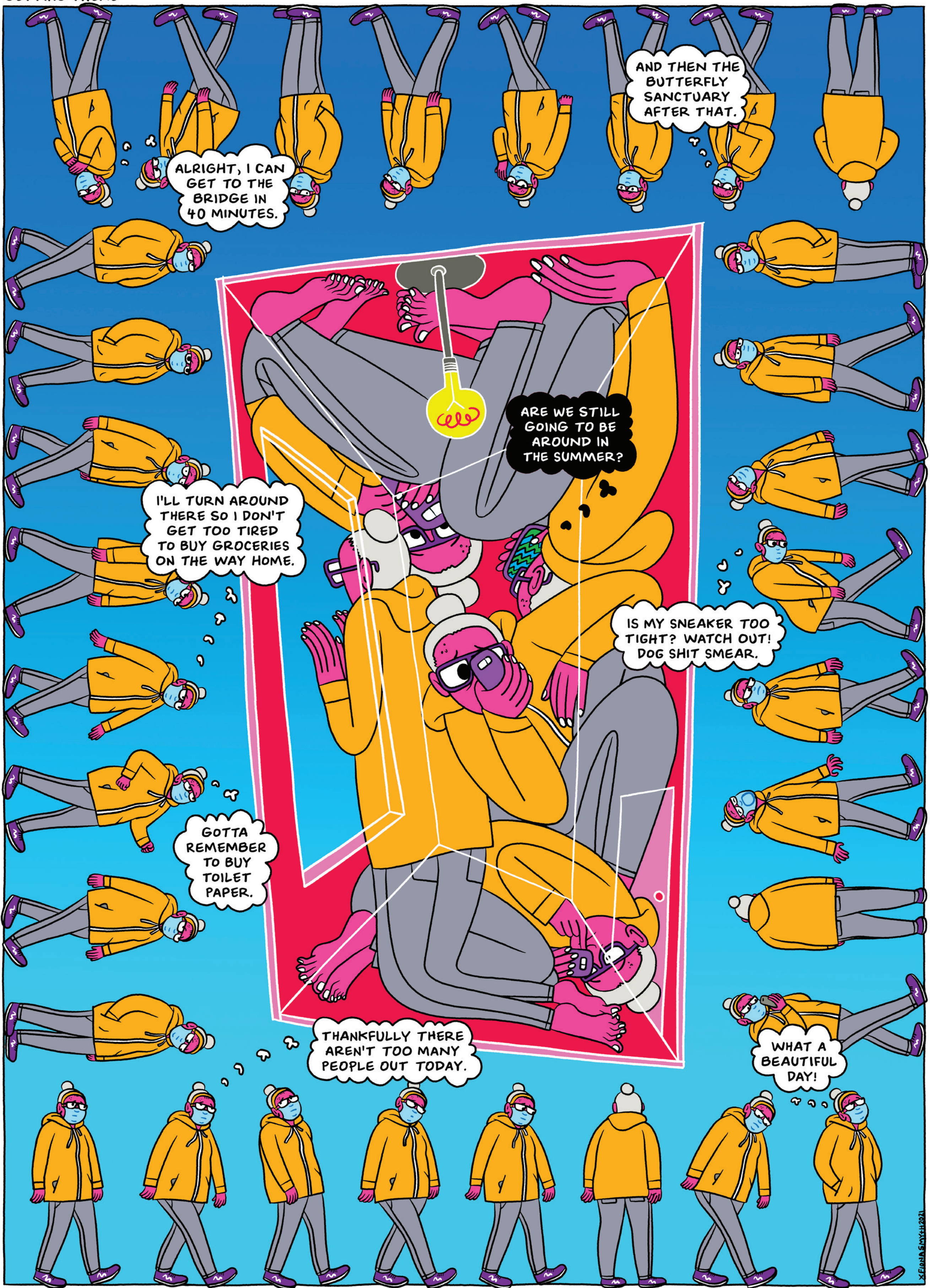


**BRICK** by Dave Craig





GETTING THERE

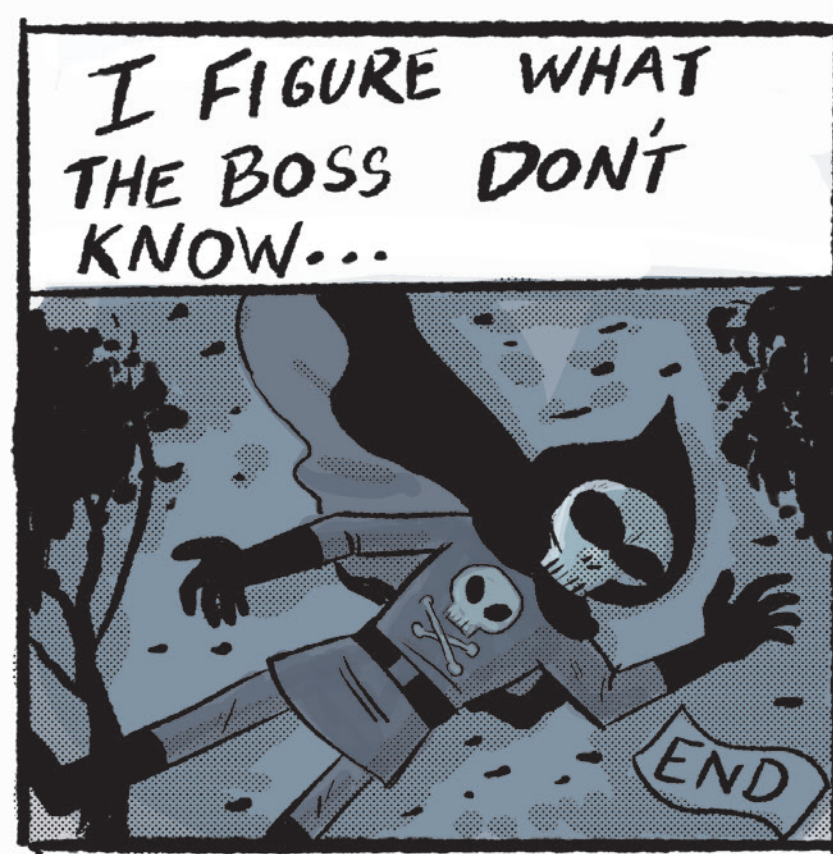
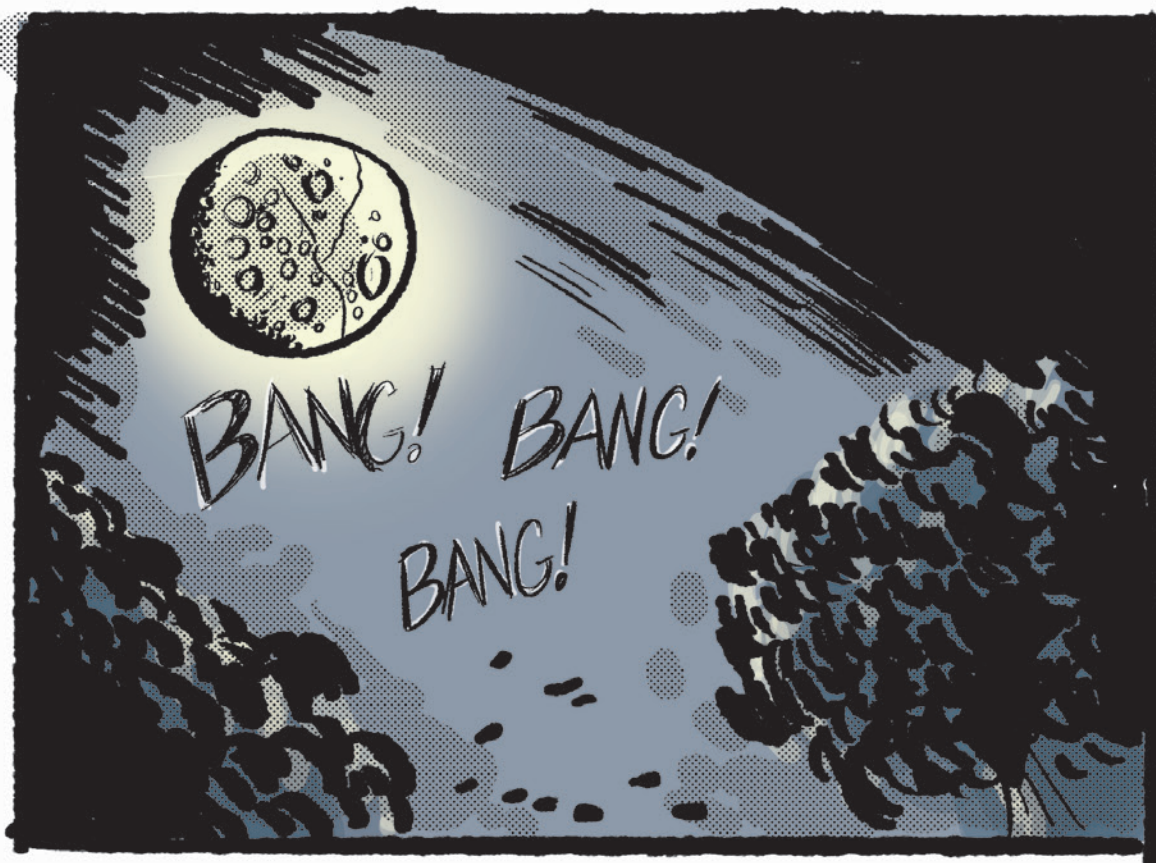
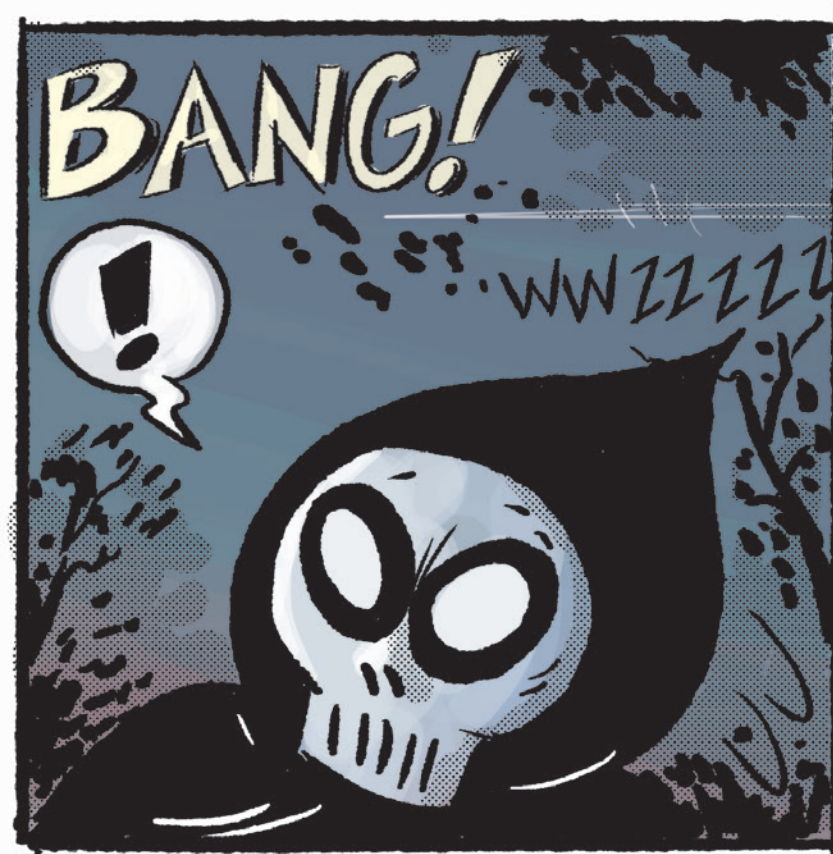




AS THE SUN BEGINS ITS GRACEFUL DESCENT ON THE GROUNDS OF THE BOCELLI ESTATE, A FURTIVE FIGURE HASTILY ATTEMPTS TO SLIP AWAY. TWO RUTHLESS HOODS SEEK TO STOP THIS SUNSET ESCAPE, AND IN DOING SO, PUT AN END TO...

# THE PHANTOM SKULL

BY GEORGE PFROMM II



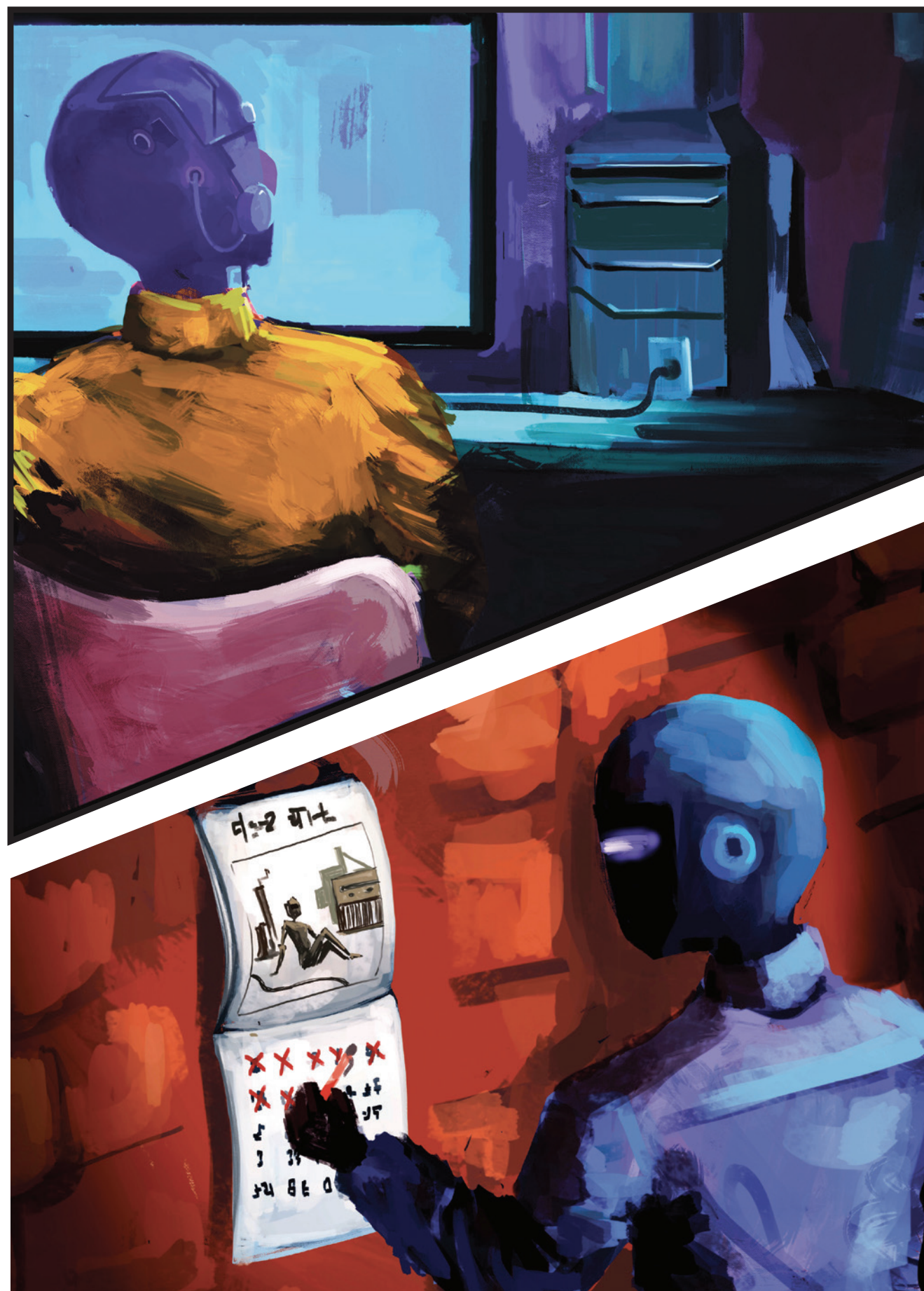
END



# DAY 65297

BY BO DOODLEY

LOG 65297: THE PLANTS HAVE FINALLY STARTED GROWING AGAIN. I SPEND MY DAYS GARDENING – WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO DO WHEN YOU'RE THE ONLY SENTIENT BEING ON THE ENTIRE PLANET...



DEAR DIARY: TODAY'S THE 65297<sup>TH</sup> DAY. ANOTHER DAY THAT I BEGIN BY MARKING A RED X ON MY TRUSTY ANALOG CALENDAR. IT'S STRANGE TO BE THE ONLY DROID LEFT ALIVE BUT I MAKE THE BEST OF IT IN MY UNDERGROUND CELLAR. TODAY, I PLAN TO BRAVE THE WILD OUTDOORS SOON, IF ONLY FOR SOME FRESH AIR...



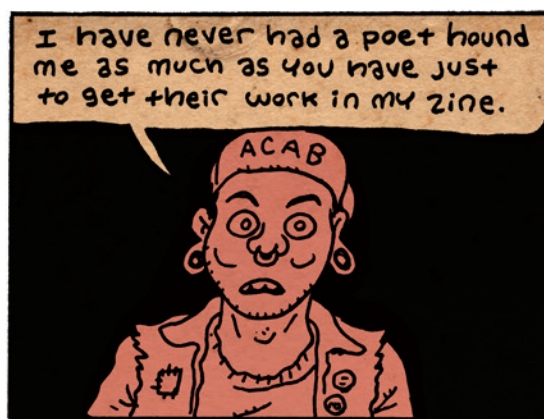
Bo.D  
2022







THE POET  
UPSTAIRS



# A PLACE OF YOUR OWN

