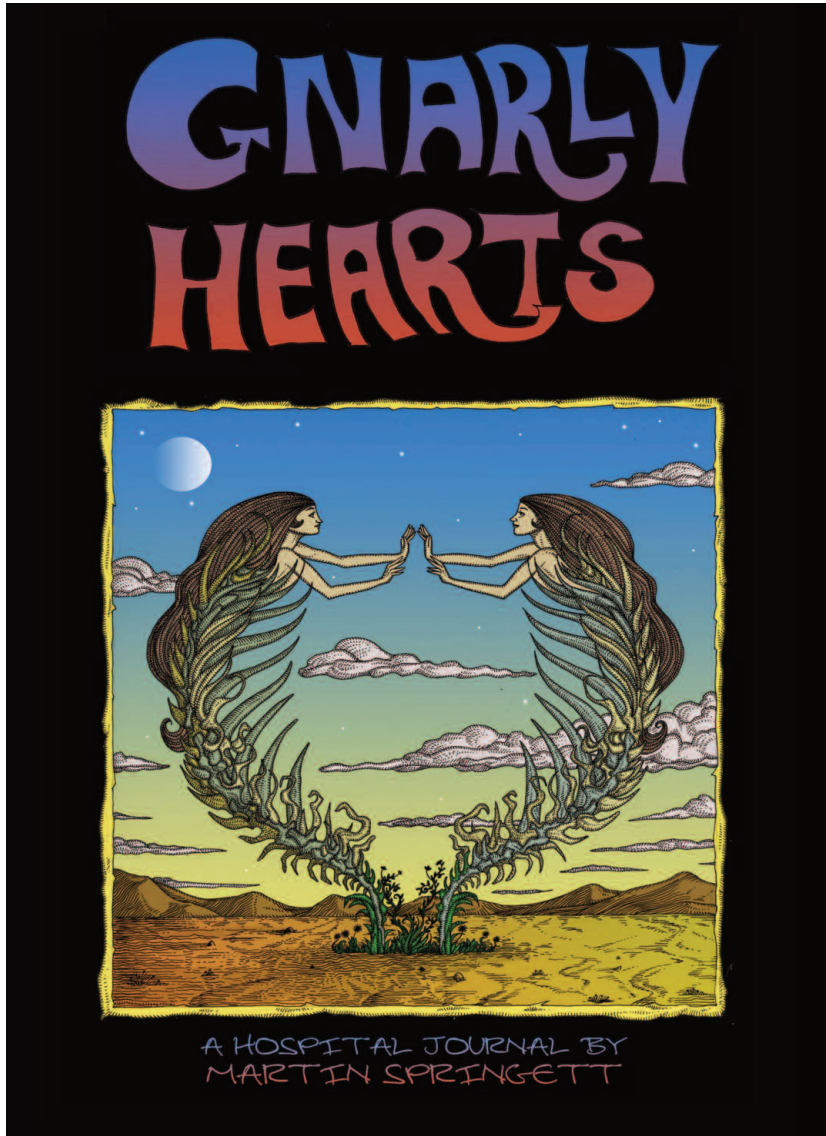
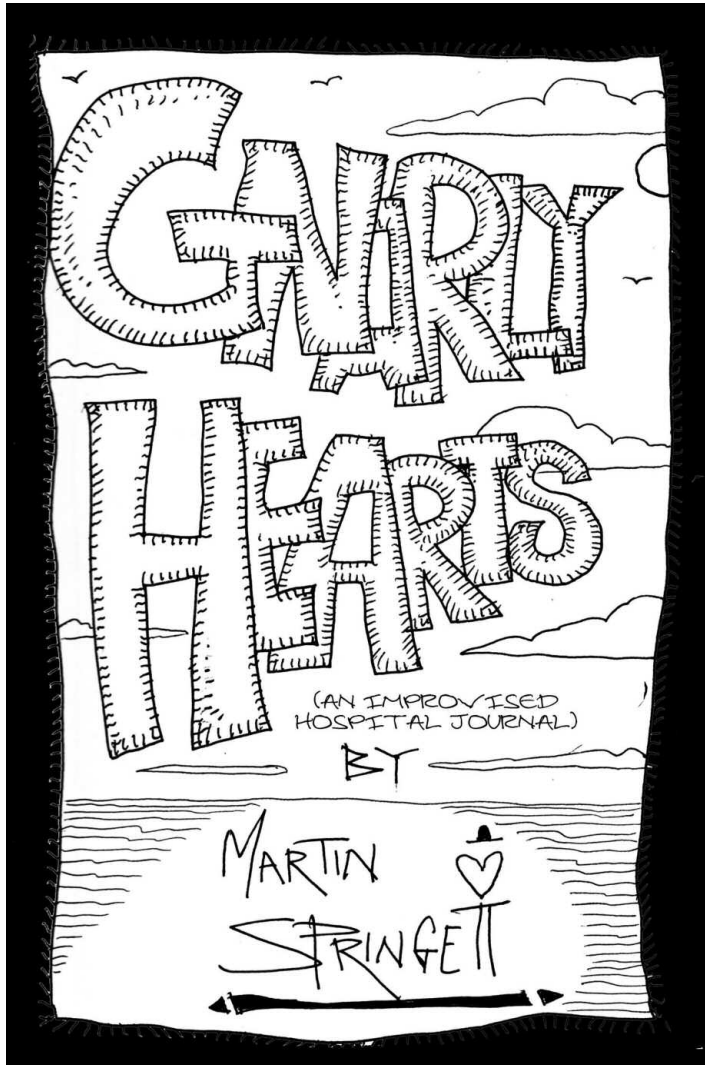
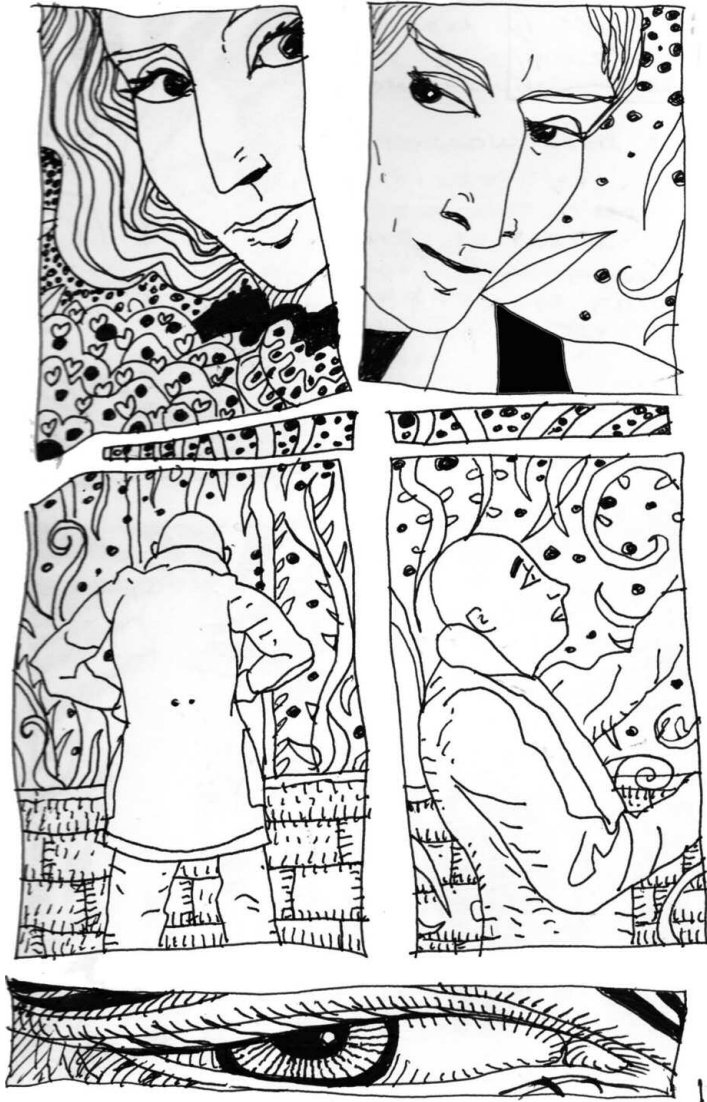




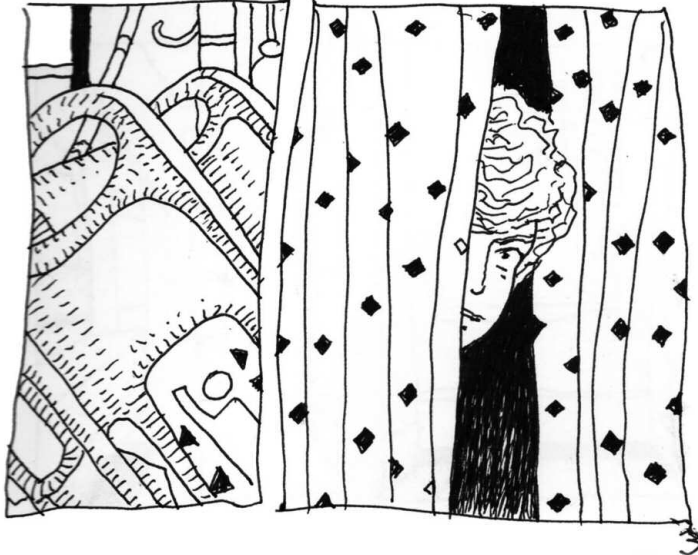
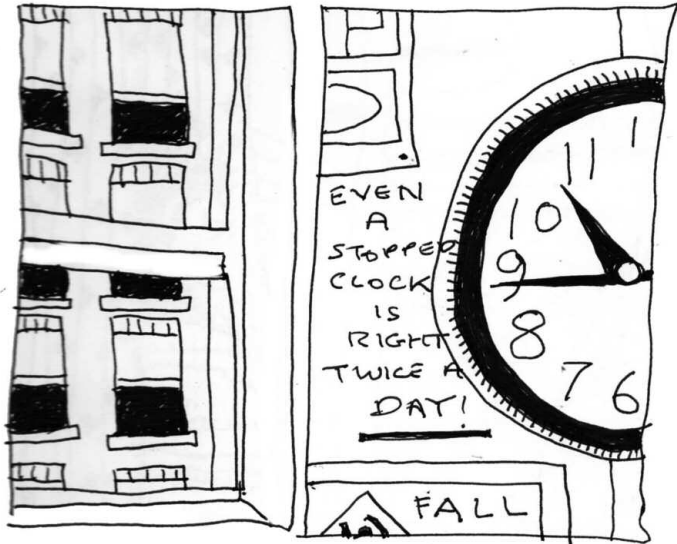
Volume 13
Issue 1
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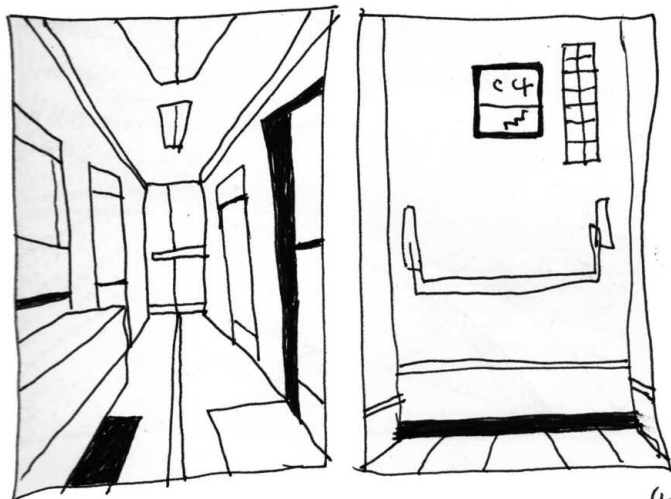
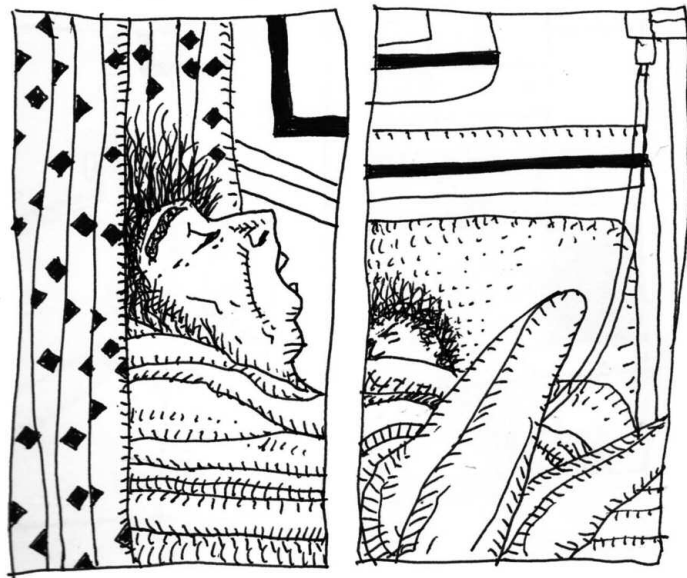




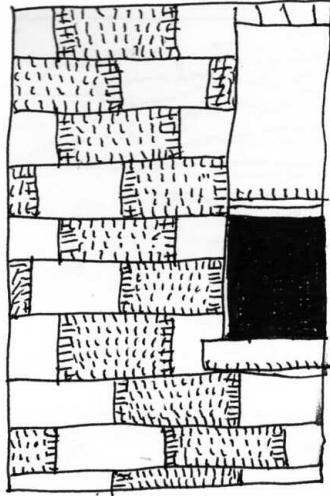
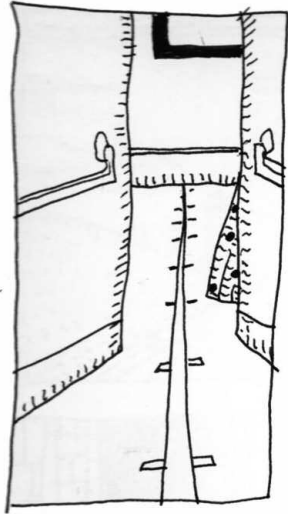


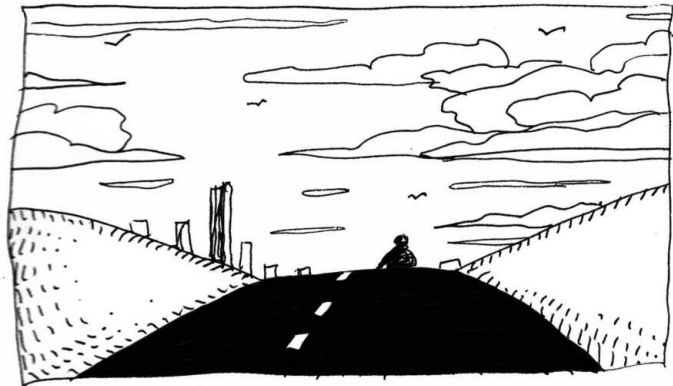






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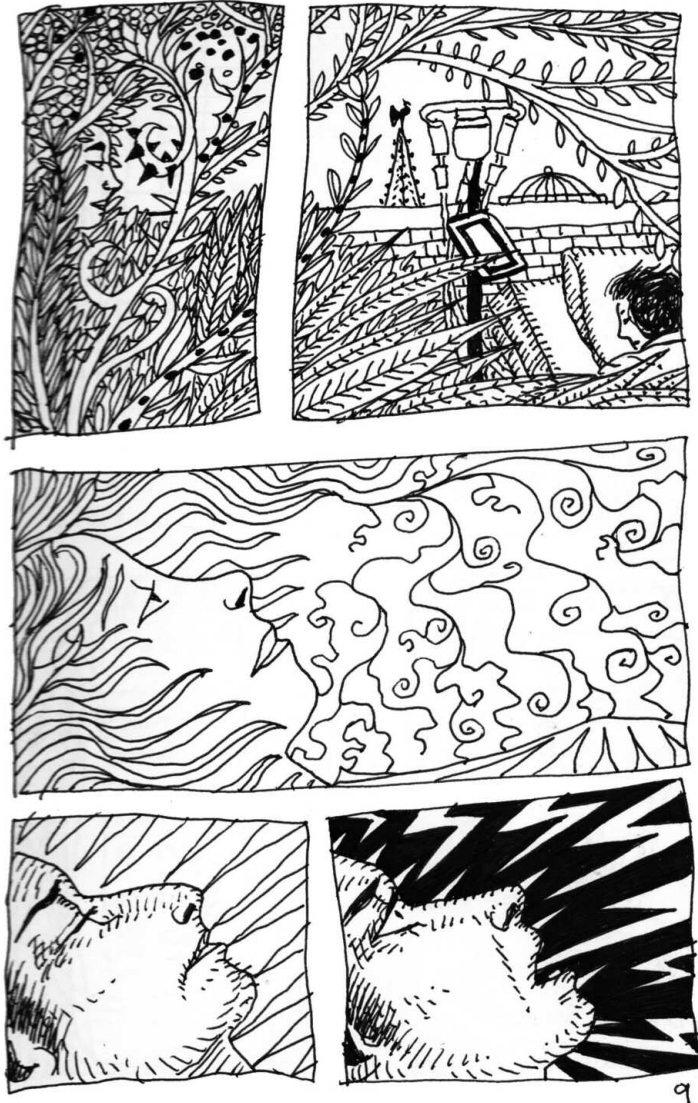




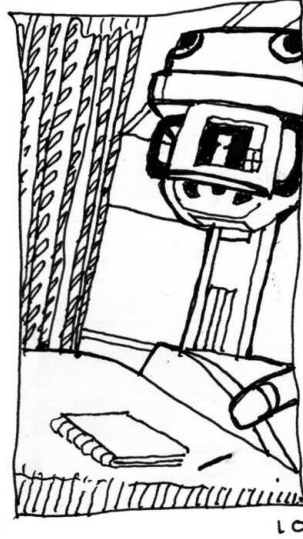
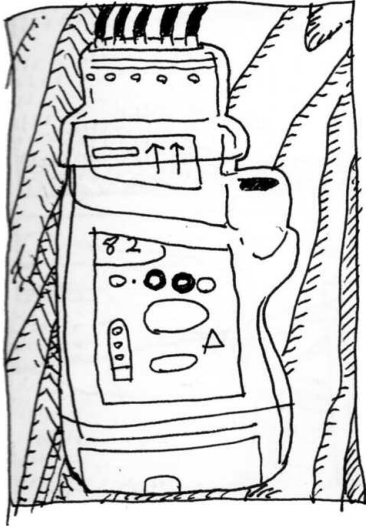
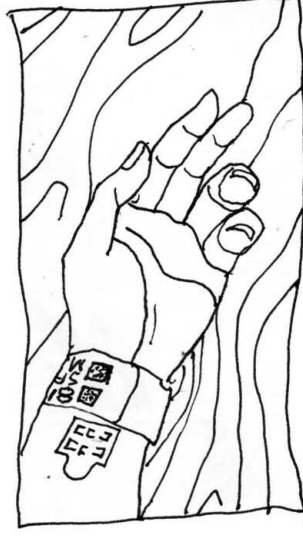
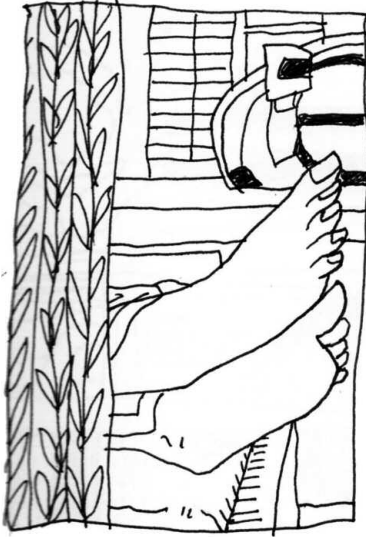
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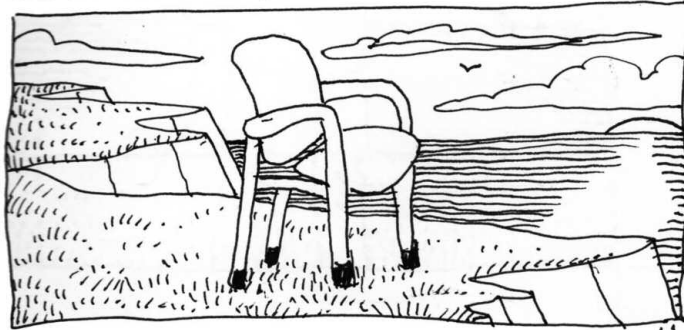
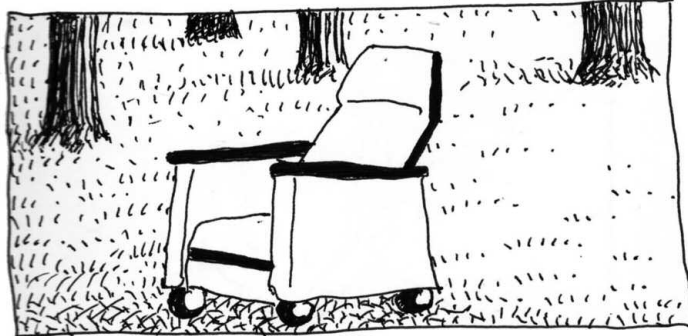
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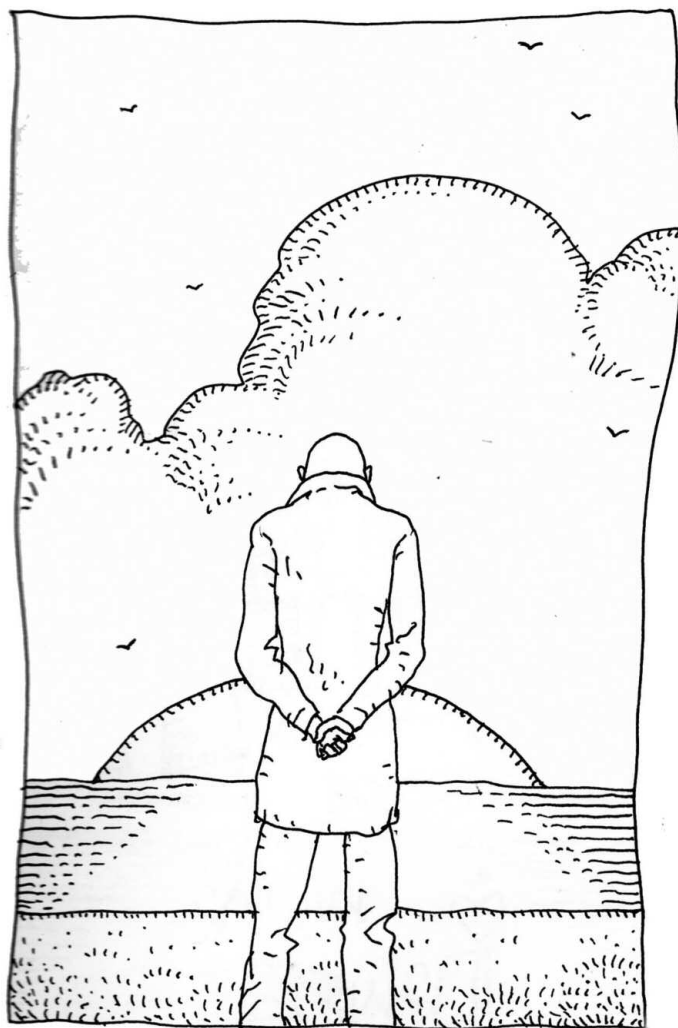


9

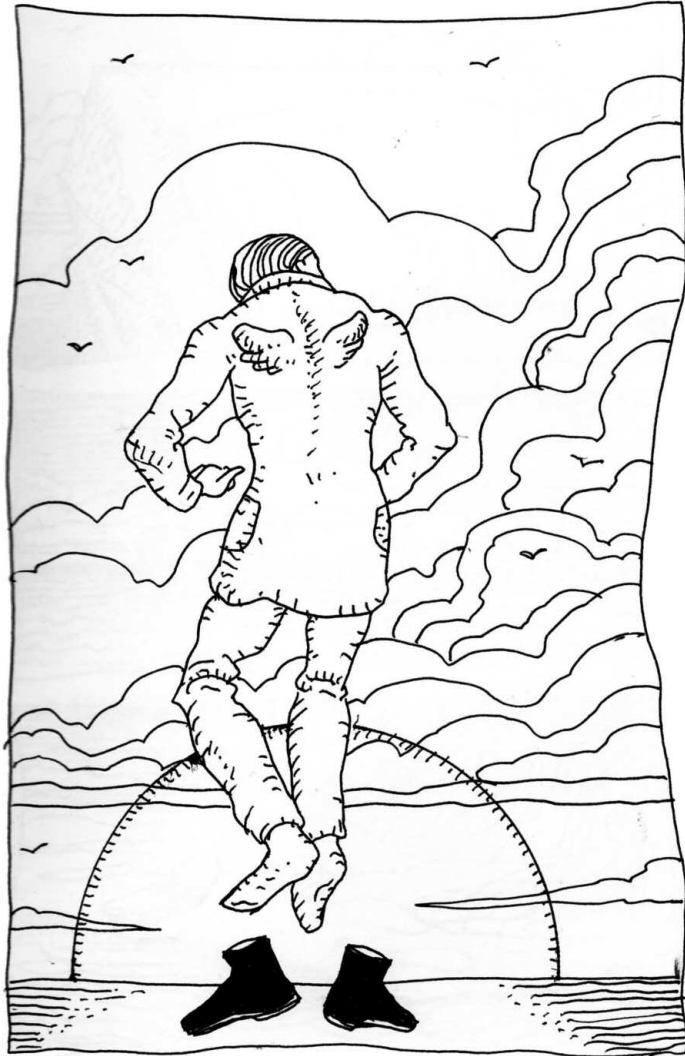


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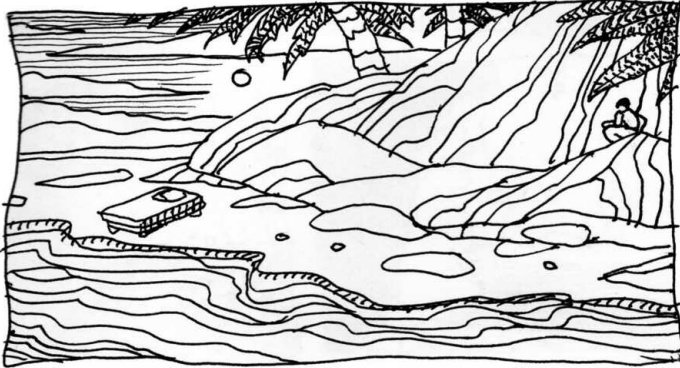
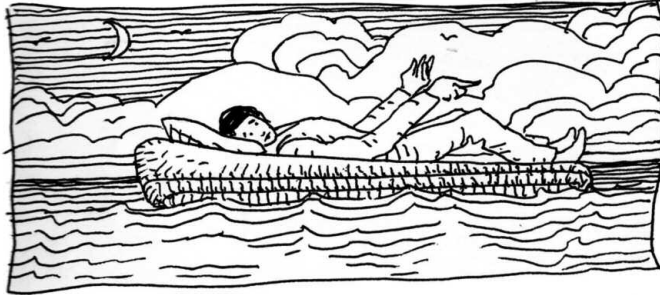
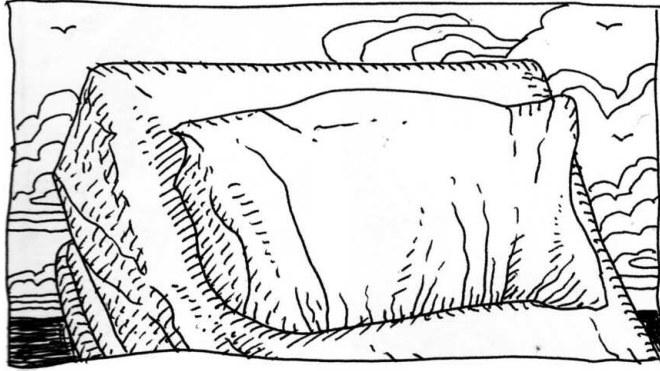




12



13

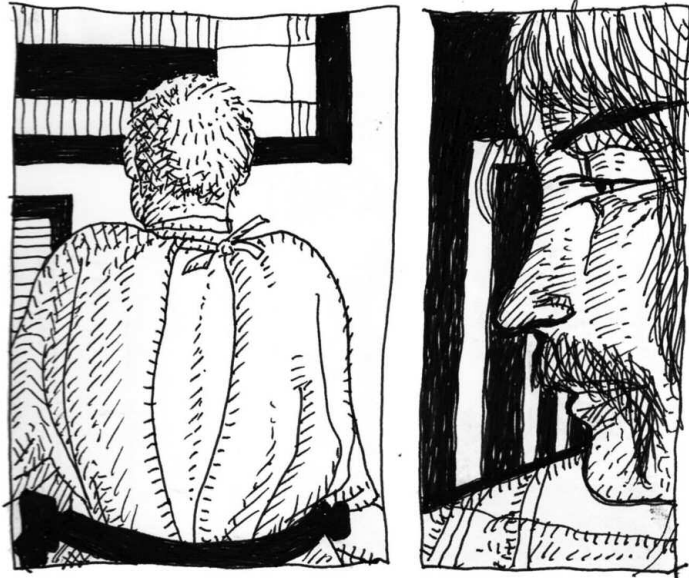


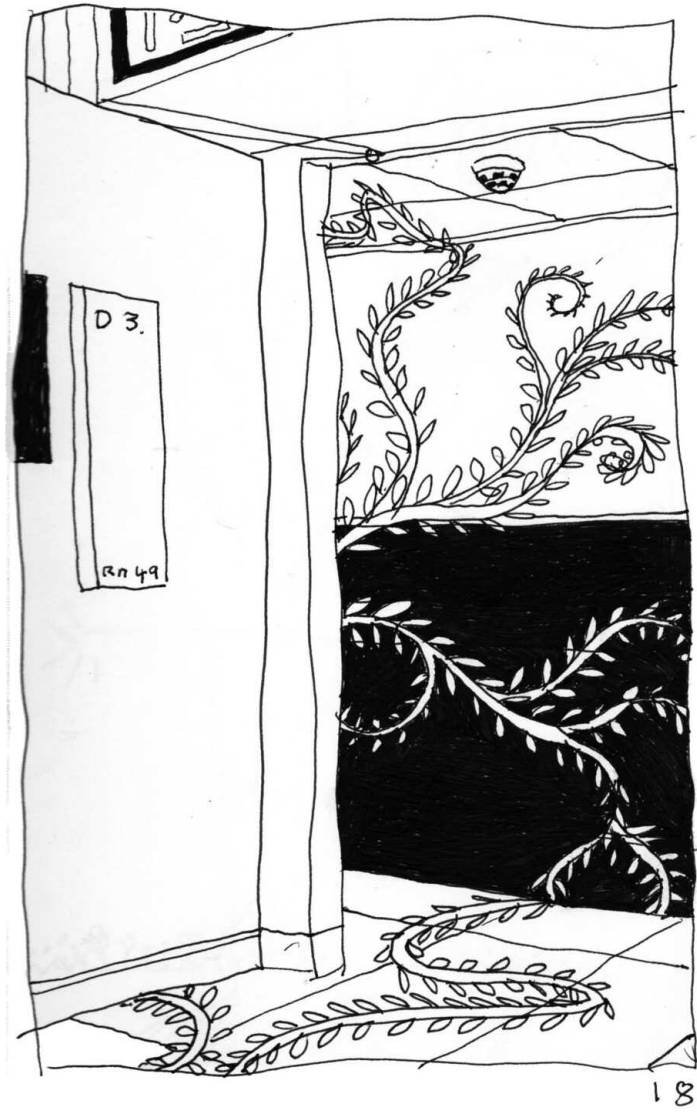
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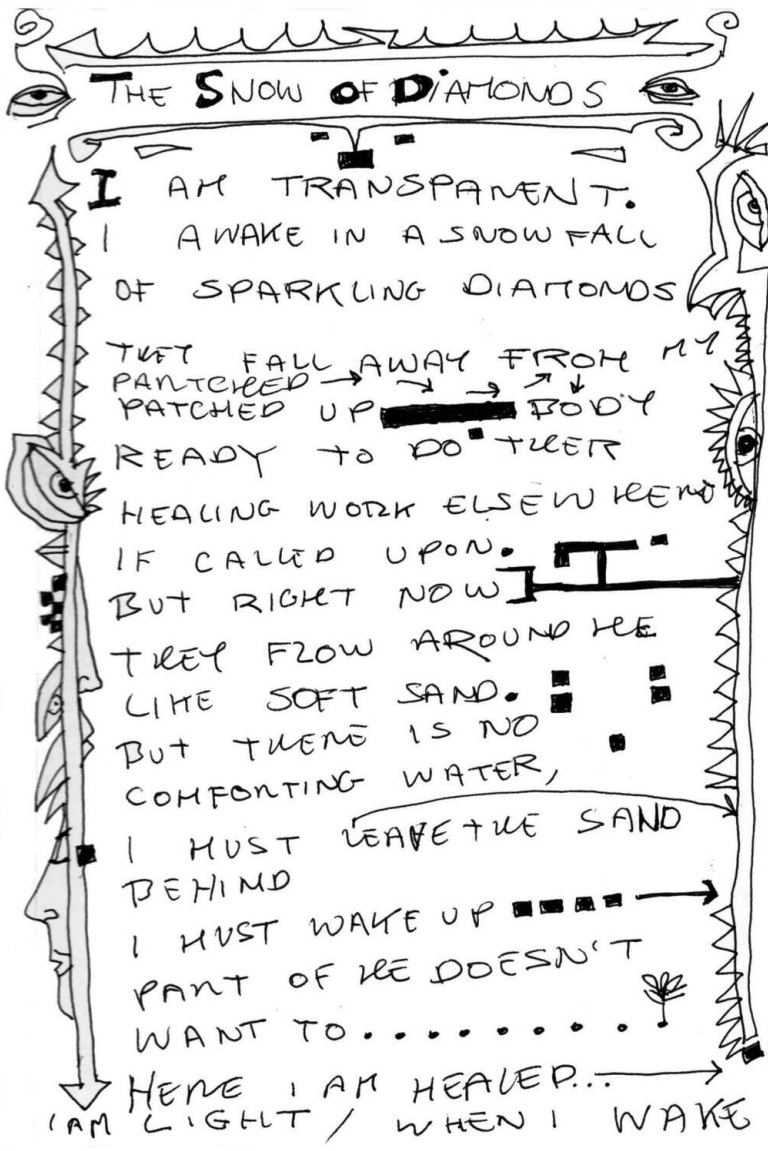


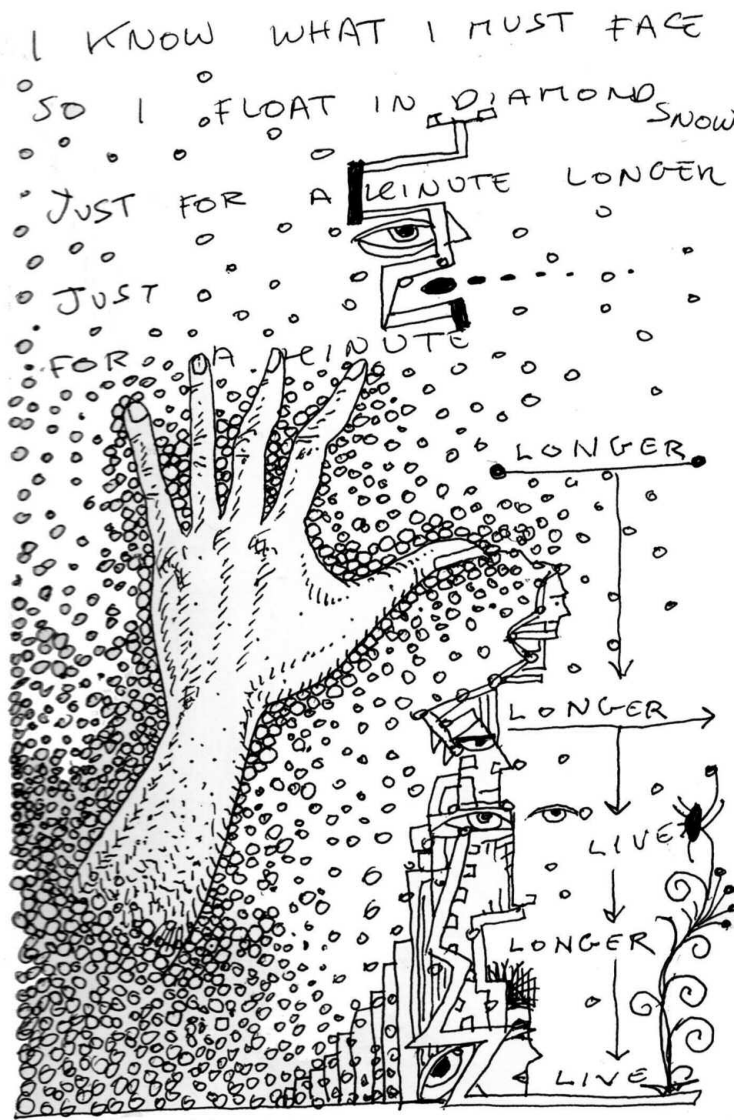


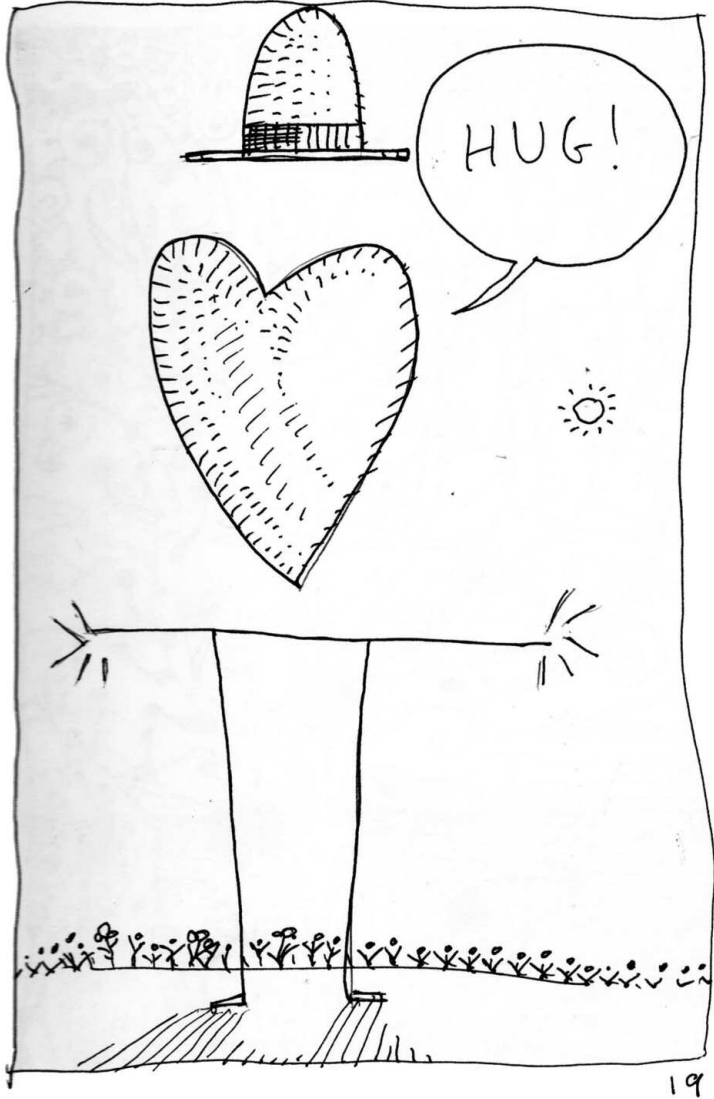
16

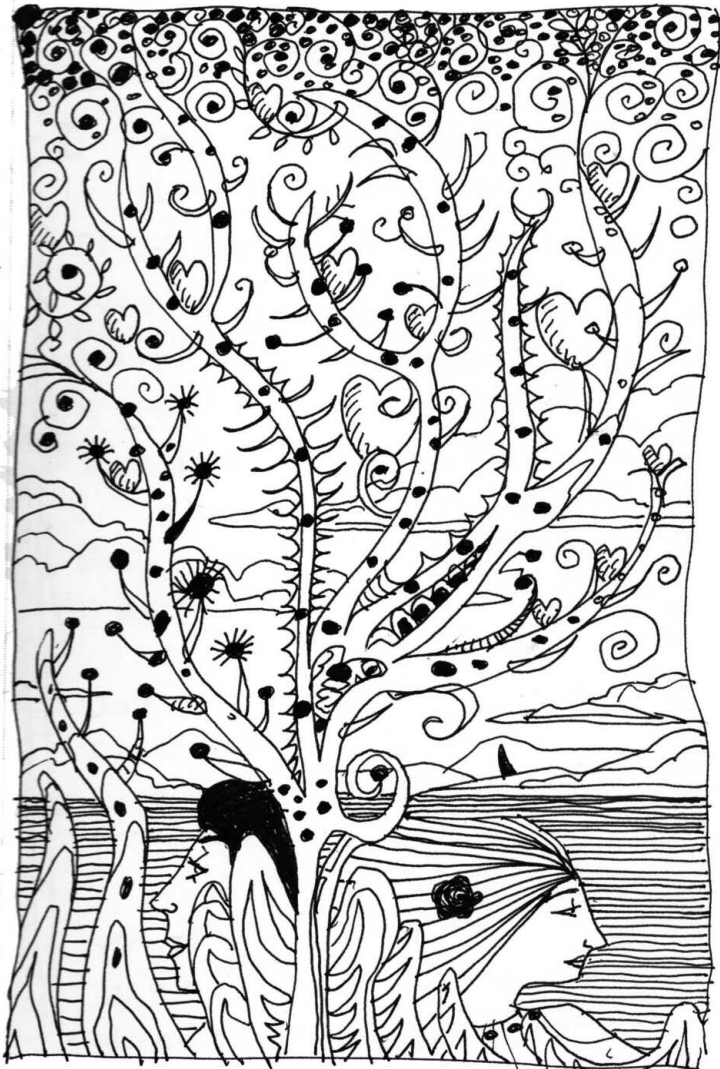












THE DREAM

I HAVE HAD MANY
STRANGE DREAMS SINCE
MY HEART OPERATION

A SEDUCTIVE BRIDE
IN RED SILK AND BLACK
LACE APPEARS

HER BRIDESMAID
IS MELANCHOLIA

I AM QUESTIONED AT
SOME LENGTH ABOUT
MY HEART'S DESIRES

I AM AT A LOSS
FOR WORDS

THEY HAVE ME
FIGURED OUT

I TRY TO TALK TO
BOTH OF THEM

THE BRIDE SMILES
ONE SWEET KISS
AND SHE IS GONE
IN A CLOUD OF SILK
AND LACE

MELANCHOLIA SITS
AND STARES AT ME

THEN

SHE LEANS FORWARD
AND PINCHES MY CHEEK

THE SLIGHTEST SMILE.

'WAKE UP M.
WAKE UP'

I WAKE UP

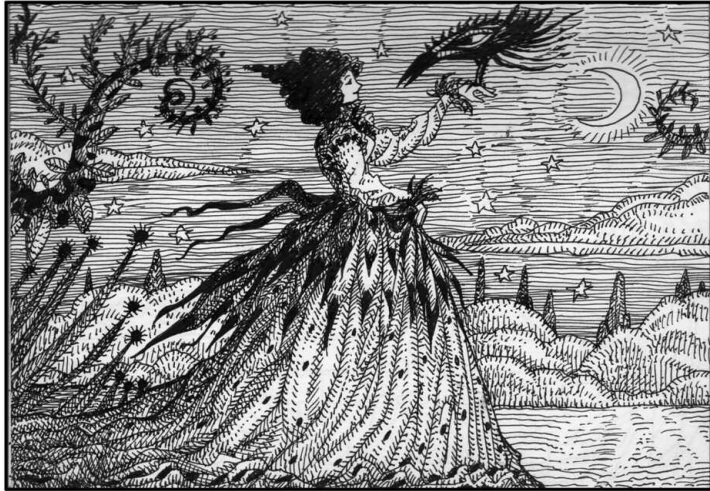
I AM IN TEARS
I DO NOT KNOW WHY.







I FOLLOW HER BECAUSE
I MUST
I DO NOT KNOW WHERE
SHE IS LEADING ME
THE ONCE FAMILIAR GARDEN
IS FULL OF SPIES,
OR JUST PRYING EYES
I AM NATED,
SCARRED, FRIGHTENED,
GRATEFUL TO SET FOOT
HERE AGAIN, EVEN IF
IT IS FULL OF FEARS
AND FOREBODING

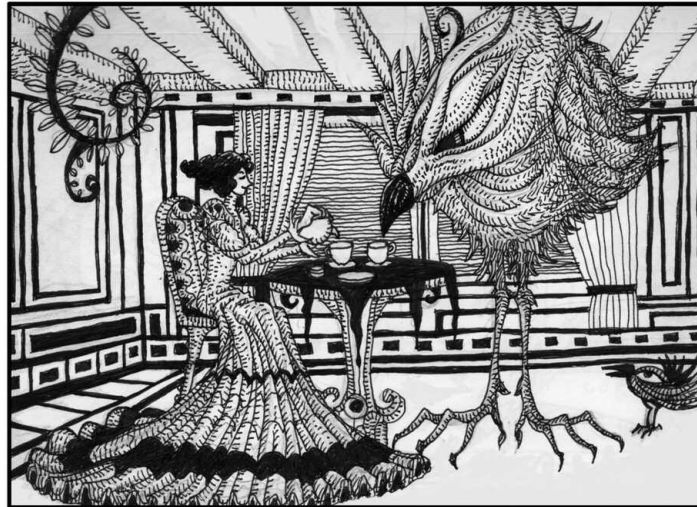


I ROAM THE GARDEN AGAIN
FREE FOR A MOMENT.





MY SWEET COMPANIONS
HAVE WAITED FOR ME
AND WE HAVE TEA TOGETHER.





AFTERWARD

ON FEBRUARY THE 8TH I SUFFERED SEVERE CHEST PAINS WHILE OUT WALKING. I CHECKED MYSELF INTO EMERGENCY AT SUNNYBROOK HOSPITAL, AND AFTER VARIOUS TESTS IT WAS DETERMINED THAT I NEEDED A TRIPLE BY-PASS HEART OPERATION. I THEN SPENT TEN DAYS ON THE CARDIAC WARD AWAITING WORD ON WHEN THE OPERATION WAS TO BE SCHEDULED. TO DEAL WITH THIS SURPRISING AND FRIGHTENING DISRUPTION IN MY LIFE, I BEGAN DRAWING IN MY SKETCHBOOK. I INSTINCTIVELY STARTED CREATING A 'COMIC BOOK', A FORM OF VISUAL STORY-TELLING THAT I HAVE LOVED EVER SINCE I WAS A CHILD GROWING UP IN ENGLAND. I WAS ON SOME LEVEL OVERWHELMED BY THIS TURN OF EVENTS, BUT DRAWING HAS ALWAYS BEEN A WAY FOR ME TO DEAL WITH DIFFICULT SITUATIONS BY MAKING A STORY I CREATE A FRAME AROUND WHAT WOULD OTHERWISE BE A ROILING SEA OF EMOTIONS. I CAN THEN HANDLE THE SITUATION BETTER AND ALSO BE INVOLVED IN THE MAKING OF SOMETHING, THE ENDING NOT BEING CLEAR, JUST AS IN ANY STORY I MIGHT WRITE IN MY CHILDREN'S BOOKS OR THE GRAPHIC NOVELS I HAVE BEEN CREATING LATELY.

NOTHING COULD HAVE PREPARED ME FOR THE GRUELLING AFTERMATH OF THE OPERATION. I WAS REDUCED TO A HELPLESS BEING; AT THE SAME TIME I HAD SURVIVED AND WAS 'FIXED'; DUE TO THE ASTONISHING SKILL OF THE SURGEON, DR FUAD MOUSSA, WHOSE OPERATING ROOM CHAT TO HIS TEAM I FOUND INCREDIBLY REASSURING. THE PRE-OP IMAGES AND THOSE CREATED POST-OP REFLECT THE CHANGE IN MY MENTAL AND PHYSICAL STATES. ACTUALLY I COULD NOT REALLY SEPARATE THOSE STATES OF BEING. I CONTINUED TO DRAW IN MY SKETCH BOOK AFTER BEING DISCHARGED FROM THE HOSPITAL, AS I STILL NEEDED TO WORK THROUGH MY RESPONSES TO MY NEW STATE. I FELT GREAT ANXIETY - EACH TIME I WENT FOR A WALK I FELT I WOULD FLY APART. THE LOGICAL SIDE OF ME REALISED THAT MY HEART WAS NOW IN GOOD SHAPE, BUT DEALING WITH THE PHYSICAL TRAUMA, THE 'BLOW TO THE BODY' CAUSED BY THE PROCEDURE, WAS ANOTHER MATTER ENTIRELY. SO I CONTINUED TO DRAW AND TAKE THE JOURNEY I NEEDED TO TAKE - MY IMAGINATION HAS ALWAYS BEEN A REFUGE TO SOFTEN THE BLOWS OF THE WORLD.

THIS IS MY INTERIOR JOURNEY, BUT I WAS SO LUCKY TO HAVE MY FAMILY, FRIENDS AND THE WONDERFUL CARE OF THE NURSES AND DOCTORS AT SUNNYBROOK HOSPITAL, AND THE GREAT STAFF AT TORONTO REHAB, TO HELP ME DEAL WITH THE PHYSICAL HEALING THAT I NEEDED TO GET ME BACK TO THIS PARTICULAR GARDEN! martin springett





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