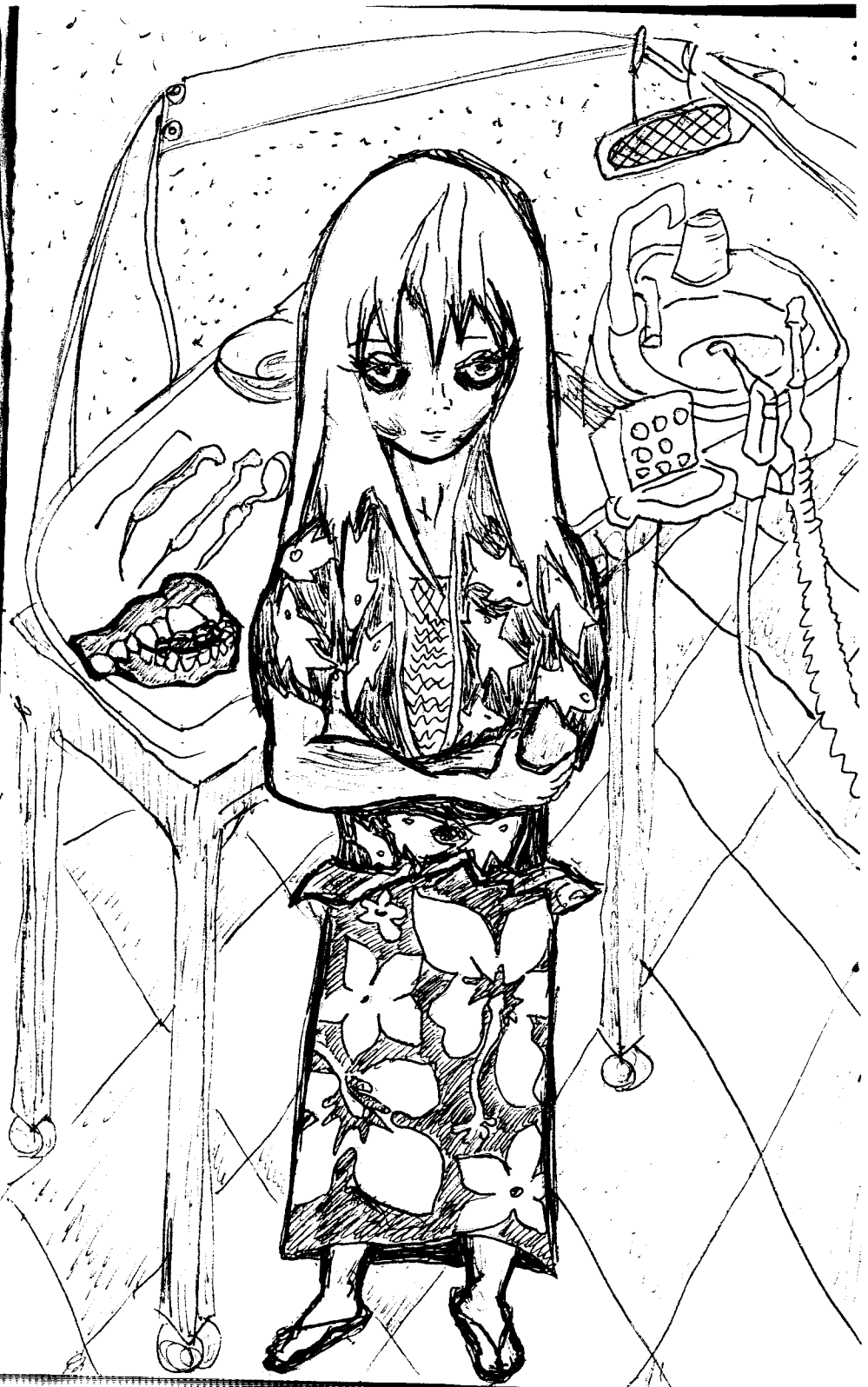


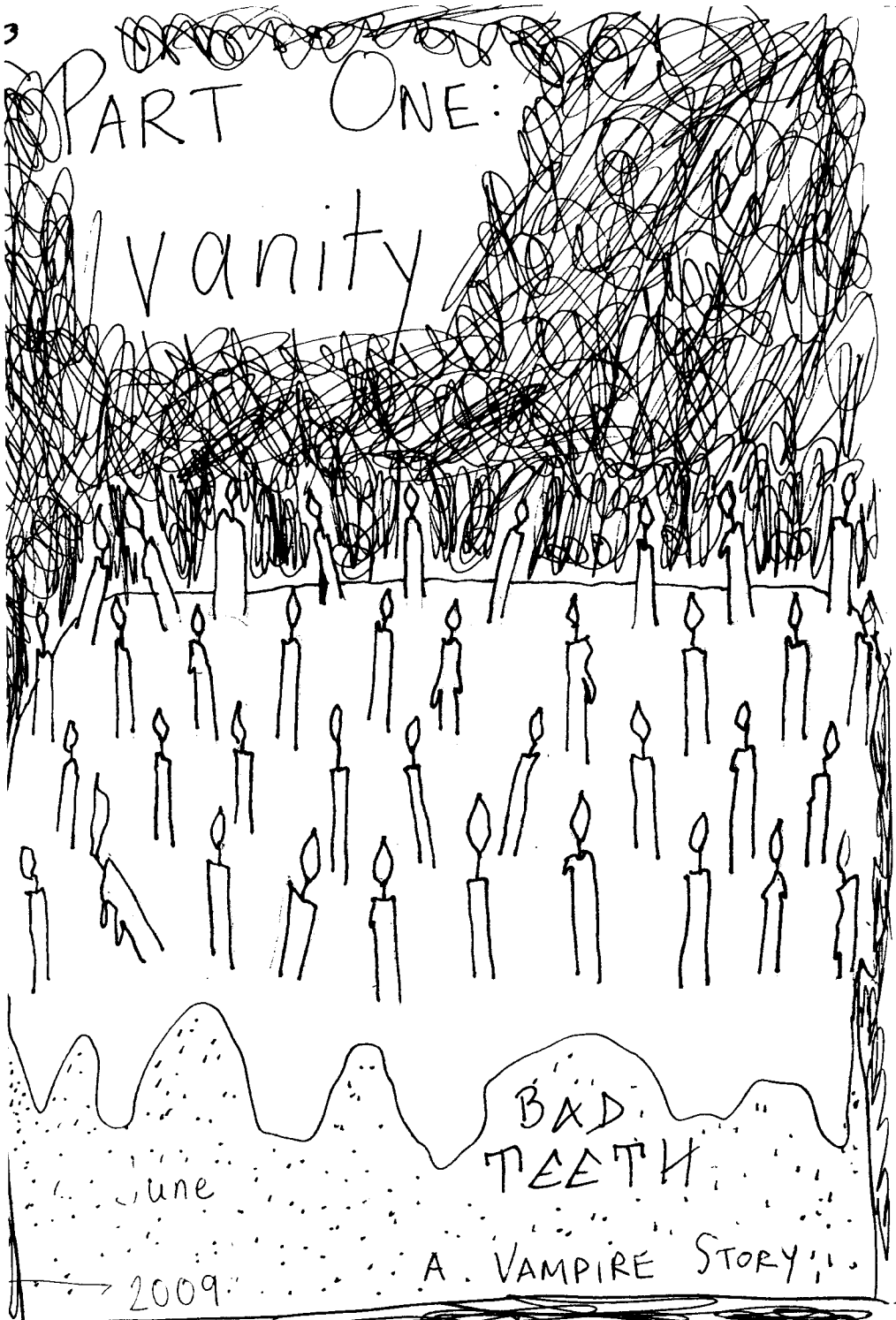
BAD TEETH

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Hand-drawn stylized text and symbols. At the top, a series of vertical, jagged shapes resembling teeth or spikes. Below that, three large, outlined triangles. At the bottom, the word "TEETH" written in a large, bold, jagged font.





PART ONE:

Vanity

BAD
TEETH

June

2009

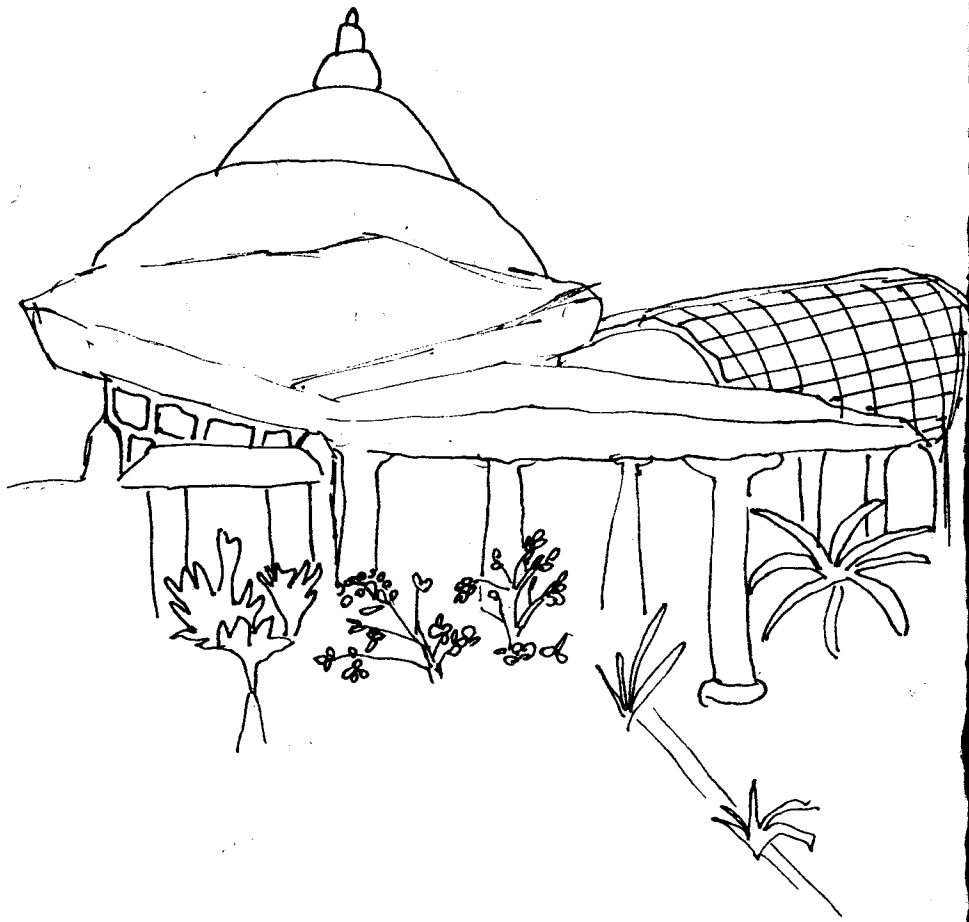
A VAMPIRE STORY

DRAFT

PART ONE vanity

CHAPTER ONE

The Library



It was a cellar door, and the trap door lifted to a big opening.

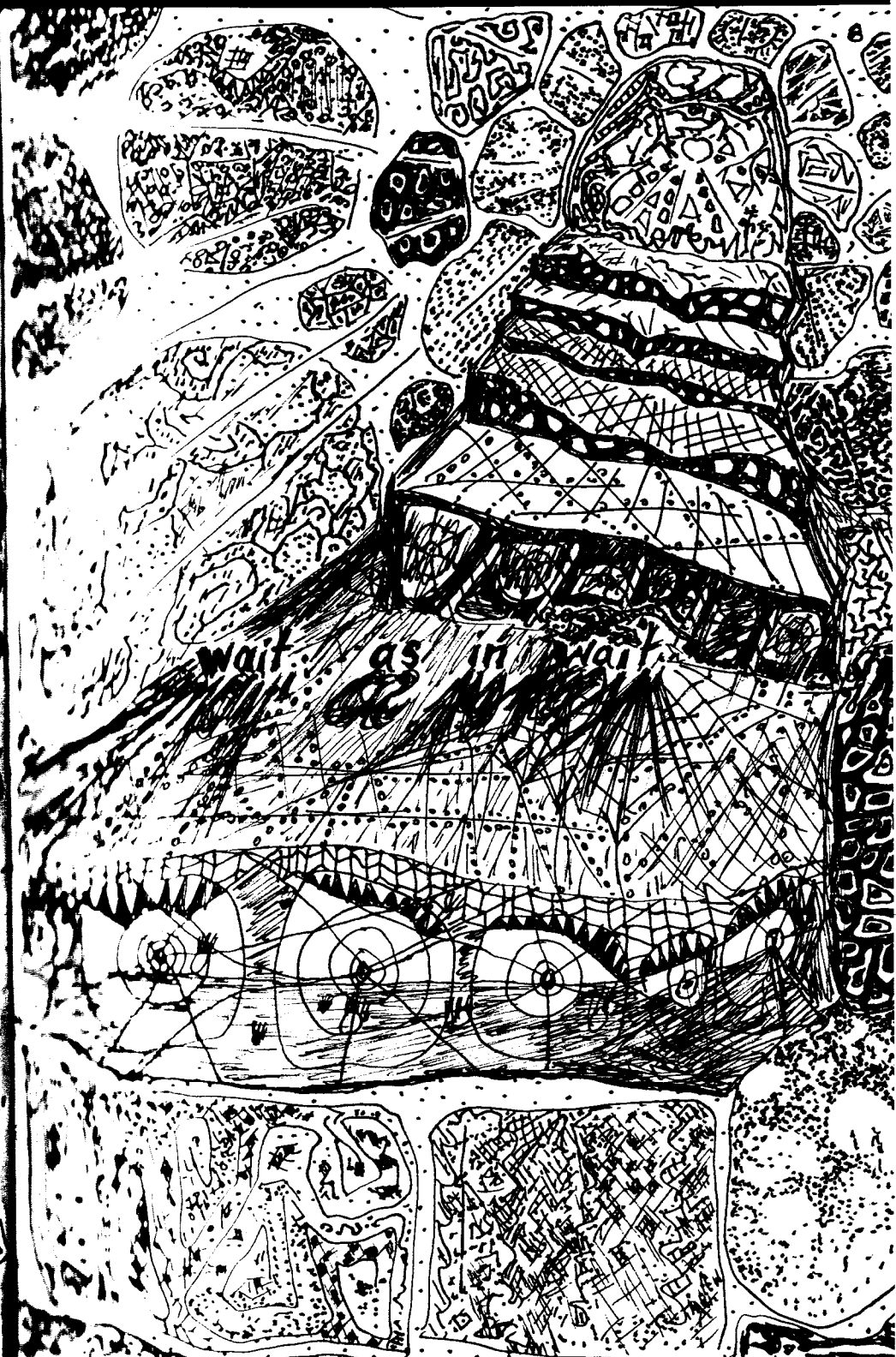
It led into an archway and down big cellar steps. The walls were brown and grey. And so grainy, I had lost my color vision.

Where'd my color vision go?

I turned to look back and saw blue which was a relief.

I turned around to go down back into the brown. We were only going into the library, the exciting library.

I knew he was a madman when he reached the bottom and the heaviness of Wait was there.







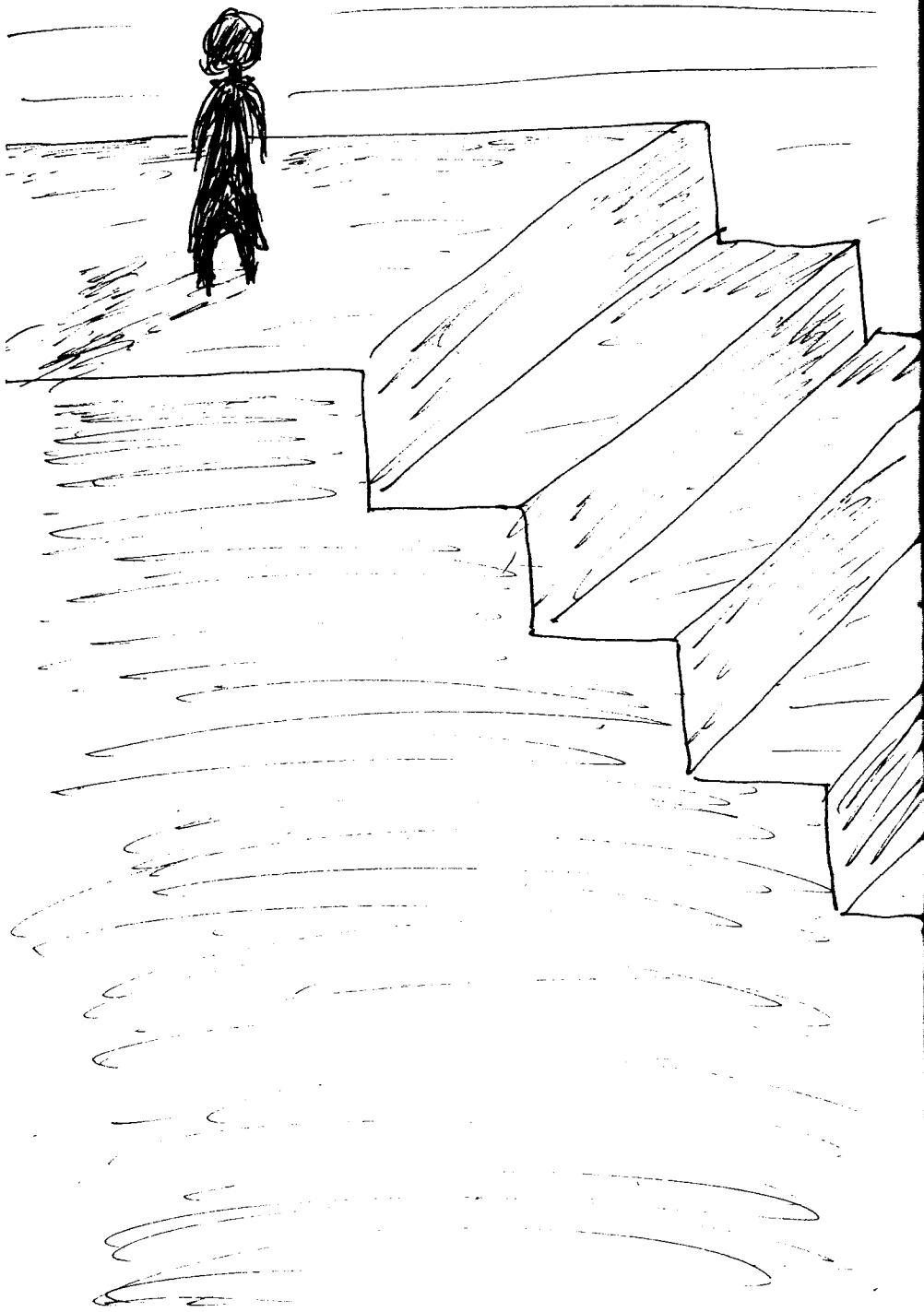
People started thronging down the stairs, the normal flow of parents with their children going down into the children's section to seat them in the dank coziness of the reading carpet.





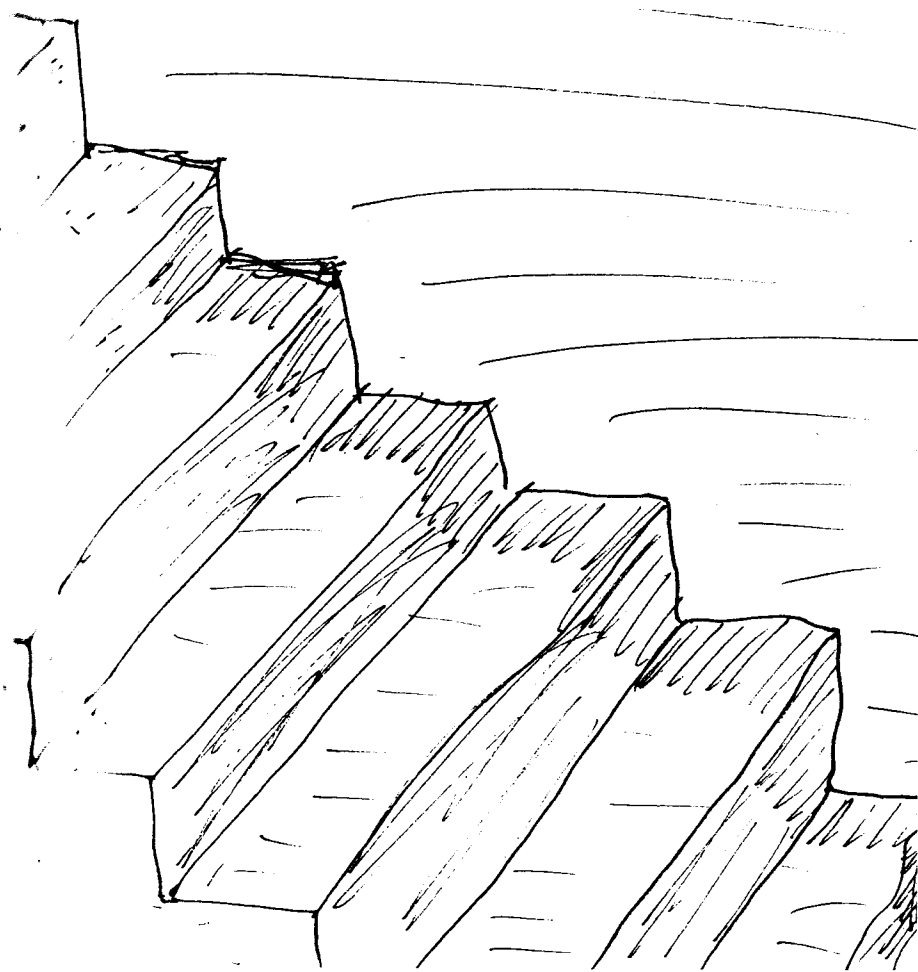
Reese was only half sleeping.
His eyes were glazed and he was
looking blankly out towards the
far wall.

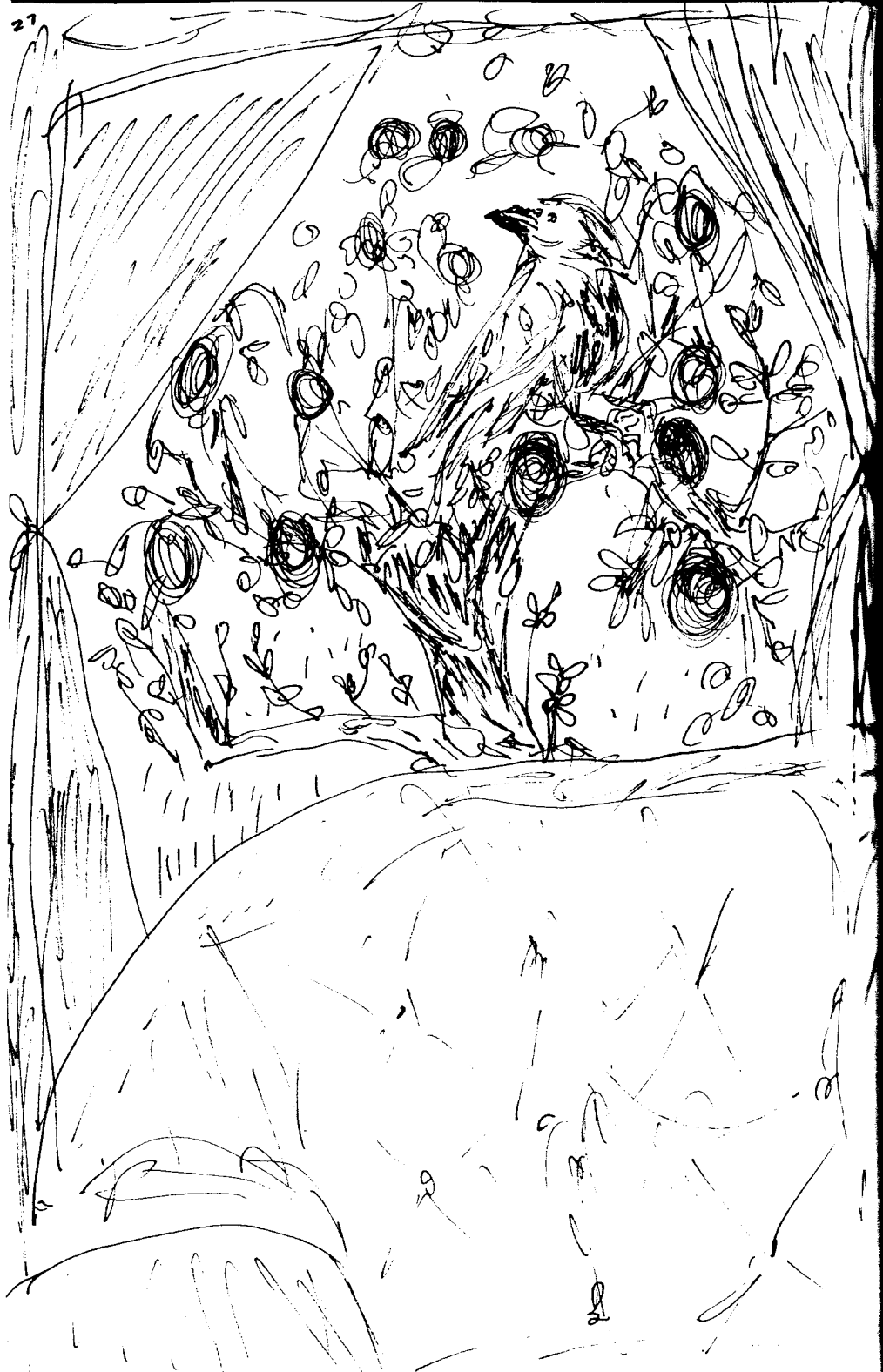




For some reason I thought in a lonely way of how Sheldon had gone up the stairs and locked me in.

Stay locked out Sheldon! stay locked out.



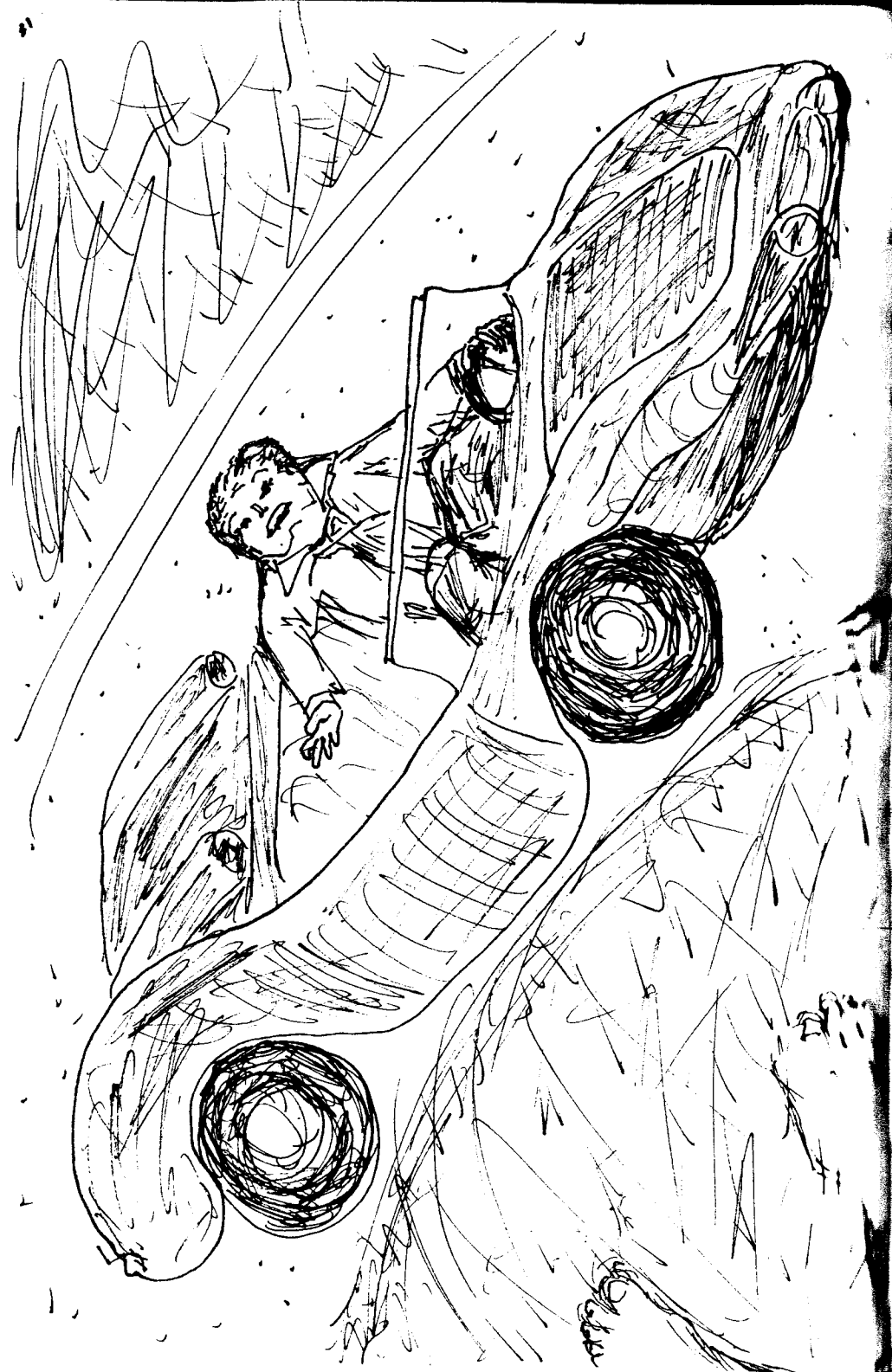


You know, when you are smart beyond belief, loyal, beautiful and witty, it's hard sometimes to accept you will never be a wife.

I tried to keep a good front, I can goad and I can kid, I can laugh and I can point out. I figured, I have to break up with him, let's see what happens.

I crawled into the house about 2 a.m., after the ball was over and Sheldon had let me out and thanked me. I slept on the couch, uncertain of how contagious I was.

Suddenly, the sun was shining and the birds singing in. I have to face him, and put on a cheery attitude to do it.



32
"Don't bother stopping by for another visit," I said as I leaned in the front window and smiled down at his lap.

Then I looked coyly up to him.
"I'm in love with another guy."

I wasn't really, of course, but it's the easiest way to drop somebody so they won't be coming back trying to patch things up. He wouldn't have suspected there was another reason even if I had been standing there with a gaping wound and blood gushing down from my torn throat. No, he'd be too busy testing himself and waiting for the results to see if he'd got VD.

At the dentist office, I cleaned another set of teeth. I actually enjoy cleaning teeth, go figure. It's sort of like standing at a sink washing dishes, same sort of calm knowledge about where everything goes and where everything ends. The bad smell doesn't bother me, the grit and decay, it's all understandable, it's all just like a car that needs to be fixed.

Today I was cleaning the teeth of a nineteen year old kid with two rows of teeth. No kidding, two rows. His mom had been too poor to have them pulled, and now here he was on his first visit to a dentist ever, his own money from working the car wash and having to hear what a professional opinion would be about his teeth.

You could tell he was squirming about it.



41
I was afraid that if I drove
touched someone with my bare
hands I might be again hit
with emotions that would make
my mouth water.

It's not enjoyable, for your mouth
to water.

As I drove home, I started having
doubts. How could I be sure
that these things were caused
by my just touching someone?

I saw a woman begging on the onramp
to the highway. Traffic was
locked at the light. I waved her
over, and when she came, I

92
reached my arm far out the window,
holding a handful of change in
my hand. I closed my hand
over her hand, to put the
money securely in her grasp,
and to find out what would
happen.



When you wait for money at the highway exit, people can't tell you once had dreams as a Hollywood star. Each car that goes by may look at your pretty face but when they drive past and look closer they see the wildness and hatred showing through.



She saw the worried expressions on people's faces when they saw her rehearsing her lines on a Hollywood street corner, talking to imaginary adversaries. It was only her regular clothes and regular features that on second take they'd figure out. But she didn't care then, here was the world of make believe and movies and there was the world of prep school and weirdos. Real weirdos were the incest-ridden hopeless contents of the hills. She wasn't content to be either prep school or weirdo — but she'd just get shrugging, trying to be helpful faces, eventually looking at her like she was a specimen, a wrongness to put on tweezers, to look at oddly.


45
She used to be, not where she
was supposed to like a stage,
but jump up on park benches
and across fences and stoops
and curbs and windows, wanting
people to play follow the leader



46
But now you're just a bitter
old grey haired thin, normal
looking except for the sign
that says homeless please help
and the look of hatred that
you give.

I dumped the money into her
hand, and gunned the
accelerator, feeling the familiar
feel of my car and its
movement away from her,
shaken from having had her
thoughts and memories inside
me.

Certainly my mouth would not
water for that.



Part One vanity
chapter FOUR

ICEES



She laughed. "No, actually I got bad teeth."

She opened her mouth. The man glanced in and winced.

"Not a vampire then," he said.

"He's a vampire," the villager said to her mother at the door.

Face expressionless, no pity, perhaps just disgust. Her mother stood there frozen, then closed the door firmly in the man's face.

"We're not trusted," and tears welled up, "We're here ages."

"Why are you in that skin?" the prosecutor said.

"To gain the bravery of your enemy, you eat his heart," her father answered. "If you're a mouse in a snake, you eat its heart from inside out. The skin's too tight, I can't get it off."

She imagined the man as a small boy, under the attack of an asthma fit, waking

67 gasping in his bed, the skin too tight.
she felt sad suddenly. "No, but my
father was killed as one."

"No!" the man said.

"I was five. He was on a business trip and
got hunted down."

"My god," the man said. "Well I'm sorry.
It must have been very rough."

"They had to execute him," she said.

"Oh no," the man said.

"I had only my mother, and she hated me."

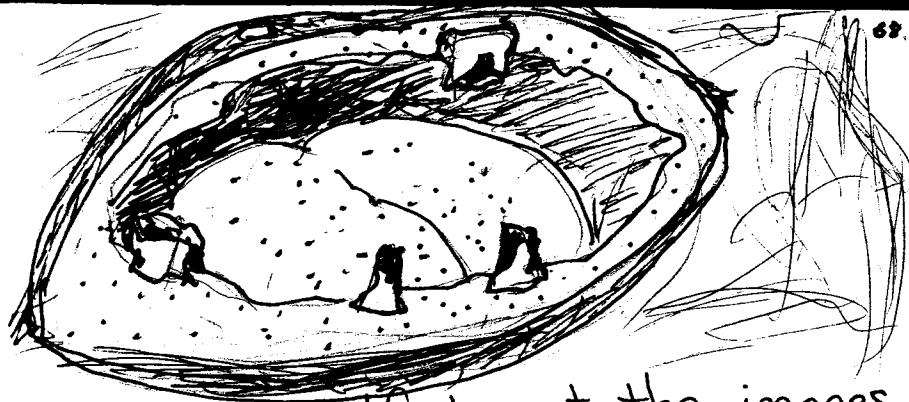
"Wo. I'm sorry," he said.

"Sometimes I'd eat just half an onion from
the trash all day."

The man didn't say anything to that. He
shifted uncomfortably in his seat and kept
driving.

"I'm Medji, by the way," he said suddenly, hold-
ing out his hand to her to shake.

"Magdalena," she said, smiling.



68
I forced myself to put the images
aside and study the teeth

There were only four teeth, actually,
and to think that those were
the good teeth allowed to
remain after the rest had
been pulled. Those four stumps
of leftover teeth were disgusting

From far away I seemed to hear
the girl answering, "the doctors
lost her dentures when she was
in surgery."



Remember that. You're nothing special.
Never be vain. I don't want him
to grow up and be like our parents.

He looked uncomfortable from talking about
his family. "What was that monument
I picked you up at?" he asked.

72
"Known to the locals, weird story," Magdalena
said, rummaging through her purse. "I'm
really hungry."

"Oh yeah?"

"Yeah, thought I might still have some
sushi in here."

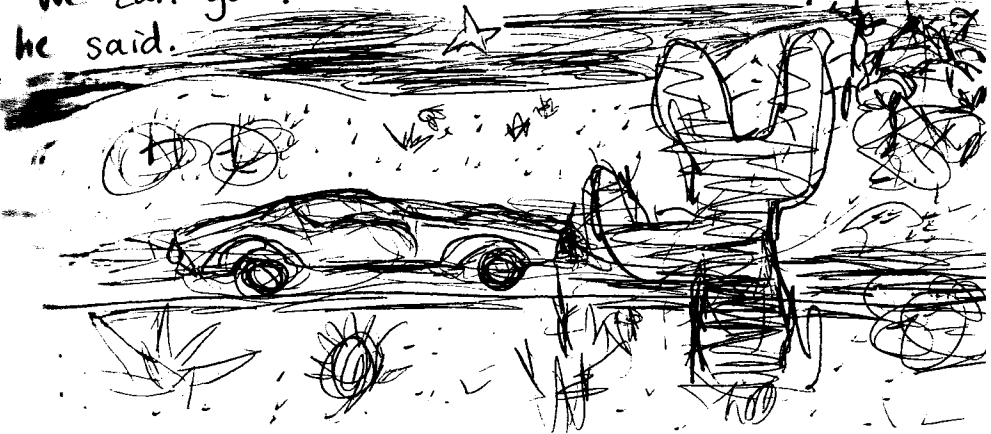
"What was the story?"

"Yeah. The guy we were hitching from.
Frozen seafood truck. He used to
deliver ice to it on his route." Then
he mumbled: "historic icee stand."

"Historic icee stand?"

"Damn it," she said, "I'm really hungry."

"We can go to a nice deli near my house,"
he said.





92
"Tomorrow night," I said. "I will make
a dinner. You can all come over for dinner

She touched my arm then, and led me over
to the dressing rooms. Her touch revealed
only images of dresses, flowered dresses
shark dresses, toe length dresses.

"How did you come to have your own shop
so young?" I asked her, as she pulled
back my sleeve and put a tape measure
around my arm.

"Shh," she said, "I'm measuring. Don't
want to write down the numbers incorrectly."

But her memories were drawn back to a
pink coverlet, and the sun shining in an
open window.

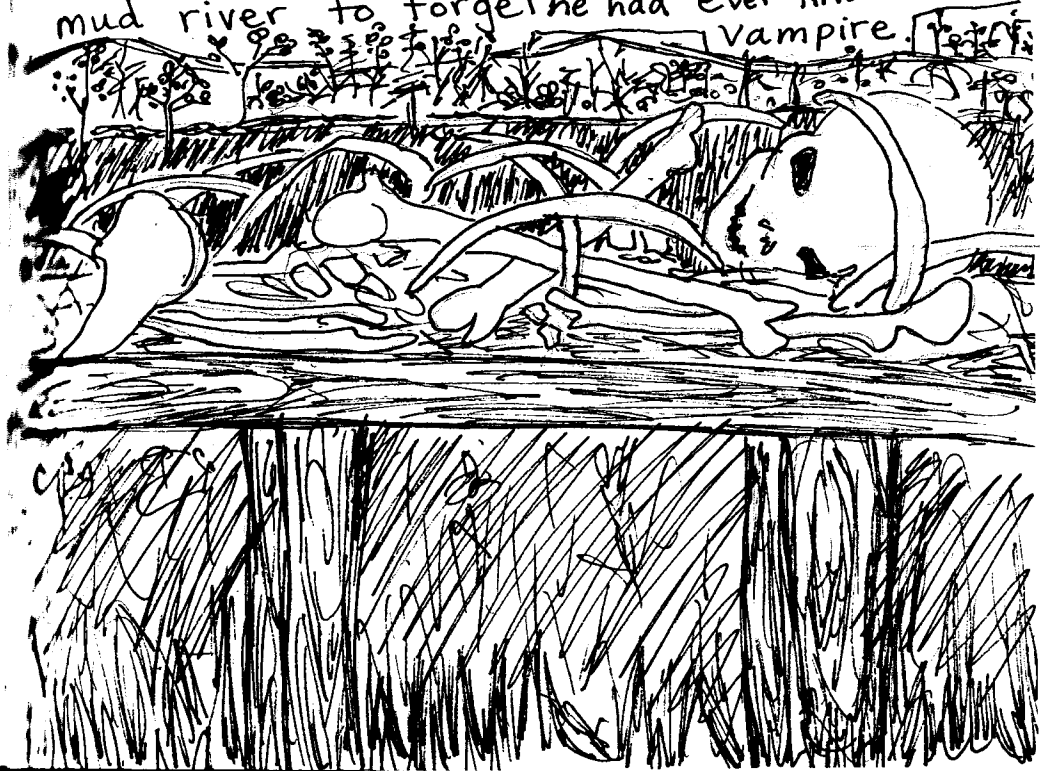




he didn't hear anything from him for more than a week, and then he came.

He came and left her hacked up into tender pieces, one on top of the other.

Outside the corral he laughed, raised his saw in victory, sawed the saw into the ground then brushed it off to satisfy himself the blood was gone. Then he came back with the dogs to eat his evidence and took the bones in a sack to bring home to his porch at his mom's. Upon his porch sill he bleached the smell out of them and gazed upon them and then dumped them in the mud river to forget he had ever known a Vampire.



"Is it everybody? She thought, as she drifted along the stream bed. Sometimes she thought of coming in the daytime and playing with the two kids who made the miniature forts and water dams.

The first person she overtook was a gardener cutting the grass of a lavender hedge.

"Morning," said the gardener, and tipped his hat to her, "how're you doin'?"

"Morning," she laughed, skipping past him, "I'm doing great, great."

"Hot out today," gardener said.

"Yep, summer's finally here."

And she rushed on, in excitement.



¹⁰³ "It's far."

"I don't mind walking. Remember, I'm strong from years outside playing mermaid and shark."

"I'm not a shark."

"I didn't mean it like that."

But he just stood there.

"I'm a model, you know I'm in good shape."

For a long time he stood there waiting for her to go. Then something snapped in him and he said, "ok then. Let's keep walking."





7 She wanted him to wake up, but he slept on, and it got dark, no moonlight, just wind curtains making shadows from the town lights outside.

Her hands fiddled with the empty dresser handles. She looked at the curtains' delicate lace and fine carelessness of embroidered hem, then got up and slipped out the door and went downstairs.

"Do you have any thread and needle?" she asked the man at the front desk.

"Try the drug store up the road," he told her.

She came back with needle and thread, and extra cash to pay for their stay.





"Why'd you think of popsicles?" he laughed, as they walked down the abandoned dirt road, juice dripping down their chins, Danielle carrying the small paper bag of goodies she had bought. The fields still swayed, and a tangle of trees and woods began.

She grinned a child's grin, and simply said, "I could live on popsicles if my mom had let me."

"Watch where you're going," a man stepped out from a tree and motioned a knife point at them.

Danielle dropped her popsicle and ran.

The man pointed his knife at Fink.

"Pull out your wallet," he said.

"Got no money in it," Fink told him, but the man pricked his knife at Fink.

He pointed the tip of it into Fink's chest to enforce his words, and then Fink laughed.

"What kind of knife you got there? Butter knife?"

And the man drove his knife and fist into Fink's chest. But the knife wouldn't sink even a bit into the finely threaded shirt.

"Get outta here, you Fink," Fink yelled angrily into the man's face, and the man started back then ran.



PART Two greed
 Chapter seven

Military life



"I don't know. The light played a funny trick with my eyes once when I first met you."

"I used to be amazed that I was alive at all, the probability of even being conceived so unlikely."

"You a miracle baby or something?"

"No, just the same as anybody else."

"Yeah? So what?"

"Maybe I should take a shower," she got up. She walked over to the bathroom door, took a folded towel off the sink counter, and closed herself into the bathroom.

She turned the water on, and undressed. He was right, the clothes were sweaty from two days walking.

She finished the shower and came out of the bathroom wrapped in a towel.

"Can I use the shirt I made you, as a night-shirt?" he handed it to her.

"I'll hand wash it in the morning," and she ducked back into the bathroom.

When she came out in it, she looked into the tooth-brush sink's mirror. It was as if made to be a night-shirt.

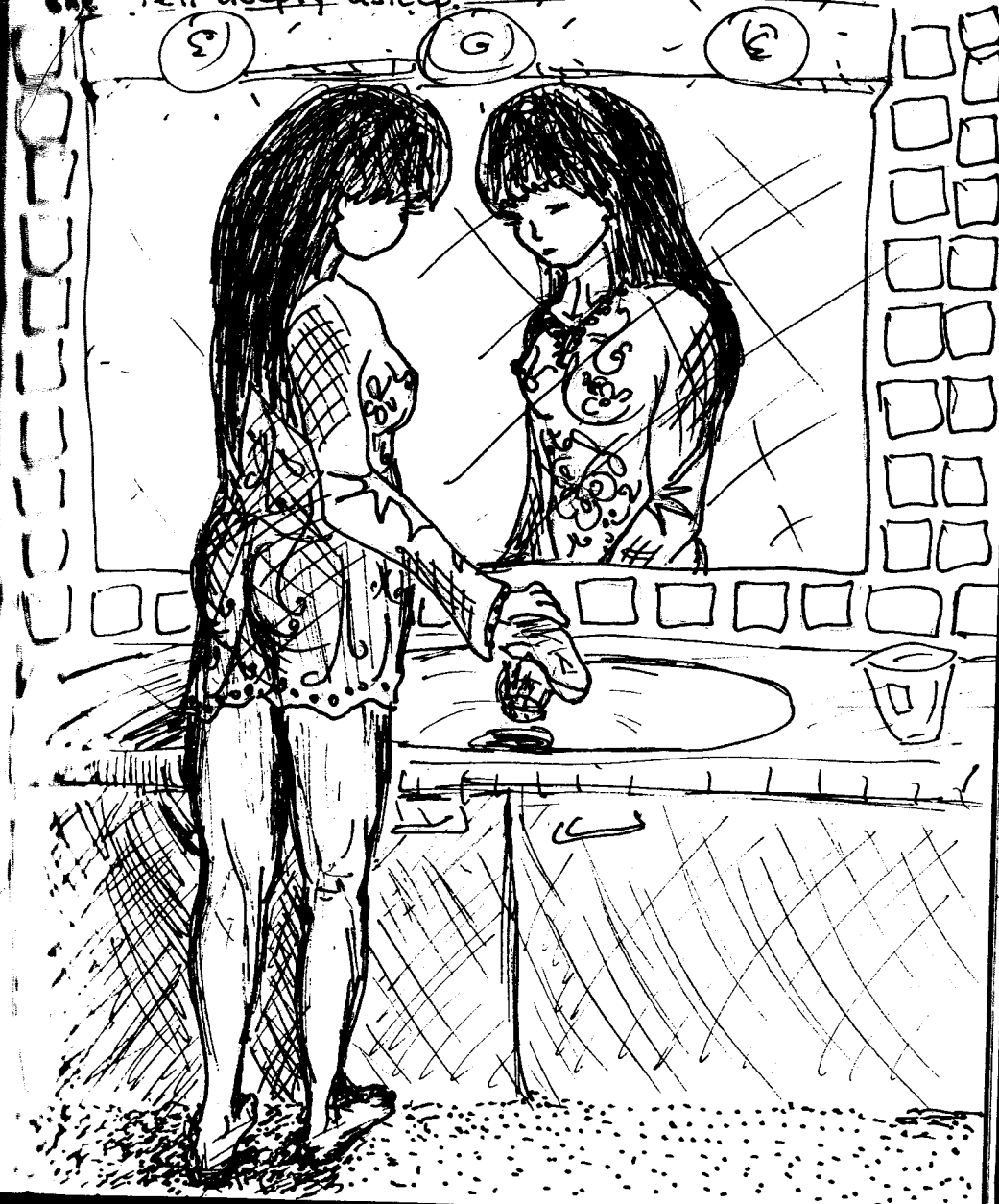
"I know it's see-through, but where I grew up, that's now the fashion was."

"Some sort of brothel?" he asked.

She laughed again. "Not in the least. It was the fashion."

"Hawaii?" he asked.

"I moved around a lot when I was a kid. My dad was in the military. When he went overseas, I got sent to live in New York with his cousins— You know, I'm tired," she answered. And she lay down and the exhaustion swept over her and she fell deeply asleep.



¹²⁵ "My grandfather was crazy, he was so wacked. His last day, he thinks I am my dad, I will always like him for thinking that. He didn't even notice I was definitely a girl by then. He's laying there dying, and sees me sitting on the chair across the room from him, and he goes

(imitating)
'Harry?'

And I look behind me, see because I think my dad must have come back, but it's just me. And he is going

(imitating)
'Harry? Don't you go AWOL on me, don't you take up the dishonor.'

And I'm like, 'honor?' Because it's a little hard to hear him, and he is going

(imitating)
'When I was in the army, nothing would've made me take the dishonor.'

So he goes on, he says,

'I killed a man in a restaurant, because that was my order, and didn't hesitate two seconds.'

¹² Only thing that made his stomach turn, he says, is he had to shoot him once more to get the other three quarters of his head, to finish the job, and the horror of imagining how that man felt waiting for the second shot to die.



"Their women mafia steal men from our world who have gone AWOL and use them as illegal gladiators. For their amusement."

Fink looked disconcerted. They walked on in silence for quite a while.

"Our army knows," she began again. "They want those men gone. They trade for science. Military science."

Fink still didn't say anything.

"They like men from this world so much better," she said.

"What do you want to do, more than anything else in the world, Danielle?" Fink suddenly asked her.

"There's one thing I want."

"What's that?"

"Don't laugh."

"What is it?"

"I want to be a famous seamstress."

"A seamstress? That's your dream in life?" he laughed.

133 "You don't understand, Fink. The land was so beautiful, and that's what was important, the style and luxury. I made the most beautiful clothes when I was there."

"Well pick up where you left off. Make your dresses here. Be famous."



¹²⁷ That night I couldn't sleep. It scared me that I couldn't sleep, that I may be awake when I transformed, so I got up and made myself a nightcap. It would put me to sleep.

I still couldn't sleep, so I went to Greg's office desk and took out a pad of paper and started writing. I wrote notes of what I had learned so far. I poured myself another nightcap, and another.

I awoke at four in the morning with my head on the table, drool pouring out over all I had written. Water in my mouth again, I thought disgustedly. The side of my face hurt from lying on paper, and my neck had an awful crick in it. I picked up the paper and was amazed by the amount I had written. It wasn't just notes, it was pages and pages on the transformation I had gone through, the screaming agony, the aliveness in my mouth.

Well, here's proof I don't go out at night and hurt people, I thought to myself.

¹²⁸ Midway through the top page, the words trailed off and the drool poured out. I looked at myself in the mirror, my left side of my face looked like smeared newsprint. I splashed water upon my face and crawled into bed for another hour of sleep.



PART THREE disquiet
CHAPTER twelve

No island



CHAPTER thirteen

The forgotten



156
Vertigo, blackness in blackness, and then the child closed its eyes. At once Fink's balance returned, and he saw flashes of babies, how they died and who killed them. The soldiers who pulled off their tiny limbs in games, or swung their small bodies by their ankles to bash the heads in against trees, or skewered them like meat on their bayonets, all to save bullets. And how the babies took it in so calmly. It was all they knew, and they had come to expect it.

Fink let go. The visions immediately passed with the release of his touch, and the child opened its eyes. He was just looking into the opening eyes of what looked to be a five year old girl. Steady, devoid of reaction, but alive.

"You can't go," she was saying to him.

Fink just stared at the child, wondering about the pictures he had seen, the pictures that had happened with his touch. Tentatively, thoughtful he put out his fingers; the girl closed her eyes and he touched her shoulder.

And again he saw pictures, this time of dark tiny stars and the inside of an exploding ship.

And again he let it go.

151 "I'm hungry," she said.

"I don't have any food," he answered.

"I want a cooked chicken from the store," she said.

"I don't have any money," he said.

"It's ok," she said, and started to walk in a way as if he'd follow. So he did.

The area of town where she walked was still awake, with old houses and lights on, and some louder people on porch steps, the neighborhood supermarket spilling its lights upon the street.

She went in, and he went in and they walked up past the open freezers and dairy shelves, and looked at the aisles and deli walls and she then smiled and said,

"You're shining."

Everything was shining in the artificial light, and the people after hours seemed animated and quiet.

"Thank you," he said, and tousled her hair, while she screwed up her face and looked at the ground. But all he saw was her imagination of him hovering above, tall, blonde curly hair making a cloudy glow around his round, large smiling face. He was so big from his perspective that he laughed.



165 I picked up Danielle, as I had planned, and carried her out to the living room to my couch. Danielle too seemed in the midst of memories of the same Vegas trip.

Niko, outside the hotel's ground floor balcony, walked away into the night. She smiled at Chris and Danielle, inside on the other side of the sliding glass door. She walked into the soft dirt outside, where there was grass and twigs to explore in the landscaped paradise and pebbles to collect in the dirt late morning.

Then it was dusk.

In the upstairs stairwell there was a window to the outside. It was a night celebration going on. The common hall was black silhouettes

"Why is it Halloween decorations in the spring?" Danielle asked Chris, as they walked through the college party in the hotel.

"They don't know what else to represent it with," Chris answered her.

The hotel stairwells and common hall were decorated for Halloween. Orange and black crepe paper hung down in streams. Black silhouettes of gargoyles and monsters.

It was an annual celebration, and a maze of decorations.





"Why is it, ~~Hallo~~ Danielle, asked again
"what else to represent the equinox with?" Chris
answered her.

"They could have flowers! I know! Venus fly
traps and such!" she exclaimed

Beautifully colored fly Traps and exotic flesh-
eating imaginary plants climbed up in vines
where the previously orange and black crepe
paper had streamed down from.

Before the words had finished shooting from
her mouth, though, everything began to go black
as if eaten from the corner across the page.

Danielle and Chris were lying on blankets
on the floor as the sun came up. The
day was barely lit, sparkling dew, early
morning radiant sun.

Chris was completely painted in body paint from
the party, dark brown
and cream stripes,
'tigeresque' and
'Zulu.'



19 Danielle's body had fallen mostly off the blankets. The cold floor under her legs woke her. She turned her head to look at Chris, tiger striped, and then over to the window.

She saw Niko walk up toward the glass door from far away, smile slowly, and wave, then walk away. Danielle again turned and looked at Chris, saw that Chris was painted, and wondered why.

She fell asleep again.

Hours later the two woke up. They were very groggy and just lay there.

Eventually Danielle rolled toward the glass sliding door. It was late afternoon, the sun at about 3 o'clock. She noticed a small indentation in the floor next to her. The floor she lay on was slightly raised, and the indentation separated her from the balcony by about a foot. The trench ran about five feet long. She sleepily looked into it and saw it was all grass, and there were many green creatures there in the green grass.

"Look Chris," she said, amused, "there are frogs here."



Toads emerged, squatter than frogs, but the same color.

"There are toads too!" she said. "There are so many of them."

Green lizards also were crawling around in the grass, crawling up through hiding places and crawling around in the grass, slinking beneath green rocks and leaves.

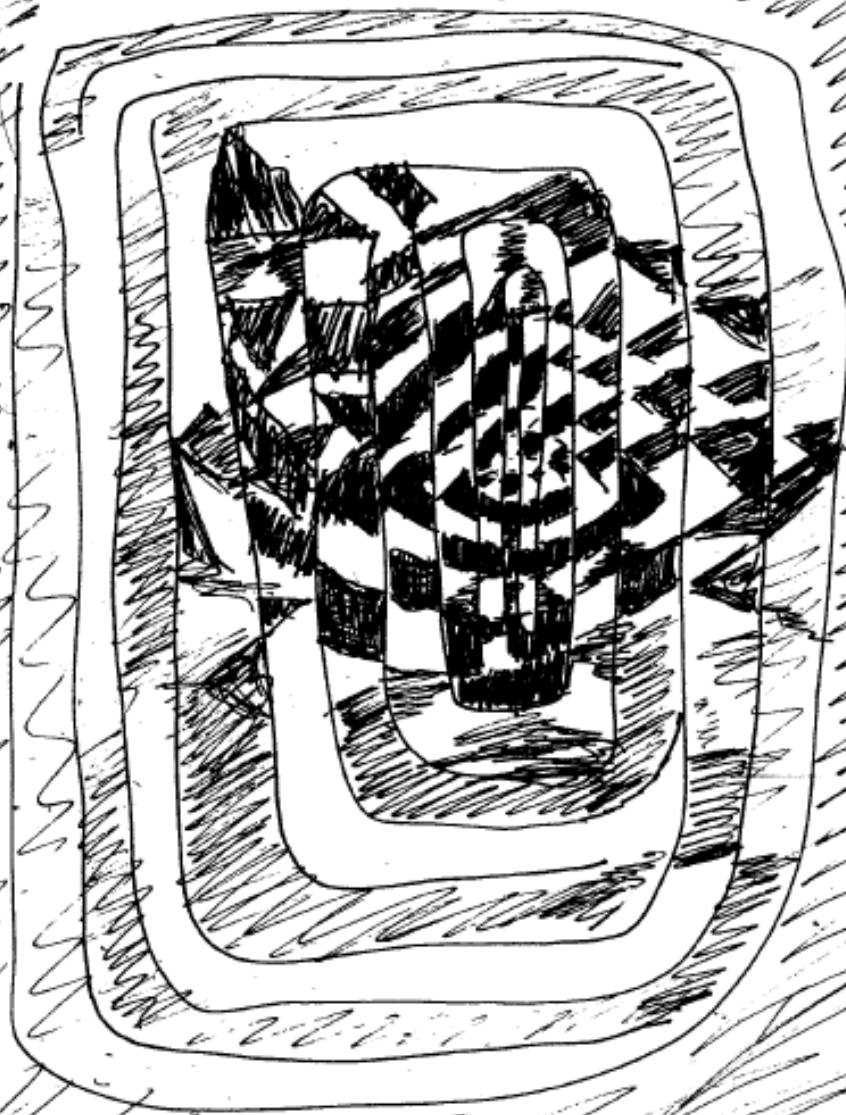
Chris grunted questioningly but not really interested, more interested in sleep.

"And they're all green. And lizards too! There are so many of them—"

She suddenly stopped, then looked up at the glass

Part Two greed
Chapter nine

Worm hole



— in your Danielle's name, barely aware that
Niko was watching us. She had been watching
Danielle's memories along with me, like a tv.
I reached over and held out my hand to Niko.
She closed her eyes obediently, to avoid the
worm hole.

She watched Danielle, through the trees on the
dirt and sand, sleeping by a pond. It was
cooler here, and Danielle's hair had grown
wilder and matted. The water lapped against
the shore.

Niko got up and started gathering sticks and
pebbles.

Then she started making a castle.

Her hand relaxed, and like children can do in an
instant, she fell asleep. Her thoughts turned
to dreams. The lapping water turned to the
sound of rain outside the dark window

Niko's rainy window to leave dark. Sleeping at
that window darker and slamming the front
door and breathless and pointing. "I ran so
fast right between the raindrops," Chris said
to her when he came home. To goal to
run so fast when she is bigger near the
streetlamp she can see the raindrops magnified
and she will one day race dry.





Niko walked through her grandparents' big Beverly Hills house. Two weeks ago, at the end of the funeral, Magdalena had wandered off, out of the cemetery, and left Niko behind. Niko came to a painting. It was of vampires fighting angels.

Her grandmother walked into the room and for a few seconds stood there quietly looking at the painting too. "Yes, that's why your grandfather and I have hated your mother so much," she said.

"Sounds like you're prejudiced," Niko told her.

"You are a stupid, stupid child," the old woman said. "You know nothing about what you're talking about."

"I want to go to her," Niko said.

"Blaspheme the memory of your dead father!" hissed her grandmother.

A taxi stopped in front of the house. There was no way to tell for sure what the address was because the front door, where the street number should have been, was covered. In fact, the whole house was covered. It was covered in a termite tent. The driver opened the taxi door for the little four year old, and walked her up the front steps to knock on the zippered shut tent.

Magdalena answered the knock. She took Niko inside.