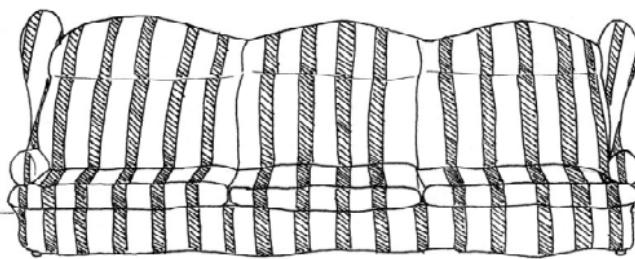


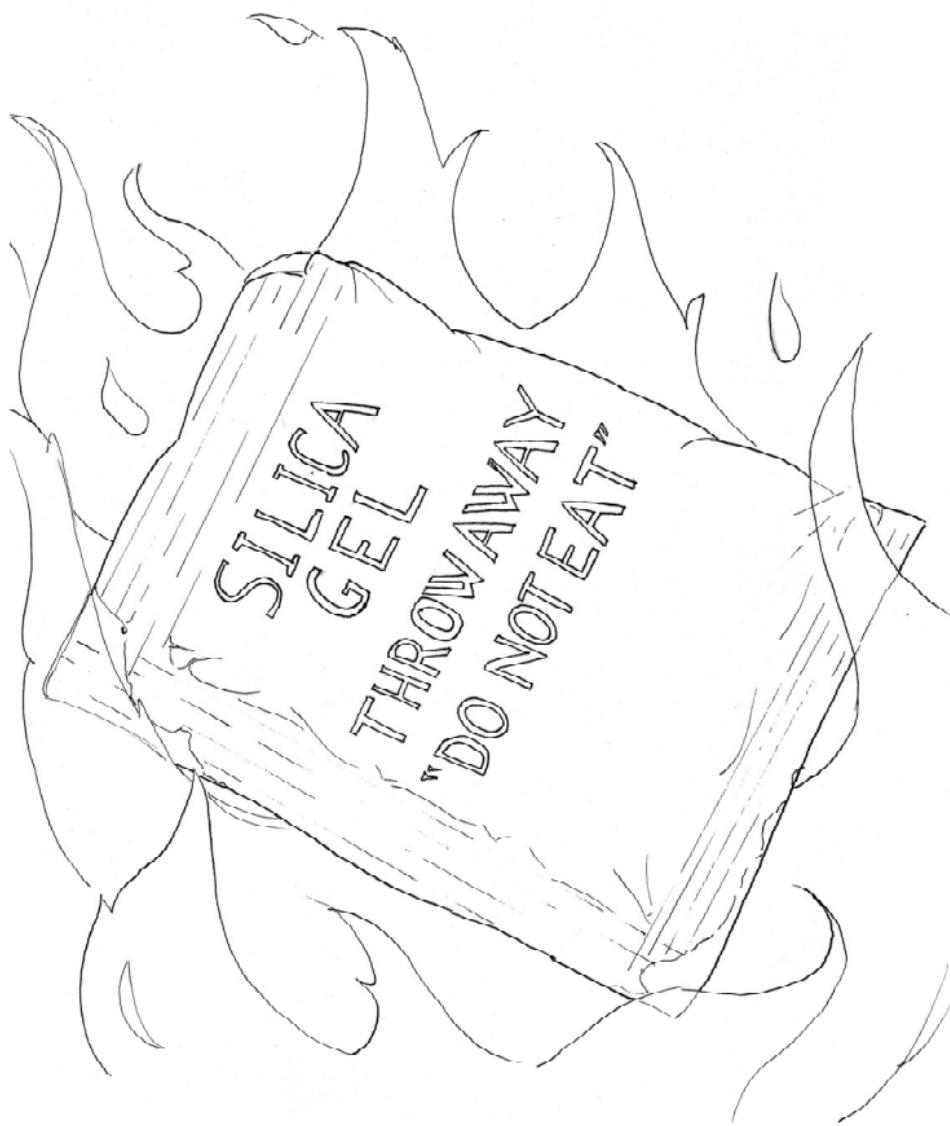
And Inside That



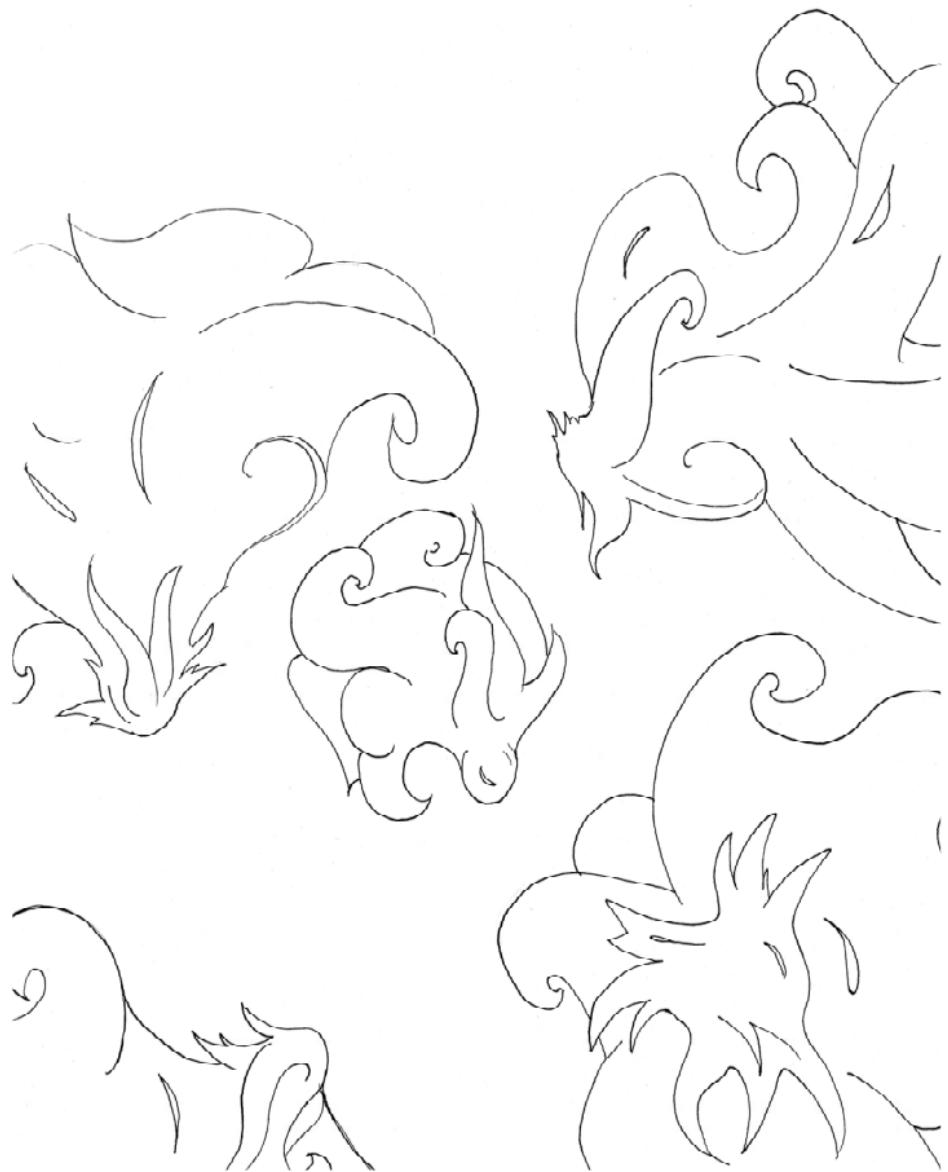
What's in the fire?

Beef, chicken.

Balls of silica from the inside cover of a first edition copy of the 1954 Ford Helpless maintenance manual.



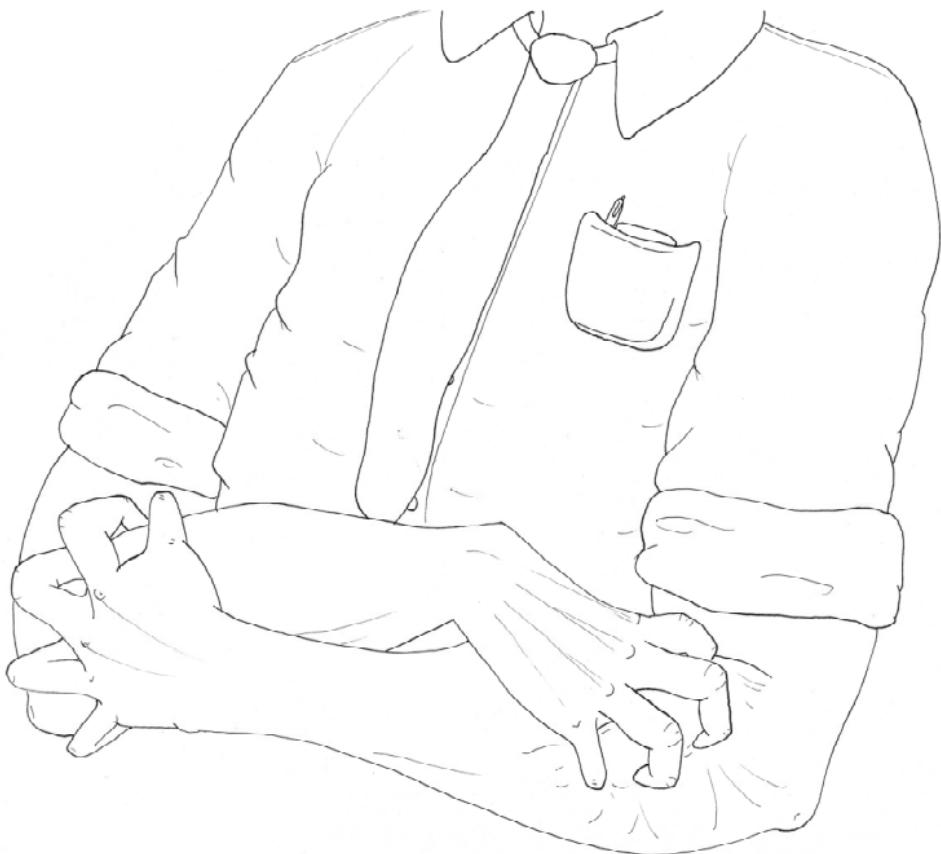
And inside one of those balls  
are little beads of light that  
explode when spoken to.



When I was a little boy

my father was very distant.

I would come home from school and he was always busy with his head on his desk, trying vainly to scratch his forearms until they bled.



"They only bruise," he would lament, "and the blood is just not there."

But there was one night, a  
summer's night in December, when  
he came closer--

if only for a moment.

It was just after dinner and Mother was still in the basement rubbing blue ink into her petticoat.



I was sitting on the floor rolling marbles under the couch, hoping to discover something intimate about the emotion of regret.

Father was scratching his eyelids  
and was wearing his New York  
Wallabies ballcap.

(The Wallabies have been my  
favorite baseball team for as long  
as I can remember.)

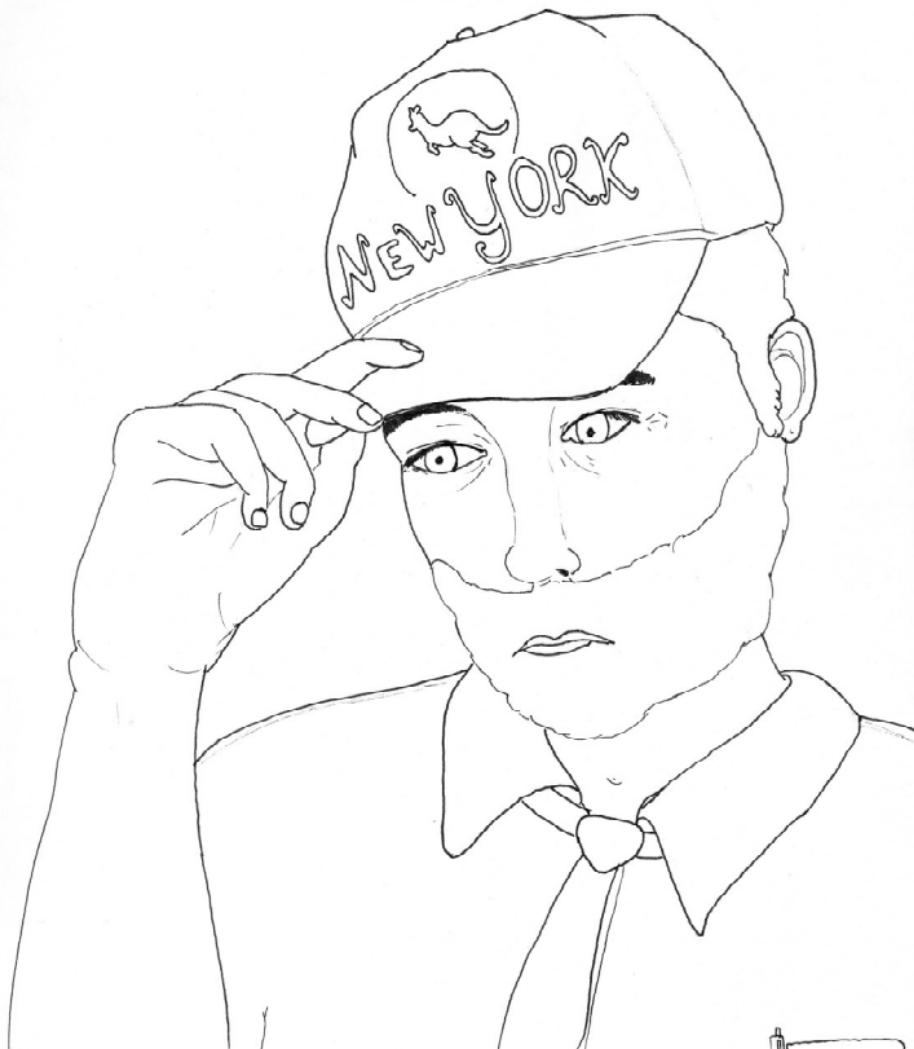
Suddenly, he stopped his  
scratching and looked at me.

"James," he said, in a voice so gruff that I looked up to him with fear. "James," he said again, this time in a loving voice,

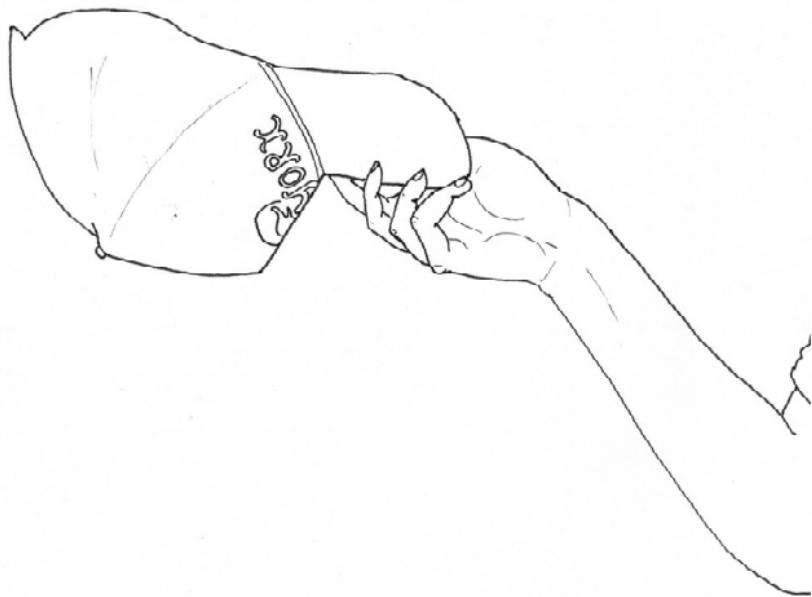
"I'm almost there."



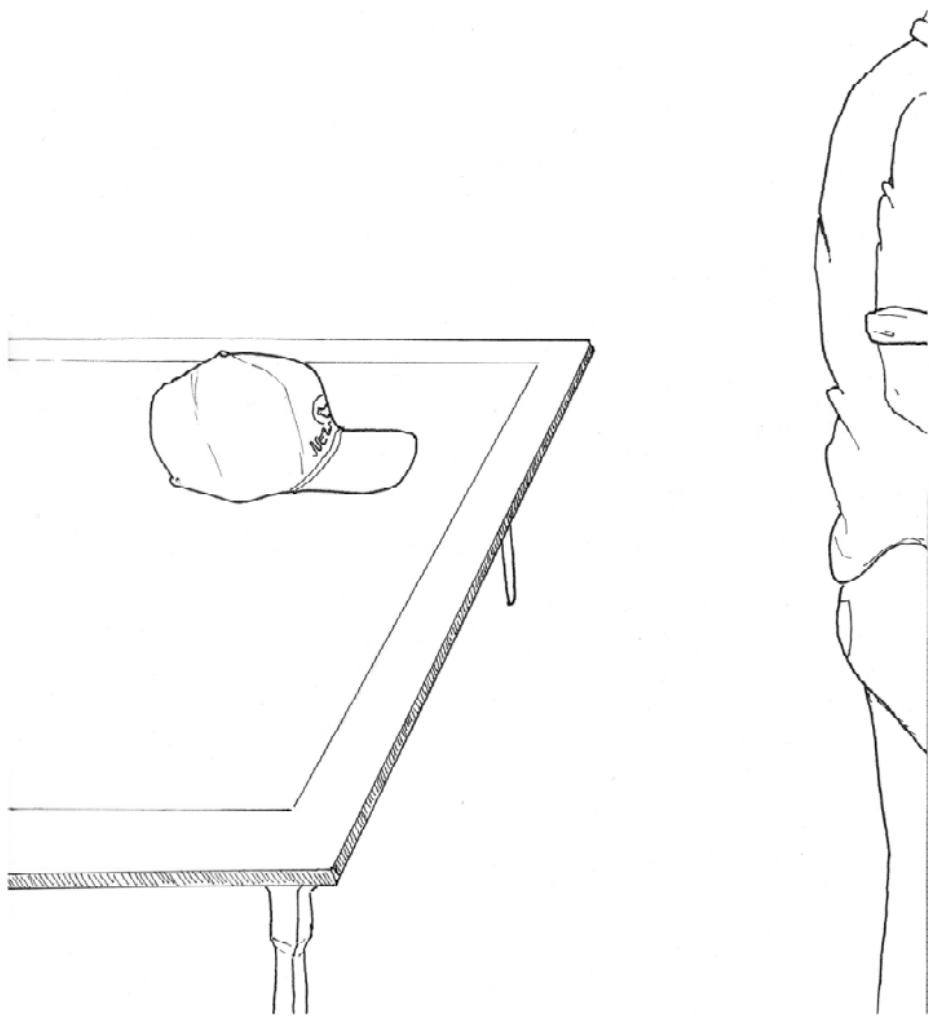
Had I been a bit older I might  
have been able to think of  
something to say quick enough.



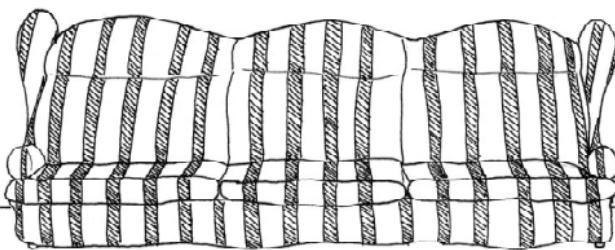
But sadly, I had  
nothing to say at all.

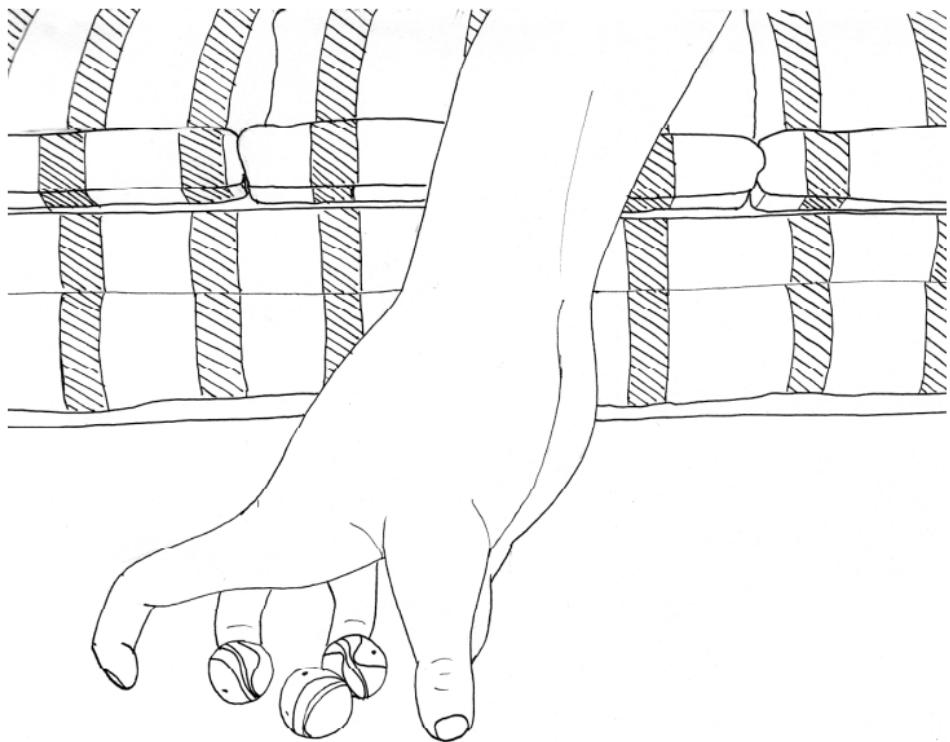


The moment was ruined by  
its silence, and because  
of it Father turned away  
from me just as quickly as  
he had thought of me.

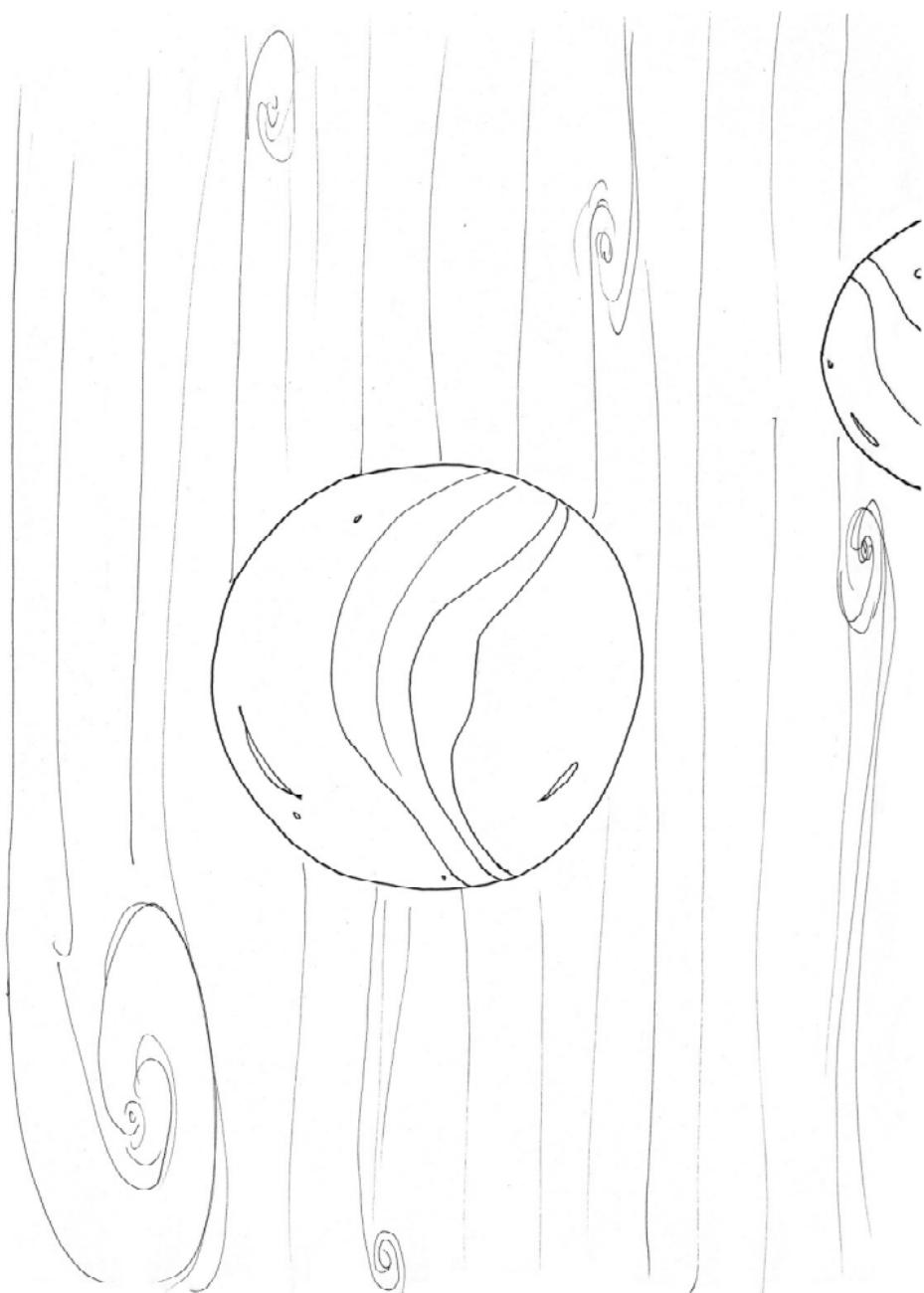


I was enraged: at myself, at Father--even at Mother for not having been there to prevent the awkward moment from ever occurring.





I grabbed my last few marbles,  
embarrassed,  
and ran out of the room.



Somewhere in the Ford Helpless  
maintenance manual you might  
find a cartoon I scribbled of a  
stick figure walking his dog.

I drew that cartoon just after  
I ran out of the living room  
with my marbles.

4.3  
C A U T I O N :     M U S T    V A L V E    T I M I N G

- ① Do not touch the cylinders, pistons or engine is on.
- ② If you need to touch the pistons make off for at least half an hour.
- ③ Your car is a machine.

fire resulting from the ignited gasoline  
e that pressure has been successfully  
once the piston reaches the bottom  
thus wasting energy.



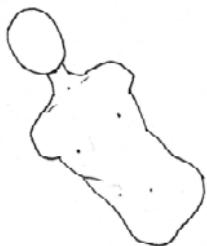
19



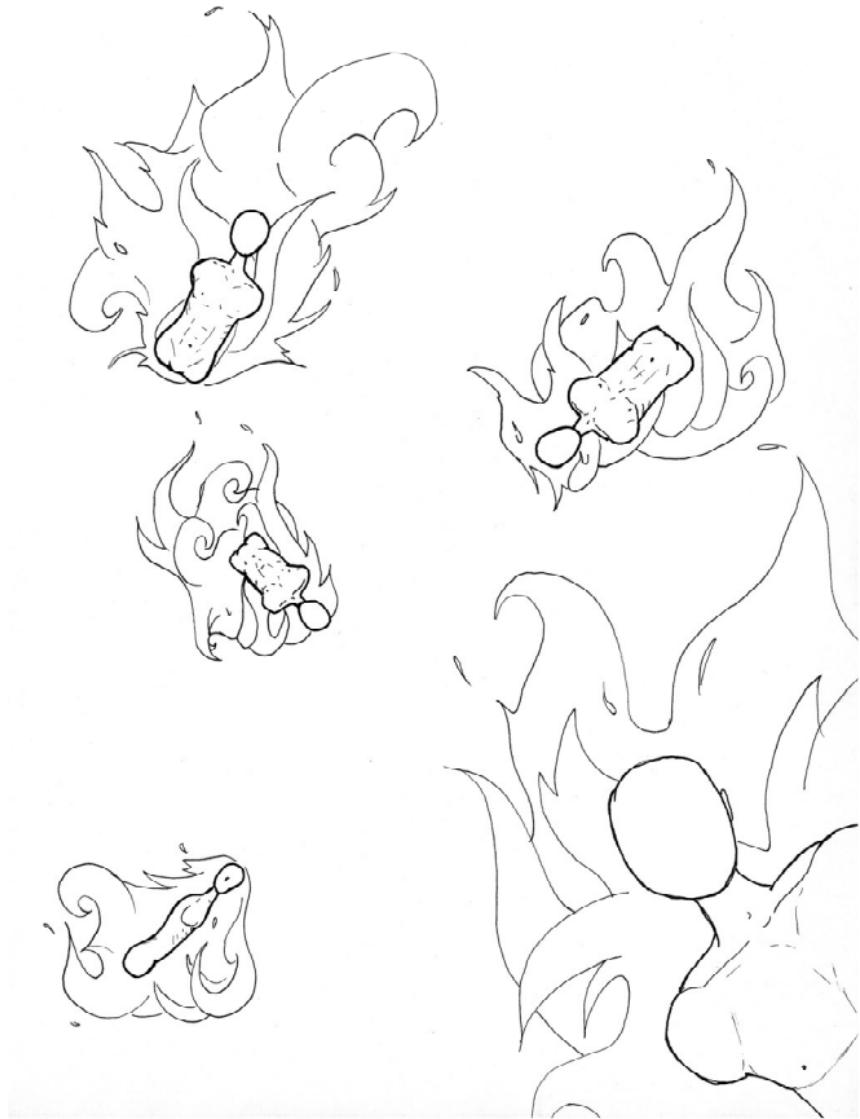
I drew the cartoon and then stripped myself naked and got into bed. I closed my eyes and fell immediately to sleep.

While I slept I dreamed of human torsos.

Faceless, limbless torsos--  
spinning in the air without any  
visible supports.



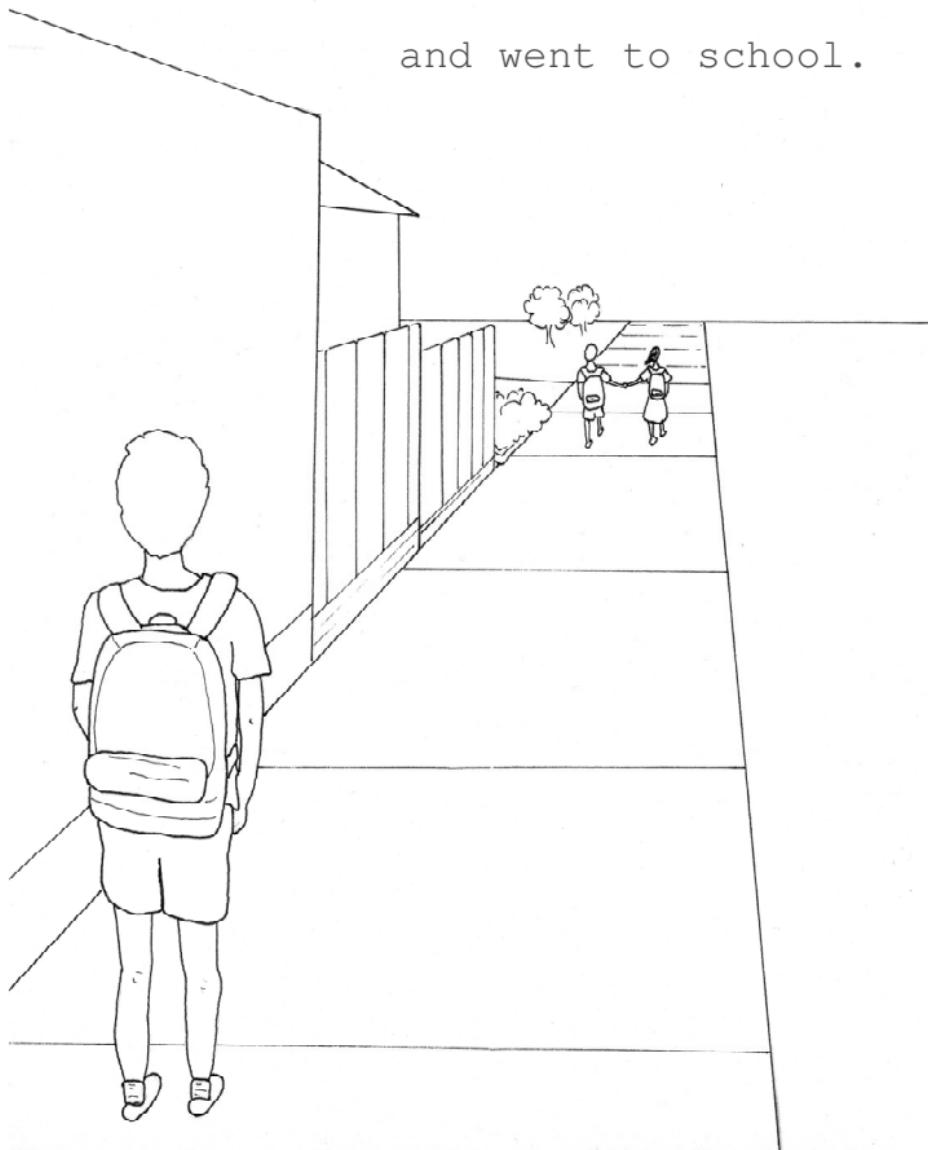
The torsos then combusted into flames and I started screaming.



They continued burning all night,  
until I woke up, at 7am.

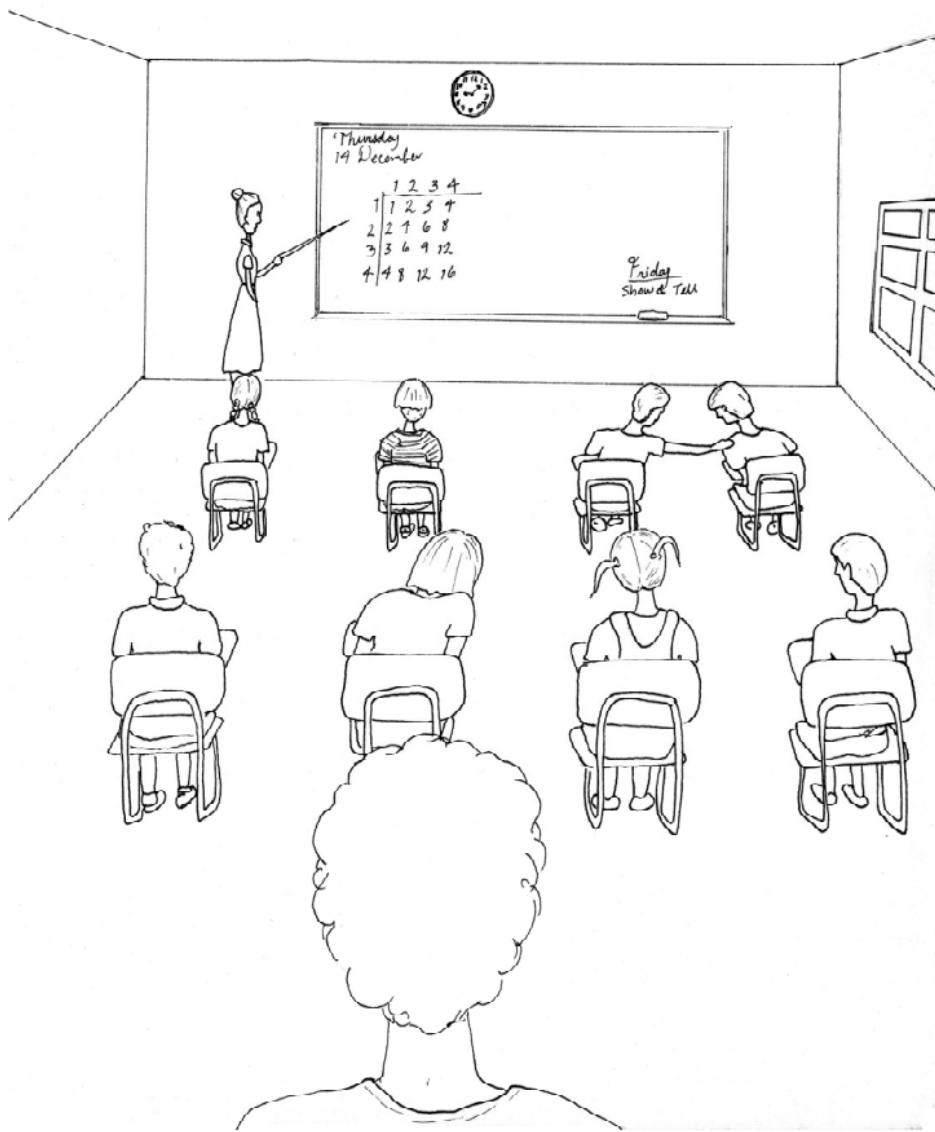
I got out of bed immediately  
(either exhausted or bored by  
the dream--I can't remember)

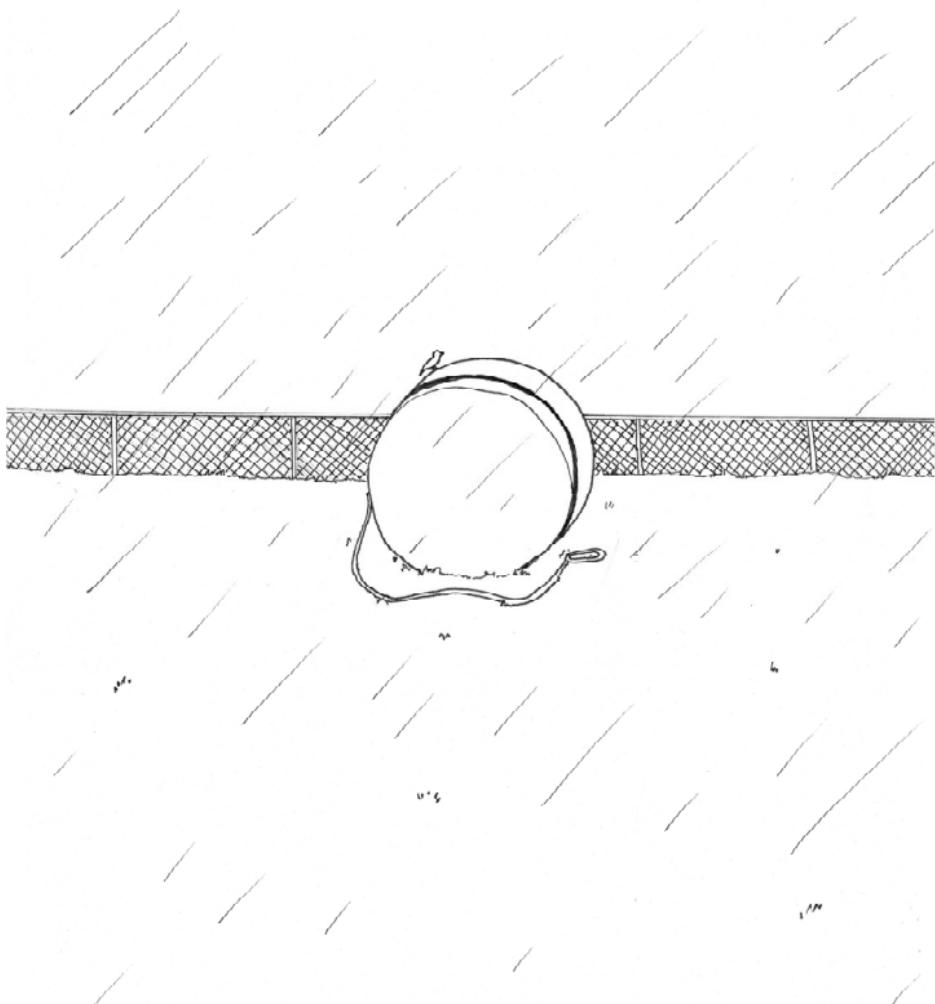
and went to school.



It was Thursday.

The day before show-and-tell.





It was raining so they wouldn't  
let us play on the giant  
yo-yo sculpture outside.

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Images: Jess Graves

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March 2013  
Melbourne