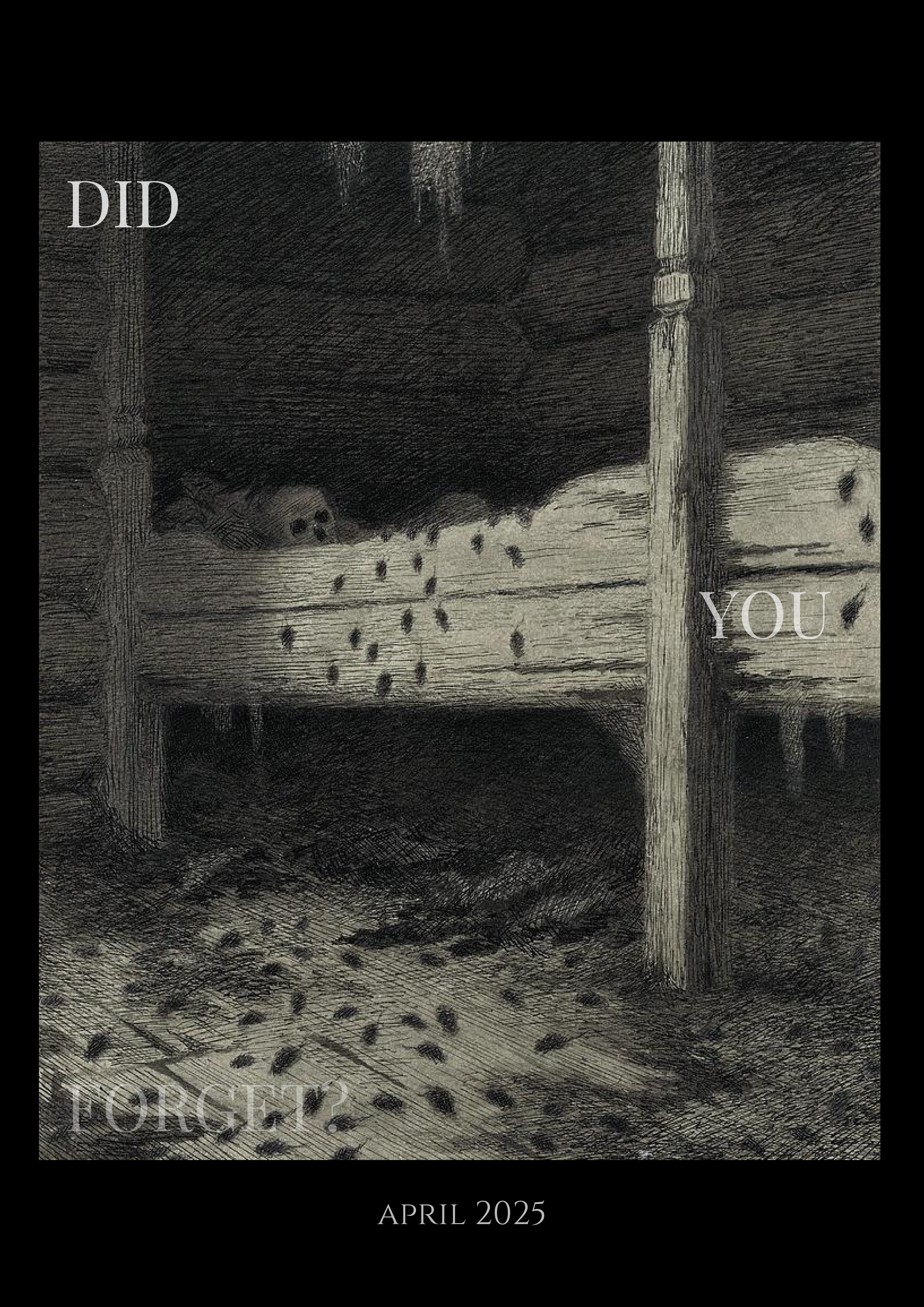


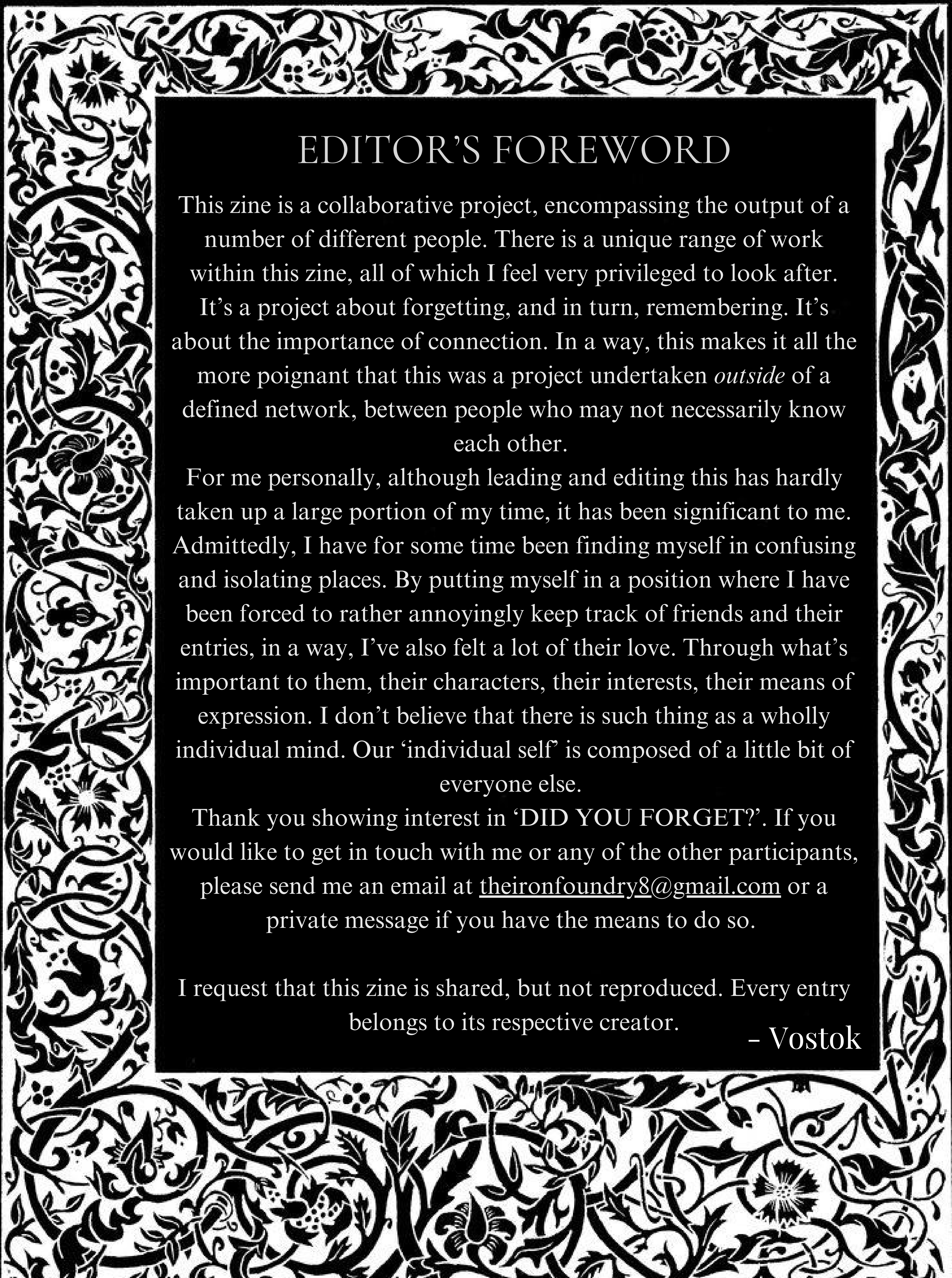


DID

YOU

FORGET?

APRIL 2025



EDITOR'S FOREWORD

This zine is a collaborative project, encompassing the output of a number of different people. There is a unique range of work within this zine, all of which I feel very privileged to look after.

It's a project about forgetting, and in turn, remembering. It's about the importance of connection. In a way, this makes it all the more poignant that this was a project undertaken *outside* of a defined network, between people who may not necessarily know each other.

For me personally, although leading and editing this has hardly taken up a large portion of my time, it has been significant to me. Admittedly, I have for some time been finding myself in confusing and isolating places. By putting myself in a position where I have been forced to rather annoyingly keep track of friends and their entries, in a way, I've also felt a lot of their love. Through what's important to them, their characters, their interests, their means of expression. I don't believe that there is such thing as a wholly individual mind. Our 'individual self' is composed of a little bit of everyone else.

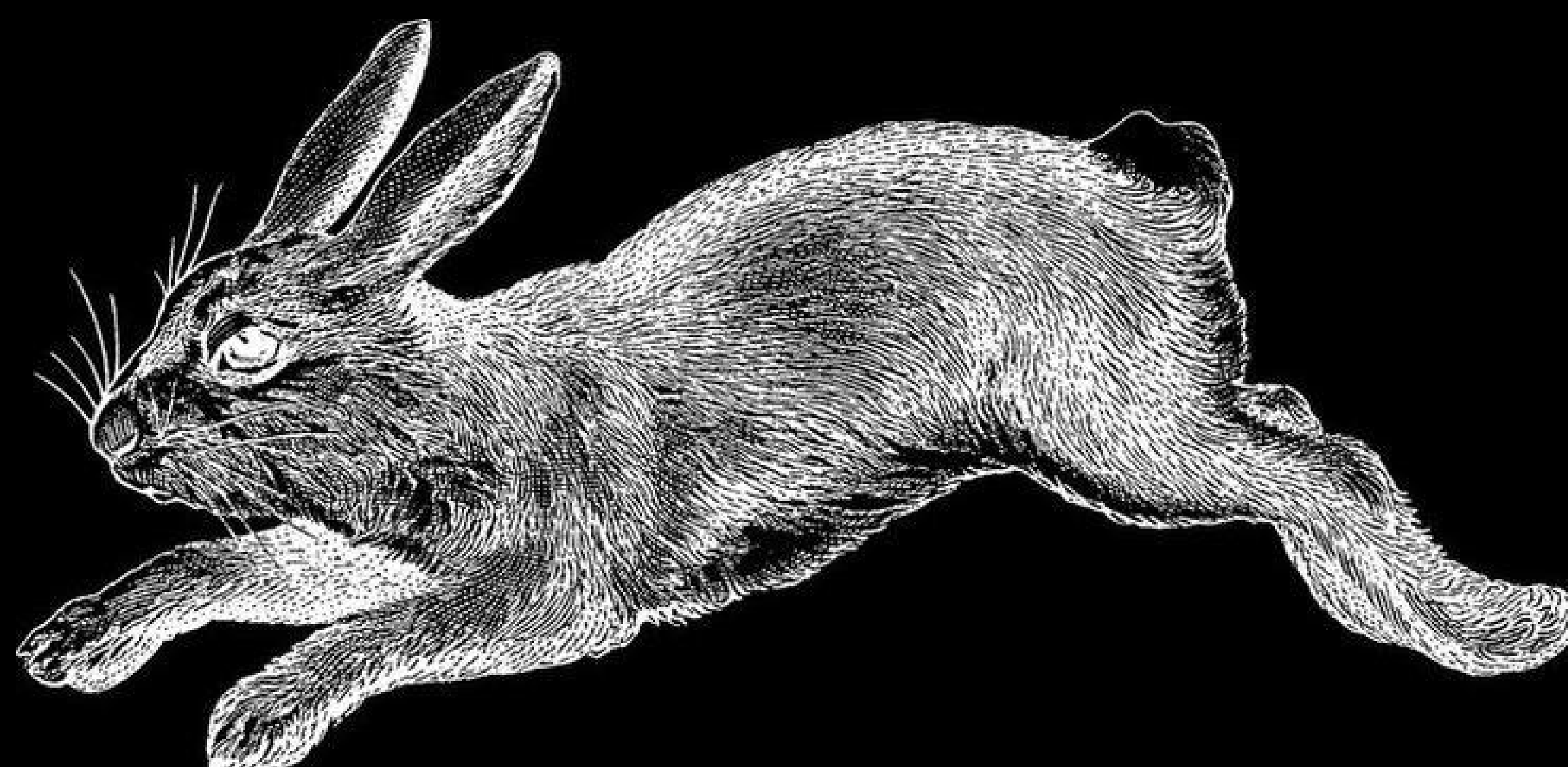
Thank you showing interest in 'DID YOU FORGET?'. If you would like to get in touch with me or any of the other participants, please send me an email at theironfoundry8@gmail.com or a private message if you have the means to do so.

I request that this zine is shared, but not reproduced. Every entry belongs to its respective creator.

– Vostok

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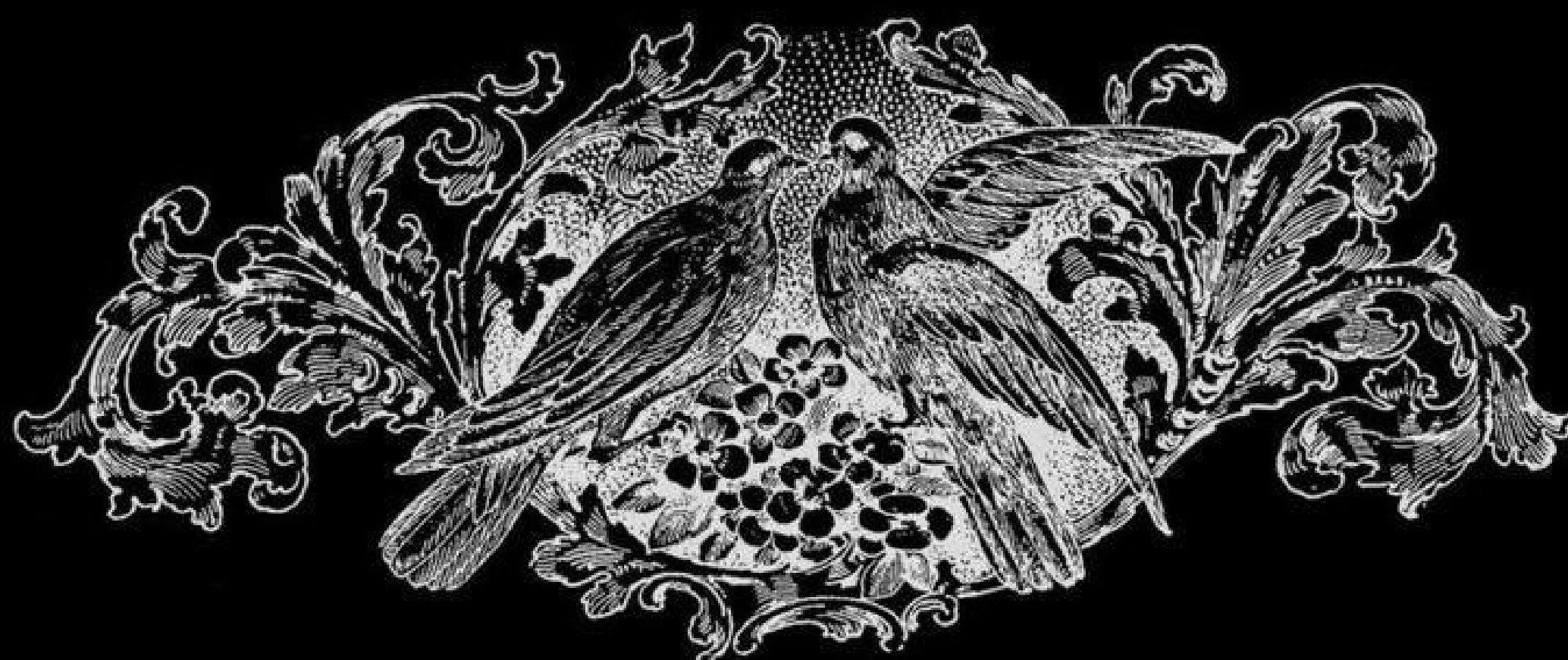
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“Patchwork”

by s.b.

Crazy quilt hanged on the wall
as an heirloom. Where none belong
unless limp, wrapped inside, hauled;
crazy quilt. Hanged. On the wall.
As you and I observe, I halt
wandering as I have so long,
crazy. Quilt hanged on the wall
as an heirloom where none belong.





This is a digital painting of a quilt my great-great-great-great grandmother made circa 1860. The other images I added to the quilt are an old family photo from the late 1970s and a sketch of my father.

D1G!T4L L1MB0

FORBIDDEN ACCESS

Internet accessible

Internet m@lin

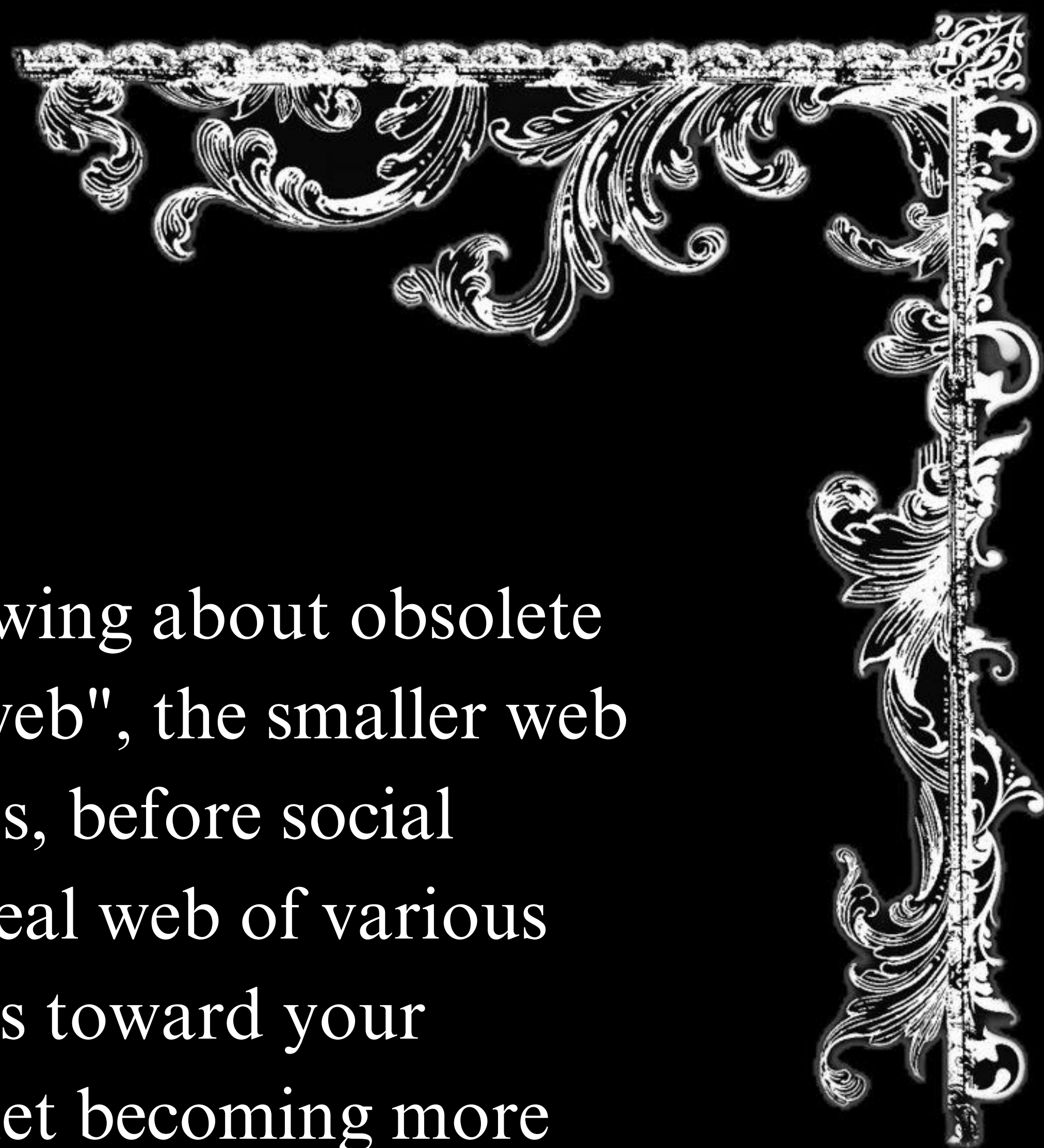
Leçons de navigation pour tous
Le CD-ROM Internet accessible apprend aux néophytes à se familiariser avec le Web et à surfer dans ses entrailles. L'interface est simplifiée au maximum, et le rubriquage clairement structuré autour de cinq axes : la toile dans son ensemble, le transfert de fichiers (FTP), le courrier électronique (e-mail), les news et les forums de discussion (IRC). Tous sont illustrés par des commentaires et des visuels.

PC CD-ROM PC, 300 F env., Trait d'union graphique.

Voyage
LA TÊTE DE TOUS LES VOYAGES

SPORTS

Un CD-ROM pour faire ses premiers pas sur Internet.



This is a small collage and ballpoint pen drawing about obsolete technologies and more specifically the "old web", the smaller web that needed guides and tutorials in magazines, before social medias ever existed, when the "web", was a real web of various personal websites held together by hyperlinks toward your friends, inspirations and credits. With Internet becoming more mainstream during the mid 2000s to 2010s, social medias almost completely erased the use of personal websites as the Internet became something more corporate, a product to be sold around. With Geocities, the principal free website hosters popular around the 90s shutting down, many of those personal websites, full of blogs, of shrine pages for various animes, bands and video games, abandoned chatrooms, forums were lost forever. But with projects like Internet Archive, new free website hosters like Neocities and Nekoweb, and old web revival projects like Spacehey, we can definitely see an interest for a more indie, more personal kind of Internet far away from the corporations that rule it today.

Despite having never known the golden age of this slower kind of Internet, I have a deep affection for it and love spending time hopping from hyperlink to hyperlink in old archived websites. All the collage material here was sourced from a 1998 magazine.



Two Portraits of Necrophagy

by Vostok

A bird in the hand. It's supposed to be worth something. The train that traverses the neurons crawls slowly to a sudden halt. That's where the recollection ends. Listen to the cables crack and whip through the nervous system. Forward.

If you've paid to be this wasted you might as well take the fucking chair and sit down. Who? I can't sense anything past the sockets of his eyes, but his mind snakes its way under the cushion of my epidermis. I feel like crossing my thumbs over his Adam's apple and constricting the passage of audacity through his windpipe. Even Bartimaeus could see what was incised into me. Maybe something scoured away my scripture. Turned inside out into the big wide world.

Drop to your knees and answer the call of the asphalt. Yell for your retribution. Lightning might strike you down. The bite of gravel in your shins tells you that you hold the centrifugal force of the storm, bearing down from overhead. Hanging on the beam of a headlight without a source and not an inch of cloth to stop the wind from tearing you apart.

Have you ever felt

terror so corporeal desperation so cellular isolation with such a cold heartbeat confusion so masterful that you

Drop to your knees and answer the call of the asphalt.

Beg to die. It could just happen. I've followed my swallow to grace.

I found my way into a church, and it seemed somehow he'd got his wish.

Nobody could sense my being there in two places. An absent spectator at my own funeral. I've been here before. So small and powerless under God's great ceiling. Certainly, I've sat in these pews before.

I wonder if anyone is watching at home. Everything is filmed here. And the vicar stood up to a microphone and began talking. He says there are people watching at home. Somehow I know it's a lie. I can feel the abstract dread of the empty chat bar.

He looks distant. I could see my own body behind him in a brown wooden casket. Sleeping beauty came to be filled with cavity fluid. Tread the ground between perversion and release. I can't really see my face - fracture. The experience continued with a deep sense of discomfort that began even before anyone started speaking. To be buried in a casket is to witness eternity. My final dalliance is with the six surfaces of a jumped-up shoebox.

Teleshopping purgatory at 2am. Divine power has imbued this clergyman with the authority to advertise wares. I can't think of what he was trying to flog. Maybe air fryers.

Absolve your sins with a set of knives.

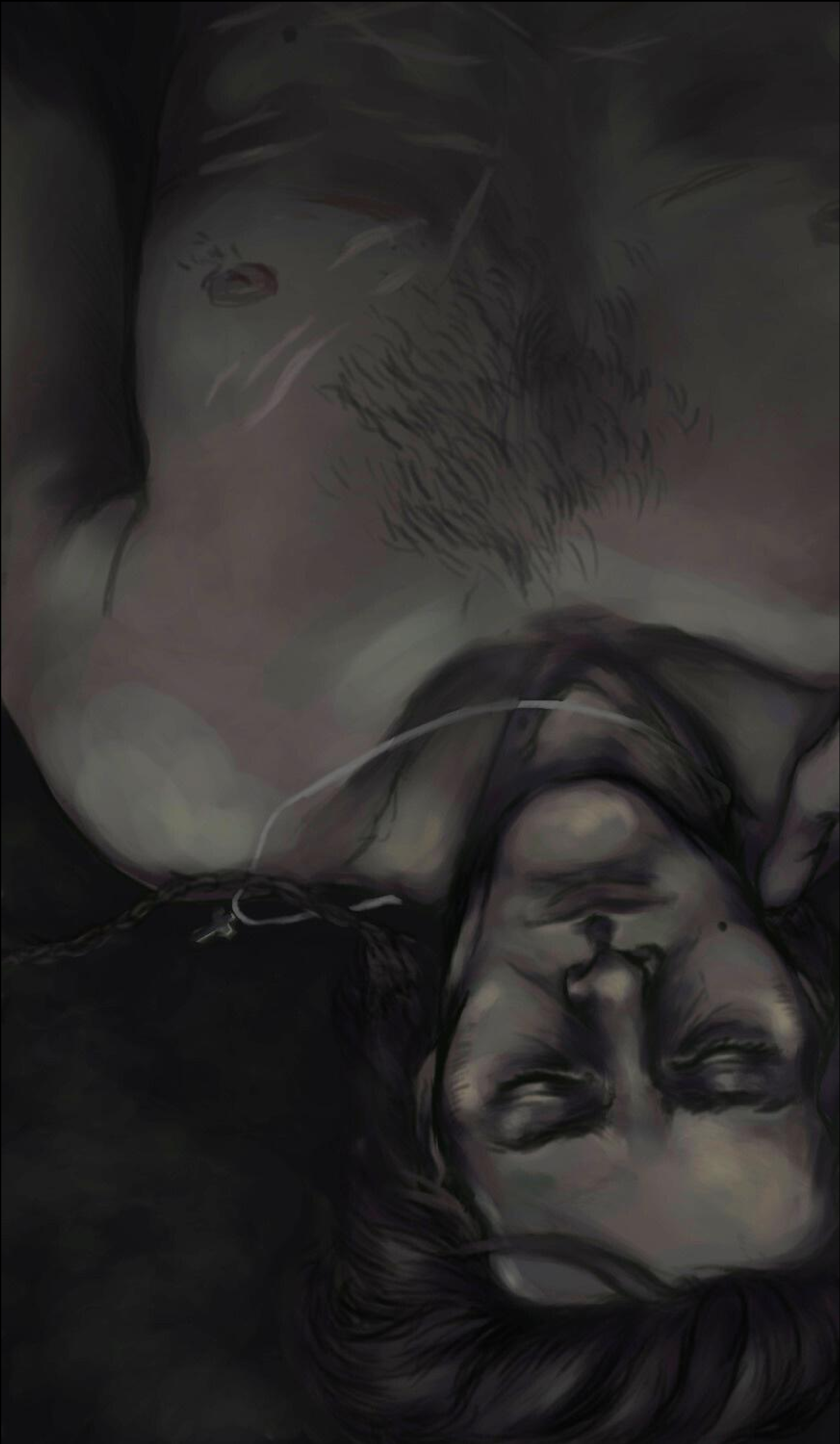
It went on for some long, slow, endless time. Vik stood up behind my right shoulder. I'd shifted myself to the other side of the church without noticing how I got there. He yells out, *stop it I have a dead brother lying there*.

Hand thrown out with an accusatory gesture and his face twisted in such a strange and pure state of distress that omnipresence had never seen. Wet and ugly and red. I can feel him close on the back of my neck. He was never angry like that. He held everything in quietly. That's where we differed in life.

I saw him throw paper into there with the body. A disembodied voice that can't find its place in memory. I can't see who said it, because no longer can I turn my eyes away from the altar. Catatonia's vigour. All energy must be transferred somewhere. The audience begins to be yanked onto their feet by a collective compelling restlessness and I see their bodies pulling and pushing and shouting out damnation such blasphemous abhorrence in the periphery of the Lord and even in death

I can't hold respect.

I think about how I will have to kill myself to retain the dignity of an animal.



alterum



portatum

Love in times of modern knights

by Jan Knyazev

We all grew up believing in love: every Disney cartoon ends with a joyous wedding of a prince and some Cinderella, you would hear songs, see movies and plays about finding a significant other, and in the end of every fairytale book you would find a big colorful illustration of a knight kissing his beloved princess. All of us used to lie in our bed, look in the window, observing unconscious passerby and wonder: what life will be? What person will I marry? What will my princess or prince look like?



Growing and reaching adulthood, we would learn that there are no princesses and knights, but 9-to-5 5/2 jobs, public transport, schedules, to-do lists, social media and traffic. Of course, we always knew these realities existed: you would ride the bus when you were a kid, go to your mom's work during lunch break, be mad about your school timetable.

"It seems like adult life is nothing like in fairy tales" we think, clocking in and smiling at the customer, "There aren't any knights, princes and princesses, there is barely any love. Situationships, unhappy marriages, break-ups, divorces and 15% tips."



Knights save their beloved one from the dragon, conquer the whole world for the sake of their love. What do we do? We don't have dragons or evil villains to fight, we have 9-to-5 jobs and 15% tips, after all.

Oh, but life is much more than just a 5/2 job and a public transport schedule.

As a society we used to think in grand frames, imagine that love is proven through heroic feats and exploits. However, the way we perceive life compressed, we gained slower, more detailed life. How we smile when we see a joyful child playing outside, how nicer our day becomes when we hear enjoyable music on the street – it doesn't take that much to make us happy as it used to.

Close your eyes (after you finish reading this paragraph) and think of your beloved person: it can be someone specific, like your partner, or some abstract significant other. Imagine them coming home after their shift, after having an argument with a random person on the bus, after being late for their train, after losing their notebook. Imagine their tired eyes, slow limbs, exhausted face. Would you want them to work at least a single more day? Would you want these worn out hands to ever work again?



You probably would not. However, you are aware that in this society it's impossible, we all must work to survive, which is quite upsetting. That's why we, people, have each other.

Close your eyes again (after finishing reading this paragraph): wouldn't you want to make your partner's time off work as nice as it can be? Wouldn't you want to cherish them and make them happy?

What makes people in society happy? *Care does.* Simple acts of care, such as gently brushing their hair, folding their clothes, charging their phone, fixing their bedsheets, **peeling their oranges**. The latter has become quite popular in the media recently, and it's obvious why.



Oranges can be unpleasant to peel – their skin can be too dry or rough, it can dig under your nails, it can be juicy and make quite a mess. These issues aren't too worthy to be real problems, but they still cause certain stress. Simply putting this inconvenience aside, patiently doing this unpleasant process for your beloved one's joy is an act of love.

You don't need to find love in fairy tales and look for your prince or princess. Times have changed, life has changed too. Look for love in your partner's eyes and orange juice spilled on your table.

My Search for the Armless and Legless Man of Pittsburgh's Hill District

by Stage Crew

I work in the house of a man who ushered the deaths of hundreds of men.

I work in the house of a man who allowed the deaths of hundreds of hungry and straining men hoping for a better life.

I work in the house of a man who sought after money more than morality, who prioritized cash over the lives of the men, women, and children who supplied him with his wealth.

And yet, the names of many of these neglected and abused men appear in papers, in research.

“Honest” John McLuckie, Hugh O'Donnell- these men even get fictional figures based on their archetype- Joe Magarac of Pittsburgh lore and Hugh Wolfe of Life in the Iron Mills.

But there are some men who are so forgotten their names cannot be found. The memory of their existence is mere chance.

I work in Henry Clay Frick's house. Henry Clay Frick was an American businessman and coke manufacturer whose enterprise came under the umbrella of Carnegie Steel in 1882. After this, he managed some steel mills- including the Homestead Mill where in 1892 seven striking workers were slaughtered for daring to stand against the exploitative demands of Frick and Carnegie. After the events at Homestead- often referred to as “the Homestead Lockout” or “The Battle of Homestead”- workers were expelled from the mill, many of them permanently blacklisted from the steel industry. Henry Clay Frick replaced these workers of Western European descent with a variety of cheaper labor, including black workers.

This is the first time black people were ever allowed to work in Homestead. Previously, the mills refused to hire black people, while the unions denied their membership. In 1892 Pittsburgh job prospects were shamefully limited for African Americans. The city's main employers were mills, who would not employ them. This left hard working men and women scrambling for whatever jobs they could find. The best paying and most respectable job for black men in nineteenth century Pittsburgh- barber- was gradually appropriated. Since even a 10 hour day of hard labor, that at least paid better than porter or custodian, was withheld from Pittsburgh's African American population for years, Homestead seemed a breath of fresh air for the black men who were finally allowed employment there.

But Frick raised the hours- 7 days a week, 12 hours a day, with one 24-hour shift on the seventh day. Frick lowered the pay. Frick removed safety restrictions. Frick used the events at Homestead to lower work standards and employ people he saw as disposable- African Americans, and Eastern European immigrants. Frick replaced his “english-speaking race” employees with black men- and racism became more prominent. Unions saw struggling black men as strikebreakers, as scabs. Frick fanned the flames of racism in Pittsburgh. For years, the stories of the white strikers were remembered and preserved, while the struggling black men and women who had to choose between survival and worker solidarity were forgotten. Meanwhile, the real enemy was often forgotten, especially by the white workers, who themselves often chose upward mobility (assimilation and racism) over worker solidarity.

The Hill District was the primary neighborhood housing Pittsburgh’s black residents for years. Despite ruthless discrimination, people always find a way to persevere- and the Hill District scene thrived. The playwright August Wilson and the photographer Charles “Teenie” Harris based their art careers off the lives of the Hill District’s residents. People called the Hill District “The Crossroads of the World” and “Pittsburgh’s Harlem,” meanwhile, poverty and desperation thrived amongst a population so thoroughly oppressed by the systems of America.

So when domestic labor became more expensive and the end of Pittsburgh’s steel industry became abundantly clear, the city sought to re-invest money elsewhere: into art, for example. They also sought to clean-up the place; and the Hill District’s rows of slums stunted by Pittsburgh’s discrimination were viewed as a blight on the same city that prided itself on Millionaire’s row.

The city decided to use eminent domain to evict 1,551 families and 413 businesses to get rid of the Hill District- thriving with art but struggling financially. In this place, they would build an ultimately flopped opera house for the Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera (CLO).

I work in the house of a man whose businesses allowed, even sanctioned, these actions. Yet, there have been special efforts to rectify poor representation in the history of Pittsburgh. This is already a trend in museum studies: to look for blindspots, especially regarding race, gender, and labor / social status, and share what’s discovered with the public. These efforts have been quite explicit with The Frick Pittsburgh, and so they have begun to learn more about the history of Pittsburgh’s black residents. Luckily, Rivers of Steel has done a very thorough ethnographic study of Pittsburgh’s African American population through the centuries.

In some cases, there have been very successful discoveries. At The Frick Pittsburgh they have learned about Spencer Ford, an exceptionally successful chef who worked for the Fricks, yet still faced explicit and glaring discrimination. They have also learned of Jane Grandison- a fantastically skilled baby nurse who made triple or quadruple the average wage of a black woman in Pittsburgh during the Gilded Age. But these efforts are fresh, and there are infinitely more people whose names we do not know.

While studying the African American history of Pittsburgh, reading Rivers of Steel's ethnographic study, I found a quote quoting from another book, regarding the Hill district they say: "Workmen demolishing another slum in the Lower Hill ma[d]e a horrible discovery in the basement -- an armless and legless alcoholic lying in his own excrement."

This quote in the ethnographic study is preceded by "The human predicament is routinely ignored and almost as proof that those residing in this area deserve to be removed one newspaper article reports that..." and it is proceeded by "To add the the misery, the uprooted businesses and residents were not compensated adequately." This armless and legless man is never returned to.

Such a throw-away line has never affected me so deeply. I have felt haunted by the presence of this man in the historical record since I first read this article several months ago. I shiver at the thought of his circumstance, at the fact that the memory of him is so based on random incidence and chance. He has been almost entirely forgotten.

And he remains unnamed.

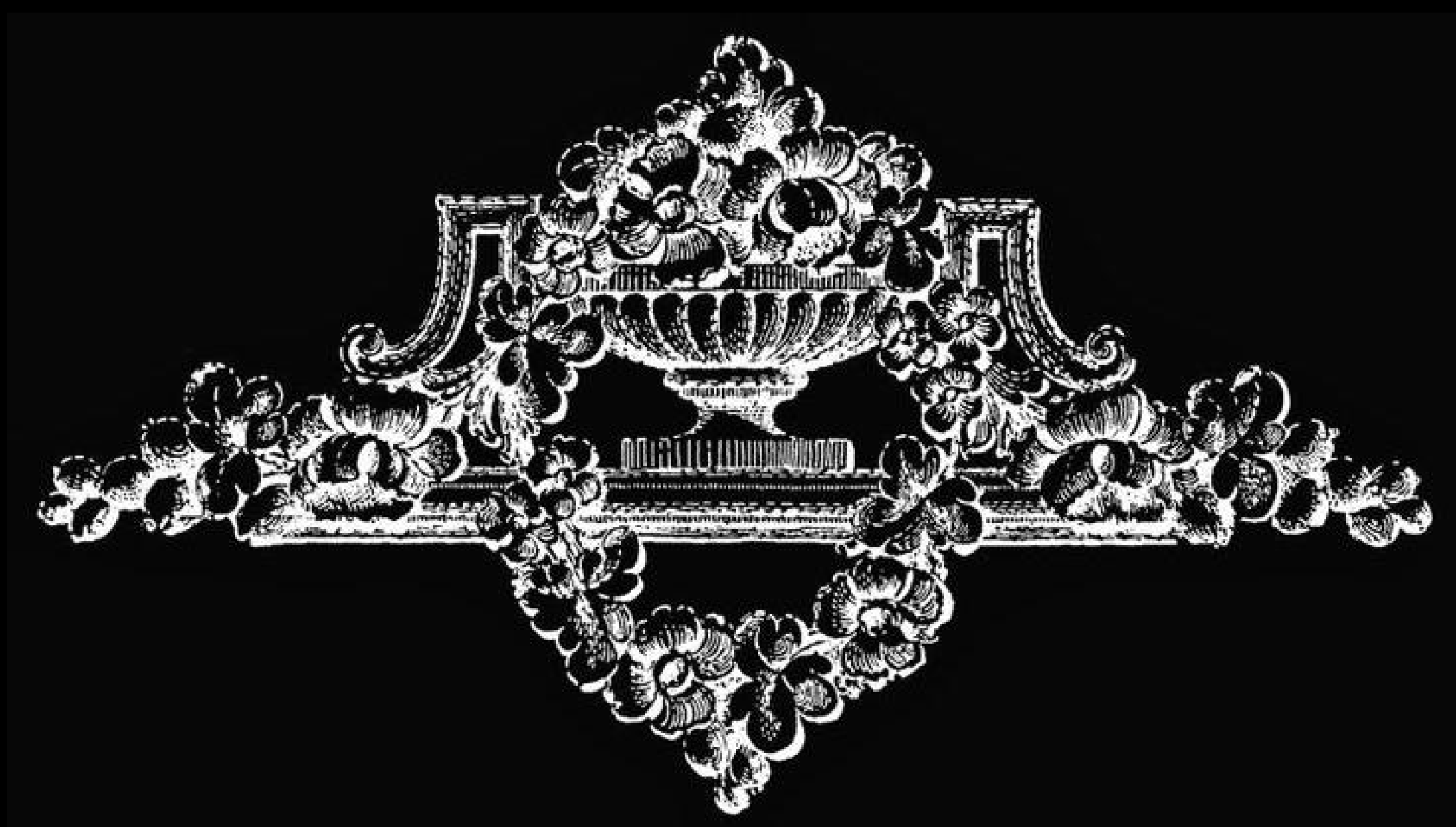
I wonder deeply about his situation. Who was this man? How old was he? What happened to his arms and legs? How was he an alcoholic? How did they know he was an alcoholic? Who was giving him the alcohol, and why? What happened to him before discovery? How long had he been in the basement? Who had he been living with? Who was his guardian? Why did they leave him there? And most importantly- **WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM AFTER DISCOVERY?**

The book which the study was quoting was Pittsburgh by Roy Lubove, 1976. Yet, upon attaining this book myself, I found the quote did not come from a newspaper article written in the 50s, but rather the entire chapter was a re-printed newspaper article from the Pittsburgh Post Gazette in 1971, which I have not yet obtained. This article does not elaborate on the situation of the armless and legless man at all. There is no source cited.

I cannot imagine the series of injustices which must occur for a human being to be left in such a despicable state, and yet in each place I encounter this story, I find a throwaway line without even a name.

A name- something we often think of as the most fundamental form of dignity- an acknowledgement of life and humanity and individuality- deprived of this individual through the record. And yet, there are hints of his existence, floating around in dusty Pittsburgh scholarship.

Pittsburgh continues to neglect and abuse its black residents. Just last week, an elderly black man was beaten by Police, who knelt on his neck, broke his ribs, and gave him head trauma. The racism of the Gilded Age persists and is topical, justice has not yet come to the residents here. Meanwhile, the manufacturing industry has shriveled up and limped overseas, where billionaires can exploit the workers in the global south instead- unnamed to most of us in Pittsburgh. The most bullied groups of Pittsburgh are left to pick up the pieces after being the first ones to starve and the first ones to die for so many years. I walk through the city acutely aware of the blood-soaked ground, first through the expulsion, poisoning, and murder of native nations, and then through the years of dreadful industry and discrimination staining generations to come. I feel a frustration and hunger, a connection, to the endless struggle against oppression and exploitation. As I return to the library once again to request another newspaper, I hope eventually I can track down the armless and legless man, and grant him the name he deserves. No one is more representative of the loss of autonomy and the neglect faced by the people of Pittsburgh, struggling beneath a collapsing house of cards, always precariously built by the millionaires seeking to use our labor for their own gain. While the black residents of Pittsburgh have faced unparalleled treatment, all of humanity is hurt through the manipulation by men like Henry Clay Frick- who pit the workers against each other so that they cannot unite.





The Forgotten Planet

by Doc

This piece explores the possibility of a future in which our planet Earth is only a distant memory for humanity.

I often find myself wondering about whether we humans will ever leave earth for good. Many questions remain in my mind about this possibility, bringing me both hope and despair for the future of humanity.

Do we truly have the ability to overcome our differences to work toward this common goal? What would it take for us to want to leave? How would society develop in this new environment? Would they even remember the planet their civilisation was born on?



This is a piece about love, and lineage.

Church

by Benny / Whalefall

Love is holy, and I have always been in church.

I will always care about those I cared about, even if I am able to distance myself from them, and remark on how they have harmed me. This care comes from ‘empathy,’ which I think is just one word out of many for seeing the humanity in someone. I am no doormat, I am capable of building walls just like everyone else, and I will protect myself from getting hurt by the same hands twice, but if someone came to me and an old friend and asked us to choose one to die, I would jump in front of the gun.

Seeing the humanity in people is extremely easy for me, and it comes naturally. It can be overwhelming, blinding, beautiful.

Sometimes I wonder why I am even alive. Humanity is not only overwhelming in a beautiful way, but it can also wear the face of horror, cruelty. The worst of humanity, the colonizers, the fascists, the liars, these people can make everyone and everything else seem pointless, because the worst of it seems all otherworldly insurmountable. But I know I do have something to offer this world, and I know this because I am my family and we have done this before. If you know me, you know I often speak of my mother & her impact on me, but I’m not talking about her. I’m talking about someone older. Wiser. I don’t remember it, but we have done this before. My great-grandfather was tortured by Nazis, and effectively killed although it took a year after he got out. They took him because they were afraid of him. They were afraid of him because he was immensely capable of seeing humanity. Well, more exactly, they were afraid of him because he was a journalist who wrote for & with the people. That is something so known to me, it’s something I strive to do. Perhaps because he isn’t gone, but still here in me, and others, and we’ve done it before.

It’s so strange, what my family has become. My mother is so often rolling off my tongue because she is one of the most selfish people I’ve ever met. I’m so disappointed, and heartbroken. She is eerily aware for a liberal of when fascism is on the rise, but instead of harnessing this awareness to inform any practice that would actually protect the community, she is overprotective of me - she keeps saying I’m going to get flagged for things that everyone’s pet Fed isn’t paid enough to care about, like stupid jokes - and she would sell our neighbors to starving hogs to protect herself. But I say, let them flag me, if the flag I wave is one of love.

Let them see me, let them fear me.

It will mean they will see his eyes in mine.

I am proud of him.

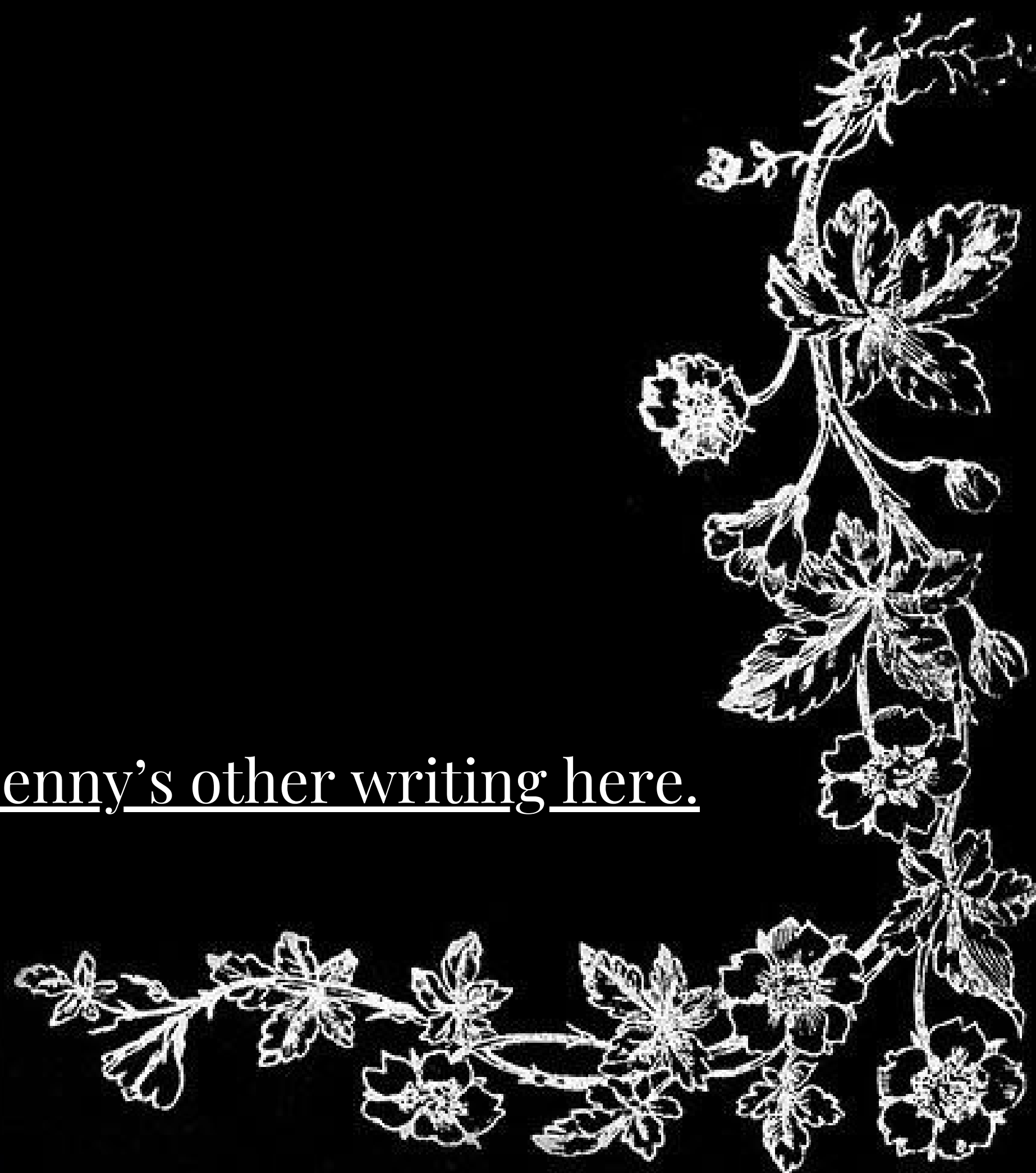
I think I have a lot in common with him, more than just my ability to write. I don't know what he was like in love, but I know that when I fall in love, it is with artists, and it feels like touching God. It feels like tying loose ends, even if the person leaves me, because I'm always there, getting to know humanity. In other artists, and in me, too. I wonder how much we have in common. I want to know more about him, and my great-grandmother, and my other family. I want to know what else they might teach me.

Sometimes I wonder why I am even alive. I have been left behind, so many times. And the people that have left me visit me in my dreams, long after they're supposed to have gone. It feels like I am unlovable, despite the immenseness of the love I hold within me. Like I can't look in the mirror, I might see a monster. But then that pride comes back. In him, and then in myself. Even if nobody can match my freak, I will have known love. I wouldn't be alive if it weren't for love. Do you understand? The people the cowards feared most outshine the monster in the mirror.

I am that freak who knows why he's alive.

I hope I never forget, ever again.

[View some of Benny's other writing here.](#)



Cultural Tourism as Diversion from Sámi Oppression

by Vostok

It is safe to assume that most English speakers have heard of Lapland, the area of Northern Scandinavian territory that may evoke imagery such as dog sledding, igloos, tribal rituals, even Santa Claus. The truth is, Lapland is a pejorative term for the territory named Sápmi, stemming from the slur ‘lapp’, and none of the aforementioned activities have any true relation to Sámi culture. Sámi people are indigenous to Sápmi, which spans over Norway, Sweden, Finland, and the Kola Peninsula. It is estimated that there are around 80,000 Sámi today, and approximately half of which are living in Norway (Nordnorge, 2024).

One of the first results that comes up when googling ‘Sámi’ is a page titled ‘Experience Sami Culture’ by the official travel guide company ‘Visit Norway’. This site is intended as a tool for visiting travellers, particularly ones from anglophone countries, and provides information about things to do all across the country. The site declares, “The Sami culture is as diverse as the Arctic nature of its traditional lands. After a dark history of repression, the Sami have reclaimed their heritage!”

This statement alludes mainly to the norwegianisation policies which were active from around the 18th century until the 1980s, and aimed to erase the Sámi identity from society. By the phrasing of this extract, and by the proud inclusion of Sámi culture into Norway’s official travel guide, it would likely be assumed that the conflict has since been mended. This leads to a question - what do these following photos show?



Is this a country with love and pride for its natives?



Does love and pride only go so far as financial gain?



Tourism brings in a lot of money to all countries. Some Sámi families and communities appreciate the income that can be gained through this method. Sámediggi (The Sami Parliament) itself claims that it would like ‘year-round tourism businesses that communicate Sámi culture in a way we Sámi people recognise’. To achieve this, they offer funding to authentic businesses in order to professionalise these experiences and encourage a stable and accurate representation of Sámi culture. It is wonderful to share different cultures with one another, especially ones that have been overlooked on an international level.

However, there are the glaring issues that Sámi people have been used as outsider entertainment for centuries, the tourism business is steeped in outdated stereotypes, and they still face great discrimination in day to day life. Tourist activities and locations in Sápmi are based on traditional Sámi life, which is of course highly important to retain after being so severely suppressed. Yet on the contrary, it’s focus within the tourism industry simultaneously continues to promote Sámihood as something bygone and novel, whilst most Sámi do not live this life any longer. It teaches foreigners that Sámi don’t have a true place in the modern world, and that their lives are not interconnected with the wider Norwegian society. This is troublesome when you consider the idea of power imbalance between the two cultures, and how Sámi people are treated unequally. This imbalance has always been present, and has been reinforced throughout history in various ways.

Historical Entertainment

Through the years of 1822–1934, Sámi people were frequently used in human zoos and circuses (Baglo, 2011). Human zoos were a startling product of colonialism, where indigenous people (and actors pretending to be indigenous people) were exhibited and presented as savage subspecies to audiences. In 1874, German entrepreneur Carl Hagenbeck used Sámi people to usher in a new form of the practice - touring troupes. These troupes were sent around Europe, accompanied by ‘scientists’ who would perform live examinations on them for the crowds. The zoos were also renamed to ‘anthropozoological exhibitions’, therefore creating an illusion of academic fact and further encouraging the dehumanisation of the people on show (Radaur, 2014). It seems that within the research on these human zoos, there is a movement of claiming that Sámi people were proud to partake in these exhibitions, and that the desire to victimise their inclusion is outdated and problematic. It may be true that some did enjoy the experience, and maybe some enjoyed displaying their culture to others, but downplaying the innate, degrading racism behind these attractions is not a reasonable conclusion to arrive at. Furthermore, it is also vital to note that the researchers who make these assertions are not Sámi, and are likely simply aiming only to increase their own academic credibility by introducing new angles into a discussion that they have no emotional connection to. It would be unheard of to ask any Sámi today if they would like to be put in a touring zoo, as it is an inhumane concept.

There is a connection here between attitudes towards current cultural tourism and the rationalisation of historic exploitation. For example, some Sámi people enjoy teaching tourists about their traditions, and benefit from the money that it introduces. Similar reasons are given for why ‘ethnological expositions’ weren’t wholly bad. This conveniently ignores the fact that why Sámi people need this money is because their human rights and territories have been continually violated for centuries, and traditional sources of income are no longer viable in consideration of wider society.

Modern Protest

The Alta Affair is arguably the most significant event in modern Sámi history, and brought a great transformation of attitudes towards Sámi people, including the creation of the Sámi parliament. As aforementioned, Sápmi was not respected by the Norwegian government as an autonomous region, which therefore allowed it to be used for industrialisation and developments without the consultation of its native inhabitants. The Sámi people had no real recognition as citizens of their own land.

In 1968, a plan for the development of a hydroelectric operation through Alta-Kautokeino was proposed, and consequently met with much criticism. There were many developments that had gone practically unnoticed in the public view, but this one caused mass outrage with Sámi citizens, as it would have disastrous consequences on reindeer herding (an important aspect of traditional Sámi life and business), and would also dam the village of Máze. The municipalities of Alta and Kautokeino stood with Norgga Sámiid Riikkasearvi (Norwegian Sámi National Association) and Norgga Boazosápmelaččaid Riikkasearvi (Norwegian Reindeer Herding Association) to oppose these plans, additionally due to the negative environmental effects that they would also have on local flora and fauna.

The conflict lasted until around 1982, but one of the most significant years within this 14 year timeframe is 1979. A civil disobedience movement erupted with around 20,000 members, and many Sámi and Norwegians in solidarity camped outside of parliament and initiated a hunger strike. In 1981, protests encouraged the largest police mobilisation in Norwegian peacetime history against demonstrators. The government paused construction twice to consider the case over two years, but each time the development was declared legal and continued. They also rejected the assertion that Sámi rights were being ignored. The power plant was built and continues to run today (Berg-Nordlie, 2024).

Wind farms are another development that impose greatly on Sámi livelihood, and one that has been much discussed within the past few years is the Fosen Vind project. This opened in 2020, and is still undergoing opposition. Wind farming has removed a third of Sámi land used for reindeer grazing, and ignores the damage that is being inflicted on the retention of Sámi culture. For example, reindeer herding is supposedly one of the largest reasons why the highly endangered Southern Sámi language exists today. Fosen Vind even invited Sámi activists to the opening of the farm to cook reindeer meat and provide entertainment - they claimed this was to continue an ‘open discussion’ between both parties (Norvang-Herstrøm, 2020).



Fosen Vind protestors inside the Norwegian Parliament building, 2023

When are Sámi people valued?

The promotion of Sámi culture by Norwegian institutions is a growing phenomenon, and on the surface, it appears that there is a lot of progress being made on how issues that relate to oppression are dealt with. However, it could also be said this respect is based largely on submission and economic contribution; indigenous tourism supplies much financial profit and interest from abroad. It encourages travellers to visit one area of Sápmi, while another area is being subject to green colonialism. It also perpetuates an image of contentment and civility, a wholesome and peaceful existence that continues to provide for the next generations to come, while reality shows, for example, that a recent study found that 95% of Sámi youth claim to have been subjected to racial abuse (Tretnes Hansen, 2021). Sámi people are blatantly used as a tool to utilise in advertising, in promotion of diversity, of proclaiming the advancement of acceptance in Scandinavia - but the voices of the Sámi people are always kept quiet and swept under the rug.

I shall close with words from the activist Petra Laiti.

“I viscerally hate the word ‘Lapland’, because ‘Lapland’ is everything that Sápmi isn’t allowed to be:

‘Lapland’ is wilderness – but the Saami fight every day to preserve what little untouched land we have left, against threats of mining, power lines, wind turbines, the erosion of climate change, and expanding tourism.

‘Lapland’ is magical and authentic – but the Saami religion was suppressed into extinction as we were forcibly Christianised, and later our people were sent to boarding schools and our culture was shamed almost into oblivion.

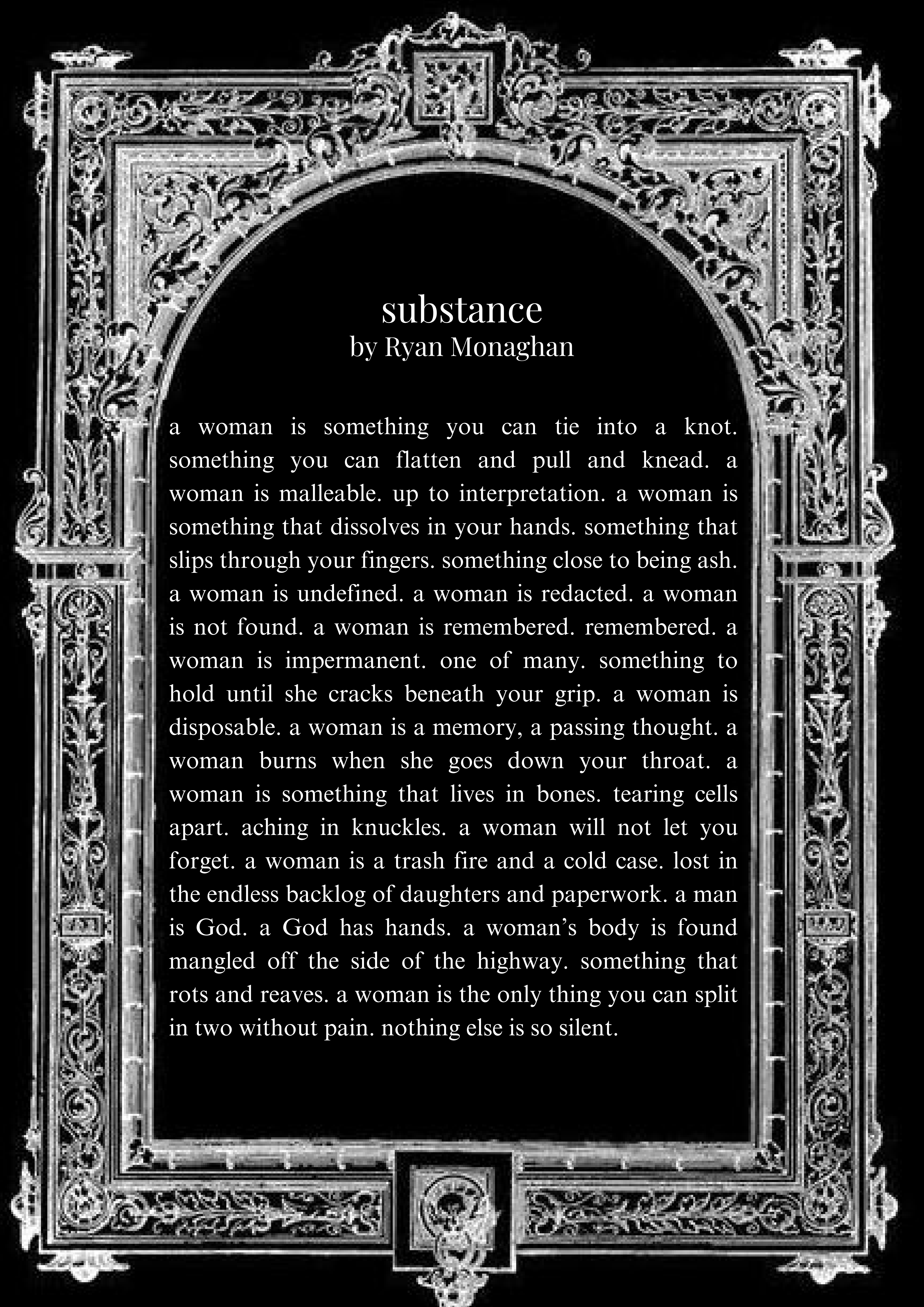
‘Lapland’ is rare Arctic fauna – but the husky who pull your sled are often abused and malnourished, and are not even indigenous to the area, but kill Saami reindeer and other Arctic animals if let loose.

‘Lapland’ is pure food – but Saami livelihoods and food systems are being restricted and even criminalized, while tourists and cottage owners receive a growing share of hunting and fishing licences to our lands.

‘Lapland’ is peace and tranquillity – but tourists will trespass into our yards, break into our cottages, vandalize our sacred sites, and stalk locals for photo opportunities.”

Čájet Sámi Vuoŋŋa!

[View reference list here](#)



substance

by Ryan Monaghan

a woman is something you can tie into a knot. something you can flatten and pull and knead. a woman is malleable. up to interpretation. a woman is something that dissolves in your hands. something that slips through your fingers. something close to being ash. a woman is undefined. a woman is redacted. a woman is not found. a woman is remembered. remembered. a woman is impermanent. one of many. something to hold until she cracks beneath your grip. a woman is disposable. a woman is a memory, a passing thought. a woman burns when she goes down your throat. a woman is something that lives in bones. tearing cells apart. aching in knuckles. a woman will not let you forget. a woman is a trash fire and a cold case. lost in the endless backlog of daughters and paperwork. a man is God. a God has hands. a woman's body is found mangled off the side of the highway. something that rots and reaves. a woman is the only thing you can split in two without pain. nothing else is so silent.

Haunted

by Phoenix



I live in a haunted house. When the floorboards creak, I hear the voices of people I used to be friends with. Cobwebs have formed around everything that connected us. I sit upright in bed, terrified that I'll see their faces in my dreams again. When I hear footsteps in the hallway only to find that no one's there, I never know whether I'm relieved or disappointed.

Sometimes the ghosts leave me alone, long enough for the dull ache in my chest to wane. They never stay in hiding for long; if I go a day without being reminded, I have a nightmare where I relive every instance of high voltage soaring into me and every failed attempt at drowning out the pain. I wake up with a howl caught in my throat. I play the defense attorney in my head until I fall asleep, pretending like I can't hear the bats rustling in the attic. I wake up in the morning exhausted and see every horrible thing I've done written in blood on the wall.

I know that my former friends have not thought of me in days and have forgotten what my smile looks like. I still hear their laughter in empty rooms. The corpse of my old self is rotting in the basement. My house is haunted and it is the only evidence that I have that I used to live a normal life.

Casting

by picklerick420



Bust with bones. Inspired by the husks of people in pompeii as the mould making process is similar to the one used. The bones serve as a reminder of the real living people that were within the husks.





How Can I Mourn a Stranger?

by Elliot Orion

Recently, I found myself looking up my family tree and researching all of my family history when suddenly, a thought struck me. Other than their death certificates, there is only one document that proves my great-grandparents were even alive. How can someone's entire existence be erased? Gone with barely anything left?

Miloslava Frantiska and Ladislav Frantisek Neuwirth, my great-grandparents, were alive during WWII and unfortunately lived in Europe during the time, which means that finding any documents from then is almost impossible. Despite how frustrating (and expensive) this was, I found their names on a list of displaced persons leaving Germany to go to the United Kingdom in 1951, and that's it. Nothing else mentioning them or talking about their life other than their names on England's death registry. Finding this out made me strangely upset. I was born in 2006, long after their deaths in 1991 and 1995, so how can I mourn people I've never even met? Even though they exist in my mind off borrowed memories, my great-grandmother specifically, I felt horrible knowing that one day they would be forgotten.

Throughout my lifetime, I've heard the most about my great-grandmother through my dad. He talks about her frequently, telling stories from his childhood. Being born in Central Bohemia in the Czech Republic, she spoke with a thick slavic accent, and my dad often mimics it when talking about her. He talked about how she would bring him these huge extravagant chocolate bars and sweets and how she would slide them through the mail slot in the door, at the time they lived in England in the late 70s / early 80s.

He talked about how she had these huge baking racks in her kitchen and how she loved to cook and bake— can you say you knew someone if you have enough memories of them, even if they aren't yours? I wish I had the chance to meet her, and part of me is distraught by the fact that one day the memory of her will be gone. When my dad inevitably dies, so will all of his memories, including then ones of her. One day when I die, my memories of him and his memories will be gone.

Thinking about this though raises another question: How far can a memory go? My family (four of us) is sort of estranged from our extended family, so it's not like I can ask people for more stories about her. Do they even talk about her like my dad does? Do my cousins know about her? Will they remember her? Do my aunts and uncles have the same memories my dad does, or do they remember a different side of her? How many generations can a memory be carried down through?

Overall, the concept of how far a memory goes makes me wonder what stories from my life will be told to my great-grandchildren. Will my great-grandchildren mourn a possible stranger the way I am? As much as I'd like to think that memories of me will live on for a while, that's something I'll never get to know.



"In These Times, We'll Have to Settle for Cremation"

Cracked red clay permeated
with bloodless capillaries;
my grandmomma wants to lay there,
the soil her father tilled,
as he wished the same. He asked
to be left on the forest floor; a
mountain-laurel drying in the sun.
On account of the Resurrection
he did not believe in, great-grandmother
opted instead for
a lead-lined prison,
now spreading its molecules
through oblivious dirt.
No different than the runoff that
killed his bladder over decades,
and the cure for the bladder which
killed his brain
in only a year.
I wonder if, at fourteen, when he
entered the home of the woman he
was living with to find her
hanging from the
doorframe, rigor
mortis legs
swaying
stiffly,
gently, like
unwieldy willow branches,
was that when he decided?

by s.b.

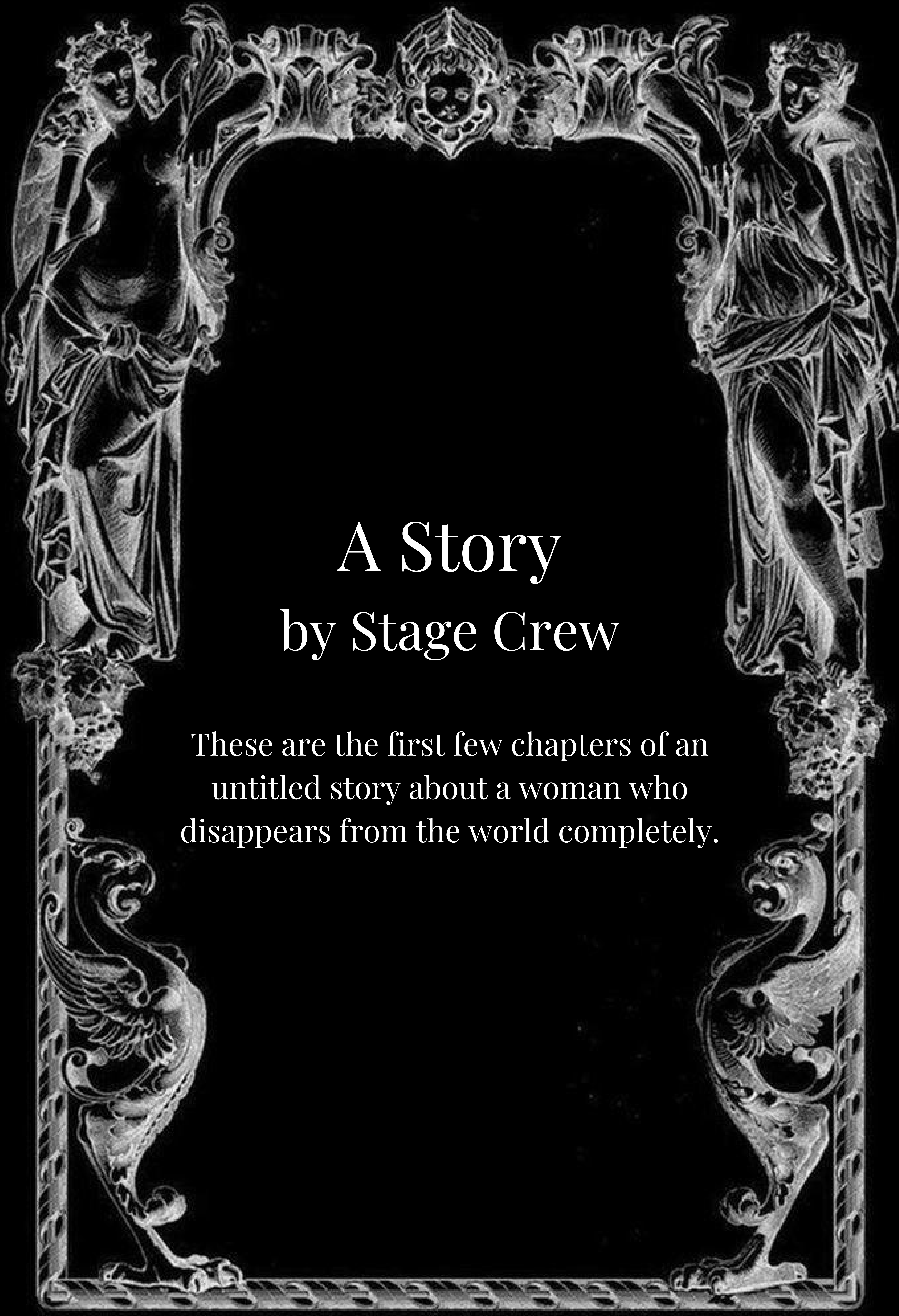
fragmented

by Vio



this work is intended to represent poor memory due to
trauma, or other forms of neurodivergence,

but mainly trauma.

An intricate, high-contrast black and white illustration of a decorative border. The border is composed of several elements: at the top, a central archway is flanked by two standing female figures in classical attire, possibly representing personifications of Art and Truth. Above the arch is a small, ornate crest featuring a face. The sides of the border are decorated with vertical panels containing more figures and floral motifs. At the bottom, two large, stylized birds, possibly phoenixes or griffins, are depicted in a symmetrical arrangement, facing each other. The entire border is highly detailed with scrollwork and classical architectural elements.

A Story by Stage Crew

These are the first few chapters of an
untitled story about a woman who
disappears from the world completely.

CHAPTER 1

I awoke to two piercing sensations in the palm of my hands, jolting upright I look at them. It wasn't a particularly agonizing sensation; but it was so bright and sudden, a camera flash. I looked at my palms, then the back of my hands. There were two identical pink dots on both sides. It looked like a needle had punched through me. My hands continued to ache dully, the dots itching slightly. I opened and closed my fingers, turned my wrists. No problems with moving. I stood and considered what the source of the pain may have been. I turned, smoothing out the bed sheets, shaking the blankets, lifting up and looking under the pillows, checking the ground. Was there a sewing needle in bed with me? Was it simultaneous bug bites? I looked at my hands again. The dot wasn't raised or swollen, only a pale red color.

I sighed. I would like to go back to bed, but I was awake now. I rose completely, stretching my arms and inhaling deeply.

In the shower my hands ran down my hair. I felt invigorated this morning. Maybe there really is some wisdom to getting out of bed immediately after you awake. I had been so accustomed to lying there, cursing the day before it even started. I felt I should make this a new habit: No more morning ruminating, start the day as soon as you wake. The water was hot and the steam even started to feel suffocating. I turned the heat down until the water was lukewarm, breathing into my shiver. I saturated myself with this new temperature. Then I reached for the faucet again and turned the heat all the way off. Within a second the water was icy cold. I jumped back, away from the stream. My heel landed on some leftover conditioner and my legs slid out in front of me. I fell on my ass. I was shocked, then I let out a laugh. I raised myself with a groan.

I shut off the water and opened the curtain. I always feel disdain when I exit the shower. I hate the feeling of being cold and wet when everything else around me is dry; and now, my ass hurt from the fall. So much for invigoration.

I used my towel to start drying my hair. My hands still ached. I dabbed my face dry, then my body. I threw on some cream, then dressed. I headed to the kitchen so I could make some breakfast before finally starting the day.

I worked in the finance department of an arts nonprofit that provides studio space for artists. I was really just one of an army. The job seemed interesting when I applied for it. I would get to meet lots of international artists, see their work, rub elbows with wealthy donors, go to fundraising dinners. I expected to be plugged into the mainframe of the art world.

In the end, it turned out the job wasn't all-that. While nothing advertised in the job description was a lie, it was genie-like truth. I could rub elbows with wealthy donors and go to fundraising dinners, but I was always expected to keep my networking persona on. I could never befriend people or relax and have fun in these scenarios, I was always selling our nonprofit, getting donors. And besides, most of the people I met looked down on me anyway. The power dynamic between struggling nonprofit worker and wealthy donors stuck like a sharp thorn. I had to agree with everything these people said, and they knew it.

It was also true I got to meet international artists and see their work; that was definitely one of the better parts of the job. It was always funny to run into artists in the kitchen and share stories. It was cool to pick their brains, learn what inspires them, and see their art. Sometimes a fantastic artist would stumble through, create an artwork directly touching God, and stumble off at the end of the six month residency completely unaware of how they changed my life. Then, the old factory building would groan and settle back into its bestial dullness. Which is to say, there were good moments, and there were boring moments. But largely, none of the artists who visited the nonprofit I worked at were big or relevant enough to make me feel I was plugged into the mainframe of the artworld. Instead I felt I was slogging through a mud of desperate mediocracy, inevitably heading towards the paper-shredder of art history. Nothing I contributed would make it to the textbooks, I wouldn't even be a footnote.

Most of my job was dedicated to keeping financial information organized. I would input sales of auction tickets, artworks, and artbooks or merch. I would make sure art got to the right location, and I would keep track of artists moving in and out. I also helped keep track of bills we needed to pay, and the amenities we needed to buy. It was a lot of administrative work, a lot of email, and a lot of spreadsheets. My job was ultimately like a Jackson Pollock, abstract, boring, and deep in the pockets of wealthy art patrons.

However, it kept the bills paid. It was a nonprofit job, so it wasn't a lot, but I lived on my own. It provided health insurance, PTO, and a few other perks too. I didn't think it was that bad of a gig. I only regretted having fallen into such a repetitious lifestyle.

After lunch that day I had to prepare for a meeting with the rest of the financial staff. It was nothing huge; it was mostly just a review of some of the good work we've done with donations lately, and a time to pitch ideas. Sometimes I felt these meetings were just for morale. We got to pat ourselves on the back and socialize a bit, and not much else.

Before it started I was just sitting around the conference room, rocking back and forth in the spinny chair and laughing with a coworker. She had been telling me this story about a prank she pulled on her stepmother one summer when she was a kid. You see, this summer was a summer of a massive cicada brood. My coworker, Lillian, was enamored with these cicadas when she was young. She would collect their exoskeletons in jars and sit by those in trees, watching their twitching and listening to their rich and endless hum. Her stepmother, on the other hand, hated their very existence. She despised their sounds. She would shut her window tight at night, close the curtains, and turn up the white noise machine to try to drown them out. She found her exoskeletons disgusting, and she threatened to smash every live one she came across with a shoe. One day, Lillian's stepmother did in fact smash one of these cicadas, right in front of Lillian. She was inconsolable, refusing to talk to her stepmother again, who found Lillian's dramatics ridiculous. At first she berated Lillian for her response; however, Lillian kept up her vow of silence until her stepmother promised not to kill any more cicadas. This satisfied Lillian for the time being, and things returned to normal.

A few weeks later though, a cicada landed on Lillian's family's picnic table while they were having a barbeque at a park. Mindlessly, Lillian's stepmother grabbed a roll of paper towels and killed the poor creature, once again right in front of Lillian. The girl began to cry, but this time her stepmother wouldn't concede anything. She told Lillian that she was being ridiculous, it was just a stupid bug, she needed to grow up and learn to control her emotions.

Well, Lillian was offended by this idea. After she stopped crying, she decided to get back at her stepmother. She pretended to listen to her, and to stop mourning her cicadas. Rather than go into a vow of silence she soon resumed conversation with her stepmother, luring her into a false sense of safety.

At this point in the story I was surprised at the simultaneous empathetic and conniving traits of my coworker, and eager to hear what her plan had been.

Well, Lillian continued to behave normally to her stepmother that week. However, during her vast amounts of free time, quantities of time that only children on summer vacation know, Lillian would pack a bag full of empty glass jars. On her way out of the house she would pretend to rummage through the kitchen; this was to convince her stepmother that she was packing herself a lunch that she could eat while exploring the surrounding woods for the day, thus dismissing any suspicion about the bag. She would throw a few apples, granola bars, and bottles of water on top of her jars, then traipse through the long yard and into the woods.

Once there Lillian scoured the trees to find as many cicada shells as she could. She would fill her jars with them. Then, she would eat her snacks and drink her waters, and go back to the house. She would rush upstairs before her stepmother could see the bag still full, and hide the jars beneath her bed. The next day she would do the same.

A week after the cicada murder was Sunday, and Lillian's stepmother would leave for church. This meant there would be approximately two hours where Lillian would be alone at home. She gave her stepmother a hug and waved goodbye as she got into her car and drove away, its waxed surface blinding in the sun. Lillian closed the door and climbed the steps to the second floor before entering her parent's room. She drew back the sheets on the bed, taking in the blank surface with fierce consideration, the way a farmer might look at an animal he's raised, and is now preparing to slaughter. Lillian went to her room and took a jar from under her bed. She walked back to her parents room and removed the lid from the jar. Gently, she emptied the exoskeletons onto the sheets. One by one Lillian marched back and forth from her room to her parents, covering the bed with the discarded impressions of these magnificent creatures. She spread her hands across them, carefully ensuring there was only one even layer, in the distinct and even shape of a rectangle. She thought of the cicadas her stepmother had killed, how their bodies had been disfigured, how one human body had so thoroughly degraded the body of another smaller than it, and how the cicada had been betrayed by its own armor when it failed to protect its soft insides. Lillian thought this would be a memorial, and this would be a retribution. Then, she covered the installation with the blankets, attempting to not disturb the perfect layer and shape that she had created. She left the room with seriousness, and found something to occupy herself for the rest of the day.

Of course Lillian's stepmother returned from church and carried on with the rest of her day. She cleaned around the house, visited a friend, watched some TV, made dinner, and ate dinner with Lillian, her dad, and a cousin who has come to visit.

"What's wrong, Lillian?" Her stepmother asked. "You seem very serious today."

"Nothing's wrong, just thinking."

Lillian's stepmother waved this off as childhood moodiness, and the night was largely normal. That evening Lillian was tucked into bed by her father and stepmother as usual. Her stepmother yawned.

"Jeez, I'm tired. I might go to bed early tonight."

“Me too,” remarked Lillian’s dad.

They said their goodnights and Lillian’s stepmother flicked off the light as she closed Lillian’s bedroom door. In the darkness Lillian was alone with sound. Her window was open, as she always asked her father to open it before bed, so she could hear the cicadas sing. She heard her parent’s walk to their room and open their door. The cicadas hummed. She heard the dresser drawers open and close as her parents changed into their pajamas. The cicadas were still humming. She heard the toilet flush and the water run and the brushing of teeth. The cicadas hummed.

Then, she heard a scream.

“What, what is it?” Shouted her father.

“That! What is that!” Her stepmother screamed and shouted.

Outside, the cicadas shrieked. Lillian felt a smile spread across her face.

Even now, telling the story, Lillian laughed and laughed and laughed. I laughed too. In response to the shriek, which Lillian expertly reenacted for me, I covered my mouth with my hands.

“Lillian, you can’t do that in here! People are going to think I’m killing you.”

But Lillian didn’t laugh at my joke. She had a confused look on her face,

“Oh, Cathy, I think you’re bleeding.”

I looked at my hands. The pin pricks were red with blood.

“What happened? Are you okay?”

“Oh, yeah, yeah. I don’t know what happened. I woke up this morning because my hands hurt, and there were these little dots on them, but they weren’t bleeding then. I guess they are now.”

I turned my hands over. The dots on my palms were bleeding too. And what’s more, The dots seemed to be bigger now. They didn’t seem to just be dots anymore either. They seemed like genuine injuries, caving in towards the center.

“Did you get stabbed or something?”

“No, no. I don’t know what happened.”

“Well that’s really gross. You better clean that up before the meeting starts.”

“Yeah...”

I stood up, preparing to go get the first aid kit from the kitchen, before I realized,

“Lillian, would you actually be able to help me? I think I’m just going to bleed on everything if I try to take care of this myself.”

CHAPTER 2

At the end of the day I returned home, dropping my bag next to my couch and collapsing into it. I layed on my stomach, pressing my face into the cushion. The sun burned red outside my window. When I had started this job I never expected office work to be so exhausting. I rolled over to face the ceiling. I sighed. I could make dinner, I could clean up, I could watch TV. I needed to eat, but nothing seemed particularly appealing. I raised my hands and looked at them, I looked at the four bandaids. They ached slightly, but the pain was barely noticeable. I thought I could only even feel it because I was thinking about the wound. I peeled off the bandaid on my left palm, exposing the red spot to the world. I felt concerned upon seeing it. The band aid was completely saturated with blood, and my injury didn’t show any signs of healing. In fact, it looked worse. The circumference was wider, and the hole appeared deeper. Still, it wasn’t much larger than a ladybug. I peeled off the band aids on the back of my left hand, and on the palm and back of my right hand. The wounds all seemed to be similarly growing. I got up from the couch and went to the hall closet, where I retrieved some neosporin to smear on the cuts. I looked at them one last time, the blood quickly leaching into the medicine, then I grabbed fresh bandaids.

I returned to the couch and grabbed my phone so I could call my girlfriend.

“Hey Cathy, What’s up!”

“Hey, what are you doing tonight?”

“Mmm nothing really. What did you have in mind?”

“Oh nothing, I’m just bored.”

“Well I was about to make dinner, want me to make enough for two?”

“That would be great.”

“Cool! I’ll see you soon then?”

“Yep, I just have to change clothes, then I’ll be over.”

By the time I got to Valery’s the sun had set almost completely. There was only the faintest blue glow left near the horizon. Valery greeted me with a hug.

“I love an impromptu visit,” she said.

“Me too, I’m glad I came.”

Valery wasted no time jogging to the kitchen once we were inside.

“My pasta was just about to boil over!”

I took a seat.

“So you made pasta, what else?”

“A nice sauce- it's got white beans, greens, garlic, capers, olives, lemon...” Valery shouted from the kitchen.

“Sounds good!”

“It is! I made it before.”

“Well I’m glad to know that even though you can still only cook pasta, you’re expanding your sauce options.”

“Hey! If I made the sauce that means I can cook more than pasta.”

“So you mean you don’t only make pasta because it’s cheap?”

“Well yeah, that’s still why I eat it!”

She emerged from the kitchen carrying a pot, the handles wrapped in towels to keep from burning her skin.

“Oh shoot, I forgot the hot pads. Cathy, can you grab them for me? I don’t want to put this down.”

“Sure.” I went to the kitchen and grabbed the hot pads, placing them on the table in the main room. As always, the table had a quilted cloth on it. Cathay went back to the kitchen and returned with the sauce pan.

“Any crudites?” I asked.

“Ew, no. But if you really want something like that there’s some grapes in the fridge.”

“I don’t, I’m just kidding.

I sat down, Valery took the seat opposite from me.

“Oh! I know what I forgot!”

She jumped from the table and disappeared into the kitchen, returning again with two glasses and a bottle of white wine.

“Valery! It’s a work night!”

“Oh come on, don’t pretend to care.”

I grinned, I could never care. Valery twisted the cap off the wine.

“A twist off! Were you raised in a barn!”

“Yes.” She replied, setting my glass in front of me and pouring my wine. She did the same for herself and then took her seat. She grabbed a heap of spaghetti from the pot while I just watched. There was a dried bouquet of flowers in a mason jar at the end of the table. Valery scooped some sauce onto her pasta.

“What? Aren’t you going to eat?”

“I like your flowers.”

“What?” Valery seemed confused. “Oh, those? They’re dead.”

“Yeah, but they’re still nice. They still look nice. They dry well.”

“Eat some food.”

I complied, grabbing my own helping of spaghetti and sauce. Valery smiled watching me take a bite.

“So how was work today?” I asked.

“Oh God, you know I don’t want to talk about work. It was boring, my manager’s a bitch. Etcetera.”

“This sauce is good! When the hell did you learn to cook?”

“I don’t know, honestly, it’s like a flip just switched and I know how now.”

“Well it’s Awesome. I need to start coming over for dinner more.”

I took another bite. Then I took a swig of my wine. Valery gave me a look.

“Are band aids on your hands?”

“Yeah.”

“On both of your hands? What happened?”

“I don’t know, I just woke up this morning with my hands hurting, then they started to bleed later in the day.”

“Oh, that’s so weird. Can I see?”

“Hmmm maybe later, I just replaced these.”

“Oh, well that’s fair. So is it like a bug bite, or a cut?”

“No, look.” I showed her that the band aids were on either sides of my hands.

“Oh, so it’s on both sides too?”

“Yep, isn’t it strange.”

“Yeah, it’s like a stigmata. Is it on your feet too?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“Well, still, maybe you’re chosen by God.”

“I doubt it. That would be cool though.”

“What would you do if you were chosen by God?”

“Hm, probably kill myself.”

“What! Why!” Valery gasped.

“Are you kidding! Have you seen the tribulations that guy puts people through? Totally not worth it.”

“But if you kill yourself won’t you like, go to Hell?”

“I don’t really know, maybe?”

“Well what if he makes you unkillable.”

“Ungillable?”

“Or like, what if he makes it so that you can’t kill yourself?”

Oh, well I guess I would cut my hair and join the French army.”

Valery raised an eyebrow.

“Typical,” she said, taking a sip of her wine.

“What! What do you mean typical.”

“Passe. Do something original.”

I laughed.

After dinner and another glass of wine Valery and I sat on the couch, legs intertwined, giggling. Valery was telling me about some mishap with her manager earlier, putting on exaggerated expressions to imitate her boss. I found it quite funny. When she reached the end of her story she gave me a look, expecting a lengthy review of it; but I couldn't come up with anything.

“What? No response? Did I leave you speechless?”

“No, no. It's just... I don't know, I'm distracted.”

“Distracted? By what?”

I picked up my hands then dropped them quickly.

“It's just my hands, they kind of ache.”

Valery flashed a concerned look, then spotted the moment for a flirtatious opportunity.

“Aw, do you want me to kiss it to make it feel better?”

She carefully lifted my left hand to her lips and laid a kiss upon the center. I blushed and smiled.

“You're sweet, but seriously, they hurt.”

“Hm, well, take off the bandaids, let's see how bad they look.”

“I was looking earlier.”

“Then you can say if they look worse. Do they feel worse?”

“Actually yeah, I haven't noticed any much pain today. I'm surprised.”

“Okay, well let's see.”

I peeled the bandaid off the left back of my hand first, right where Valery had just

kissed it. The hole was pooled with fresh blood, and appeared concave, like the opening to a volcano. The perimeter was a furious pink. I subsequently removed the other bandaids, and all my wounds looked similarly.

“Damn...” Valery said quietly, more as if the word escaped from her than as if she had spoken it voluntarily.

“This does definitely look worse.” I said.

“Do they... itch?”

“No! And that’s something that concerns me. Usually healing wounds itch.”

“And the edge seems swollen.”

“I agree, this doesn’t look good.”

“Have you put antibiotics on them?”

“Yes, I have. And what’s more- the wounds appear bigger now. Marginally so, maybe not something anyone else would notice- at least from the last time I looked, but definitely bigger. I mean this morning they were the size of a needle.”

“Wow, it’s like something caustic is there. And it hurts? How does it hurt?”

“Well, it’s just an aching feeling.”

“It’s not burning or sharp?”

“No, it just kind of feels like a bruise.”

As I said this I lifted my hand closer to my face, trying to get a very close look. The hole on the back of my hand beaded and overfilled with blood, causing it to run down my wrist.

“Shit!”

Valery jumped for a tissue, placing it on my arm near the bottom of the drip.

“I would hate to stain this nice couch.”

“I’m sorry, Valery. This is so weird.”

“That’s okay. Come with me.”

I followed Valery into the bathroom where the sterile light was almost green. She had me sit on the toilet lid while she rummaged around in a closet in the hallway. In a moment she returned, carrying with her a surprisingly robust first aid kit.

“Wow, suddenly you’re Red Cross.”

“Don’t be surprised. I used to be a lifeguard, you know.”

“Yeah, in highschool!”

“Well, my favorite part of the job was first aid.”

She pulled out a bottle of hydrogen peroxide. I grimaced in expectation.

“Why? What’s wrong with the no-hurt neosporin paste that I use?”

“Well, we’ll just use both. It seems like it might be infected so we might as well.”

She saturated a cotton ball with the hydrogen peroxide then began to dab my cuts. I kept my body tense.

“Sorry, but you know I have to.”

“It’s fine, just get it over with.”

When Valery was done she located some neosporin paste and smeared it on the wounds, then she placed her own bandaids on them.

“There, that should do. But I’m concerned, I mean, if it’s truly gotten so much worse as you say.”

“It has.”

“What about bleeding?”

“I don’t think it’s really stopped.”

“If it doesn’t stop by tomorrow, and continues to grow tomorrow, you should probably go to the doctor.”

“I’m just really so confused. It seems like such a minor wound yet it’s behaving so strangely.”

“Yes, that’s why I think you have to keep a close eye on it.”

“Yes- I am, I will.”

After that we sat in silence for a minute. Valery was looking indistinctly at some tile on the floor, and I at the radiator which heated the space. Eventually I resolved what I was thinking about and looked at her.

“Do you mind if I spend the night?”

She smiled when I asked.

“No, I don’t mind at all.”

CHAPTER 3

I softly opened my eyes to the morning light. I found myself intertwined with Valery, our shared body heat causing me to sweat. At first I felt nothing, I thought of nothing. I drank the sunlight as if it was my first time feeling it, seeing it.

And then, I felt a wetness on my hands. Then I remembered the events from yesterday. I raised my arm to examine my hand. The bandage I was wearing the night before was soaked through with blood. I didn't want to wake Valery, so as carefully as possible I slipped off of the bed and went to the bathroom. I closed the door and began to unwind the bandages. When I finally saw my wound I gasped. On both hands were dime sized holes, pooled with running blood. I sat down. I stood up. I sat back down. I wasn't exactly sure what to do. I considered re-dressing the wounds myself, but it was clear to me that they were too substantial for me to do so. I would have to wake Valery. As soon as I realized this, there was a knock on the bathroom door.

"Cathy? I saw the blood on the bed. Can I come in?"

"Yeah, come in." I cursed the slight shake in my voice.

She opened the door.

"Cathy, are you okay?"

"Look at my hands."

Valery knelt down and gently grabbed my left hand, examining it with consternation.

"This is... so much bigger than last night."

"Yes, it is."

"We need to get this looked at by a professional."

"I don't know. I have work. I think maybe I should just go to work."

"Cathy, yesterday your hands were without blemish. Last night your cuts were much smaller. Now look at them. This is not normal. Something seriously wrong is going on."

"But what? What is a doctor going to do?"

"I don't know, they're probably infected. I mean, what else would cause this? Maybe they'll give you an antibiotic, or an antifungal ointment."

I sighed.

"Well, I don't know" said Valery "I'm not a doctor, I can't say what's wrong with you. But I can say something's wrong."

"Okay, will you come with me?" I asked.

"Cathy... I also have work today."

CHAPTER 4

I stared at the back of the doctor's head as she stared at a computer screen checkered with test results. The air hung dull and the fluorescent buzzed above. In another room down the hall a muffled laughter rose and fell into the silence.

"And you said you haven't left the country in the past 12 months?"

"I've never left the country period."

Finally the doctor turned around, sighing.

"Well, my best bet is a Brown Recluse bite. However, there are a few things that make me uncertain. Firstly, while you do obviously have an open wound, it's not necrotizing. It appears more like a puncture wound, but you didn't do anything that would have resulted in such an injury. Secondly, the wound started immediately after you felt the first pain, right?"

"Yes."

"Yes, and typically with brown recluse bites, blisters and sores don't develop until days after. And you never developed a regular blister, either. Which is odd. You also aren't coming up for any kind of bacterial or fungal infection, and it doesn't smell, have pus, or look discolored. So it's unlikely that you're experiencing any kind of infection anyway. So, yeah, spider bite is my best guess."

"Can you test for that?"

"Unfortunately there is no test for a brown recluse bite. Only the symptoms can be used to identify it."

"Okay, but it just doesn't make any sense. My house barely has any spiders-"

"-That you know of." My nurse interjected.

"Um, right, that I know of. It doesn't have any spiders, I've never seen any in my bed, and why would there have been two spiders that bit me in symmetrical spots? Or could it have been one spider that did it?"

The doctor shrugged.

“I will admit it’s odd. But that could be a coincidence.”

“And it doesn’t even hurt! At least not when I’m just sitting here.”

“Well, I suppose you have a high pain tolerance.”

I couldn’t believe it. I looked at my hands folded in my lap, premium bandaids slapped on either side. Around the edge of my wound I could feel a tingling. Already I knew that by the next time I looked, the hole would be bigger.

“Okay, doctor Osipova, I understand you’re just as confused as I am,” she laughed at this, “so what do I have to do to treat this.”

“Well,” she swivelled around in her chair to look back at the computer, clicking away at the mouse, “We can take you downstairs to urgent care. There they can assess the situation a little bit better than I can, and draft up a more specific treatment plan.”

She continued to click away. I couldn’t tell what she was doing. Click. Click. Click. Click. I waited for her to do something else. For a moment it seemed like she had forgotten about me.

“Um, what will I do if it doesn’t get better?”

“It will get better.”

“But what will I do if it doesn’t?”

“Well, all things either get better or, you know, or you die. There! I just printed your papers. Now let's get you downstairs.”

Downstairs I sat on a cold plastic bed. A doctor and a nurse held my hands, flipping them back and forth and peering down at me.

“Doctor Osipova believes these to be Brown Recluse bites?”

“Yes, doctor.” The nurse responded. He gave her a skeptical look. He gave me a skeptical look. He grabbed my other hand.

“Nurse, roll over that cart.”

The nurse let go of my left hand and brought over a nearby cart. The top tray had a fresh coating of some kind of paper or fabric, white as the snow. On the shelf below were a few bottles and tubes, and some packaged pads, bandages, and similar things.

“Please sterilize her hands.”

She put on a pair of latex gloves and opened a plastic package, inside contained an alcohol wipe. Its astringent smell stabbed my eyes and nose. The lights appeared to glow brighter and the nurse and doctor began to radiate a nauseating chartreuse. She grabbed my one hand and instructed me to hold the other in the air. She began to rub the wipe across the back of my hand. The doctor stood behind the tray watching this unfold. I made momentary eye contact with him and pulled a strained smile. He didn’t smile back, and so I looked away. The nurse finished cleaning my one hand and placed it on the tray. She began on my other. I looked at her hair, a few loose strands floating free from her ponytail. Her gray eyes, unfocused and empty, were cast down as she cleaned my hand.

“So, what? Are you just going to clean and bandage it? Do I have to take, like, a special medicine or something?”

Although I was speaking directly to the nurse she said nothing.

“I don’t believe this is a Brown Recluse bite.” Said the doctor.

“Oh?” I looked back at the doctor. He said nothing, but stared at me with his arms crossed and a judgemental frown.

The nurse's wipe grazed my cut and I sharply inhaled. The pain was a flash of light, but it was brief, and not particularly intense. Suddenly and involuntarily I laughed. Finally the nurse placed my hand onto the tray. I felt silly with my wrists at a sharp angle and fingers poised like I was at a nail salon. The doctor sat in a chair, one that I noticed he had been standing in front of the whole time. The nurse threw away her gloves and picked up a laptop. She took a seat next to him and began to type something. After another moment of staring the doctor began to speak.

“We’re very busy in urgent care this time of the year.”

“Oh? Really.”

“Really. Ms. Wilson, what school did you go to?”

“I graduated from Chatham University, Why?”

“No, what high school?”

“Um, Montour High School, in the Robinson area. Why?”

“And was this a public or a private high school?”

“Um, Doctor Ranger, why is this important?”

“Was it public or private?”

”

“It was a public high school.”

“And do you attend church?”

“I’m sorry, what?” I began to laugh.

“I really don’t think this is funny.”

“Church?” I looked at the nurse. Her face was completely straight as she typed away. There was no way she needed to be typing this whole time. There hadn’t been nearly enough information to enter into my chart.

“Church, can you even ask that question?”

“Listen, Ms. Wilson, I’m the Doctor, and I can ask any questions I feel necessary. Now, do you attend church?”

“Listen, Doctor Ranger, I haven’t stepped foot into a church since I was sixteen years old. Now, can you explain why this information is relevant to my treatment?”

“Nurse, please finish cleaning our patient’s hands now. She’s almost ready to leave.”

The nurse stopped typing in a snap, stood, and placed the laptop on the chair she had been sitting on. The screen appeared to be a document completely filled with text. There were no discernable fields or charts on the paper. I watched the nurse, shocked.

“Nurse Adelaide here is a novelist.”

Nurse Adelaide smiled momentarily, as she put on her latex gloves.

“It’s true, I’m a novelist.”

I didn’t say anything, but I looked at Doctor Ranger.

“Ms. Wilson, during such a busy time of year, we can not afford to have people coming in here with unnecessary injuries.”

“Unnecessary? What do you mean by that?”

The nurse roughly grabbed my hand and spread some kind of ointment directly onto my wound. I gasped.

“Ow, hey, that hurts!” She held my fingers tighter when I jumped and tried to pull away.

“Sorry,” she said indifferently.

“If you have self-inflicted injuries, that’s something that you need to disclose. You have sent Doctor Osipova on a wild-goose chase for your diagnosis, when I think that diagnosis should be pretty clear if you are honest with your medical providers.”

“Ranger, I didn’t do this to myself. I told you exactly when I noticed my injury and what happened. Why would I lie about that?”

“There’s a variety of reasons why you might have done it. But I’m not a psychologist, and this is not my responsibility. My job is to treat injuries and illnesses that people obtained through... accident, chance, bad luck, or through the actions of another person. If you feel the need to hurt yourself for one reason or another, you should seek help from a mental health professional.”

I sat there, stunned. The threads of a migraine wrapping tightly around my head, clouding my thoughts.

“Doctor, I don’t know what you’re saying, or why you’re saying it, but I did not hurt myself. I do not want to hurt myself. I have no intention or plan to hurt myself.

I don't understand how I got this injury either, but it is your job as a doctor to help me determine that information."

The nurse finished bandaging my first hand and began to apply ointment to the second. I jumped again, but less this time.

"I don't even know how I would have done this. And look!" I pulled my hand away from the nurse and held it plainly for Doctor Ranger to see. The nurse scoffed and pulled it toward her again, continuing her work where she left off. "The hole is already bigger than when I was upstairs! How would I have done that? I haven't had time to do that. I've been under supervision this whole time!"

"Except for when you were waiting in this room alone."

"Oh my god. Doctor, look, if you think I'm... stabbing myself and prying the cut open wider, or something, then why don't you just, I don't know, send me to the psych ward?"

"I could 5150-you. However, I don't think either of us want that."

"Okay, so, what? So what are you saying then? How do I take care of this? That's all I really want to know. How do I take care of this and how do I stop this from growing?"

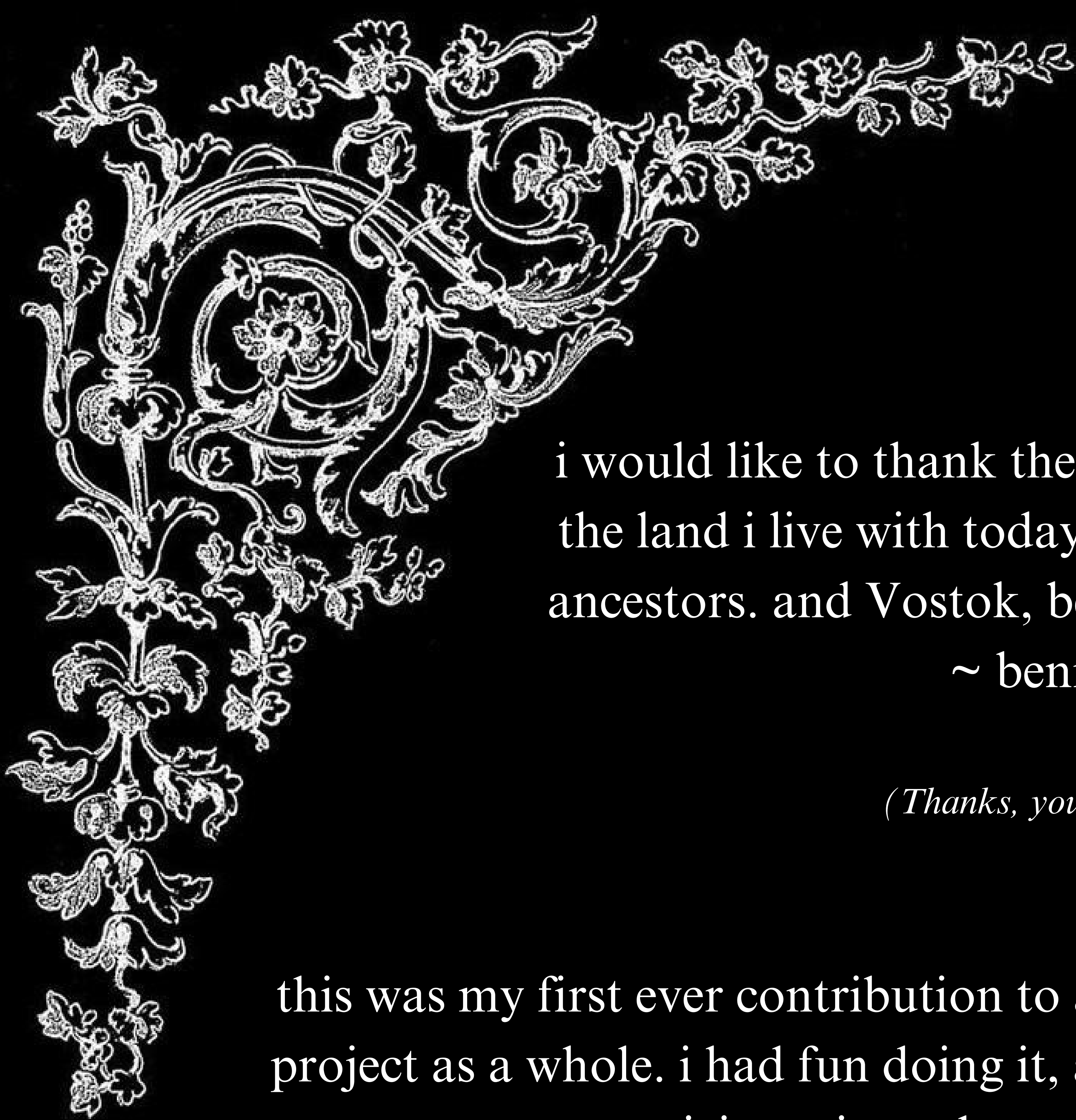
The nurse finished my other hand. I rubbed my thumb across the center of the bandage where I knew the wound was hiding underneath.

"Well, you can start by not touching it. Not picking at it. Not sticking anything into it. Then you keep it clean, dry, and covered.

"Wow, thanks doctor. That was super helpful. How do I stop it from growing?"

"Ms. Wilson, you are the one making it 'grow.' You are the only one who can stop it. Nurse Adelaide, please print our patient's discharge papers and walk her out. Oh, and make sure you print the self-harm hotline and our therapists' contacts as well."

~



i would like to thank the Tongva people, the ancestors of
the land i live with today, and the Greek people, my own
ancestors. and Vostok, because Vostok is so fucking cool.
~ benny // whalefall

(Thanks, you're so fucking cool too.)

this was my first ever contribution to a zine, and to an online art
project as a whole. i had fun doing it, and am looking forward to
participate in such a project again

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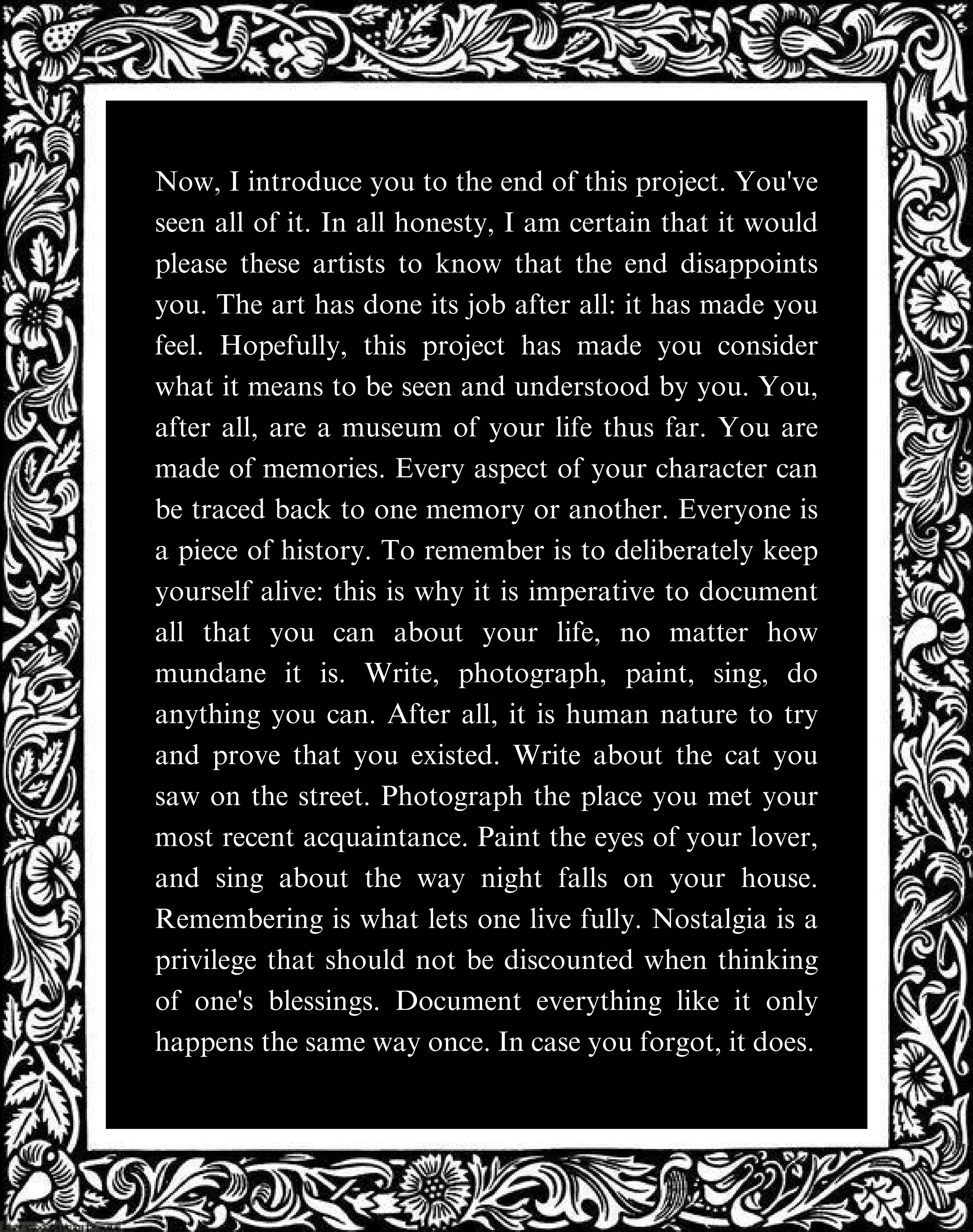
Thank you to RC for being my unyielding support system, and for always helping
me to get back on my feet (sometimes a little too literally, sorry about that). I
won't forget. I wish you guys could have joined.

Additional thanks to April, Carlos, Lily, kitkatanddog, and raindog for showing
interest and enthusiasm in the project when things were a little too difficult for you
to participate. I hope we can work together in the future.
~ Vostok

ARTIST ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

AFTERWORD

by Lily



Now, I introduce you to the end of this project. You've seen all of it. In all honesty, I am certain that it would please these artists to know that the end disappoints you. The art has done its job after all: it has made you feel. Hopefully, this project has made you consider what it means to be seen and understood by you. You, after all, are a museum of your life thus far. You are made of memories. Every aspect of your character can be traced back to one memory or another. Everyone is a piece of history. To remember is to deliberately keep yourself alive: this is why it is imperative to document all that you can about your life, no matter how mundane it is. Write, photograph, paint, sing, do anything you can. After all, it is human nature to try and prove that you existed. Write about the cat you saw on the street. Photograph the place you met your most recent acquaintance. Paint the eyes of your lover, and sing about the way night falls on your house. Remembering is what lets one live fully. Nostalgia is a privilege that should not be discounted when thinking of one's blessings. Document everything like it only happens the same way once. In case you forgot, it does.

THANK YOU
FOR READING...

