

To Mark Stewart Guin and to my brother, Ted

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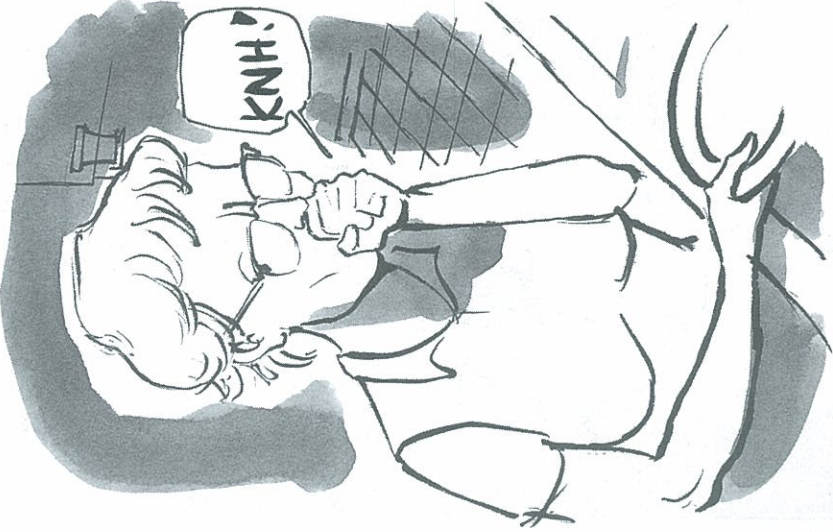
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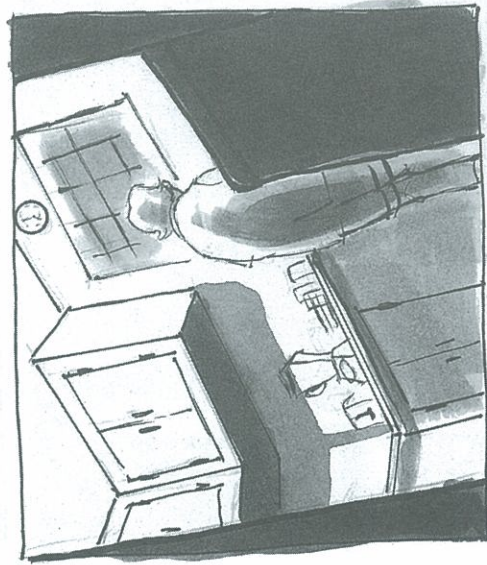
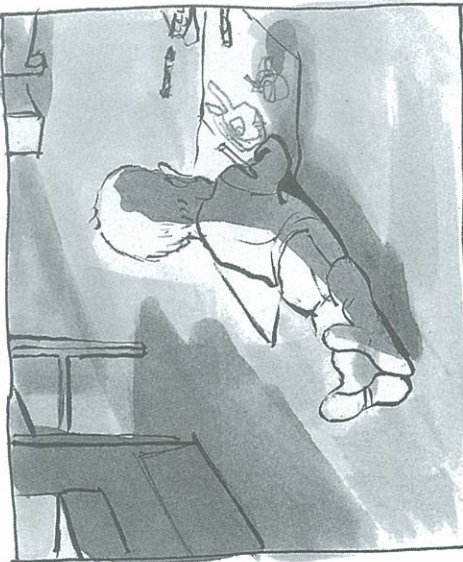
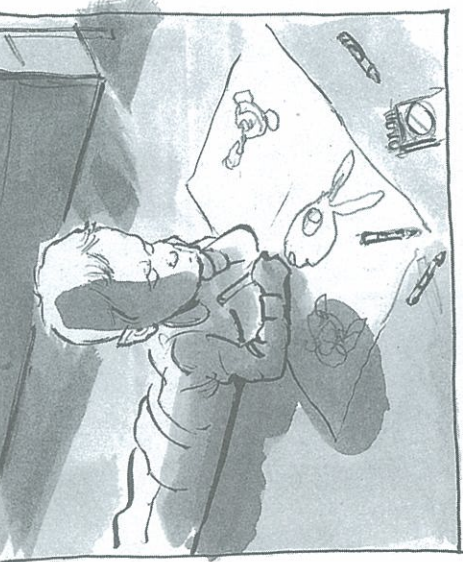
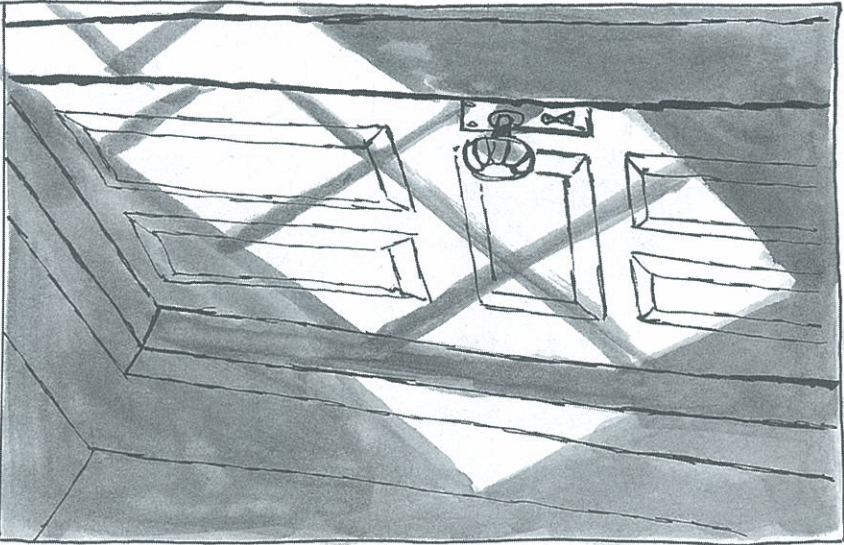
1 2 3 4 5 74 13 12 11 10

S T I T C H E S

MAMA HAD HER LITTLE COUGH . . .



ONCE OR TWICE, SOME QUIET SOBBING, OUT OF SIGHT . . .



OR THE SLAMMING OF KITCHEN CLIPBOARD DOORS.

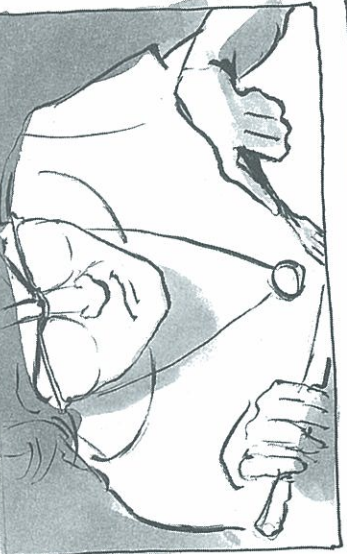


THAT WAS HER LANGUAGE.

THE MERE MOVING OF HER FORK
A HALF-INCH TO THE RIGHT
SPELLED DREAD AT THE DINNER
TABLE.



HER FURIOUS, SILENT WITHDRAWALS
COULD LAST FOR DAYS, EVEN WEEKS
AT A TIME.



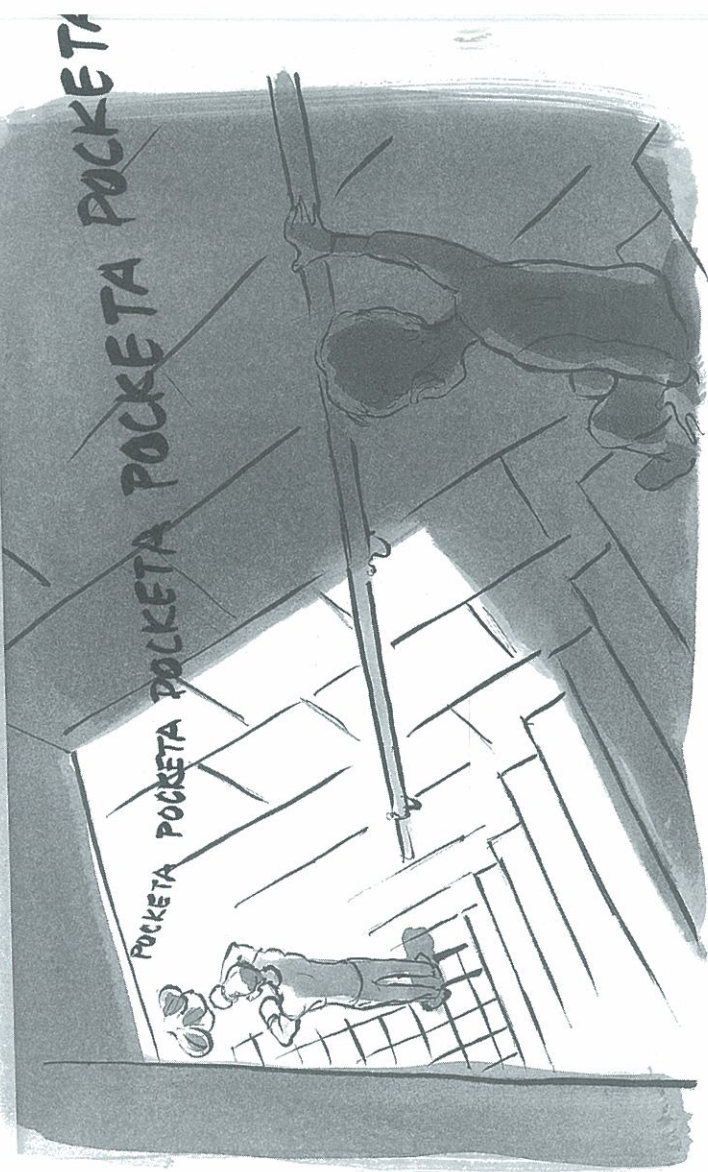
BECAUSE SHE NEVER SPOKE HER MIND, WE NEVER KNEW WHAT THIS WAS
ALL ABOUT.



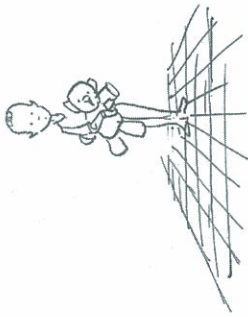
WE TWO BOYS DIDN'T, AT ANY RATE.



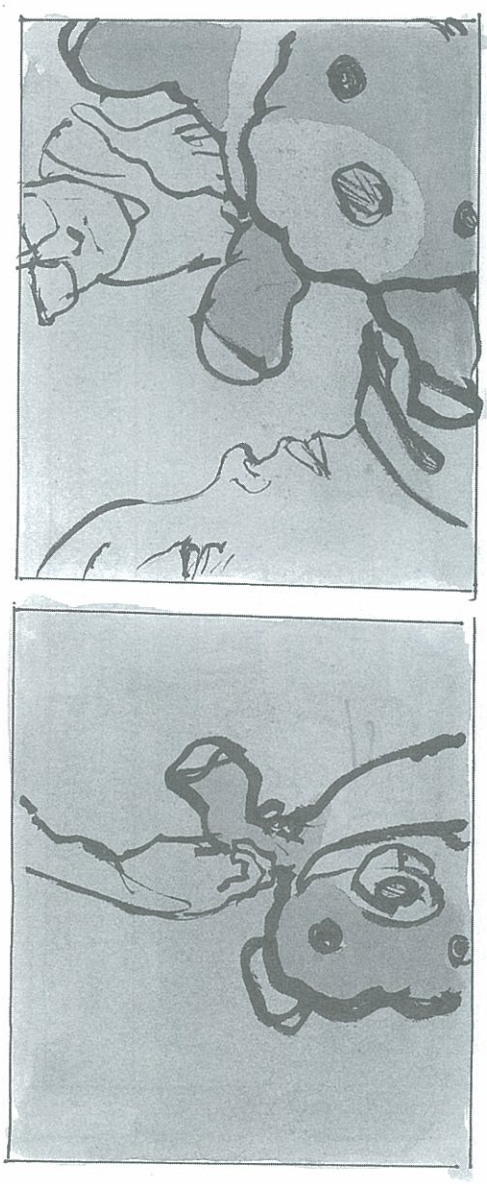
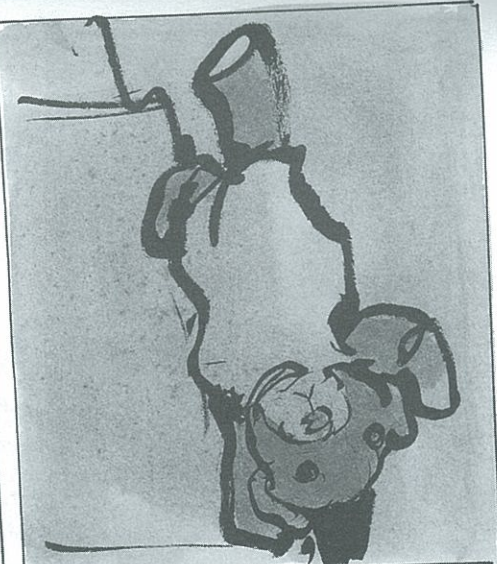
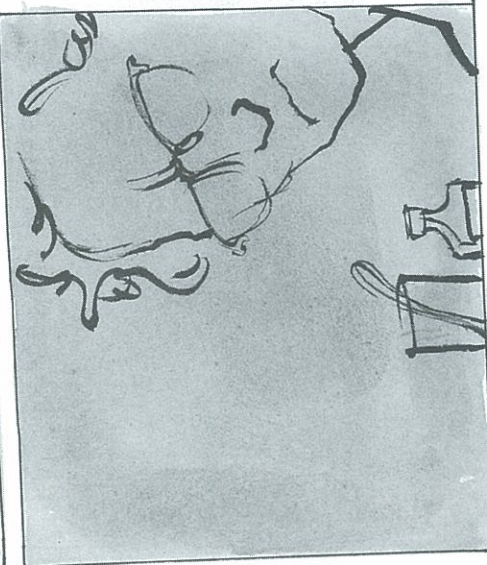
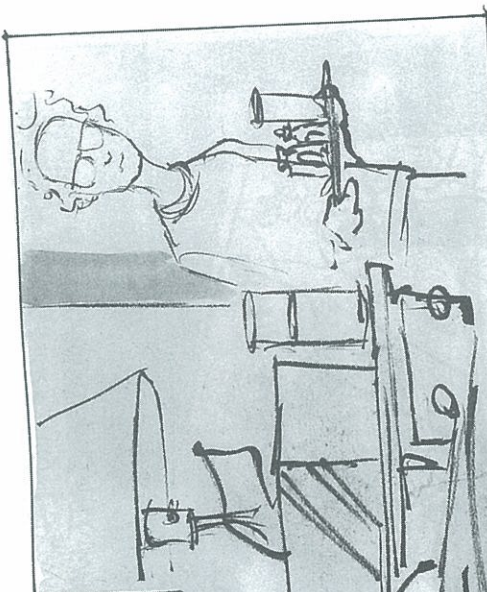
DAD, HOME FROM WORK, WENT DOWN TO THE BASEMENT AND
THUMPED A PUNCHING BAG. THAT WAS HIS LANGUAGE.



MY BROTHER, TED,
BEAT ON HIS DRUM.

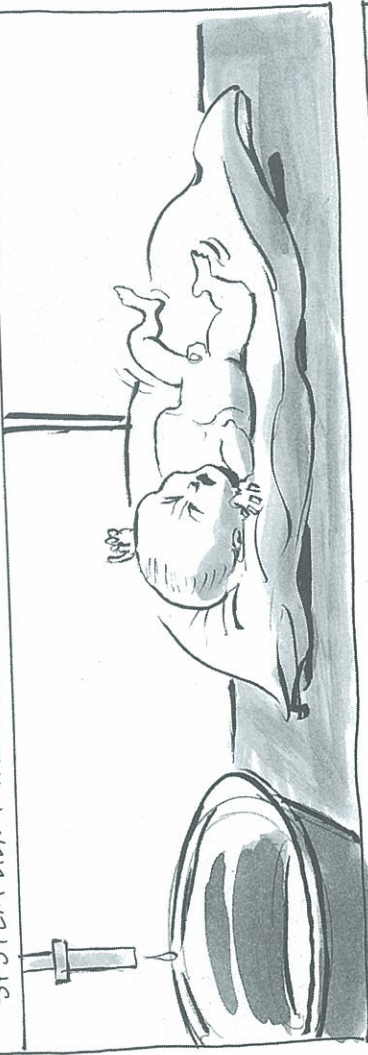


AND I, TOO, HAD LEARNED
A WAY OF EXPRESSING MYSELF
WORDLESSLY . . .



GETTING SICK, THAT WAS MY LANGUAGE.

I WAS BORN ANXIOUS AND ANGRY. MY SINUSES AND DIGESTIVE SYSTEM DIDN'T WORK AS THEY SHOULD HAVE.



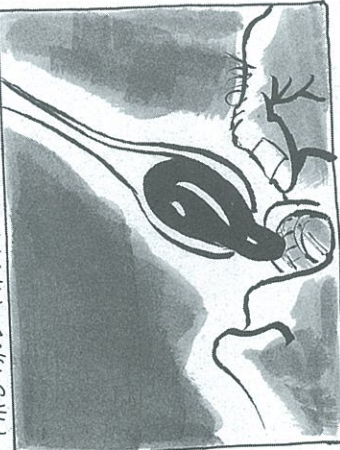
HOWEVER, DAD WAS A DOCTOR.



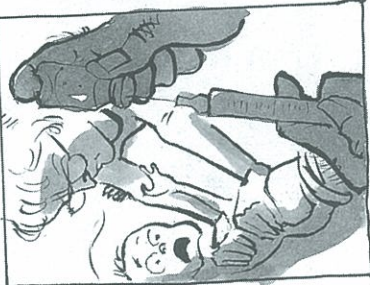
HE KNEW WHAT TO DO.



DAD PRESCRIBED THE MEDICINES FOR MY FREQUENT BOULTS WITH THIS AND THAT.



DAD GAVE ME SHOTS



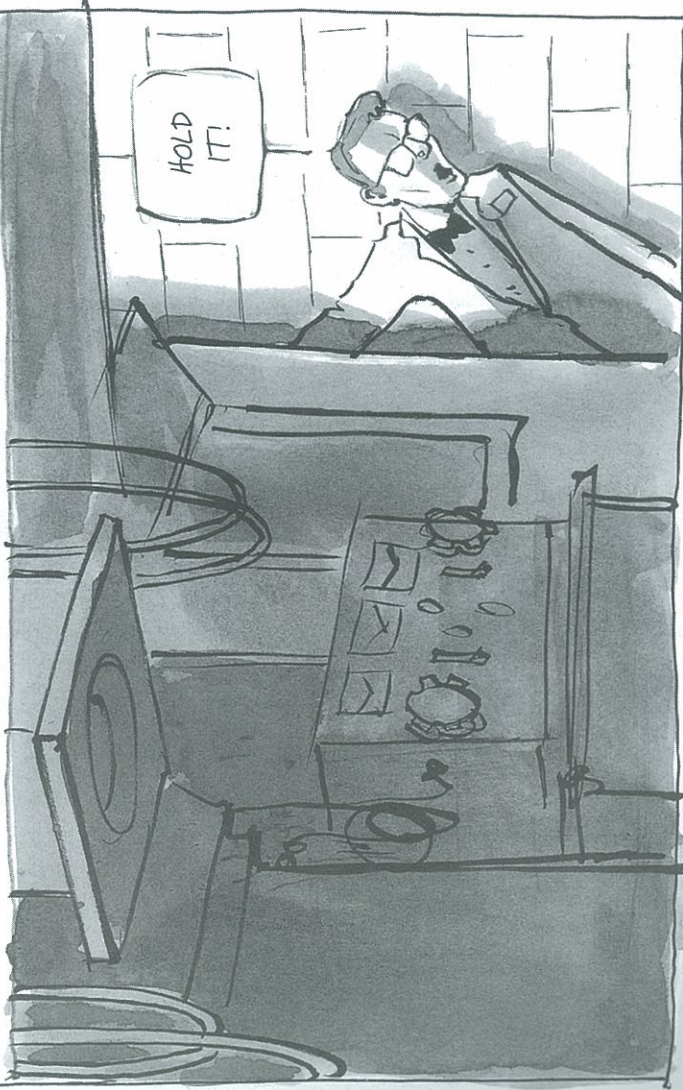
AND ENEMAS.

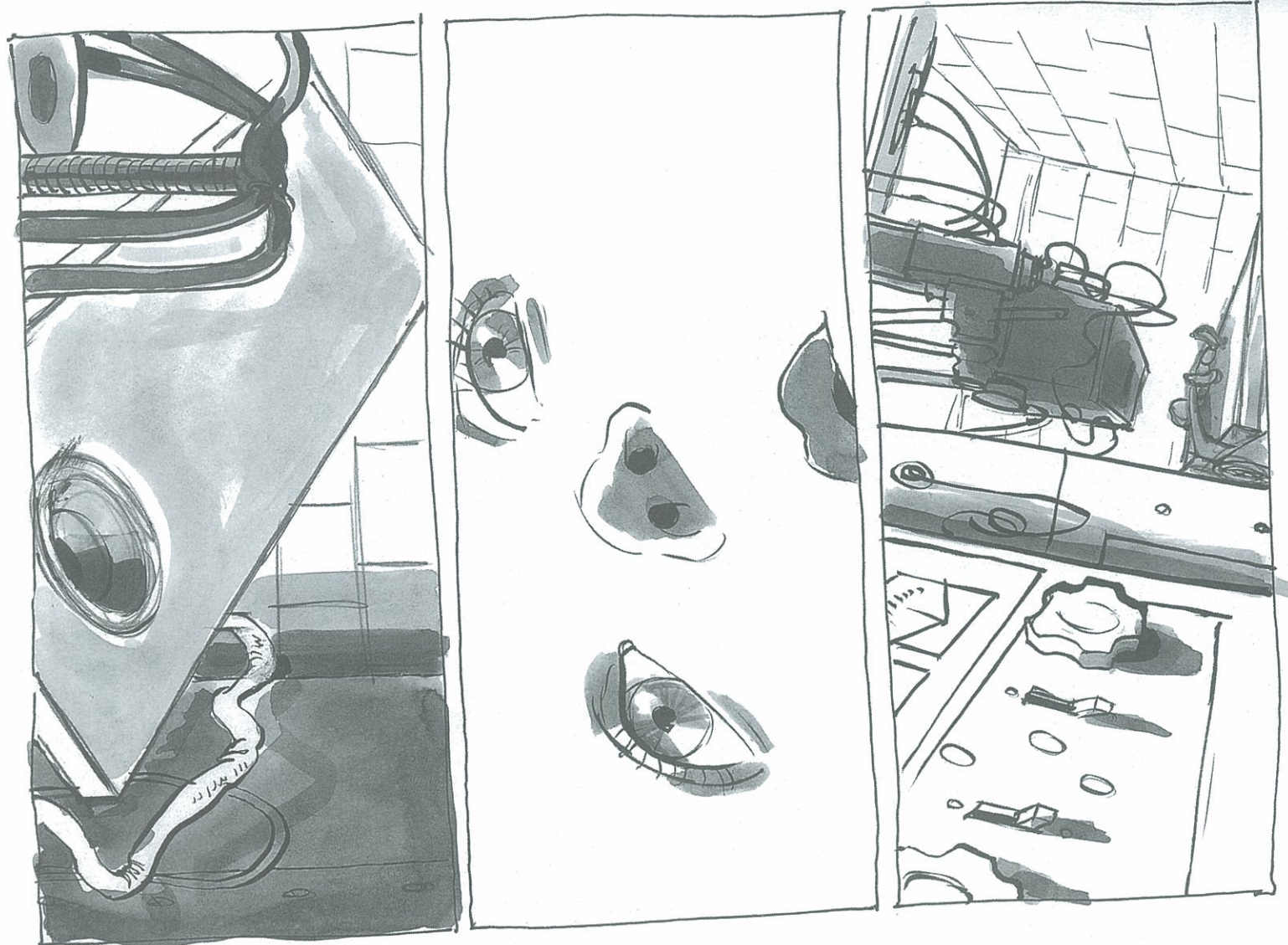
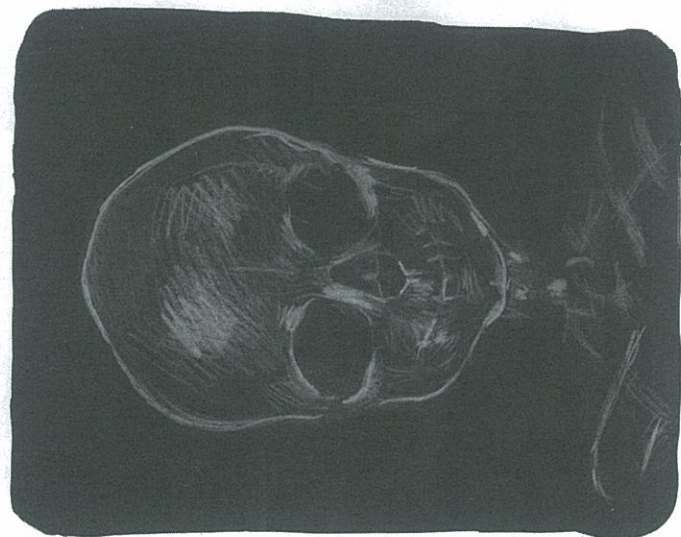


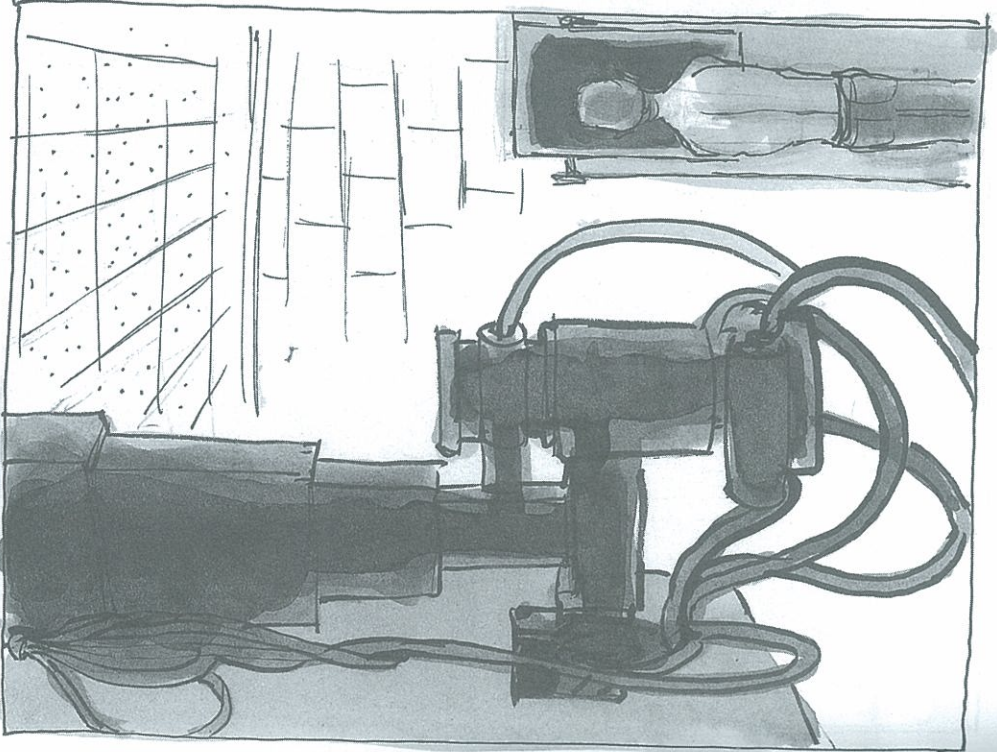
DAD PUT ME ON HIS TREATMENT TABLE AND "CRACKED MY NECK," OUR FAMILY NICKNAME FOR THE OSTEOPATHIC MANIPULATIONS HE HAD LEARNED IN MEDICAL SCHOOL.



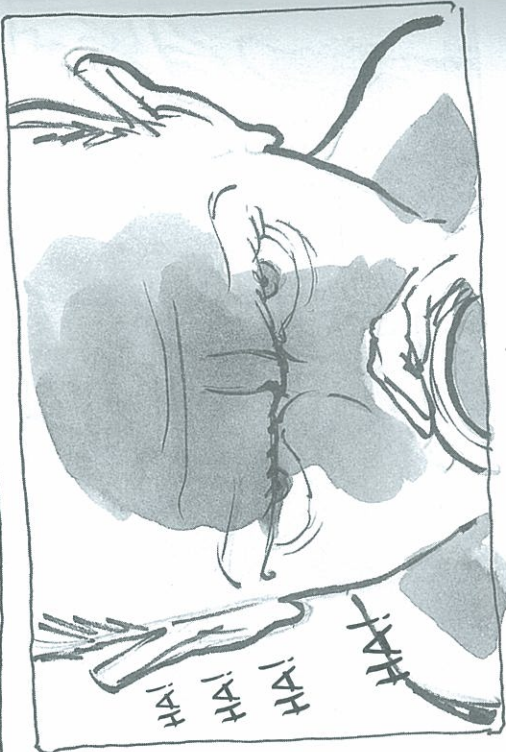
AND IT WAS DAD THE RADIOLOGIST WHO GAVE ME THE MANY X-RAYS THAT WERE SUPPOSED TO CURE MY SINUS PROBLEMS.



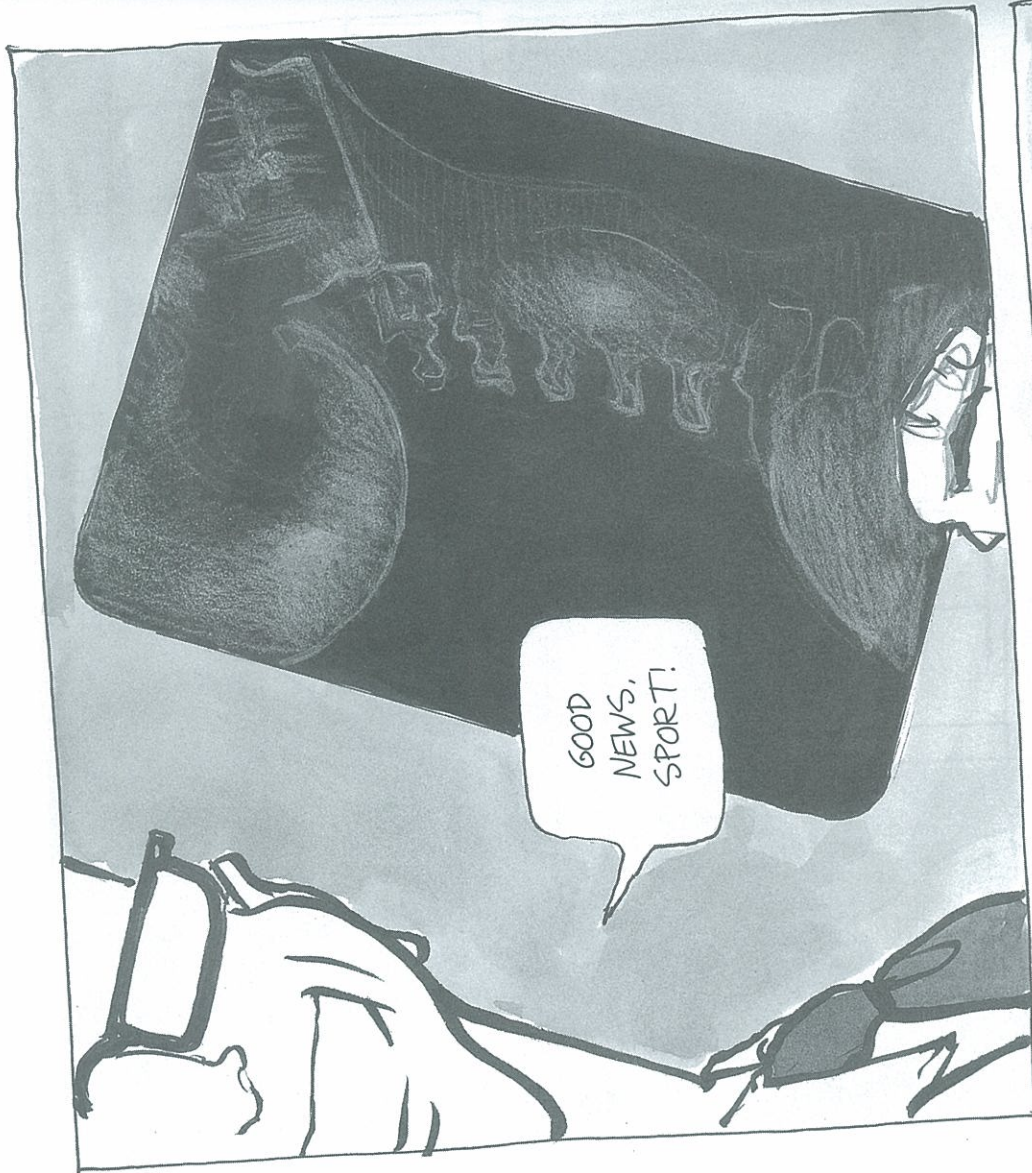




HOLD STILL THERE,
SPORT.
HM.
YOUR GUESS IS AS
GOOD AS MINE.
BETTER HAVE BETTY
CALL MY OFFICE,
MAKE AN APPOINTMENT,
NEXT WEEK.



AND HEY,
ED...
YOU'RE THE
X-RAY MAN.
GET ME SOME
SHOTS OF
THAT AREA,
WOULDN'T
THAT BE NICE?



GOOD NEWS, SPORT!



LOOKS LIKE IT'S ONLY A CEREBACEOUS CYST.



OF COURSE DAVID WILL NEED AN OPERATION AND A FEW DAYS IN THE HOSPITAL...



AND THE COST OF ALL THAT, JOE?

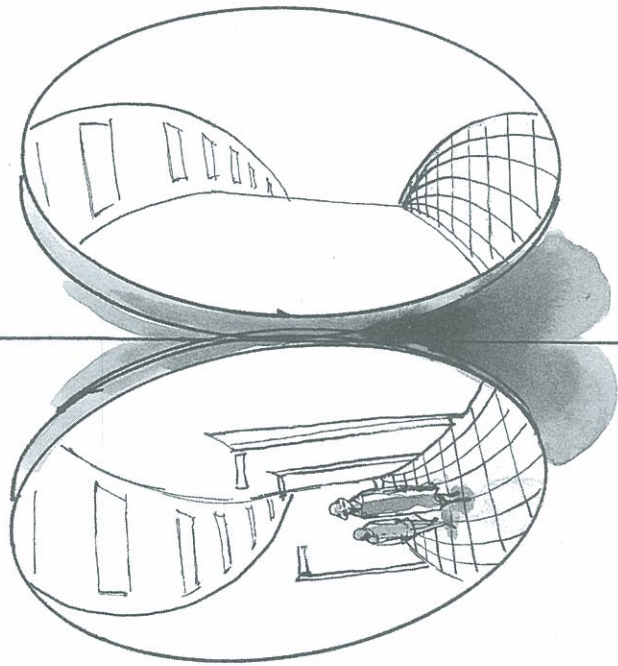
WELL, NATURALLY, BETTY, WE'LL DO THAT WHENEVER IT'S CONVENIENT FOR YOU. THERE'S NO HURRY.

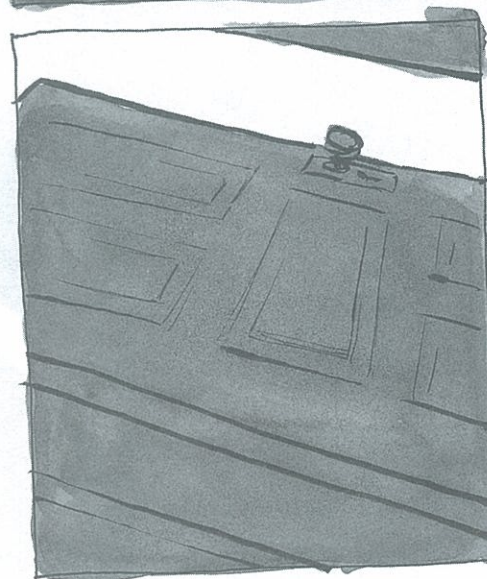
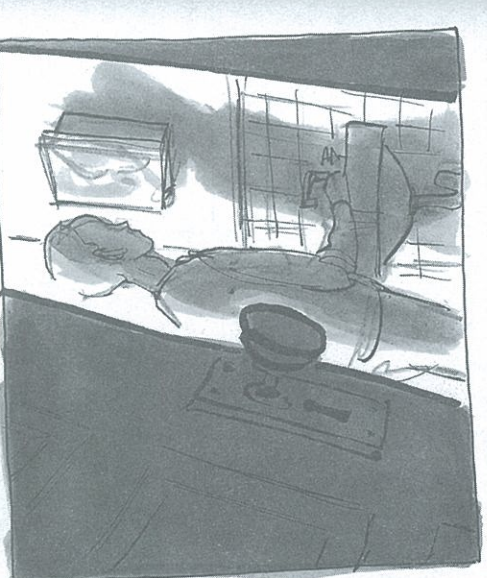
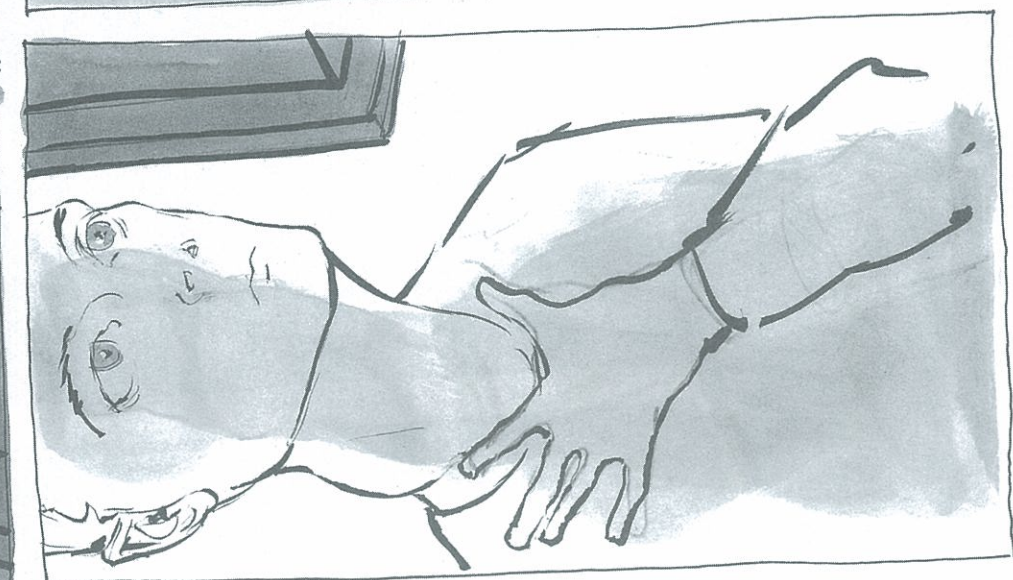
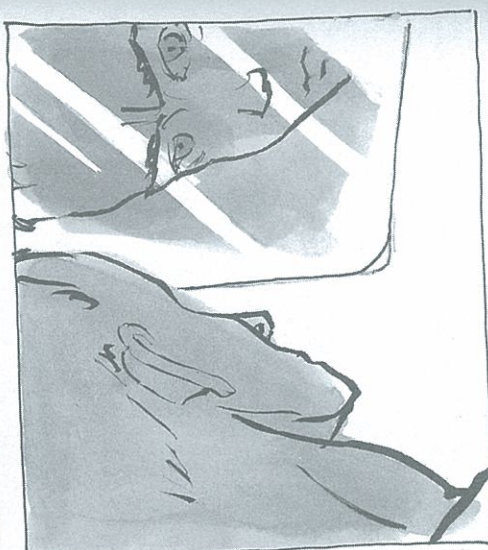
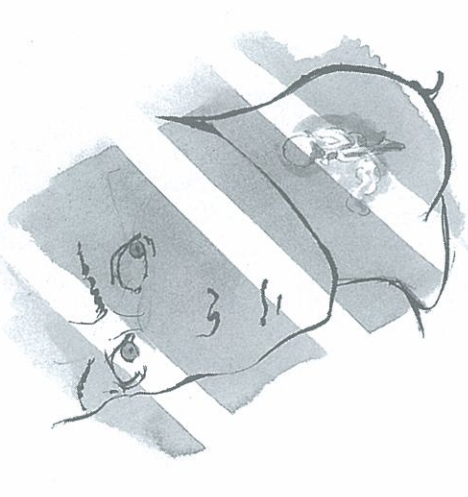


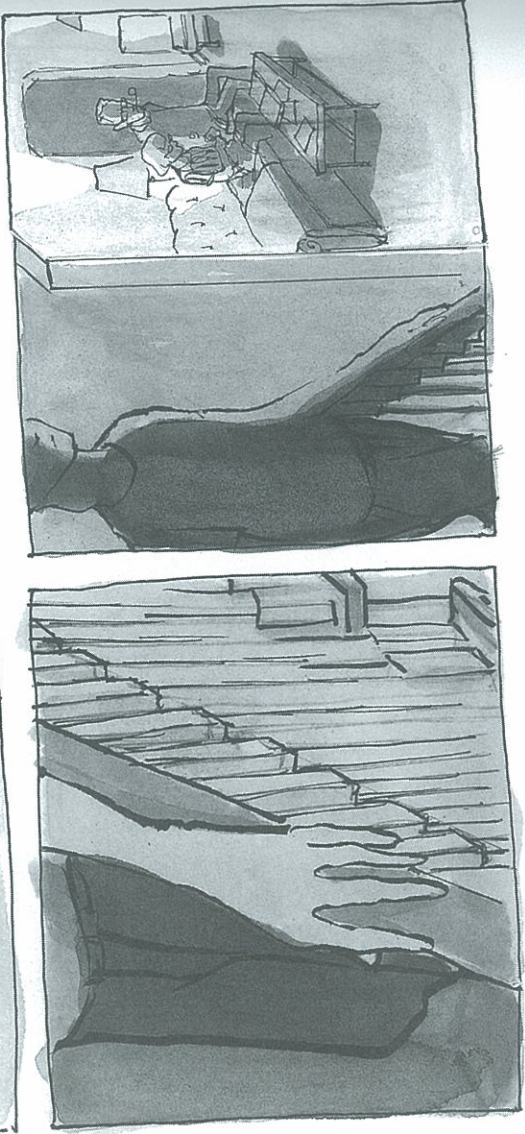
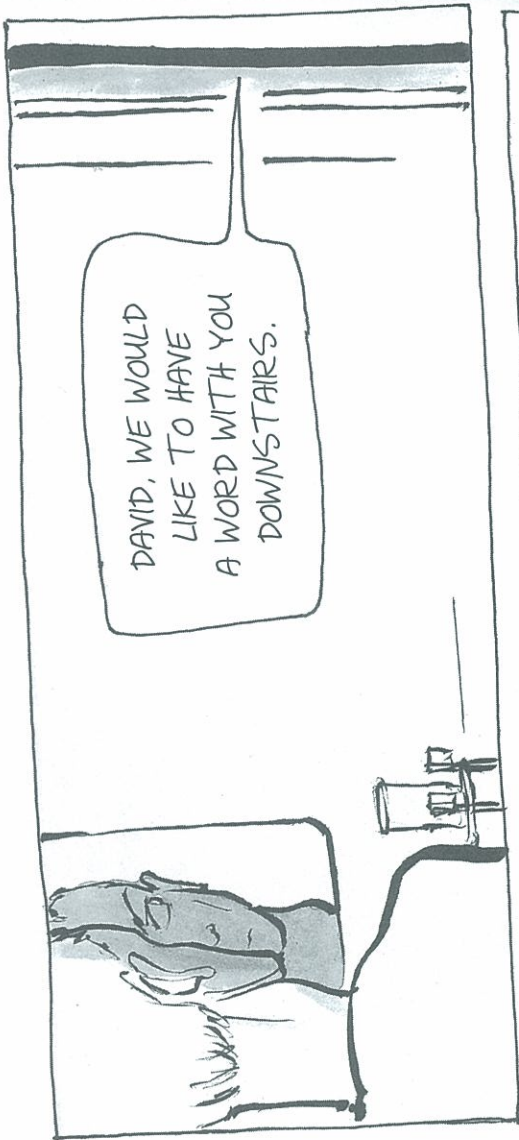
HOW DOES ALL OF THAT SOUND TO YOU, SPORT?

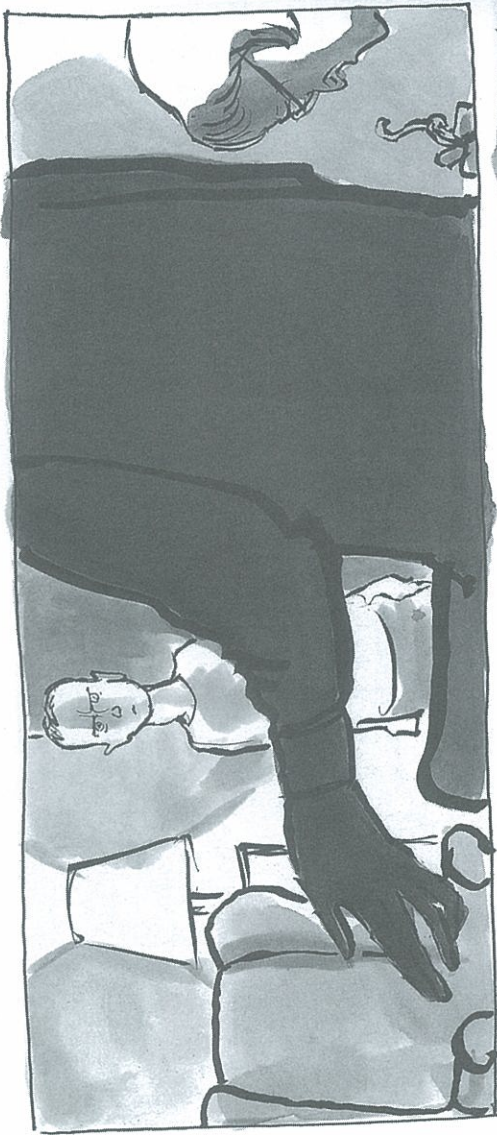
UH, OK. I GUESS.

TEEE-RIFIK!









YOUR MOTHER HAS ASKED ME TO SPEAK TO YOU ABOUT SOMETHING WE BOTH FEEL IS IMPORTANT.



THE HABIT (PUFF PUFF) YOU HAVE ...



OF STANDING (PUFF) AND SITTING IN A (PUFF PUFF) SLOUCHED POSITION.



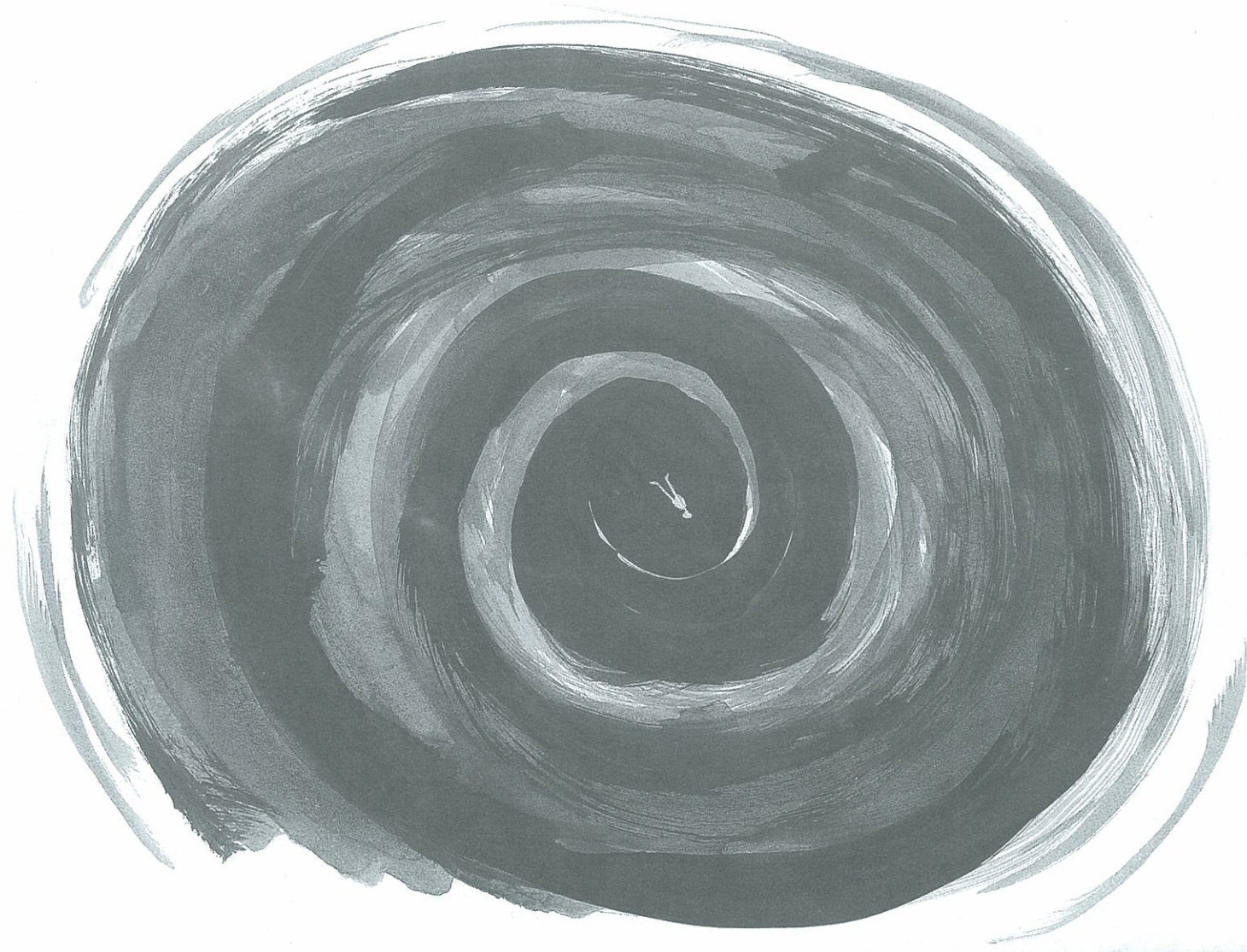
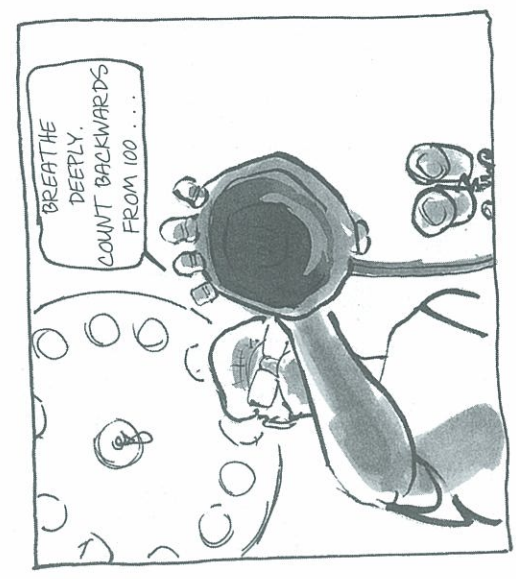
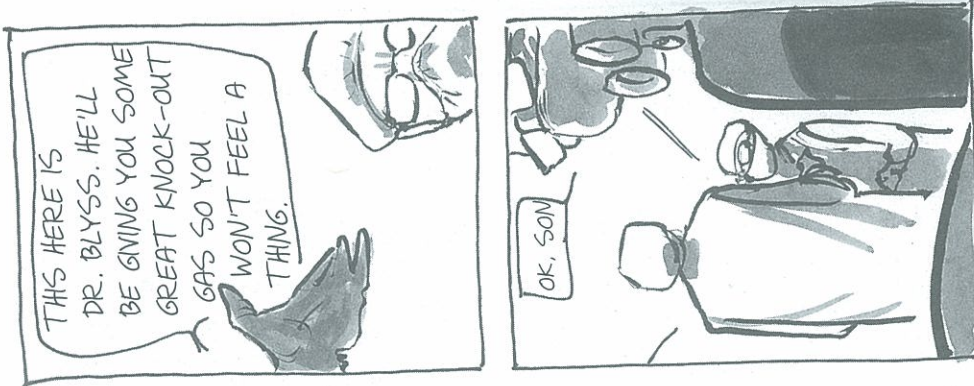
THIS WILL SURELY LEAD TO A COMPRESSION OF THE (PUFF) VERTEBRAE RESULTING IN PERMANENT DEFORMATION OF THE SPINE SUCH AS (PUFF) SCOLIOSIS OR SPONDYLOLISTHESIS. WE SEE THIS ALL THE TIME IN LATERAL CURVATURE (PUFF) AND ALSO IN THE EXAGGERATIONS OF THE ANTERO-POSTERIOR CURVES FOUND IN MOST CASES OF (PUFF) POOR POSTURE.

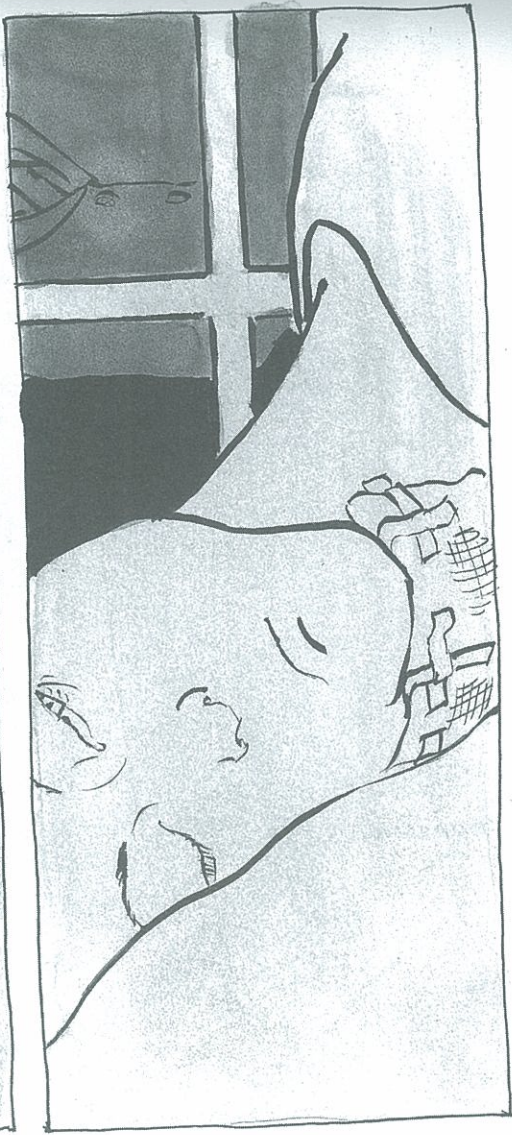
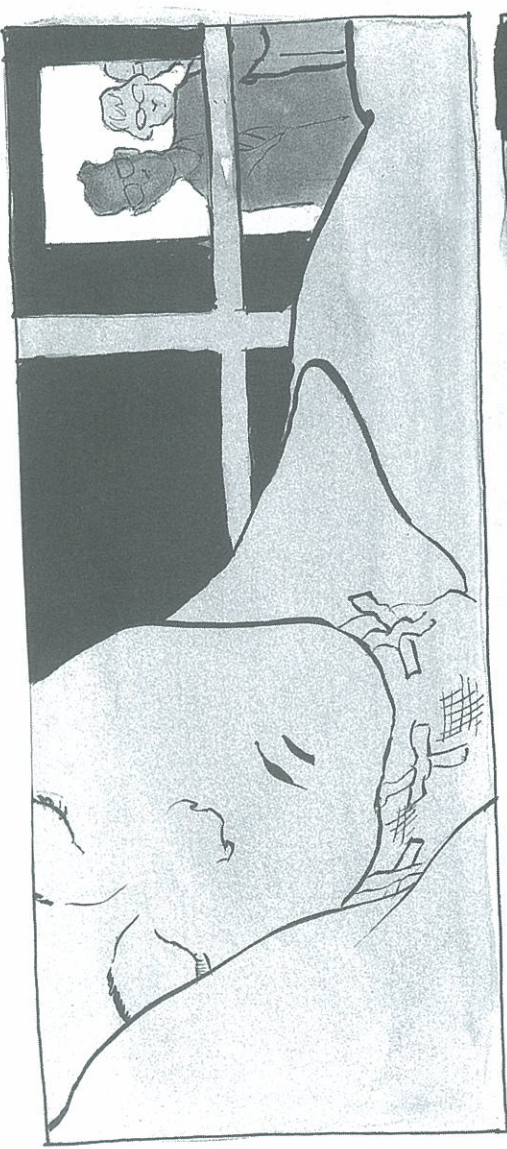


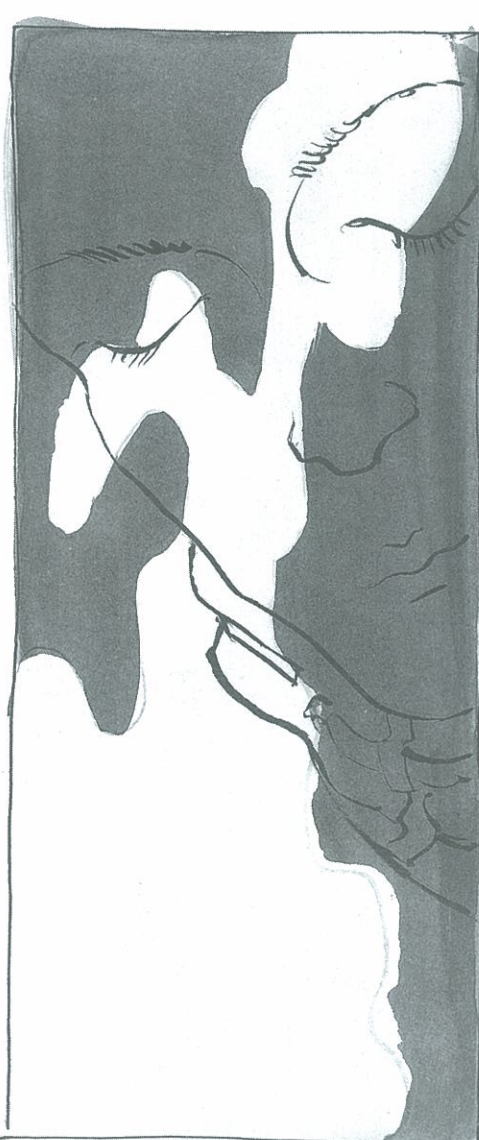
AS FOR YOUR STANDING POSITION, IF YOU GO ON WITH IT, YOUR LUMBAR WILL START TO FAIL TO UPHOLD YOUR DORSAL CURVE AND BOTH WILL BECOME EXAGGERATED.



THE RESULTANT LORDOSIS AND KYPHOSIS WILL GIVE YOU THAT FORWARD THRUST OF THE HEAD AND THE SUNKEN CHEST (PUFF PUFF); THAT LOOK OF CHRONIC FATIGUE WHICH WE SEE SO OFTEN IN OLD PEOPLE.







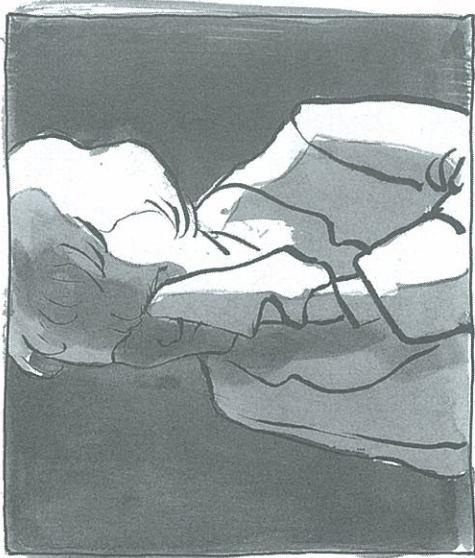
THAT NIGHT, BACK IN MY HOSPITAL ROOM, I WAS SURPRISED BY
A VISIT FROM MY MOTHER.

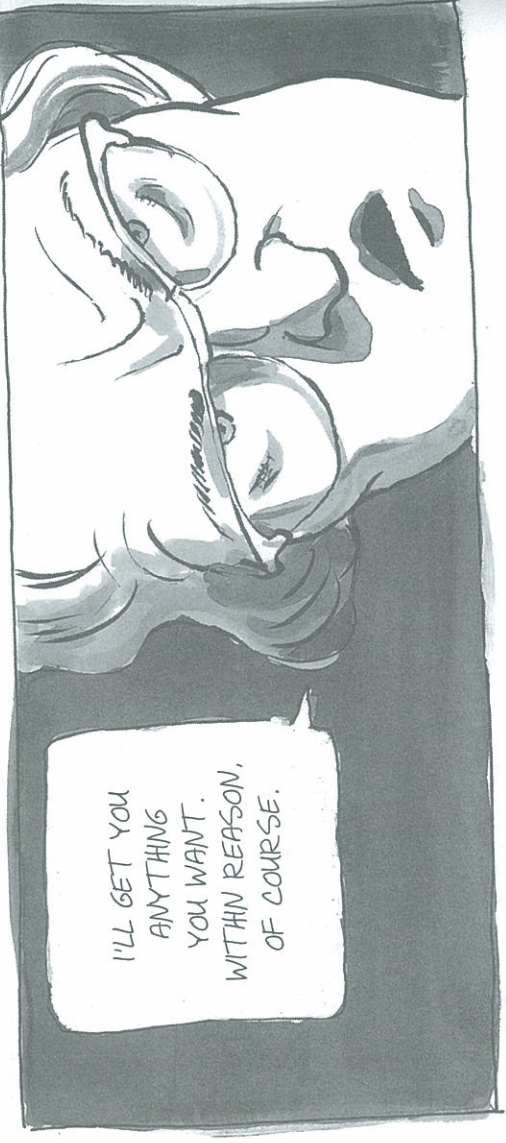
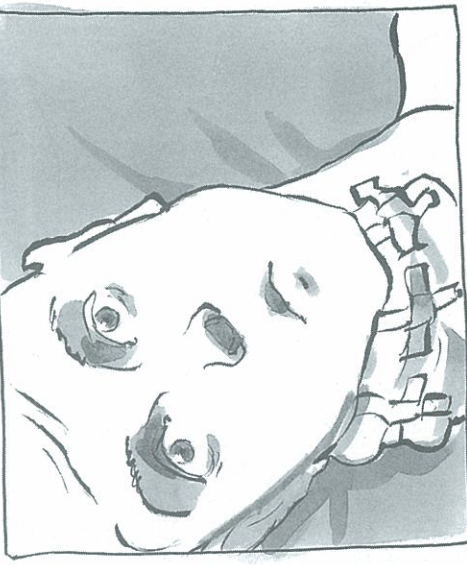
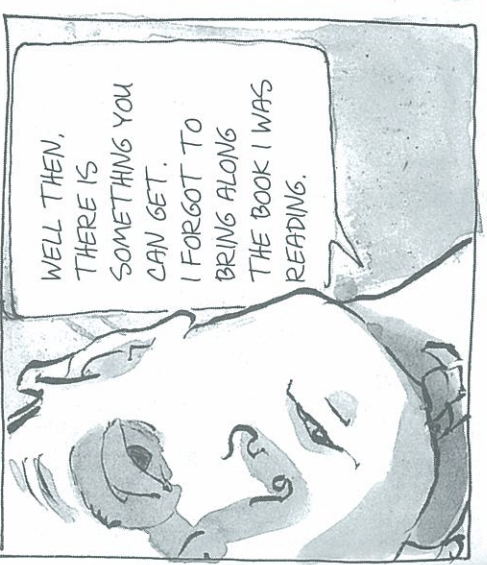
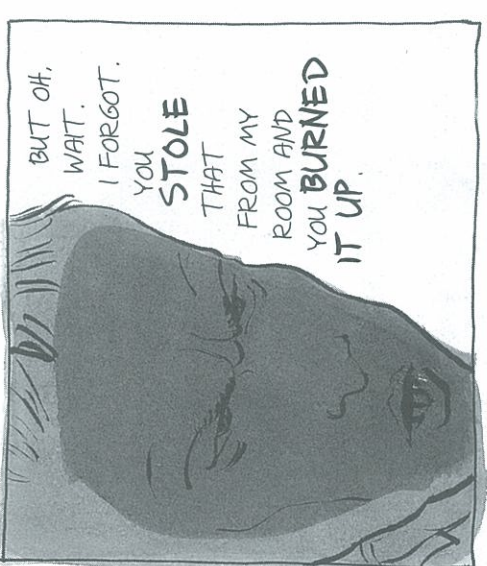


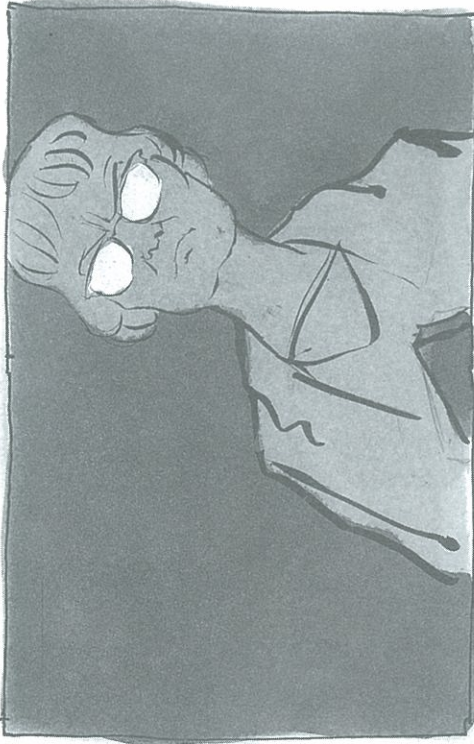
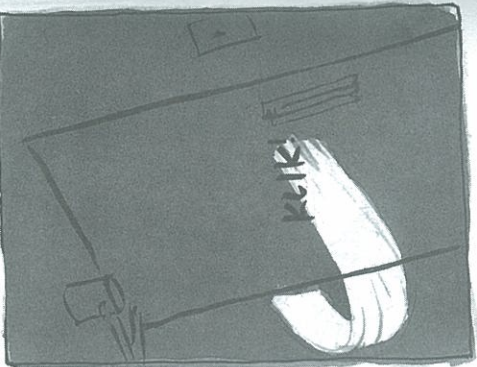
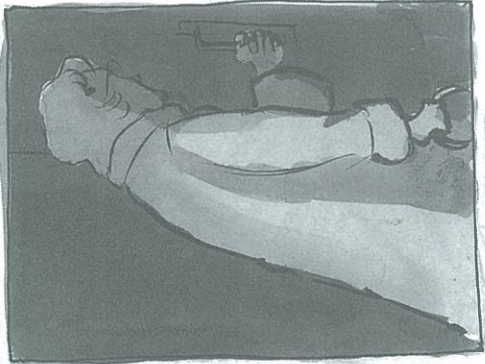
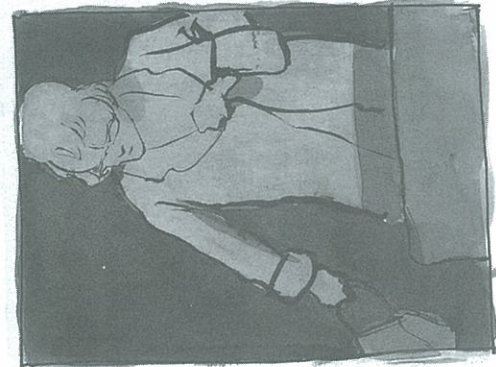
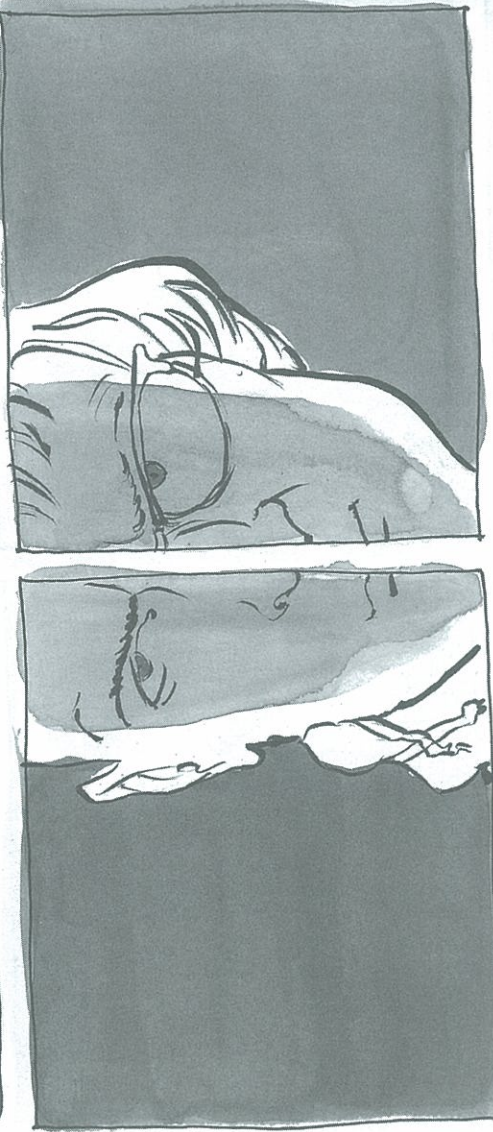
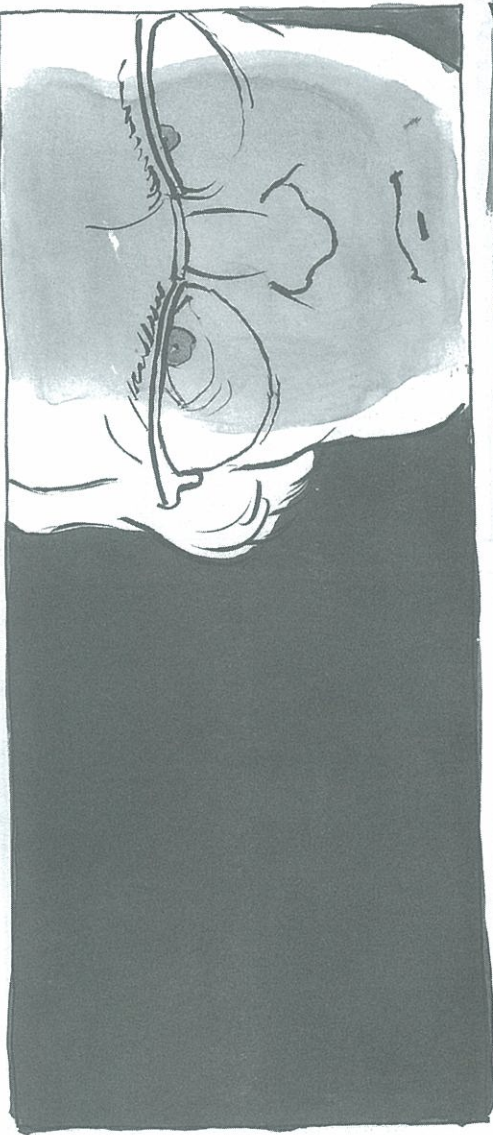
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING
HERE?

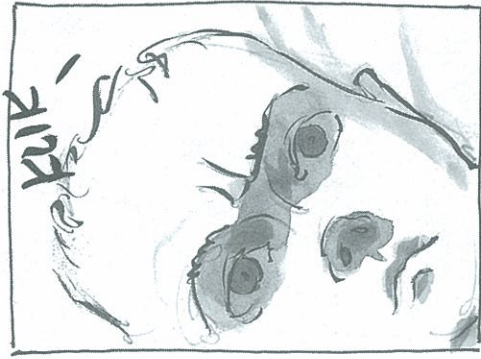
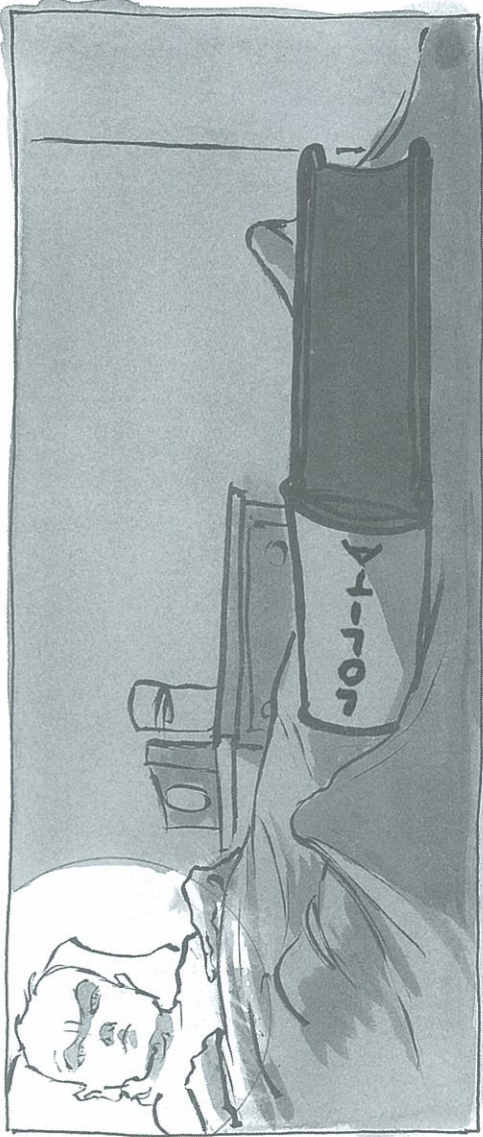


I SUPPOSE
I HAVE THE
RIGHT TO VISIT
MY OWN SON.





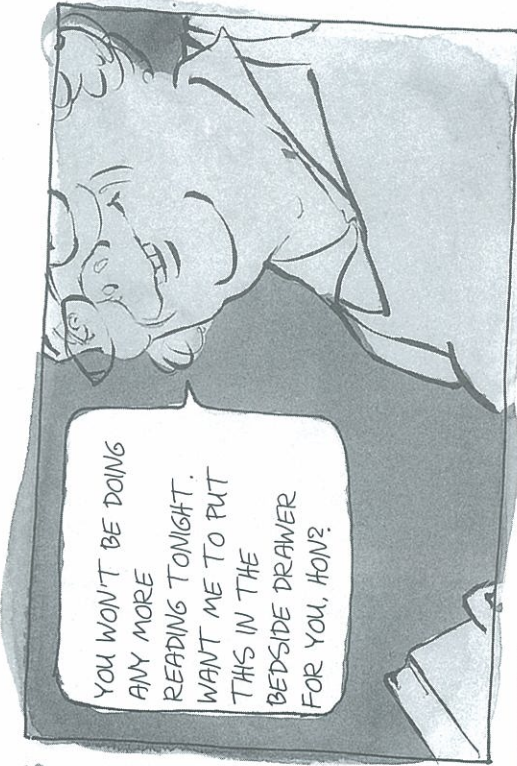
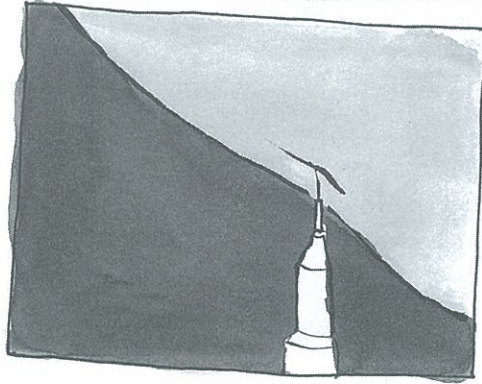




HEY, HON!
I'LL BET YOU'RE GLAD
TO SEE ME AGAIN!
HE HE HE!



OOO!
I HEAR THAT
ONE'S A
REAL
DIRTY
BOOK!



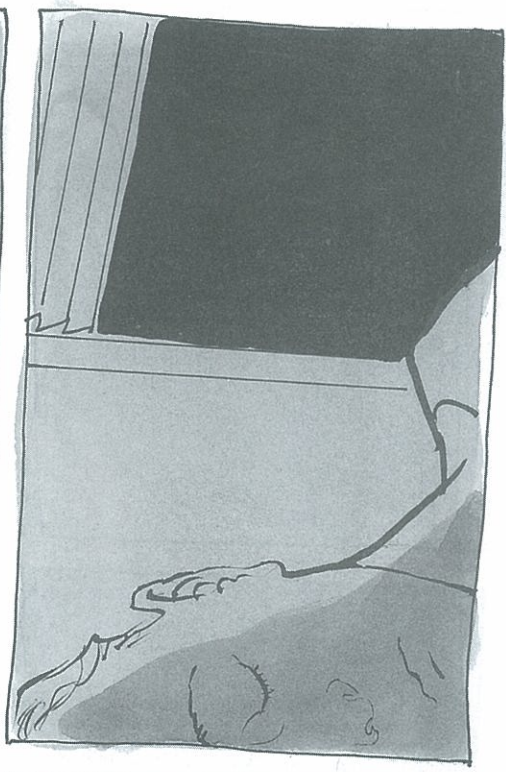
YOU WON'T BE DOING
ANY MORE
READING TONIGHT.
WANT ME TO PUT
THS IN THE
BEDSIDE DRAWER
FOR YOU, HON?

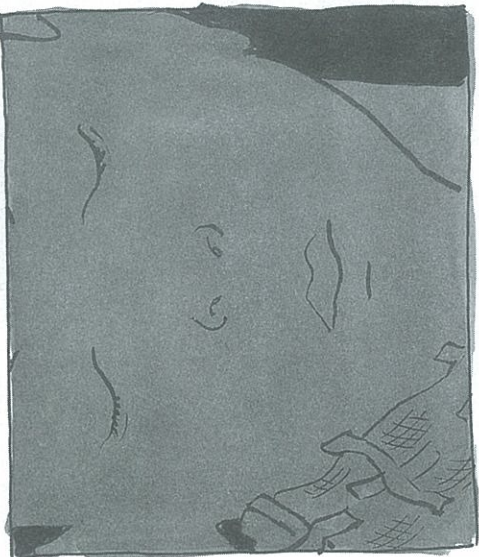
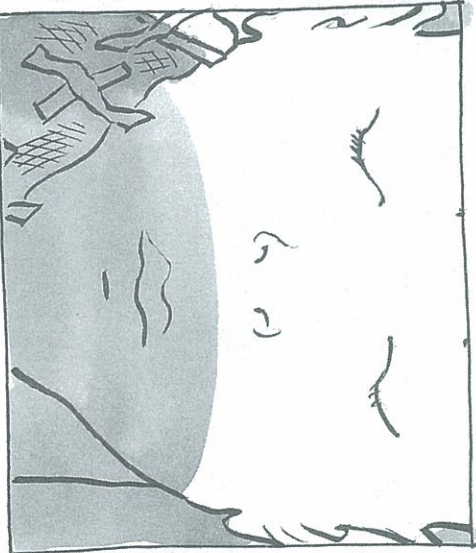
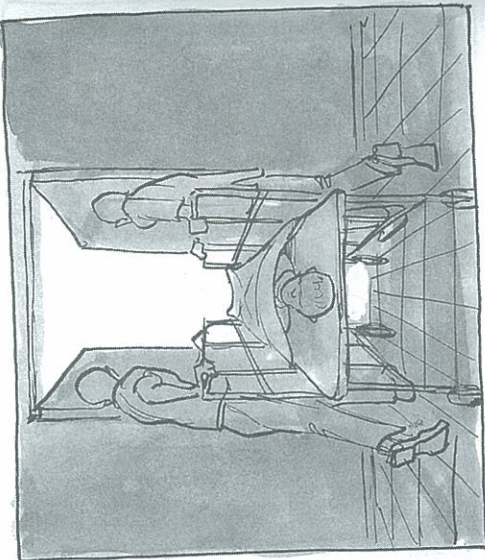
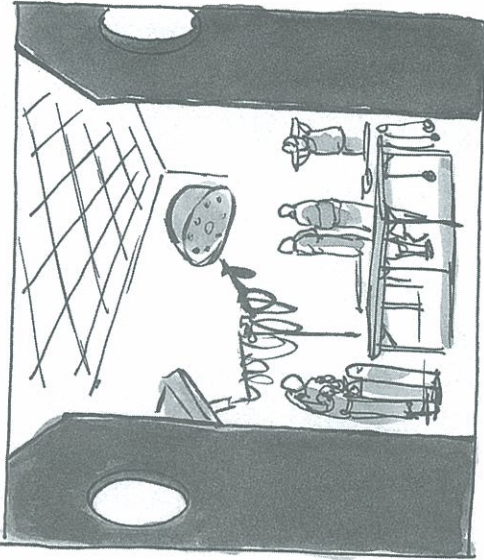
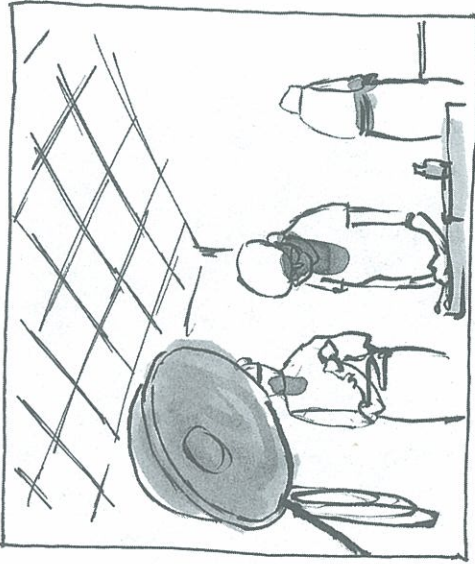
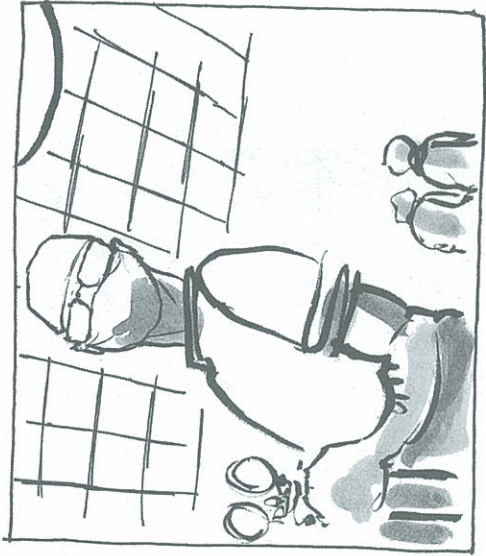
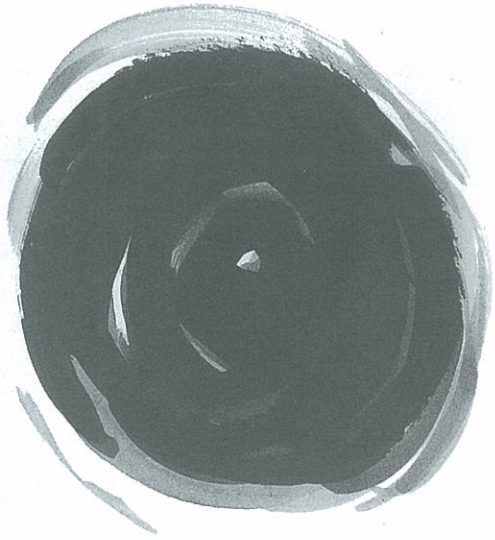


THANKS.



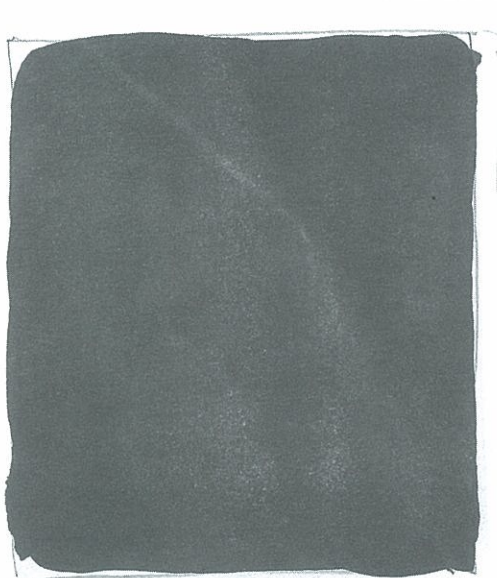
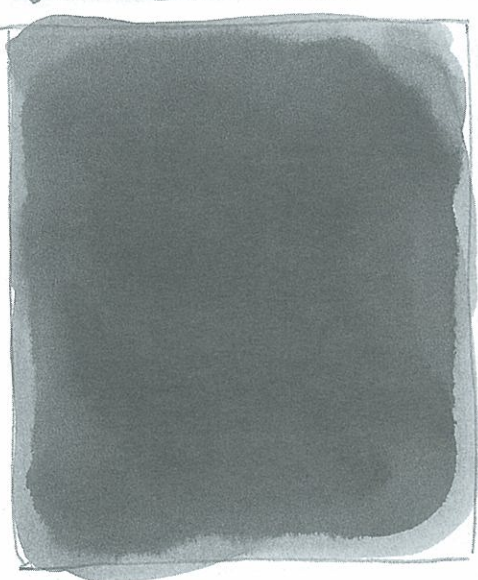
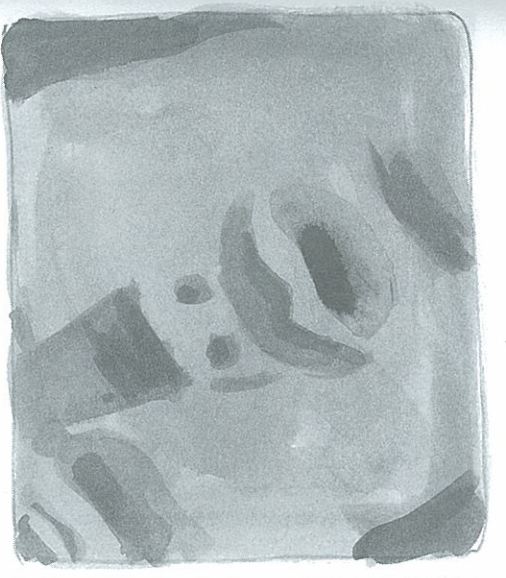
SWEET
DREAMS,
HON.



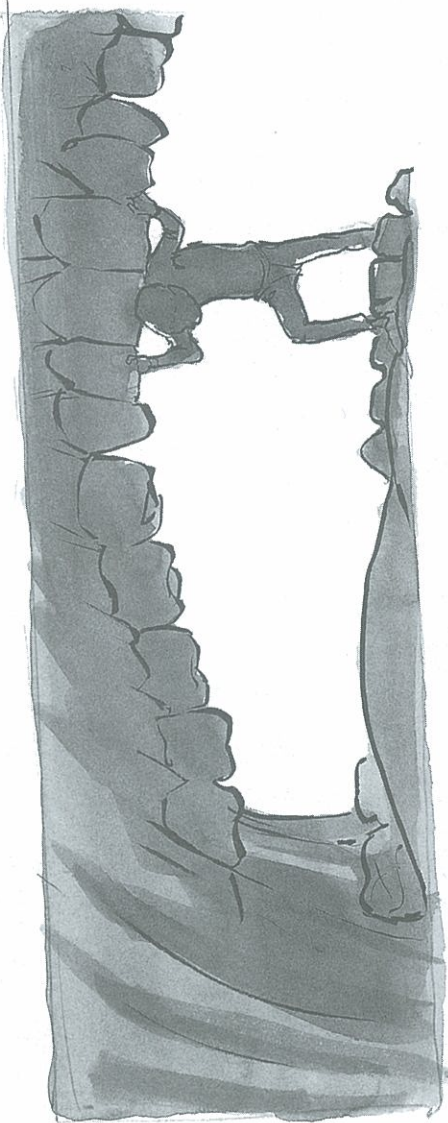




ACK?



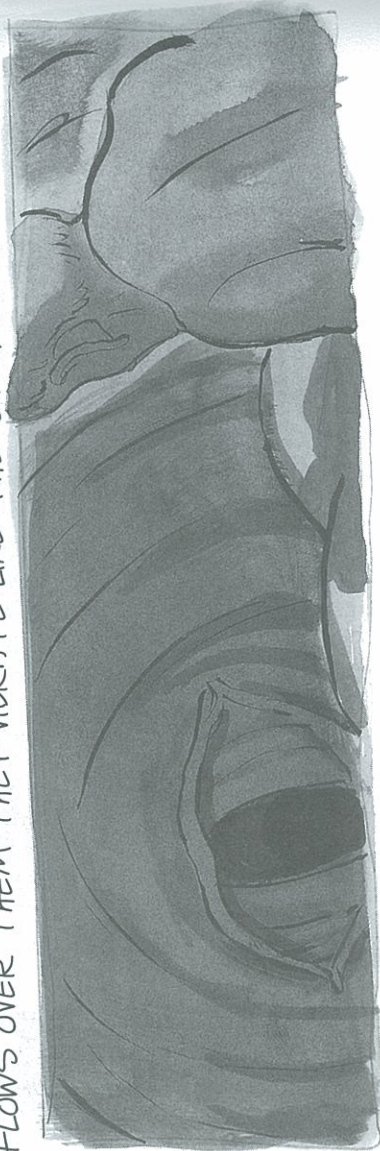
STEP INSIDE YOUR MOUTH WITH ME FOR A MOMENT, WON'T YOU?



CAREFUL ON THE TONGUE! IT'S SLIPPERY!



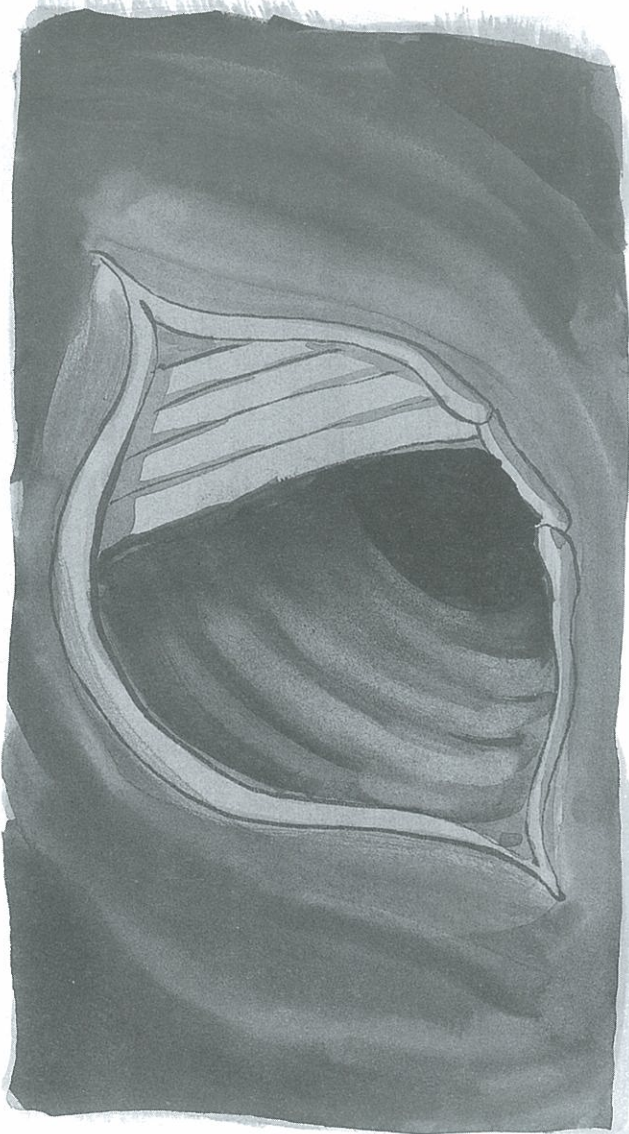
NOW, YOU SEE DOWN THERE? THOSE FOLDING SCREENS OVER THE TUNNEL OF YOUR THROAT? THOSE ARE YOUR VOCAL CORDS. WHEN AIR FLOWS OVER THEM THEY VIBRATE LIKE THE STRINGS ON A CELLO.

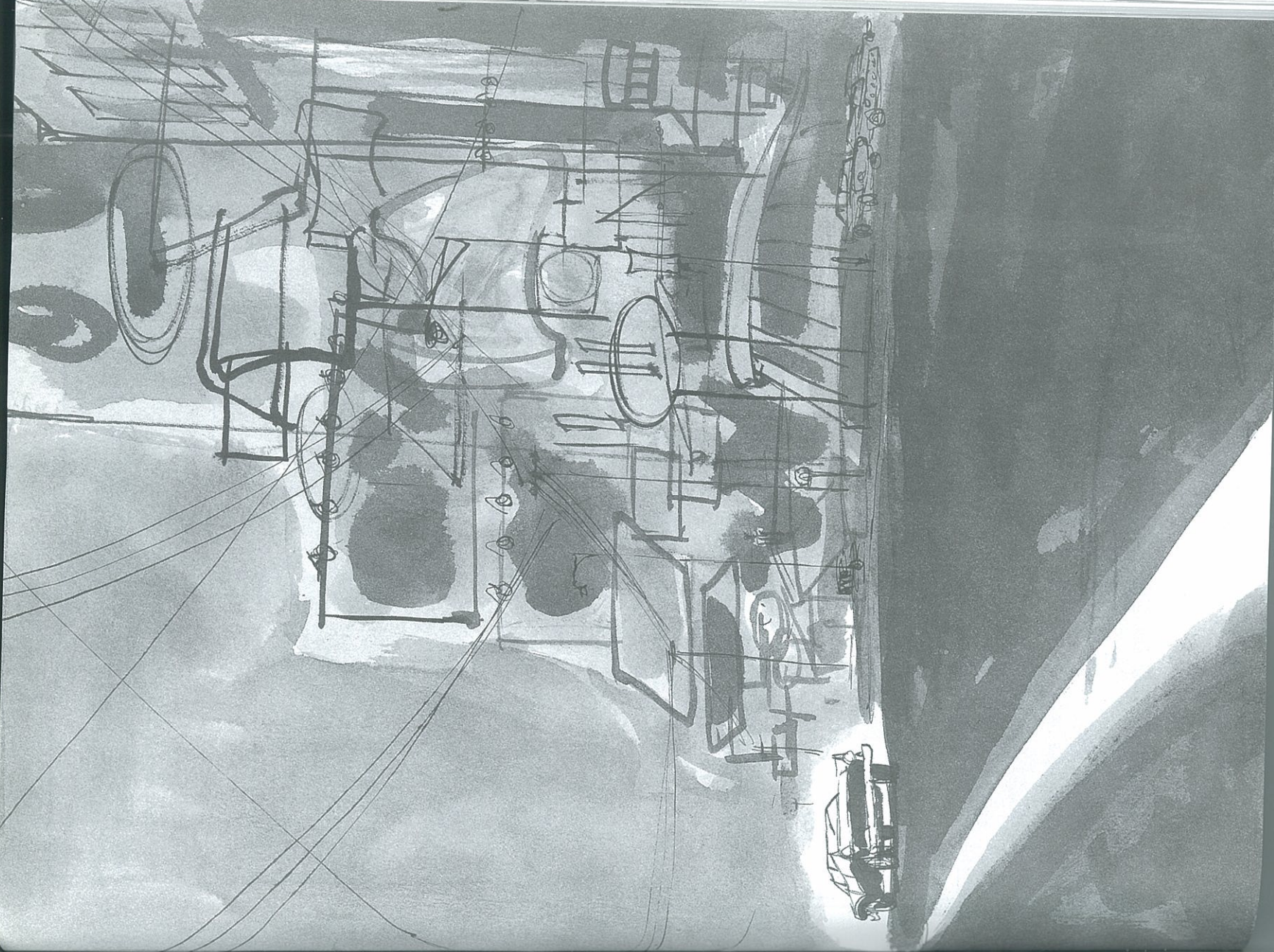
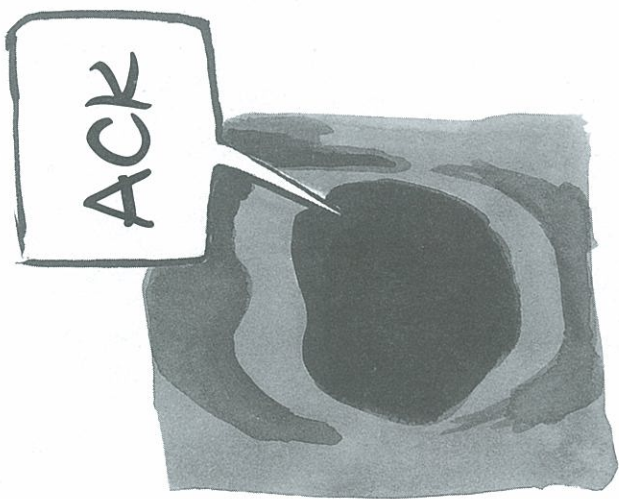


YOUR VOCAL CORDS MAKE THE SOUNDS OF YOUR VOICE,
YOUR CURSES AND YOUR PRAYERS.



WHEN I WOKE UP FROM OPERATION #2, I HAD ONLY ONE
VOCAL CORD, AND WITH ONLY ONE VOCAL CORD THE SOUND YOU MAKE IS . . .





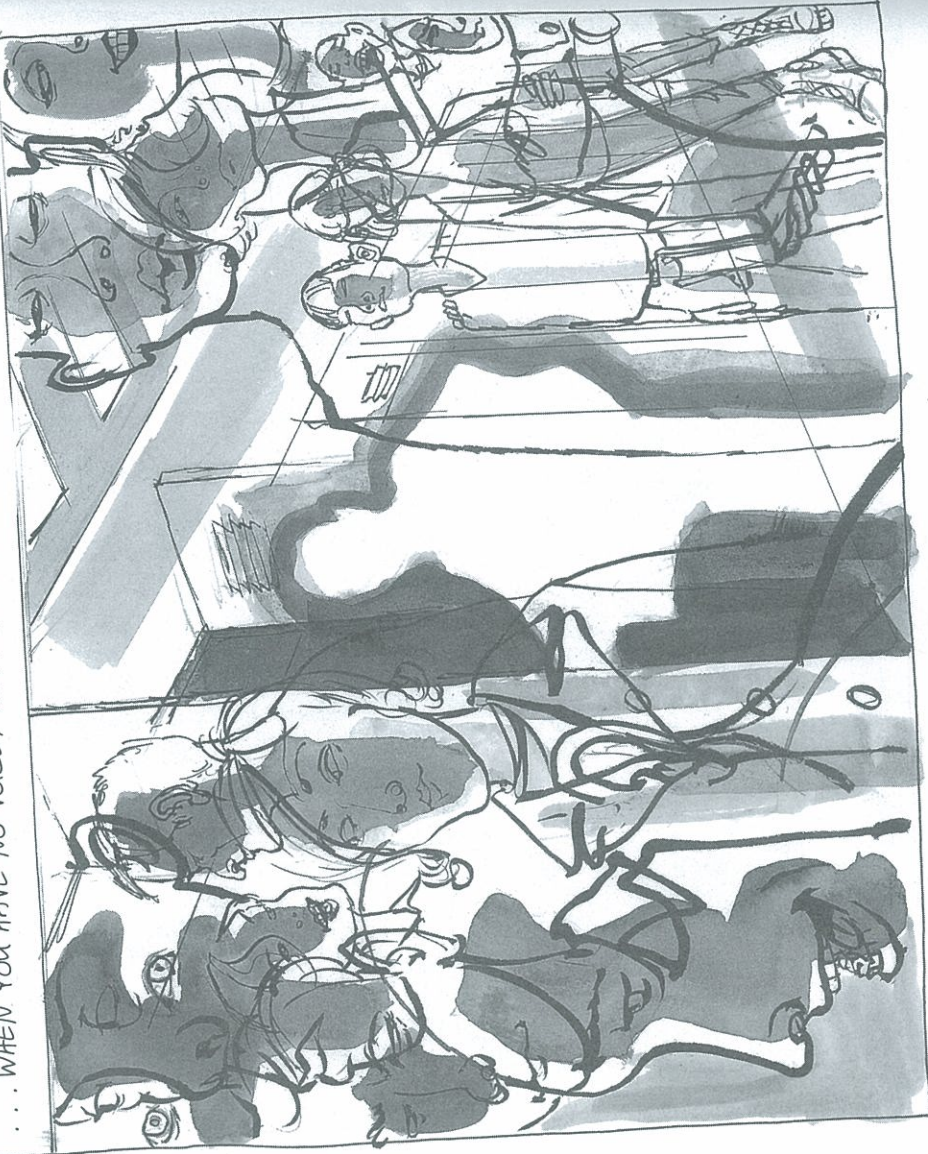
BACK IN SCHOOL, AT FIRST
WILDLY SELF-CONSCIOUS...



... I SOON LEARNED ...



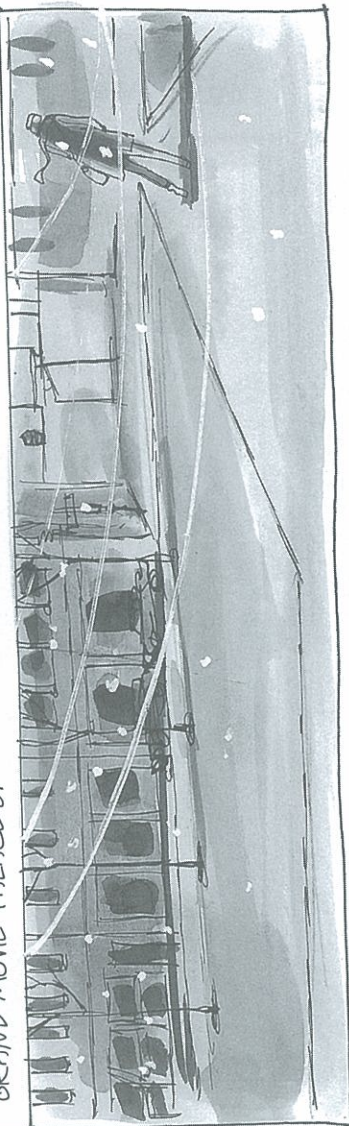
... WHEN YOU HAVE NO VOICE, YOU DON'T EXIST.



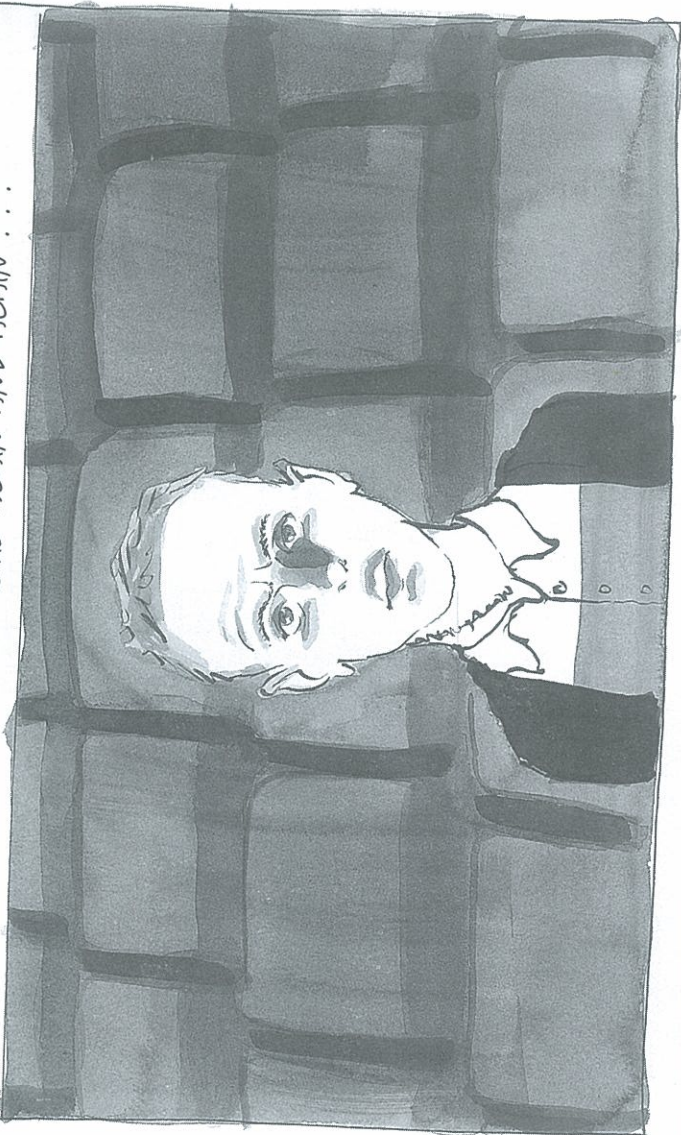
EVEN AMONG MY OLD FRIENDS I FELT INVISIBLE, A SHADOW
FLICKERING AROUND THE EDGES OF EVERY EVENT.



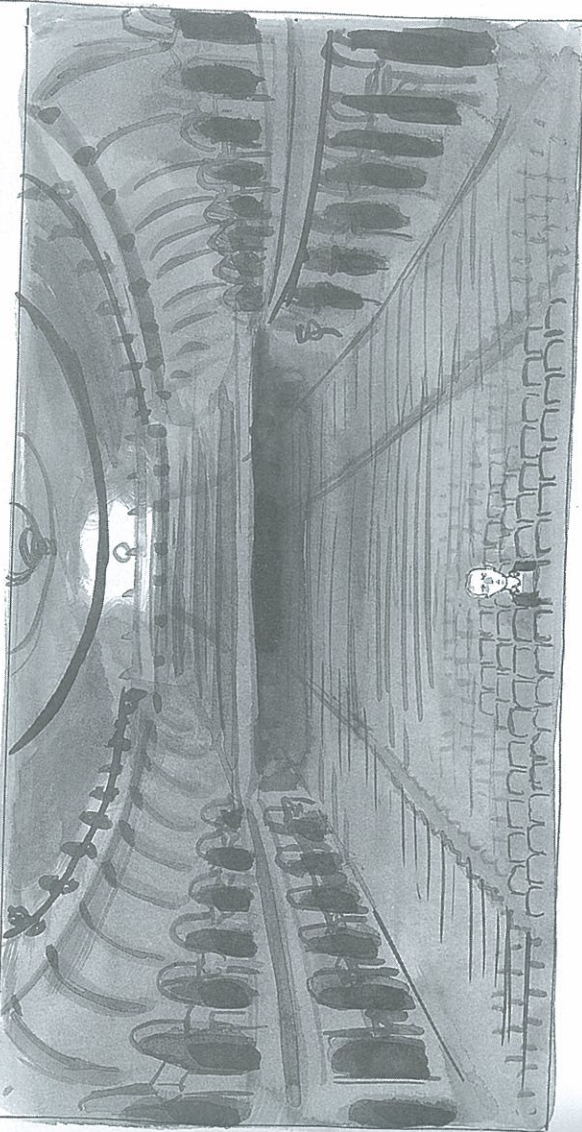
I BEGAN SKIPPING CLASSES. SCHOOL WAS ONLY A SHORT WALK FROM DOWNTOWN, WITH ITS SKYSCRAPERS, COFFEE BARS AND GRAND MOVIE PALACES.



I SAT THROUGH THE SAME MOVIE AGAIN AND AGAIN . . .



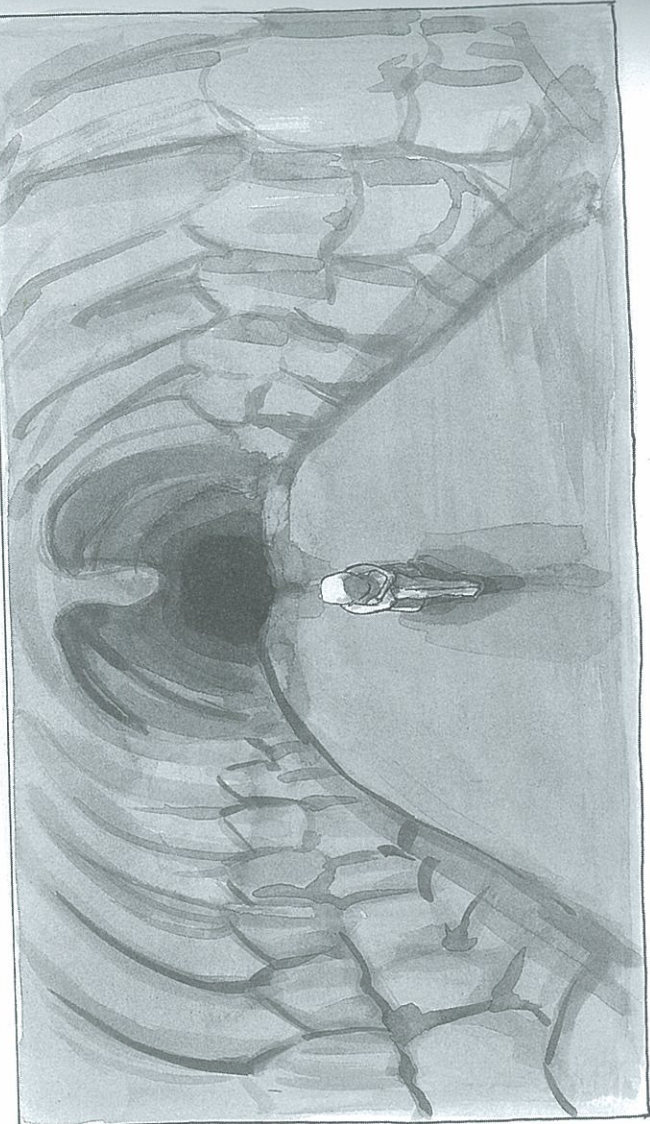
A SCIENTIST TAKES AN EXPERIMENTAL DRUG THAT GIVES HIM X-RAY VISION. DRIVEN MAD BY WHAT HE SEES, HE GOES INTO THE DESERT AND TEARS OUT HIS OWN EYES.



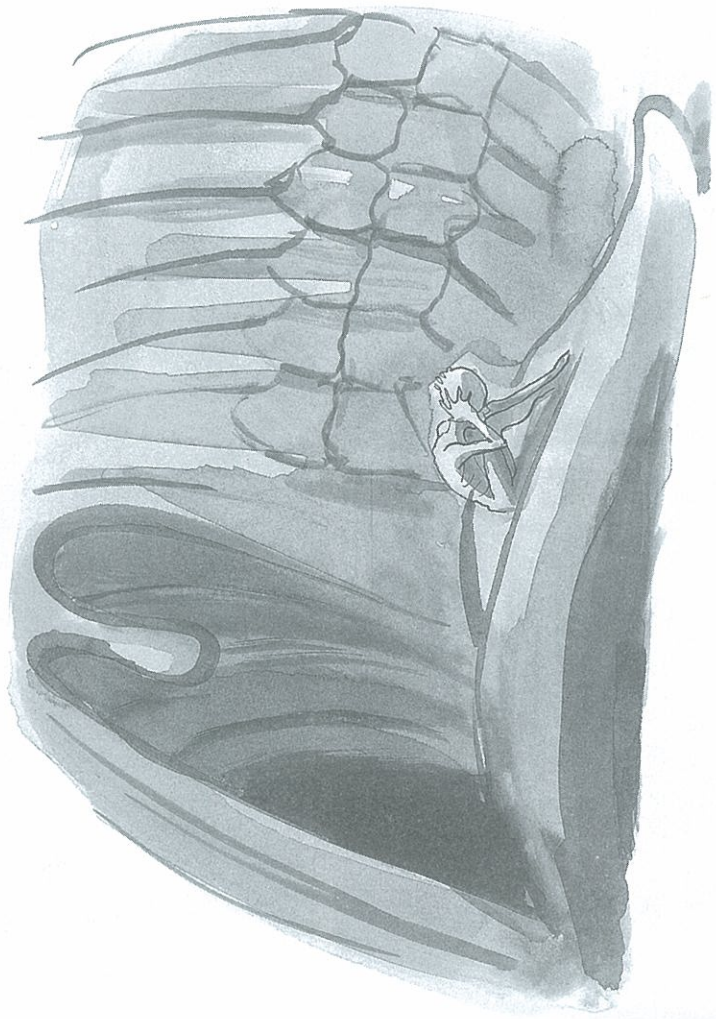
AT HOME, LATE AT NIGHT, I BEGAN TO HAVE THE SENSATION THAT I WAS SHRINKING DOWN . . .



. . . AND LIVING INSIDE MY OWN MOUTH.



. . . A HOT, MOIST CAVERN, IN WHICH EVERYTHING I THOUGHT, EVERY WORD THAT CAME INTO MY BRAIN, WAS THUNDEROUSLY SHOUTED BACK AT ME.



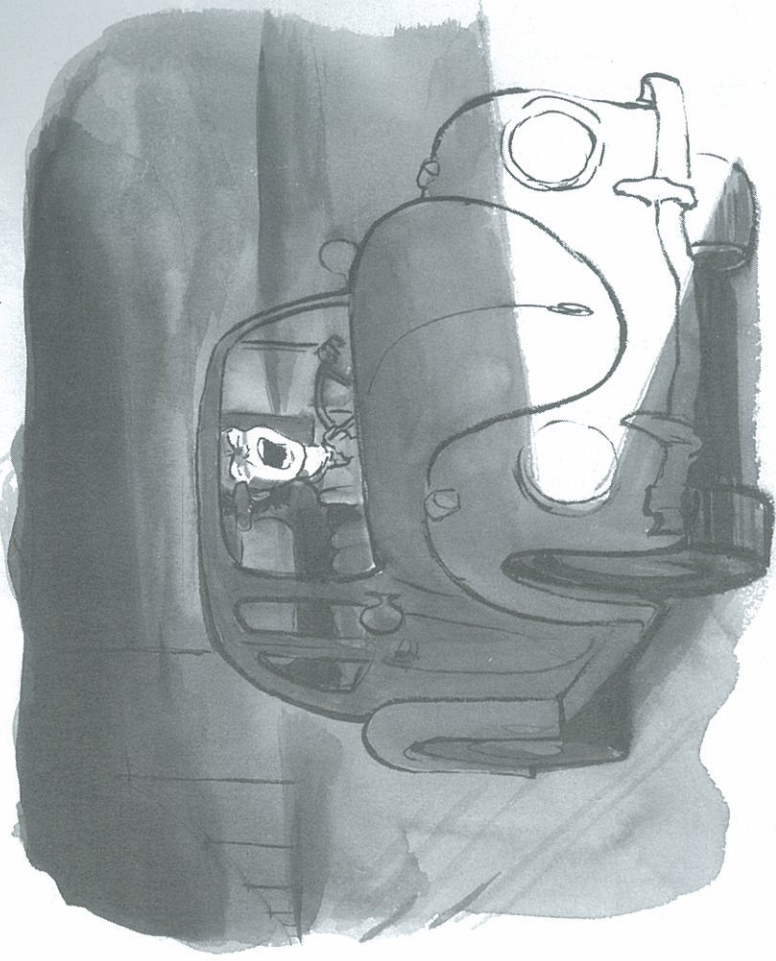
I WAS SCARED TO GO UP TO BED, AFRAID THAT THE SCREAMING IN MY HEAD WOULD BE HEARD BY THE FAMILY.



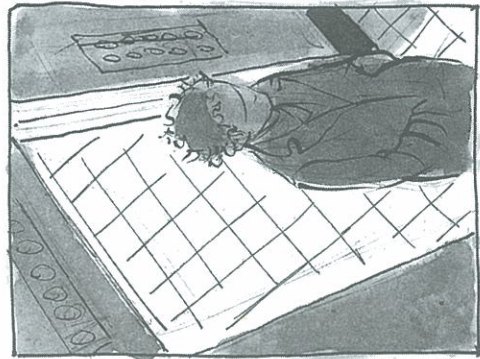
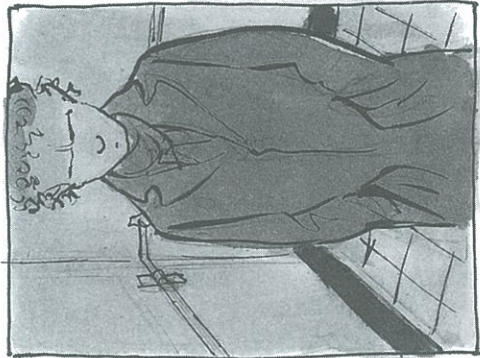
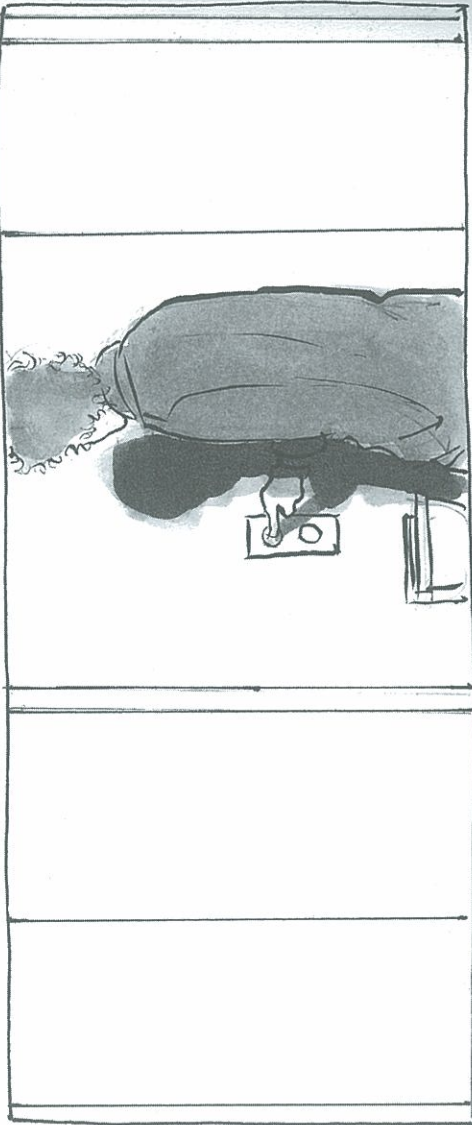
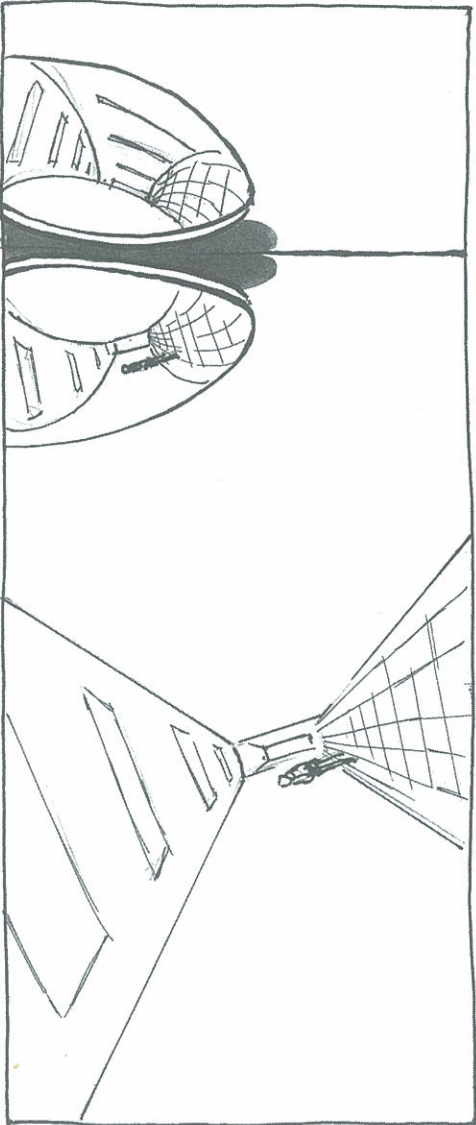
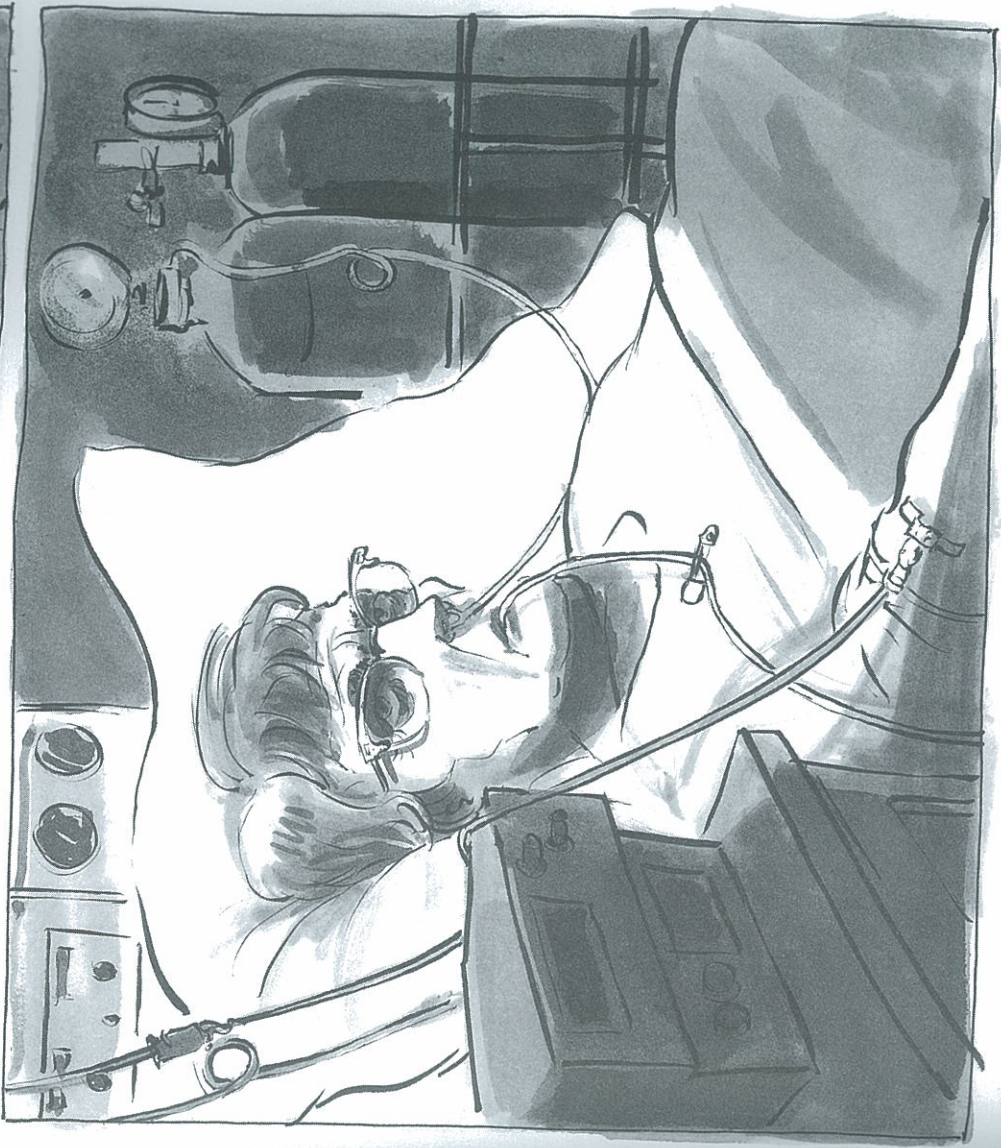
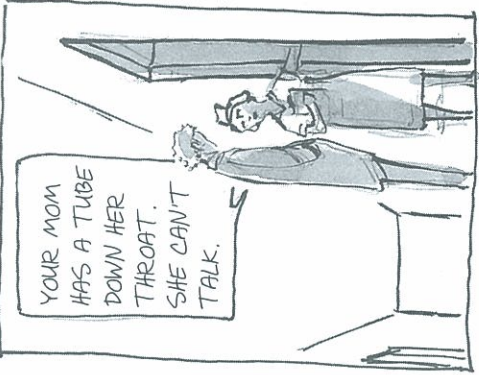
ART BECAME MY HOME.
NOT ONLY DID IT GIVE ME BACK
MY VOICE, BUT ART HAS GIVEN ME
EVERYTHING I HAVE WANTED
OR NEEDED SINCE.



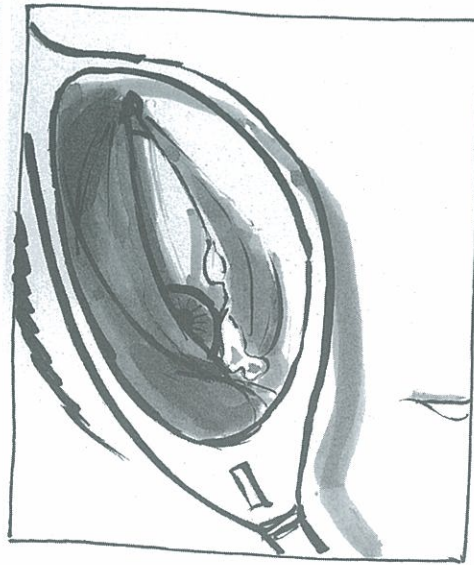
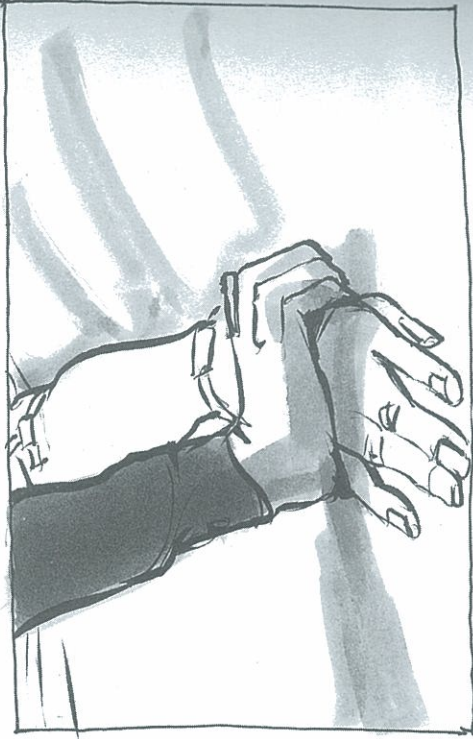
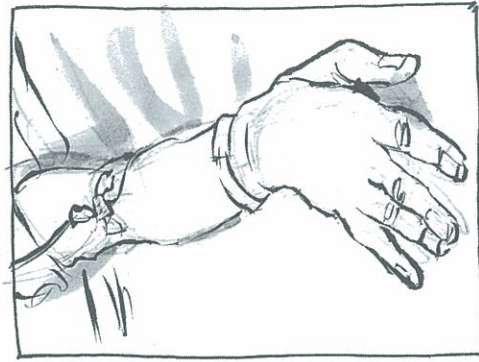
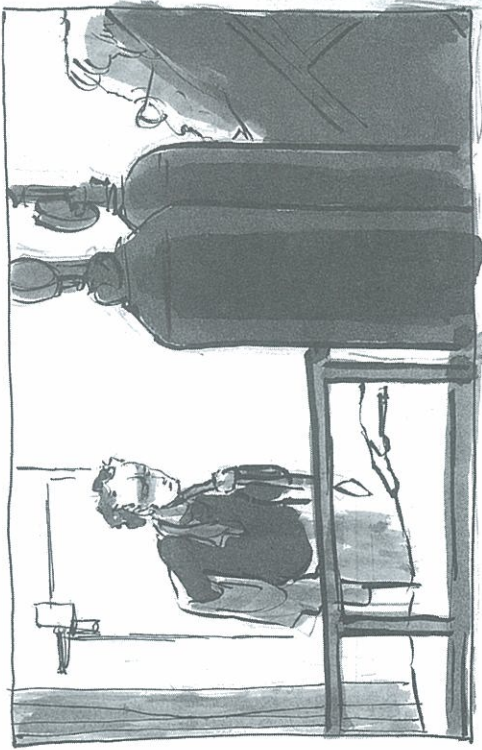
AT 30, WHEN I WAS TEACHING DRAWING
AT A COLLEGE IN UPSTATE NEW YORK,
DAD CALLED ONE NIGHT FROM DETROIT.
MOTHER WAS DYING, HE SAID. I SHOULD
COME QUICKLY.
ALONE IN THE CAR, I SCREAMED
ALL THE WAY BACK TO MICHIGAN.



I WASN'T SCREAMING IN ANGER OR RAGE OR
AT THE THOUGHT OF AN IMPENDING LOSS. I HAD
LEARNED THAT SCREAMING THICKENS UP THE
VOCAL CORDS. ALREADY THIS HAD GIVEN ME BACK
SOMETHING OF A VOICE. SO, I TOOK EVERY OPPOR-
TUNITY TO BE ALONE, TO SCREAM, OR SING
OR TELL MYSELF STORIES AS LOUDLY AS I COULD.



SHE COULDN'T TALK
AND NEITHER COULD I.
I HAD BEEN SCREAMING
FOR SO MANY HOURS
THAT I, TOO, WAS
VOICELESS.



MOTHER DIED THAT NIGHT.

