

Curiosity Burnt the Cat

A. E. Thiel

When accidentally touching a hot stove,
you feel your hand move away
before the pain begins.

When we first locked eyes,
those dark brown worlds pierced through me
like hellfire.

Yet, I didn't flinch.

I think a human emotion more powerful
than pain
is curiosity.

In My Spare Time

Vanessa Roberts

I don't have any hobbies
I don't have the desire to be a painter or a dancer
I'm not drawn towards any instrument or game
I watch TV and movies, sure
But it's not something I study
Just time spent staring
Plotting my next daydream
I look at my phone for longer than I care to admit
And I think I enjoyed reading once
Before it became a competition
Before I lost
I think fiction became too unrealistic
People talk about their ambitions
What they want to do when they retire
And maybe I'm depressed
Or maybe I've never cared about things the way others do
Drive seems like a waste of energy
Motivation is inspiring, sure
But that's as far as it reaches me
And I can't help but wonder if that's as far as it'll ever go
A lingering feeling after a particularly good movie
A silent, snot-filled cry that only I'm there to witness
Not pretty like an actress
But grotesque and ugly
Heaving sobs over something wonderful
A quote that sticks with me like burdocks in the summer
Is enough in the moment
And maybe my hobby is chasing moments like these
In a really good meal
Out to dinner with friends
The once a year I travel
Or the few times I write
It's never enough to make me want more
But it's always enough to make me wish I did

JUSTICE

Sean Ennis

When we were introduced, I said, “That’s funny. I sat next to you last weekend at Snackbar.”

But he said, “I haven’t been to Snackbar in years.”

He was a very specific type of goof. And I do have the ability to recognize people.

“You wore a green turtleneck and brown sport coat,” I said.

In fact, last Saturday, he had been sitting with a much younger woman, I want to say a graduate student. The awkwardness between them was not sexual attraction. I had been eavesdropping because I had ordered poorly, and was bored by my plate.

He shook his head and looked at his wife, “Nope.”

His wife was interested, “When *were* you at Snackbar?”

It seemed I had reintroduced a bone of contention between them, so the couple drifted towards the opposite corner to argue. I was not a part of any evil doing. And, remember, telling the truth about bad behavior doesn’t make it good.

We were all at this poetry reading—the poet was from out of town and competing for a job. Every other person in the room knew the hiring would be internal, and he had no shot. This insight seemed to dawn on the man during his third poem, which was an extended metaphor about the dangers of micro plastics. He suddenly looked embarrassed and terrified. It was heartbreaking, but, yes, kind of poetic.

For myself, I find it difficult to worry about micro plastics. Given my medical history, something else will surely take me out first.

As for what I overheard the weekend before, the man had been giving a dull, cultural history of our small town in which he played some minor role or witness. The young woman entertained his lesson, nothing overly excited.

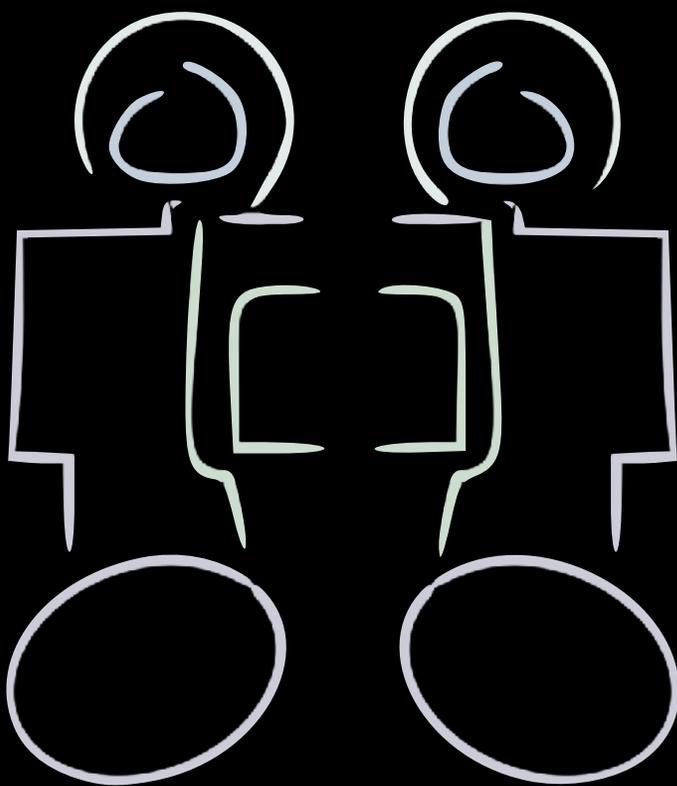
I had ordered red drum in a state of panic when the waiter arrived, the menu was that uninspired. Nutritionally, it wasn't a terrible choice, being low in saturated fats and calories and a good source of calcium, protein, selenium, and niacin. But the dish wasn't more than the sum of its parts, and the butternut squash purée presented as baby food.

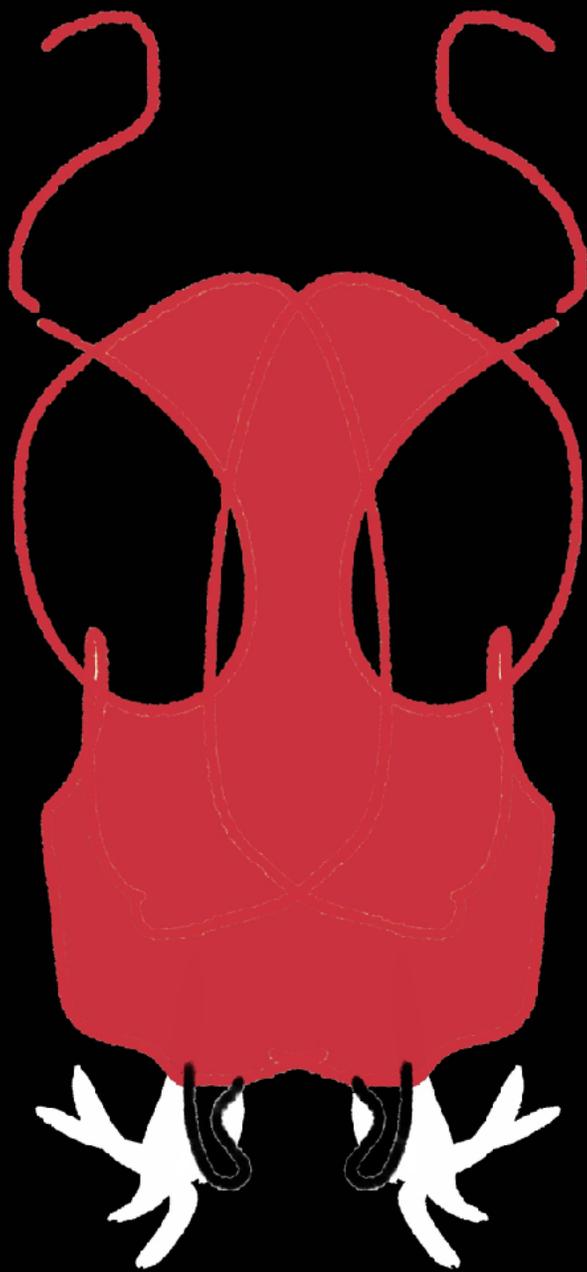
At the cocktail hour, the poet returned again and again to the bar. I was checking on him from across the reception. He looked dazed and a little drunk. Just a reminder here that this was technically still part of his job interview.

I had wanted responsibility, but I didn't know it would come with all these responsibilities. For instance, I'm the poet's ride to the airport.

I lost sight of the first couple. I may have ruined their marriage.

People these days don't have the common courtesy of disappearing from your life. You can always be found out.





“Close Friends”

Ivana Tubić

For the times when I want to expose myself,
But not in a way everyone'd be comfortable with.
A sanctuary for my darkness
Explosive tears and laughters.
A place to safely display
My visually gruesome 4-year-old ache.
A glitter-wrapped dumpster
In which I finally do not take up space.
True, my personality is flexible
But sometimes I get tired of playing different roles
In front of the insecure part-time commentators.
It may inflame my loneliness
But I'm a fire sign all the same
And it feels nice to be seen
Even if the love comes in bloody(-red) pixels!
Is connection going into reverse?
'Cause I miss (redacted) (redacted)
Exclusivity is the 21st century's love language
Taking on a deformed and a gradually malicious shape

Viridian

Salvatore Difalco

Weary last illusion died
died & I felt truth flag
& its fire-dear delusion.

Is rest ever enough?
Is earth worthy
of sighs—bitter tedious
life & world mud silence?

Despair at last hands
the race a flat
calls the face a horn. Green
 brute secret
 commons the hurt
while the infinite empties it all.

Red Genii

Salvatore Difalco

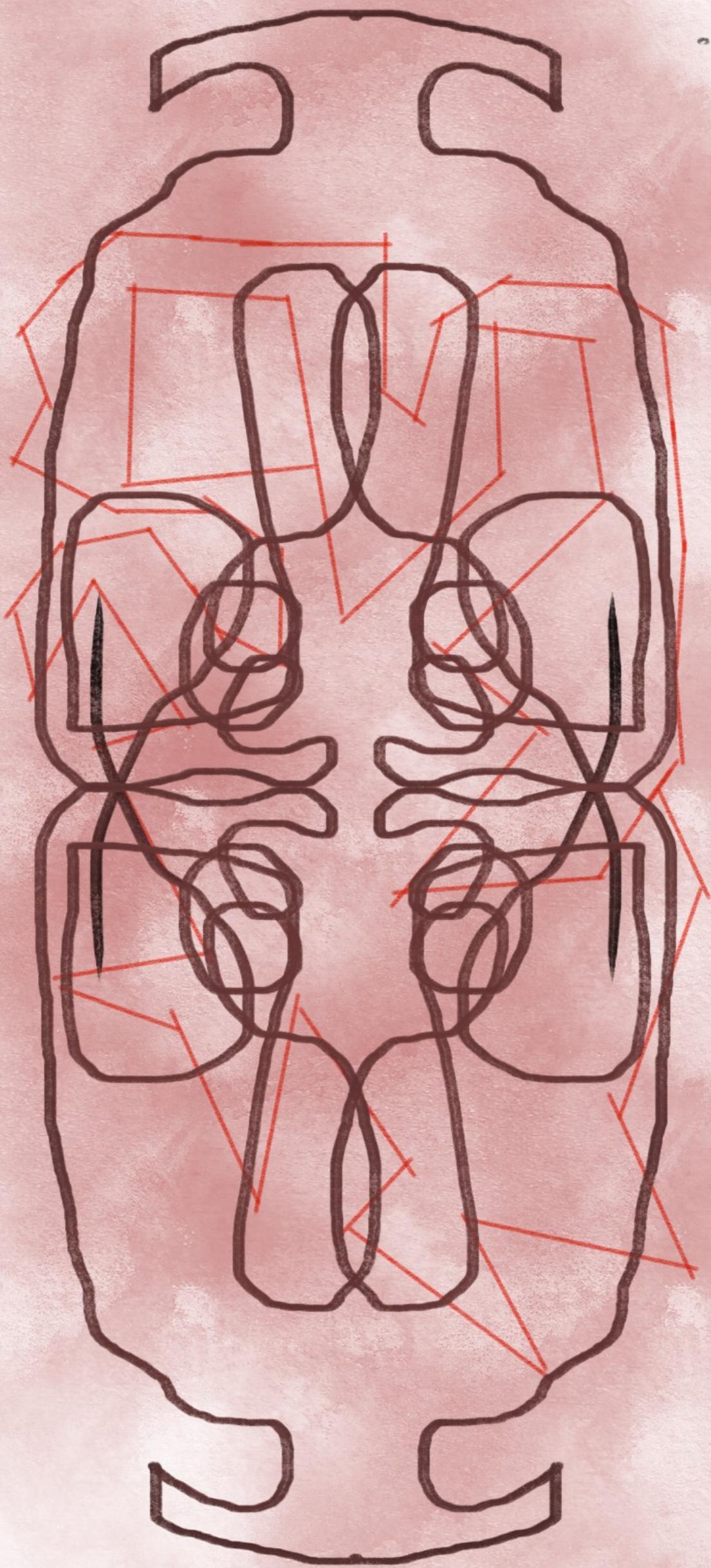
It's turn day—I felt flame
war me hands, I said.
Ah flame, it tortures me.

Eyes fixed, I ground
I marvel open all innocent baggage.
Red ah flame, bad treated me

 much fire much pain

did enter red
serenely purely pure
fulsome agony, trouble.

Tell me gentle red
why you whoosh to
sate these earthly pleas?



His tongue promised truth

Salvatore Difalco

He allotted us
a low feeble state,
green in itself
strong enough to suffer miseries.
As hatred & anger worsened,
evils sorrows filled the guilty
with malice. They called,
considered united,
ranked the old units
& all flame offers
prompting support. "Expect
the various dangers
of mutual war, I think."
This does not comfort us.

Lettuce Leaves Losing the Plot

Terry Trowbridge

Why did you make a tossed salad?

What did you do to the lettuce I chose at the store?

When you left me at the table

when you called me from the couch

when you turned off the kitchen lights and went to bed

because you threw away the stem

I am still here trying to collate lettuce leaves

because you threw away the stem.

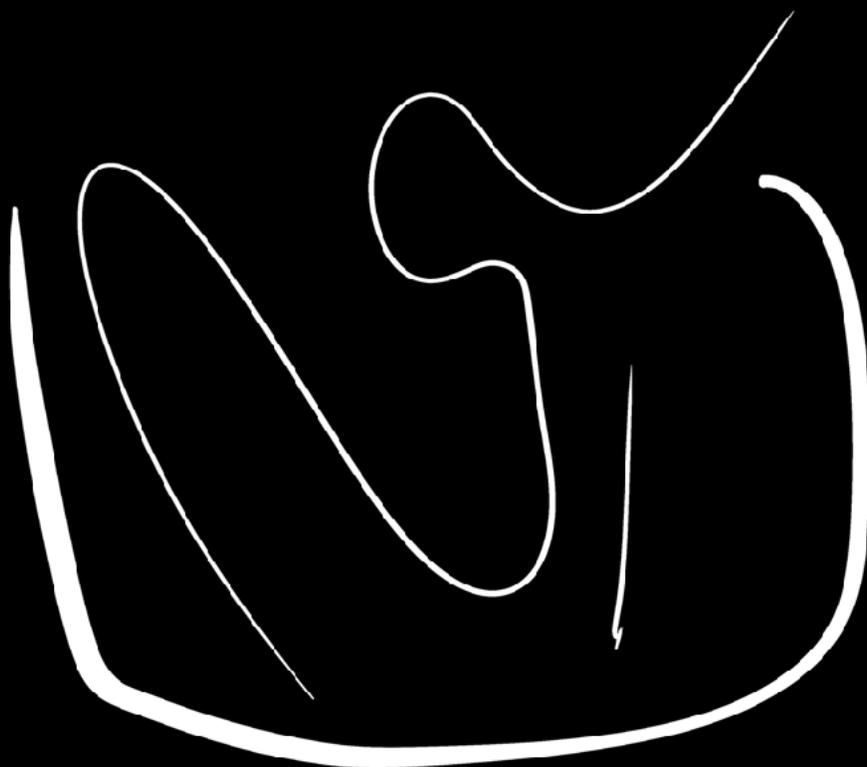
My task is no different from collating the mixed pages of a manuscript

had you torn off their corner staple and shuffled them

along with pieces of tomatoes and green peppers

Verso, recto, vinaigrette

Boston, romaine, edit, stet



TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALLGAME

Alan Berger

At 12

Tony's first and last year in little league was brutal.

Not one hit.

At the end of the season his failure was legendary.

During the end of the last game, the opposite teams coach felt so sorry for Tony that he instructed his young pitcher to purposely walk Tony so at least he would know how it felt to step on a base.

He never played again.

Not in little league.

Not anywhere.

But became in his little head, the next best thing:

A fan.

A super fan.

By the time he was married with a kid on the way, he became obsessed with the career of one big baseball hitter known as "The Crack", because of the sound that his bat would make during his counted, but countless home runs.

"Crack" was a hero and Tony was the hero worshipper.

Whenever the hero switched teams for more money Tony would pack up the family and move to the city his hero was playing for.

After moving the family four times, a sports reporter heard about it and

wrote a piece proclaiming Tony's loyalty.

Tony was delighted with the story and thought of himself as "The Crack"'s fellow teammate.

One day while being interviewed on ESPN, "The Crack" was told about this situation.

His response was, "What a nutjob."

This was seen by Tony as he watched the interview wearing "The Crack"'s mail order jersey with "The Crack"'s name and number on it.

Tony was, to say the least of the least, destroyed.

Later that night, after he replaced his "The Crack" jersey with one of his wife's pajama tops, he killed himself.

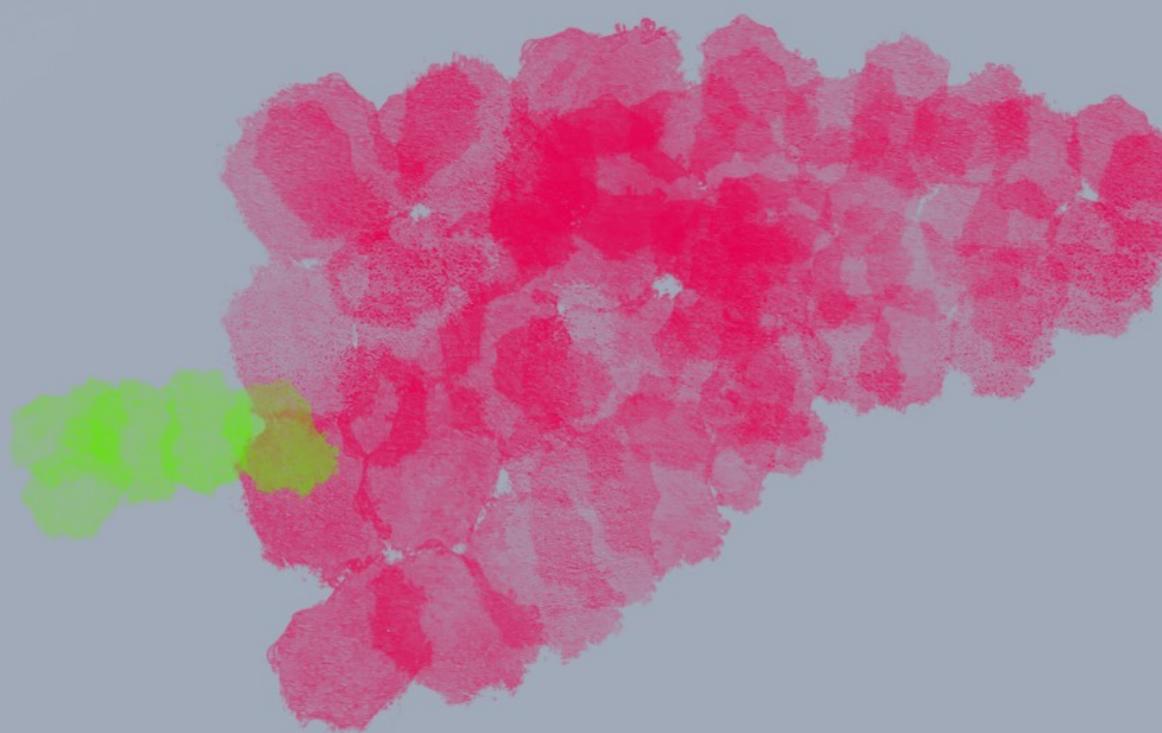
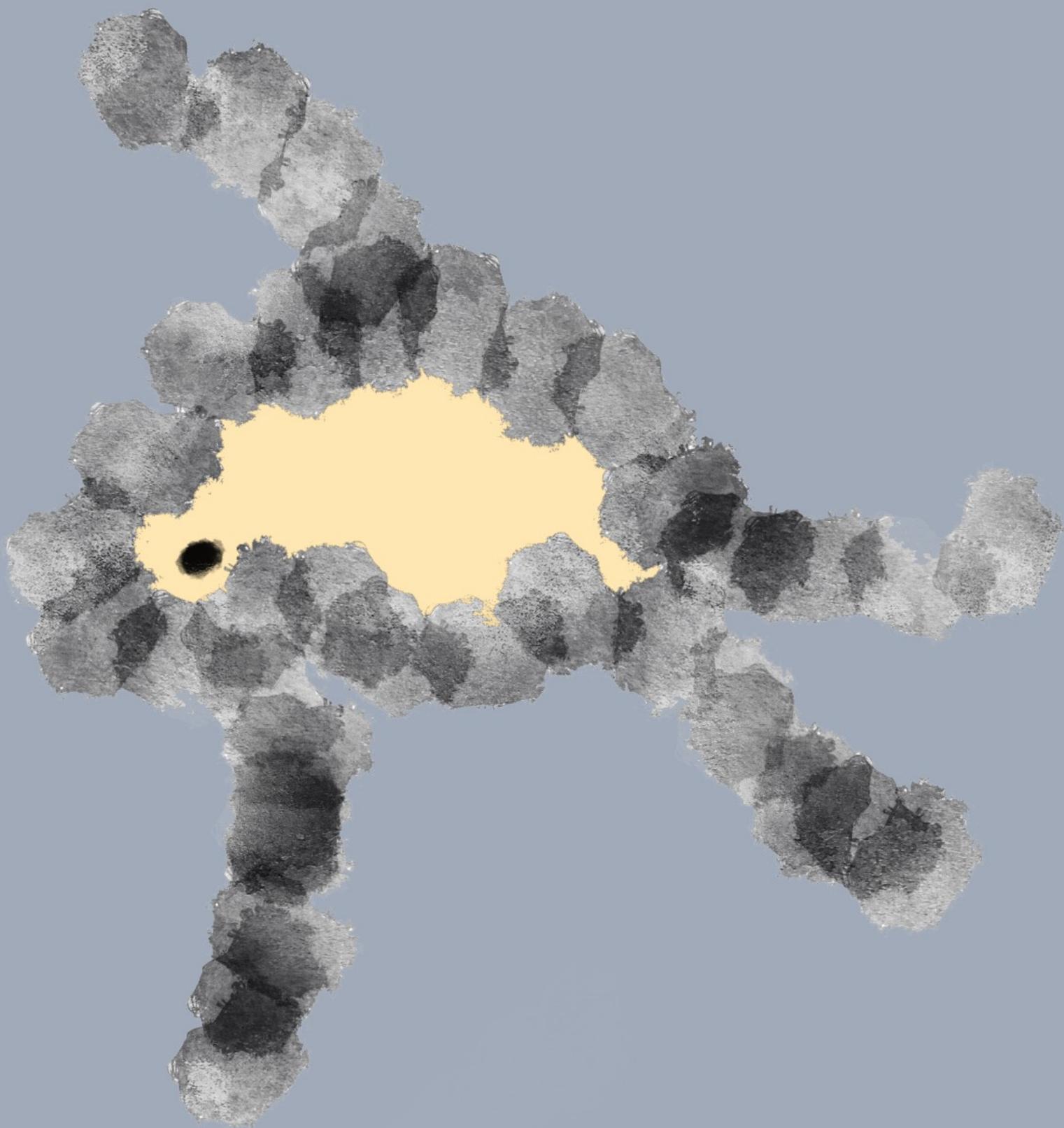
During another ESPN interview when the "The Crack" heard about this situation, his only response was:

"Well, what did I tell you"?

The sportswriter, and who knows, perhaps some of the crew, thought for maybe just a tick, that every clock on the wall of ESPN Sports Central had held their place.

That night the reporter threw away his special autographed "The Crack" jersey.

He thought, wouldn't it be nice, if everyone was their own hero.



line

drama!

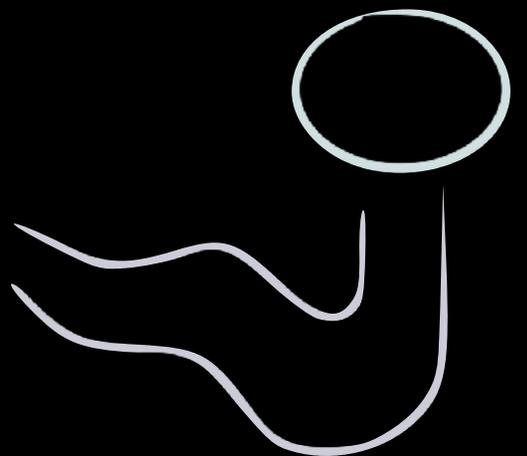
new & now



lampbylit.com



We're smoking reefer,
and you don't want no part of this shit.

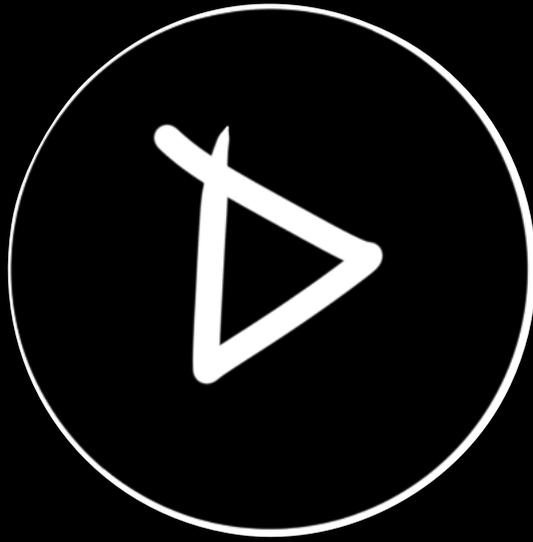




Sanctuary

Zoe Davis

I built my first home
When I was six
Empty cardboard box
Humble caul
Of a washing machine
Cluttered hands
Grasping crayons focused
In a tender act of crafting
A spaceship
A palace
A lifeboat.



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subs: minimagsubmissions@gmail.com
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Art by CJ the Tall Poet
Page 2: Smog Hook
Page 6: Abnormal Creepy Crawly
Page 8: Twisted Lucky Charm
Page 13: The Ghoul and The Pepper
Website: <https://cjthetallpoet.wixsite.com/website>
Book: Abstractions of Civil Modernity (<https://a.co/d/0ikzTNU>)

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“In My Spare Time“ by Vanessa Roberts
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“JUSTICE” by Sean Ennis
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Book: Cunning, Baffling, Powerful (<https://tinyurl.com/2n7n9y6v>)

“Viridian”, “Red Genii”, and “His tongue promised truth”
by Salvatore Difalco
Book: The Mountie at Niagara Falls (<https://tinyurl.com/yycfrntk>)

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