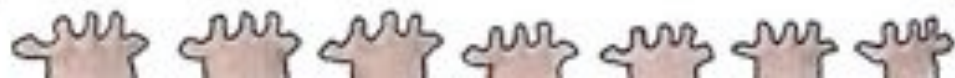


hOMage



start here

"Don't come here looking for something
and maybe you will find it."



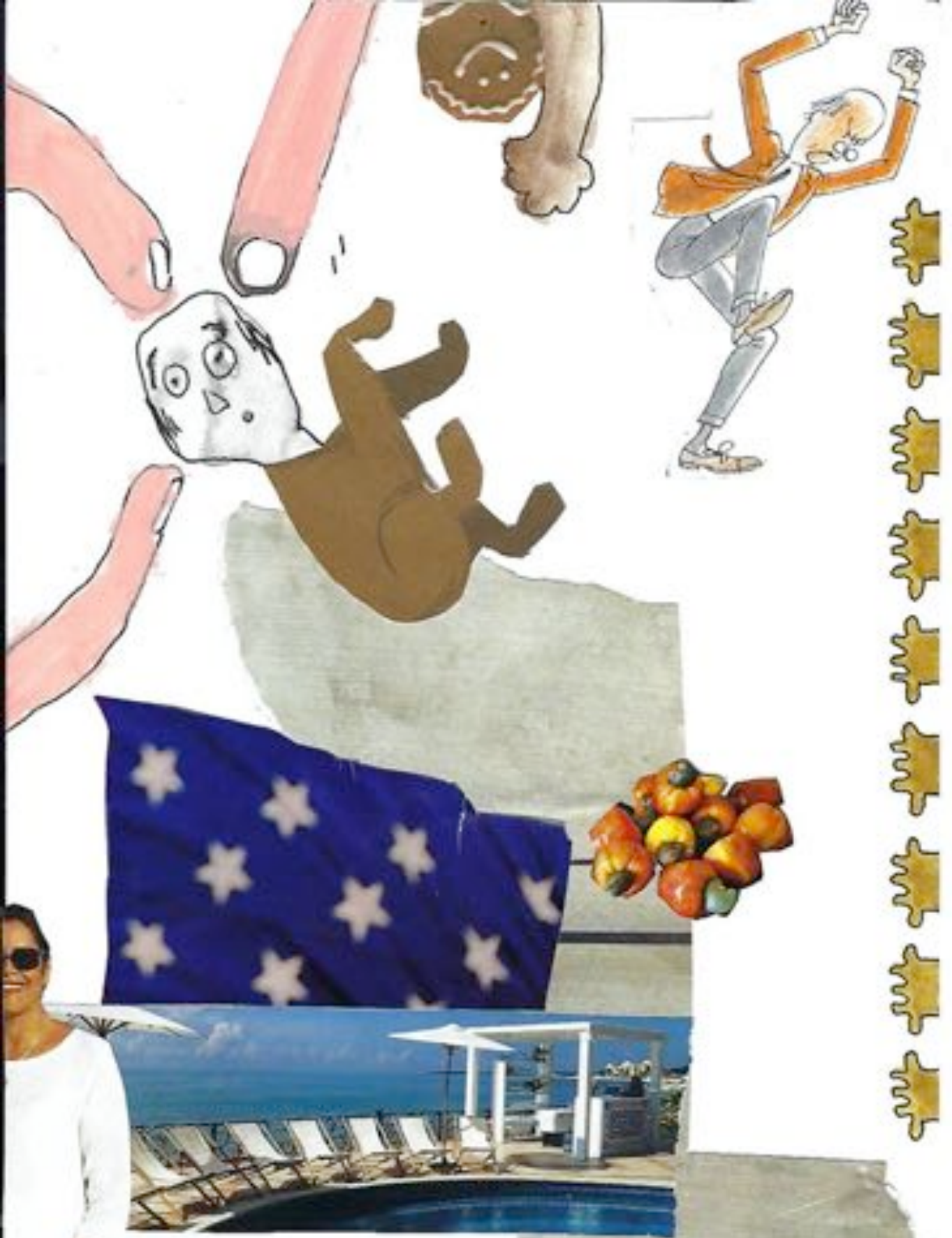
Monsignor Coll tries to roll over in the bed. The covers grab and hold.



The Monsignor is dressed in his favorite orange bell bottom pants and the flowered shirt.



He stops straining.



He stops straining. He lays back with a sigh.

M M's
Monsignor Coll



Cheap mezcal in a brandy snifter. "A sign of health."



From a too thin bottle. "A sign of health," he says. His hand reaches shakily, brushing and shaking the bottle, then settling around the neck of the small brandy snifter. He lifts it above him, brandishing the glass like an answer. He laughs, abrading the air around him. "How can it stand up, something so thin? Something so unnatural?"



Mushroom clouds billowed



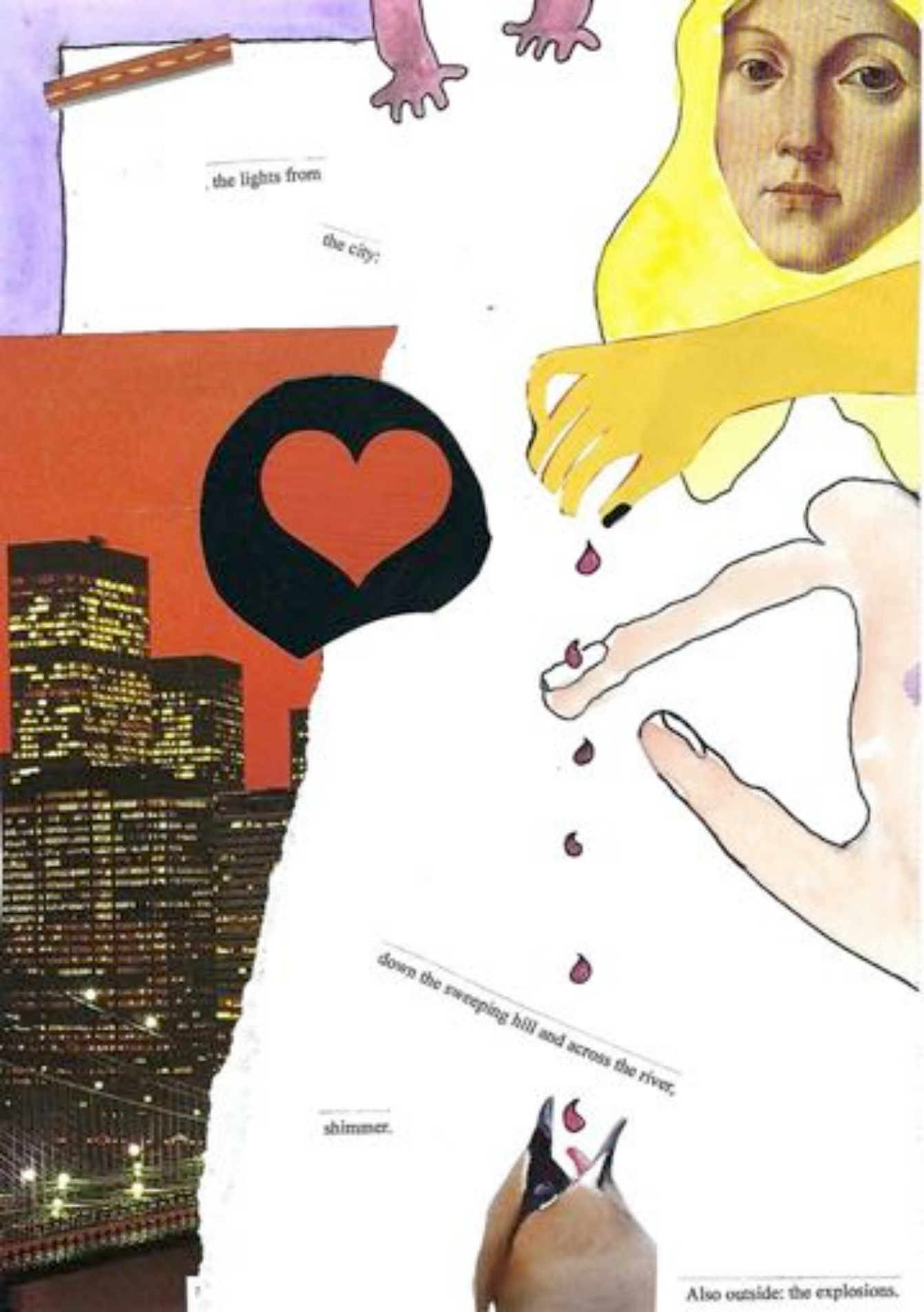
The smell like petrol. Wafting. Fills the small room. Dissipates into the warm walls.



He tries again to turn onto his

side.

Footer



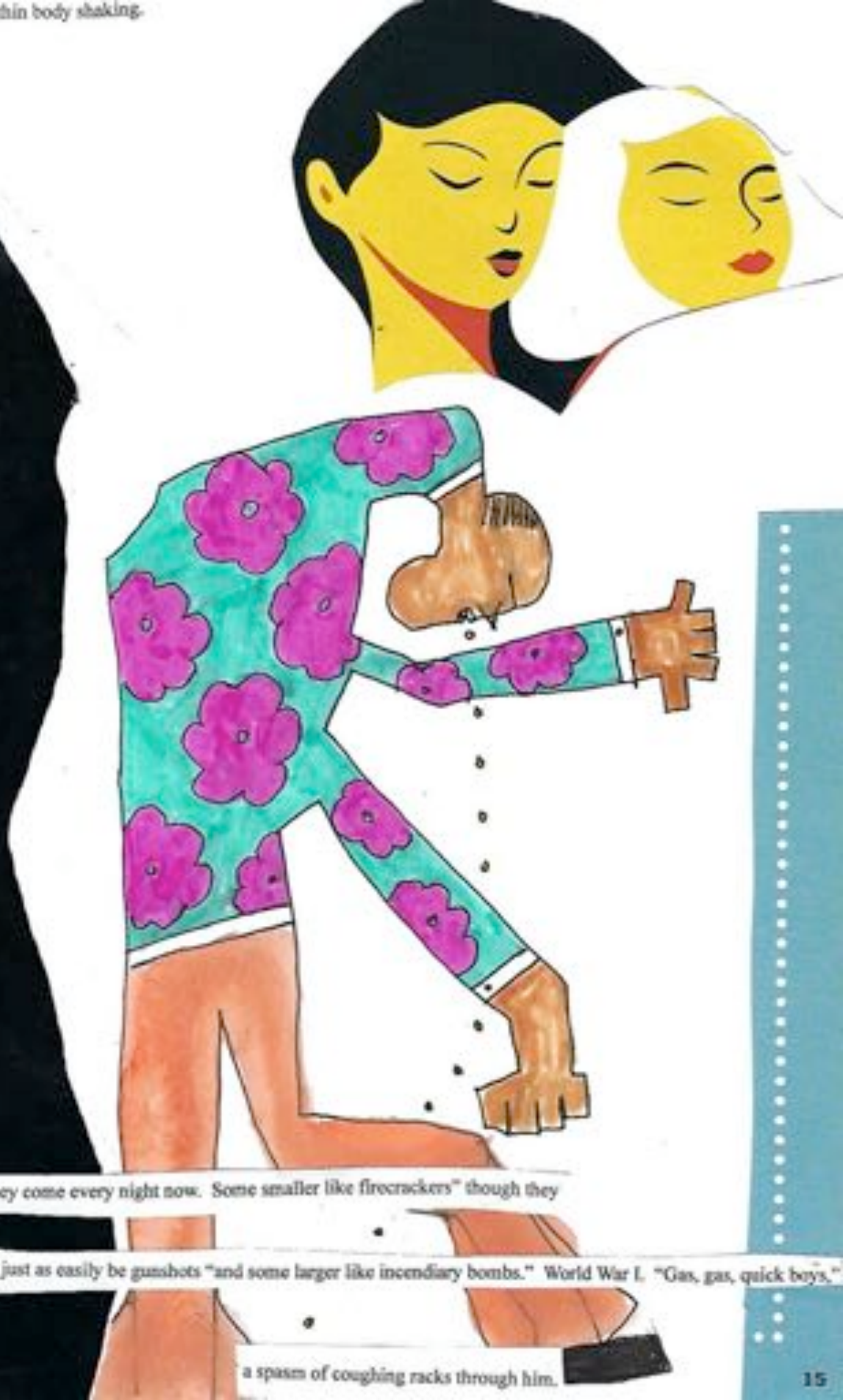
the lights from

the city;

down the sweeping hill and across the river,

shimmer.

Also outside: the explosions.



Then: "they come every night now. Some smaller like firecrackers" though they

could just as easily be gunshots "and some larger like incendiary bombs." World War I. "Gas, gas, quick boys."

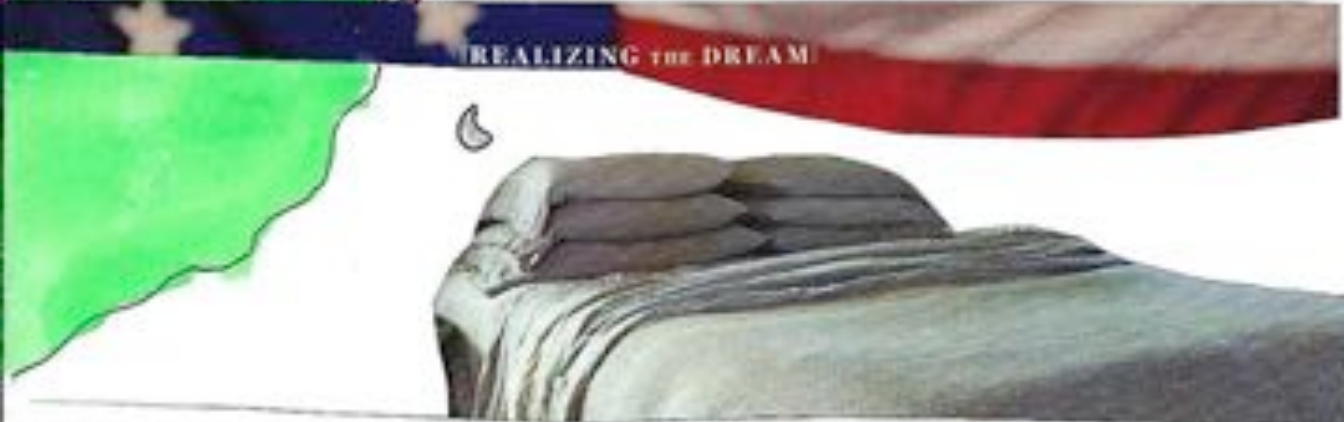
a spasm of coughing racks through him.

The snifter goes down onto the cracking bedside table.



The smell like petrol. Dissipates into the warm walls. He tries again to turn onto his side.





Monsignor Coll waves a hand. He eases back on the bed. "Fill her up," he says, indicating toward the abandoned glass. I comply I hand the small draught back. He takes it shakily, lifting it to his lips. It sips like gasoline.

TIME

He shrugs. "We've all been ill."

His wooden cross sits limply on his bedside table,
the weary beads spilling over

what
happens

He stares upward toward the gray ceiling. The explosions have stopped

The night rests silent, dark, full of illness and retreat.



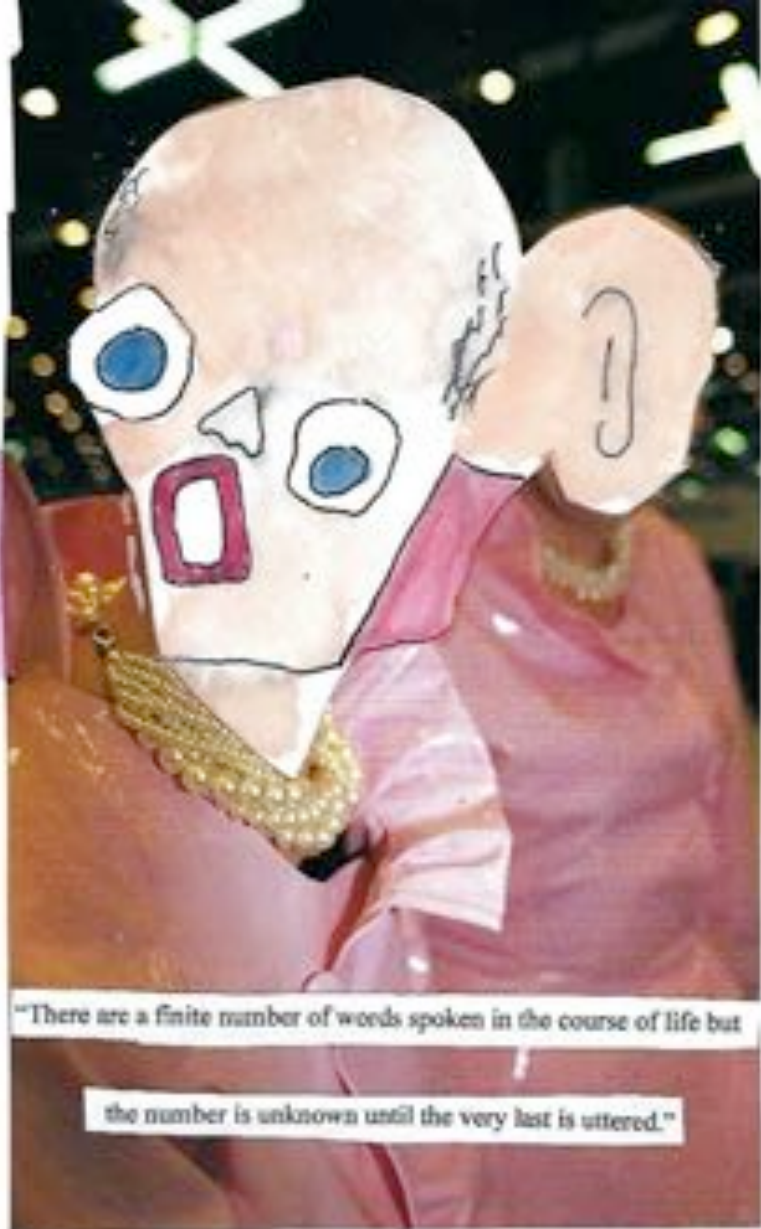


"Don't look. You might see something."

He laughs too hard, then wheezes catching his breath.

"Every word must count," he says.

Up on one elbow now, the brandy snifter balanced in his fingers,





Me: "Nobody wants that."

CHANGE
WE WANT

WELDY
BACK

SPECIAL
INTEREST

A car backfires. People still slide along the freeway through the deepening night. They head north. "You can't get out," the Monsignor says. Then: "This is a fine line."

Help.

impregnation methods



everyone throwing in one dollar. Guesses
45,000 to 100,000. The winning bet was 18,000 and

The bomb would be detonated at 5:29 AM. The bomb was built by the scientists of Los Alamos. It was called "Fat Man" or "Journey's End". It was 30 km by 28 km by 30 km. It was a shed at the top of the tower. It was called Trinity and it was a thunderstorm, it was a long time.

By twenty minutes after the regaining of consciousness, the scientist was sitting on the ground. The history-making event was at 5:29:45 AM. The witness was sitting on the ground. The witness was sitting on the ground. The witness was sitting on the ground.

(10 km) of the scientist was sitting on the ground. The history-making event was at 5:29:45 AM. The witness was sitting on the ground. The witness was sitting on the ground. The witness was sitting on the ground.

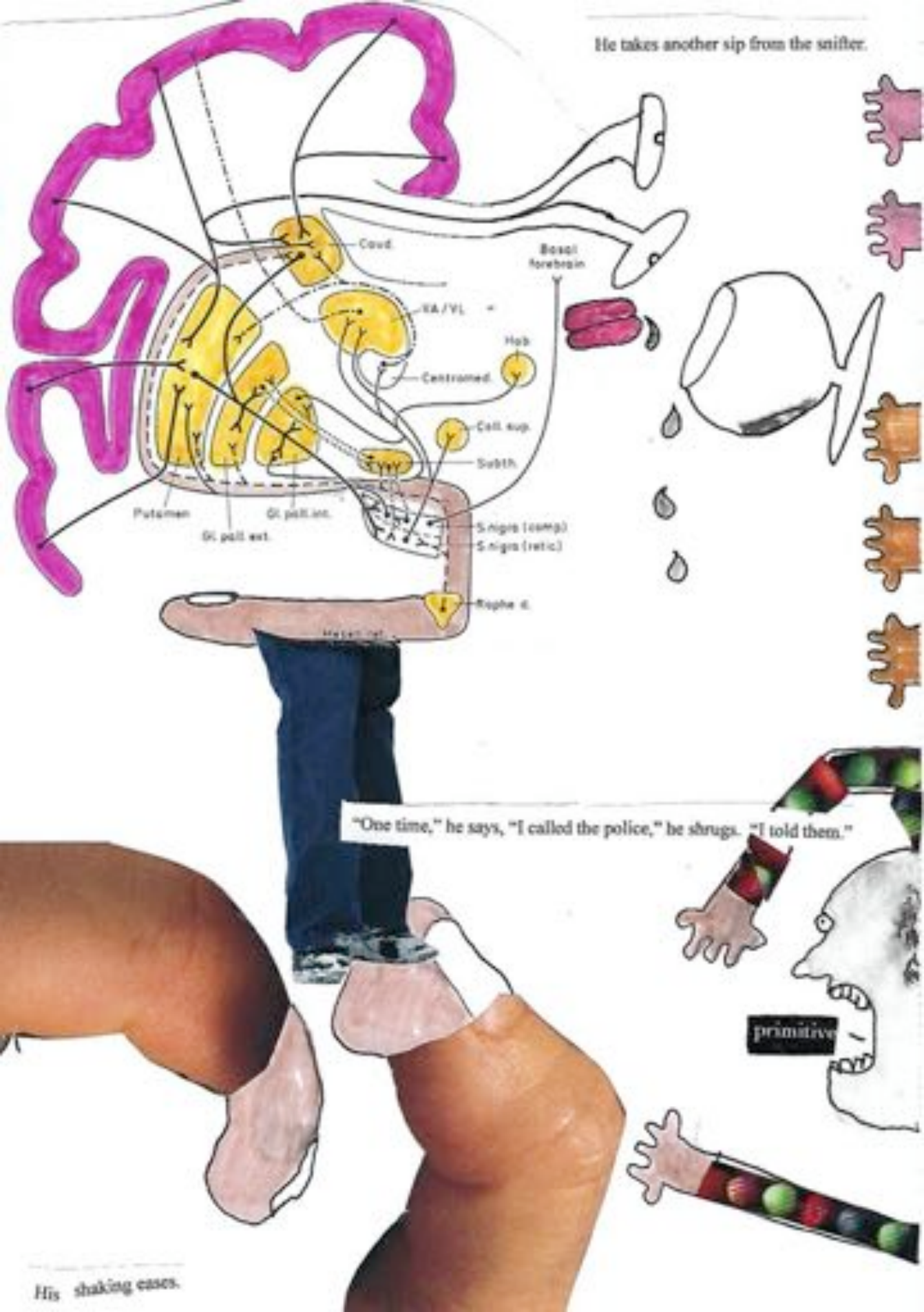
At 5:29:45 AM, the witness was sitting on the ground. The witness was sitting on the ground. The witness was sitting on the ground. The witness was sitting on the ground. The witness was sitting on the ground.

EYEWITNESSES TO TRINITY'S POWER



The resounding sound of another explosion. Closer. "They come every now and again." He shrugs. "You just sit and hear. Same as the breathing." He takes a sip. Then remembers: "Don't go outside."

He takes another sip from the snifter.



"One time," he says, "I called the police," he shrugs. "I told them."

His shaking eases.

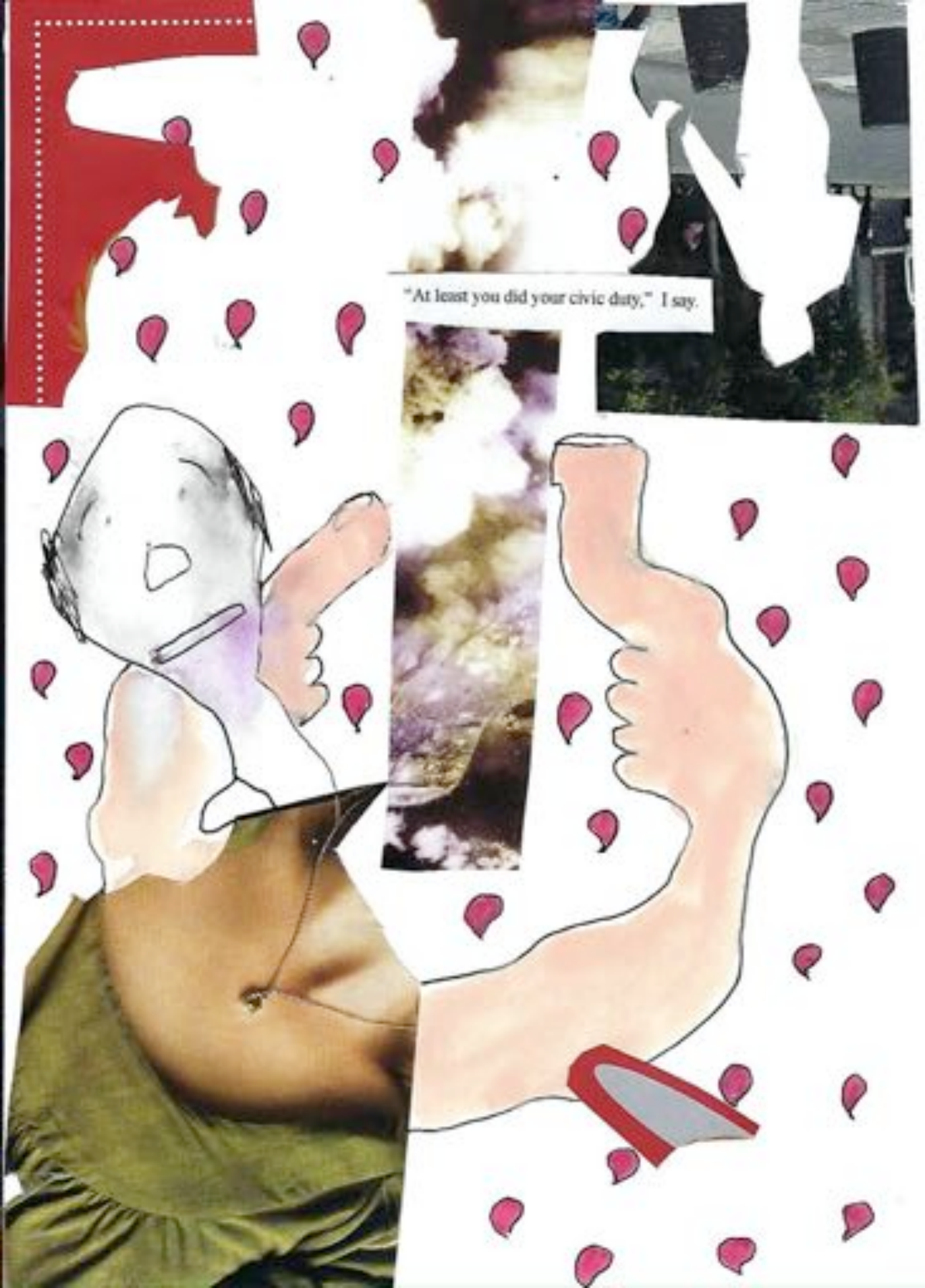
"They asked if I had seen any blood. I had to admit that I had not. I had not seen any blood."



'But

it's dark,' I said.

"The woman on the other end of the line hung up."

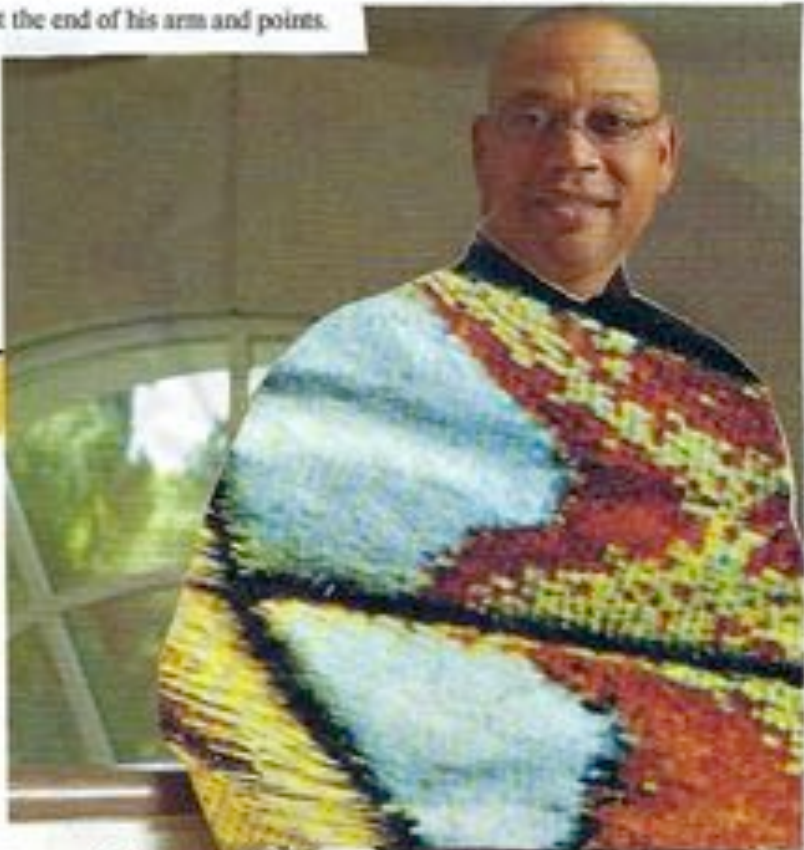


"At least you did your civic duty," I say.



aragus, romps, morals

"Points collected at the well of a Skee-Ball game, if you remember those from the beach. At the end, you turn them in for a plastic toy." He hands me the glass. I place it down on a yellowed doctor's prescription resting on the table. "Get me," he continues. A finger emerges at the end of his arm and points.



Silence invades and suffuses the room. The silence between explosions.



PARTITION

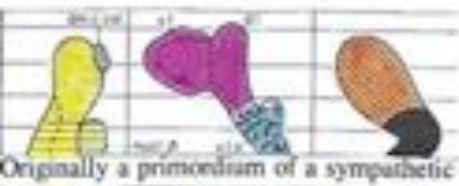


"I wish," he shatters.

The zipper of something in the future approaching. Then something soft and caught between the hard metal teeth.



"Who goes there?" He laughs. Then wheezes.



tinguished pedigree. The word comes from the Greek *diabolo* which means a "slanderer," "perjurer" or "adversary." When the Old Testament was translated into Greek (2nd century B.C.) *diabolo* was used as an equivalent to the Hebrew Satan. Some claim the meaning of "adversary" is arrived at through another route, which is the Greek "diapros," "without," and the Persian "di" meaning "evil." Although the argument is...

mortified by the consequences of his lost when he sees his gigantic mutant sons being destroyed by the Angels of Vengeance, that's why he's... if into the constellation can still be seen has... rily hurls him-... this is where down. This

an and Belzebuth. Illustration by Mayby.

the Last by John



(Me): Today with both fatigue and sadness I note that you noted that whimsy is dead or when alive, so aggressive as to be unrecognizable. Like Coney Island or the sound of two Russians discussing politics or



(Monsignor Coll): Of course. That kind of whimsy. It exists.

But of the half smile and the shrug of a shoulders?

Interred in a past we didn't understand at the time. Or still spoken in Portuguese down an alley in the Alfama. In places of hanging dust motes and lonely lunches and stifled memories and soft waves on filthy city beaches or simply in an internal monologue that overtakes and then obliterates that which takes place (allegedly takes place) outside the head. In the "real world."

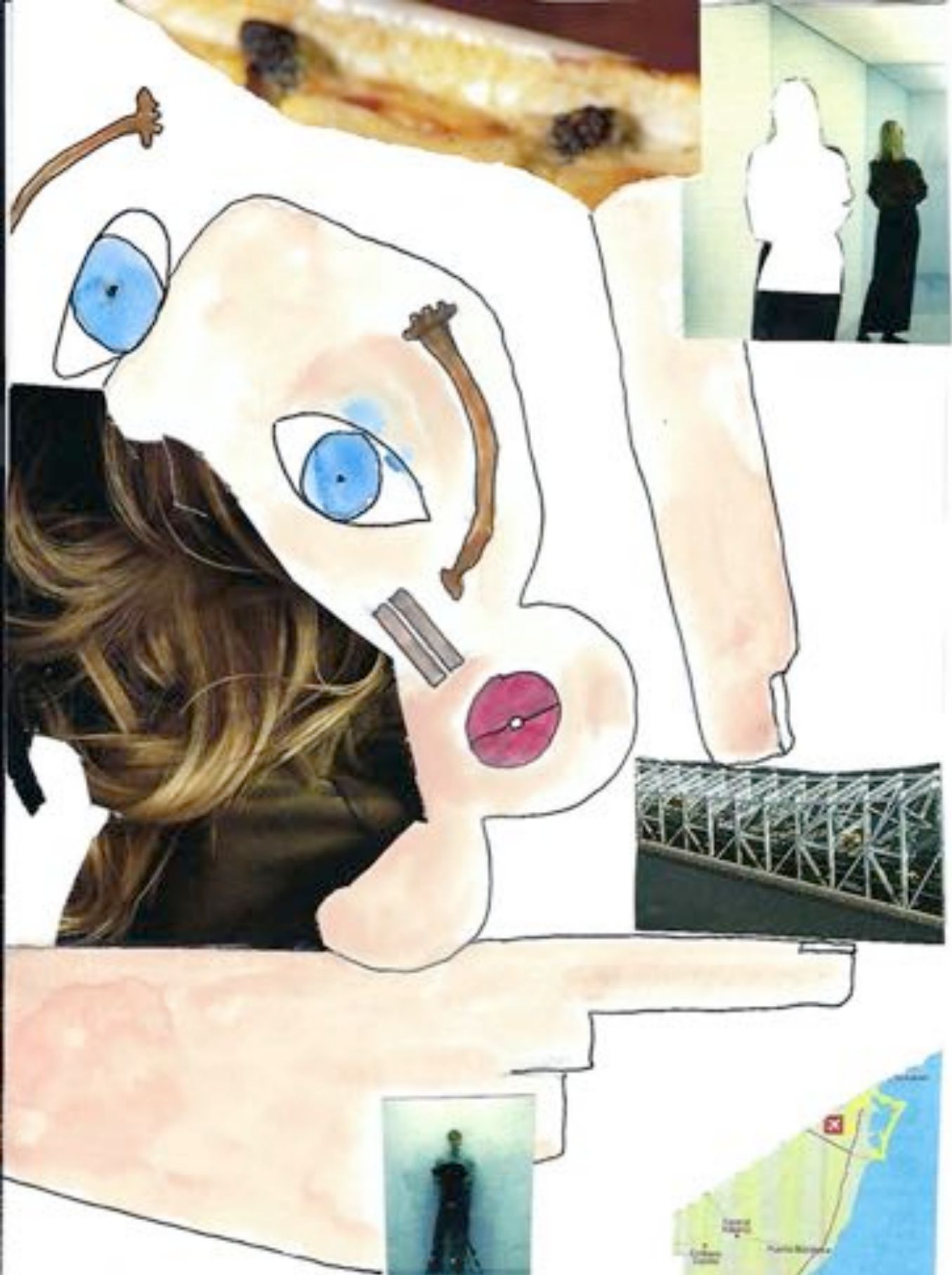




(Monsignor Coll tries to spit. I help him wipe his chin.)



(Monsignor Coll continues): In those places of silence heard, a man could wax whimsical, even if no one paid attention.



(Methinks:) All unkempt memories and deeper regrets.



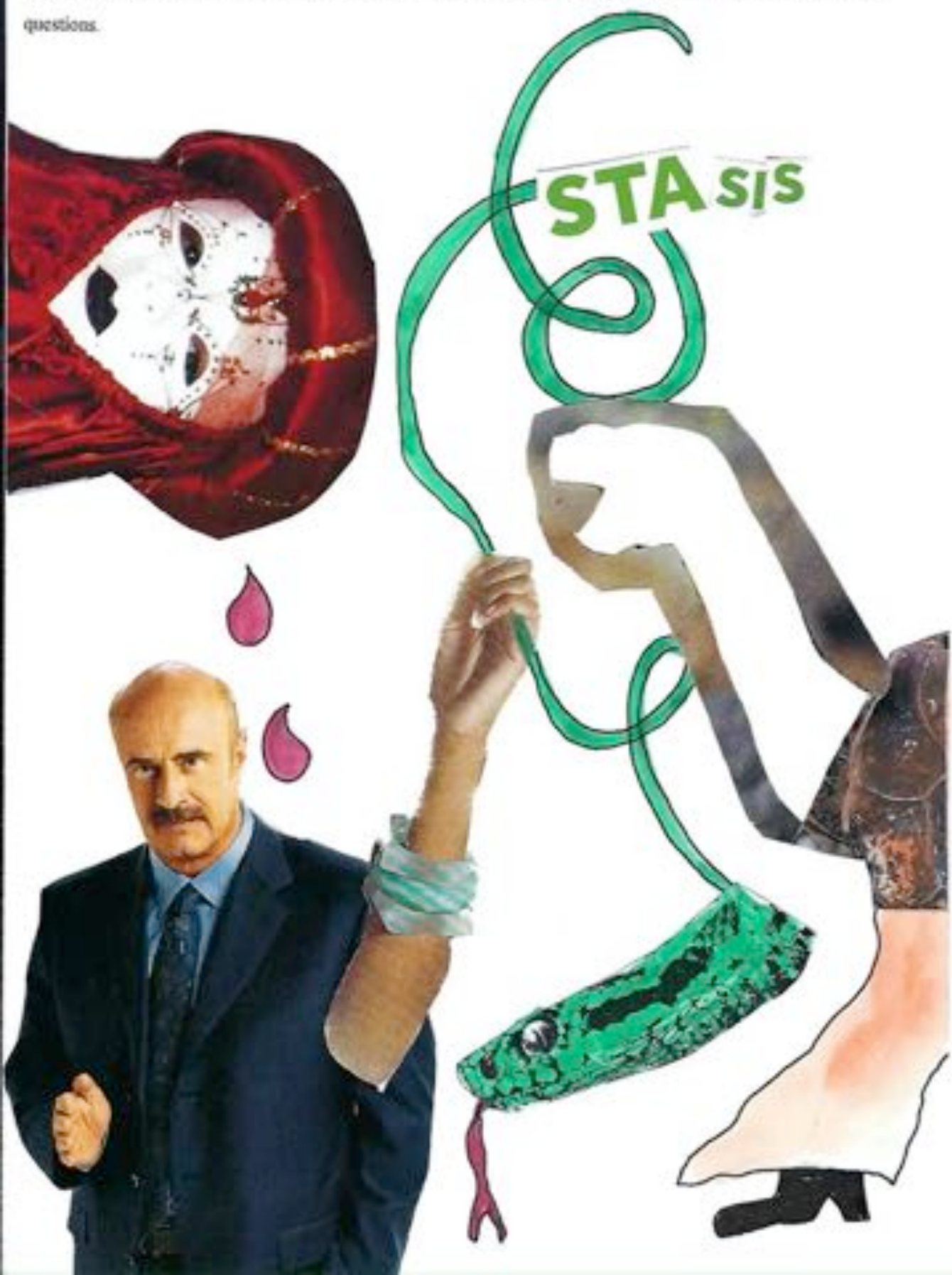
(Monsignor Coll finishes:) Sitting in front of a glass of vinho verde.





How long did he sleep?

"Things haven't changed. They have not." His insistent voice. And though things might not have been good to begin with, at least in stasis there remained some small comfort. "The devil you know" he cackles, answering all questions.




"Yes, of course. That explains the terror of the unknown," I respond before thinking.




A compulsion to say




something. Anything.




"Whatever you do." He shrugs.



"You will do what you want."



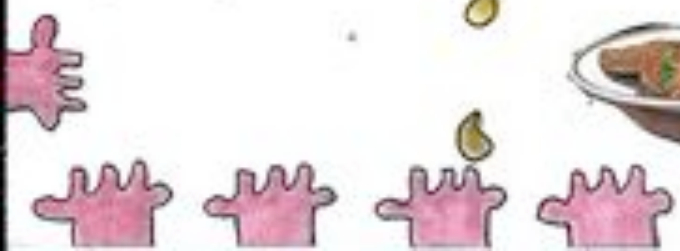

As long as you are able, at least,



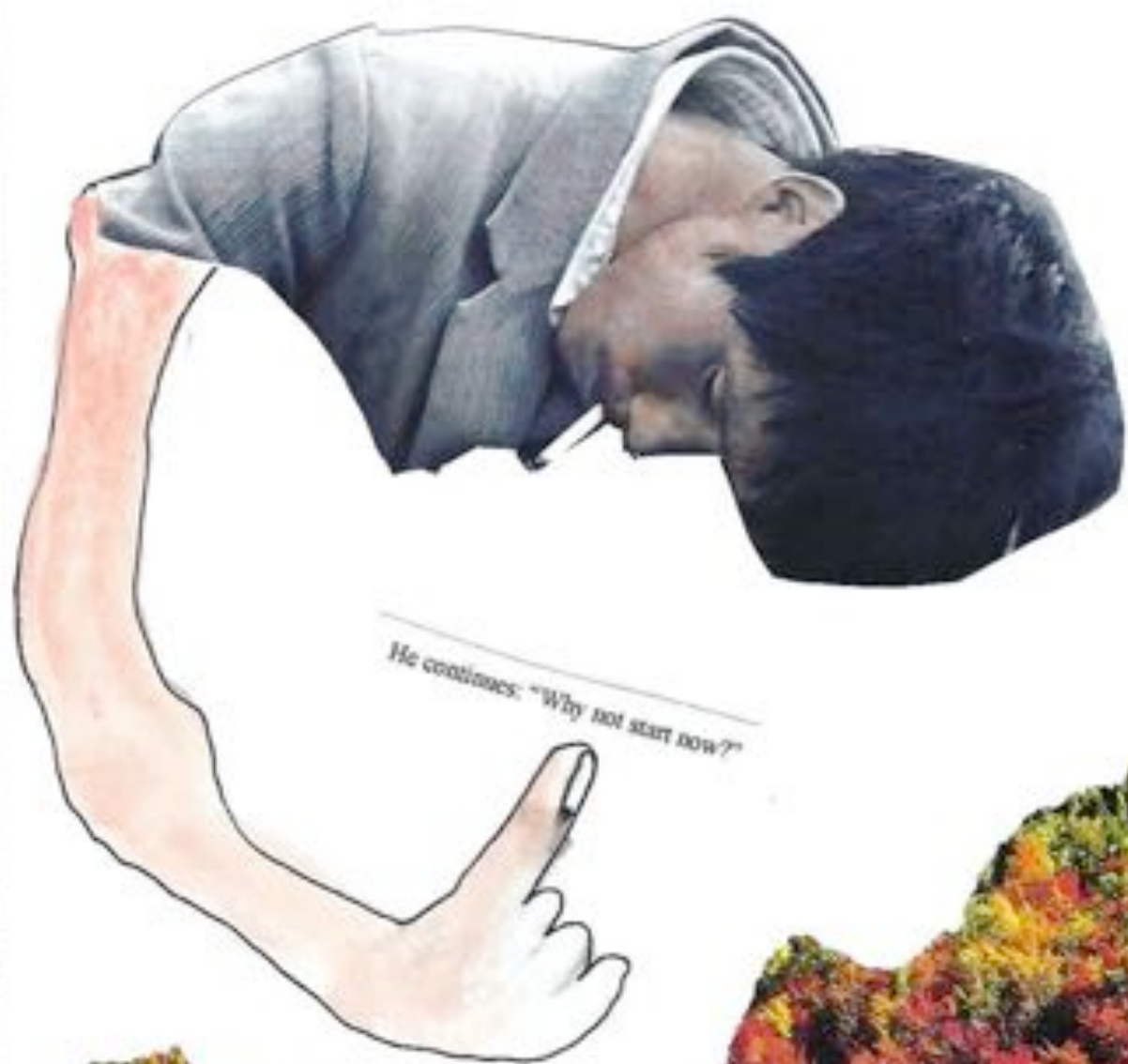
and then you will be

lowered into the ground or scattered to the four winds

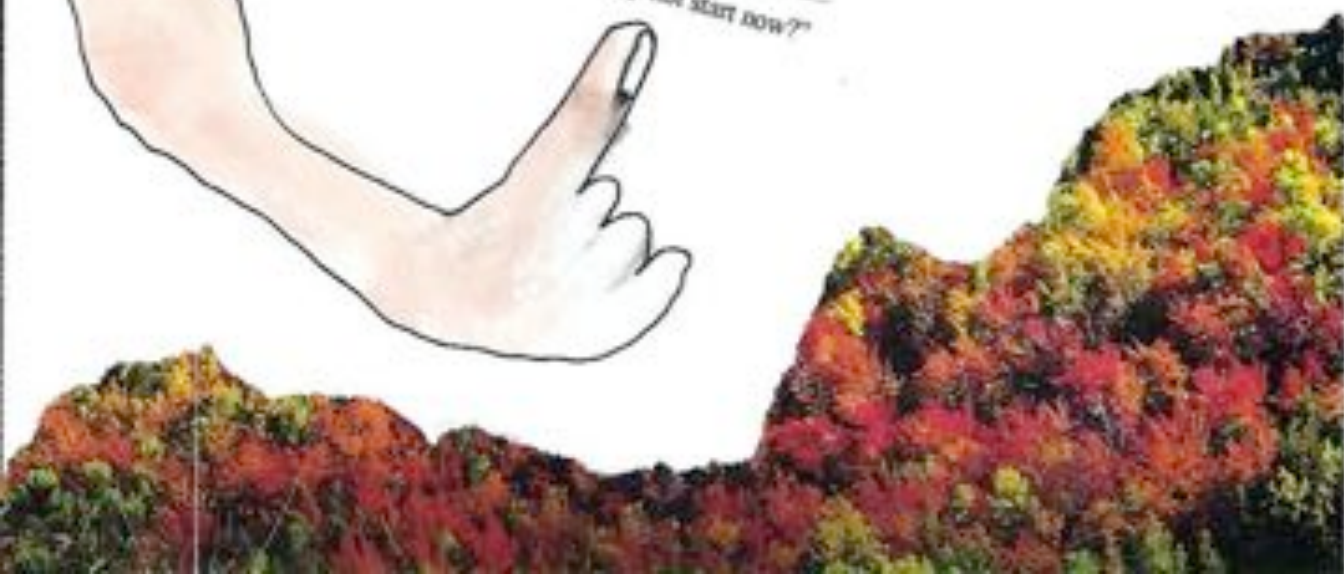
but in any event: forgotten."



"Why not start now?"

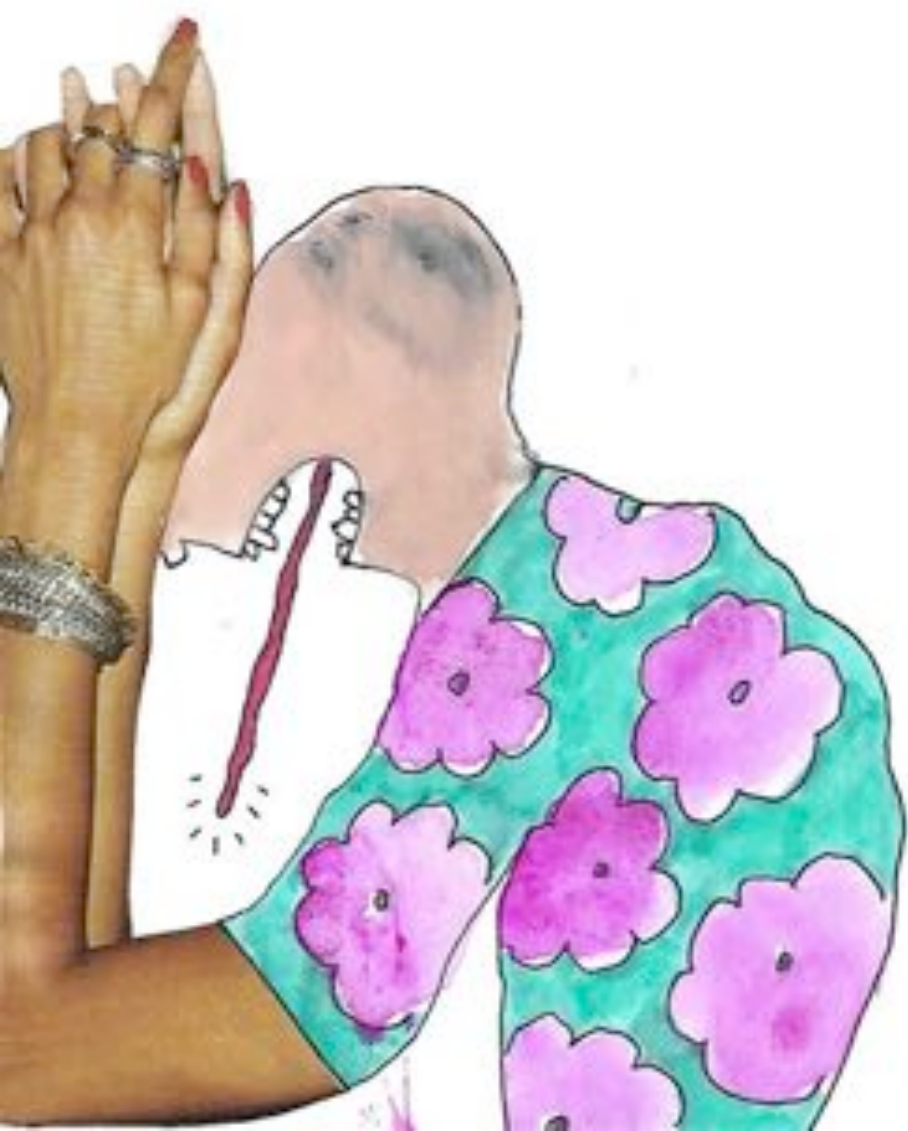


He continues: "Why not start now?"





Ancient cinnamon. Musty. Dry to the point of cracking. Something disinterred from an old, cracking book or an older mummy. Something which once was, "not unlike you will be."





The Monsignor whispers: "Clutch your hands together. Wring them together. The kind of hands where old, cracking fingers grasp for something just on the shadow side of memory. Something you thought of day after day after day until you forgot, once and for all. What was it again?"

"When there's no correct answer,"



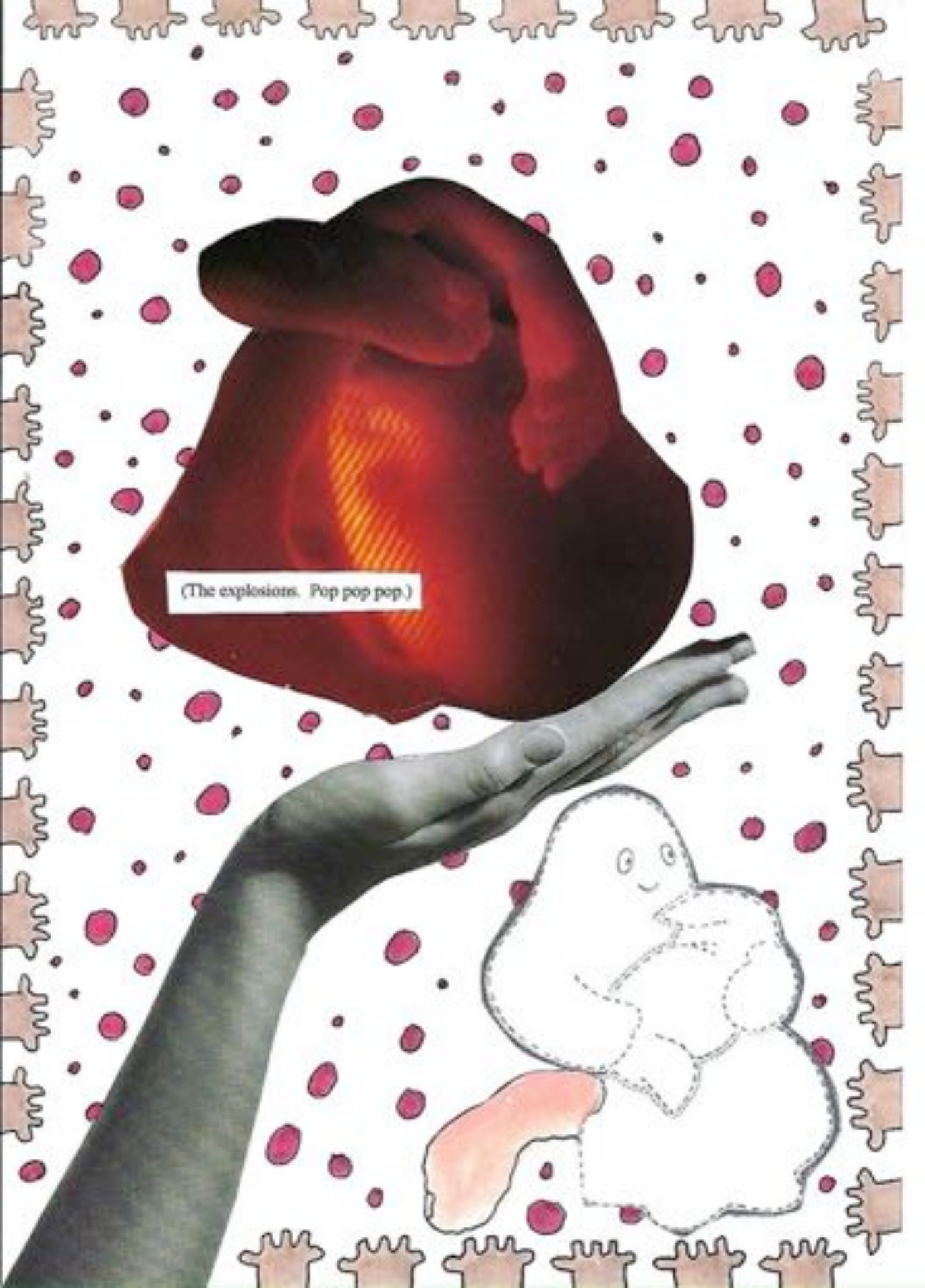
Flowers
Trees
Insects



Case in point: We went



"Every word must count,"

A hand holding a glowing red heart with a white text box and a ghost illustration. The background is white with pink dots and a border of brown handprints.

(The explosions. Pop pop pop.)

Nicholsons
Gin
IT'S GOOD

Colony Standard

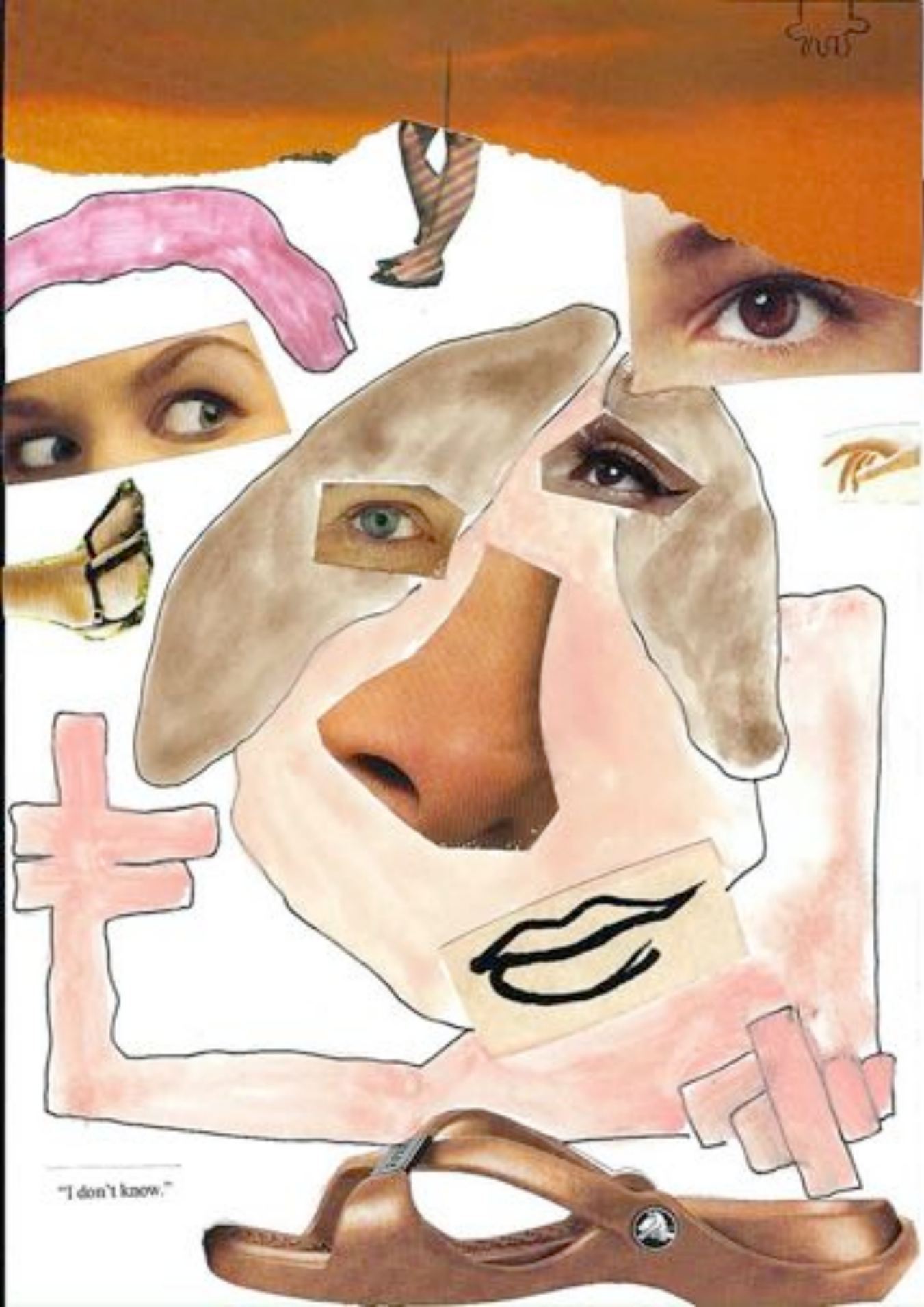
ESTABLISHED 1840



GERMANS INVADE

Monsignor Coll turns over on the bed. It is later. Much later. "What they did to Ishi. For his own good. In the name of their civilization. Always in our good name and with our best intentions."





"I don't know."



He stares upward, unblinking. There has not been an explosion in hours.

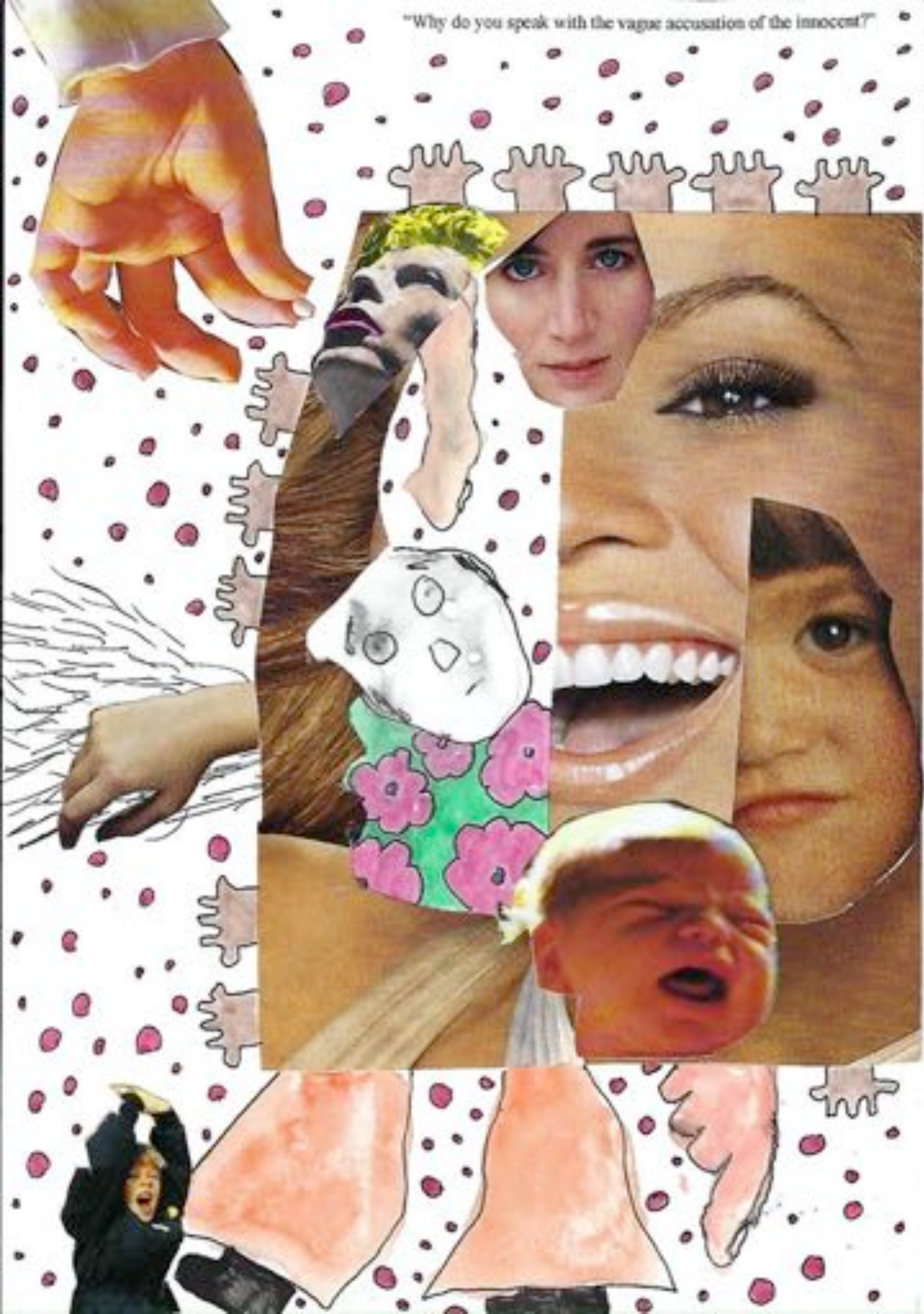


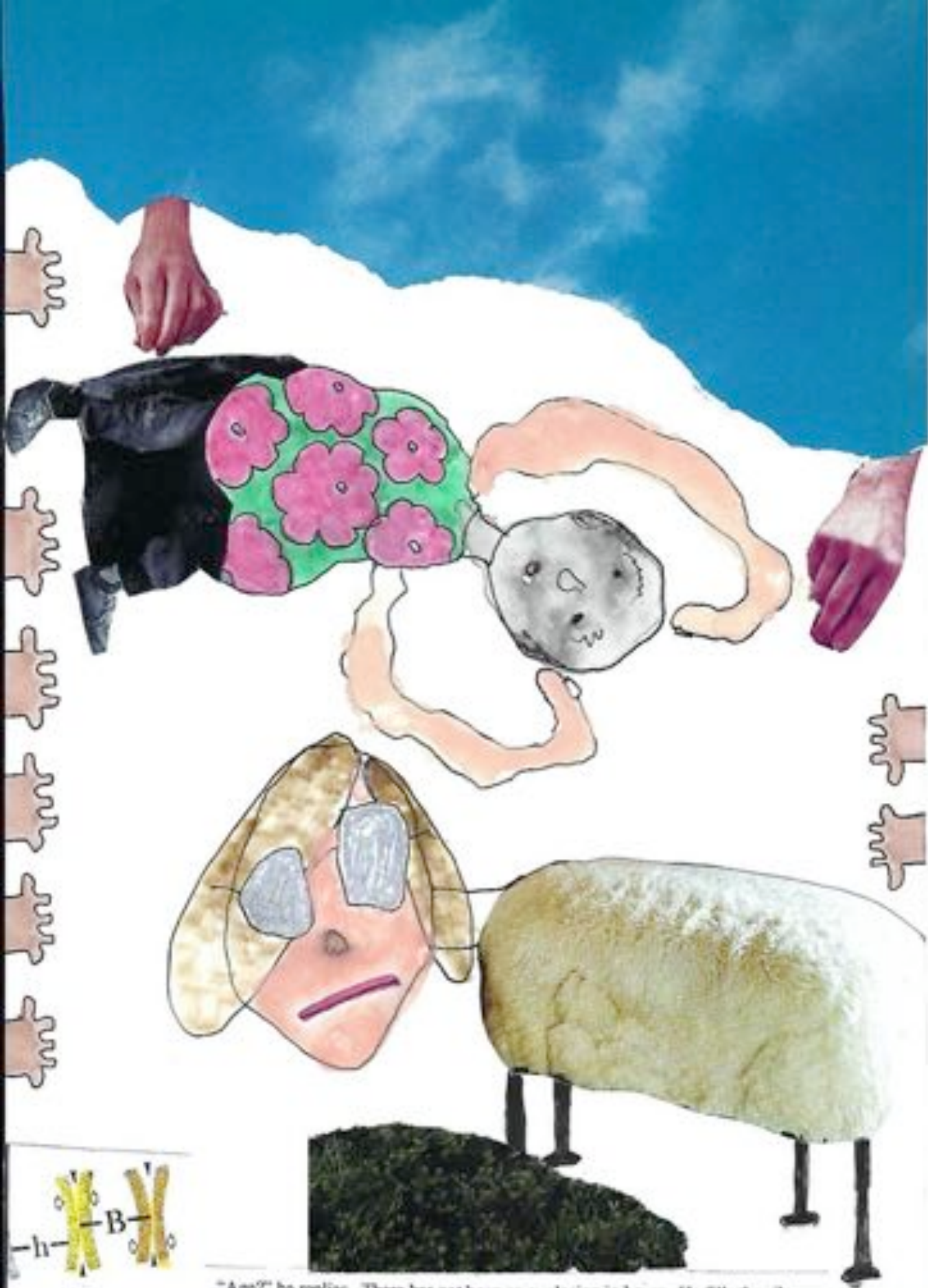
"It is better to be in control than to understand."



"They found him on a freeway median, hunted in like a cat on a shrinking island in a vast sea. Thin and muscular. By the time they were done with him, Ishi was absurd rolls of lard over his loin cloth and addicted to cigarettes."

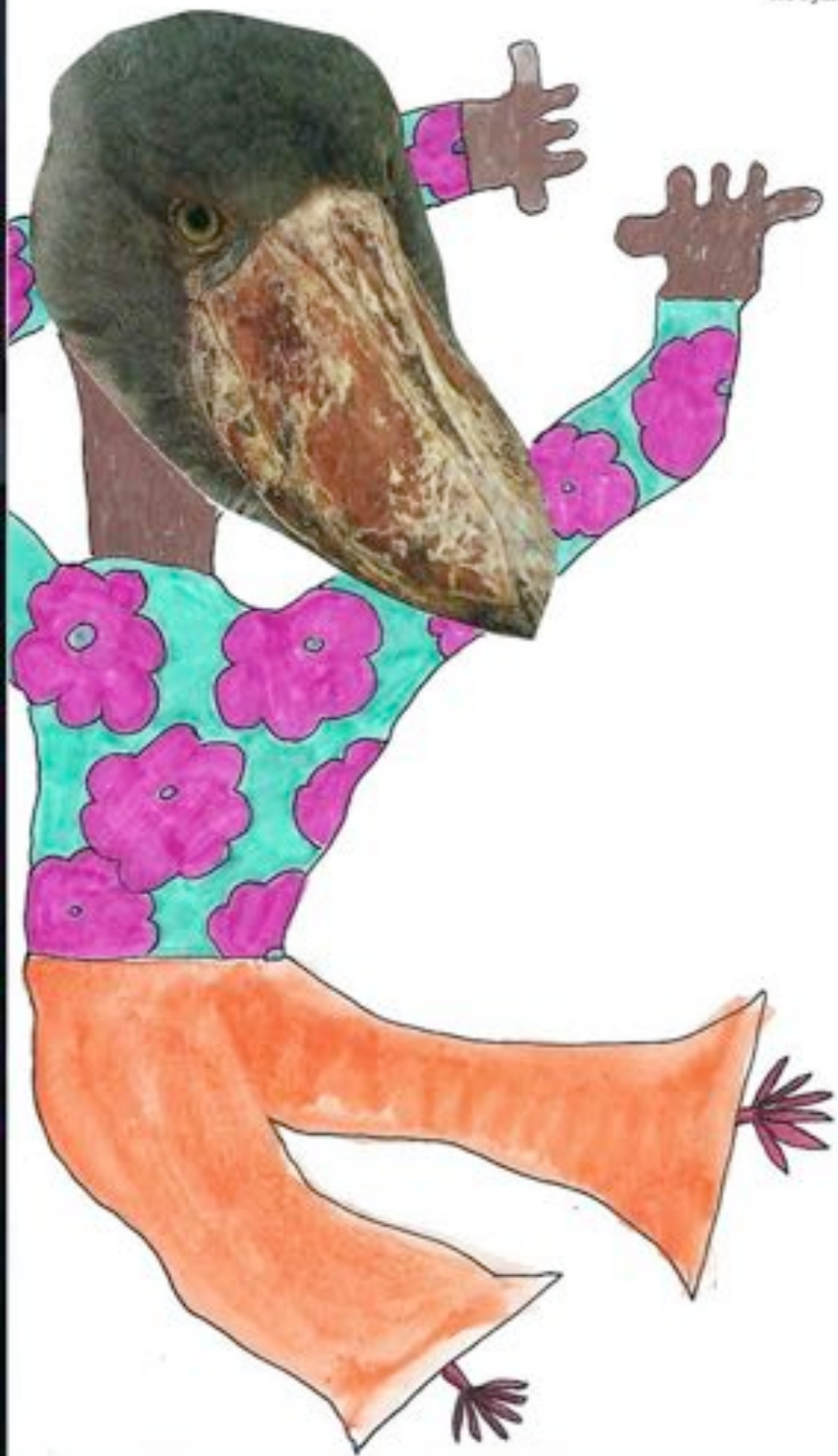
"Why do you speak with the vague accusation of the innocent?"





"Ago?" he replies. There has not been an explosion in hours. He fills the silence.

He's just flapping his gums I think.



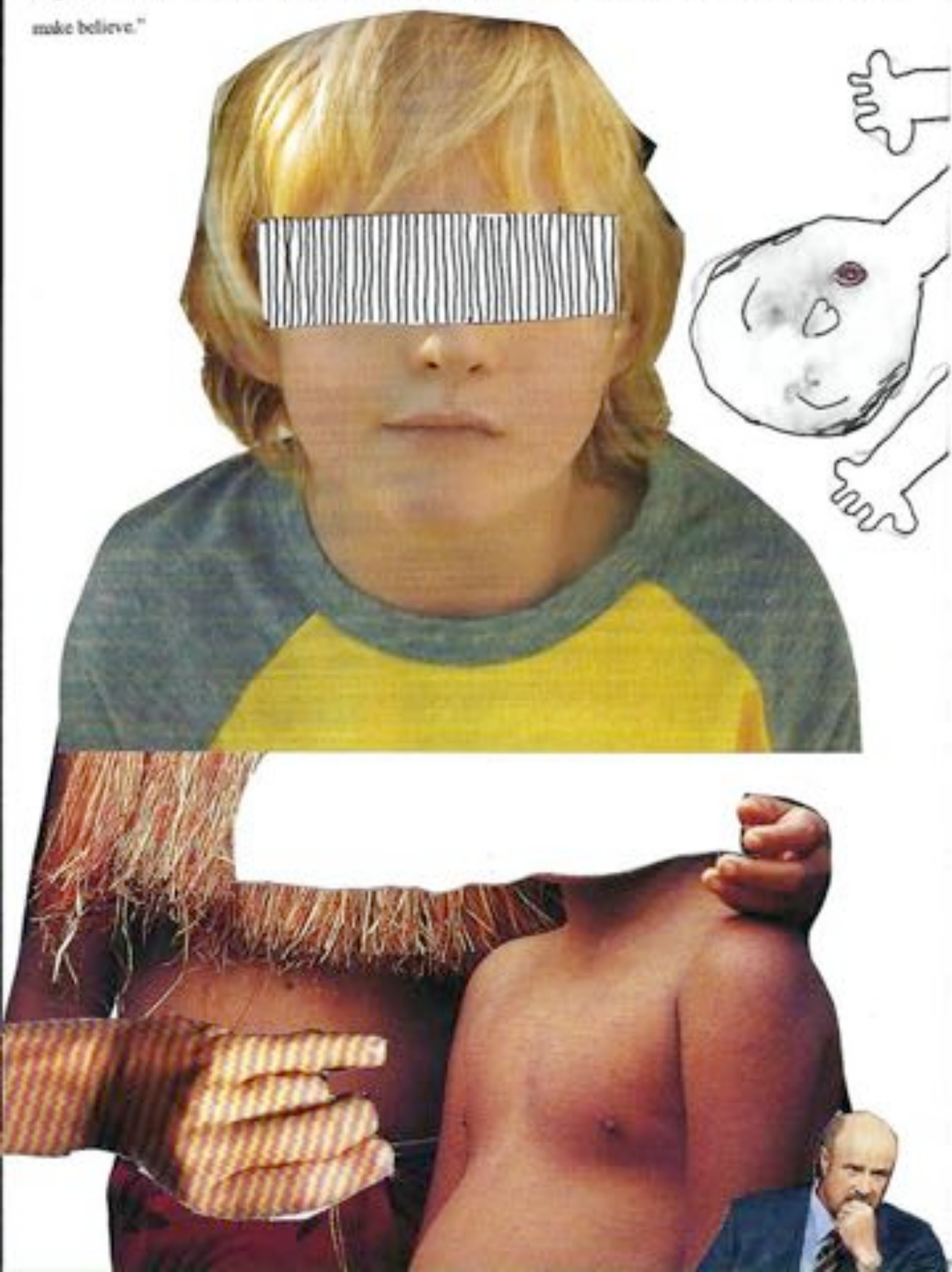
I feel a little better.



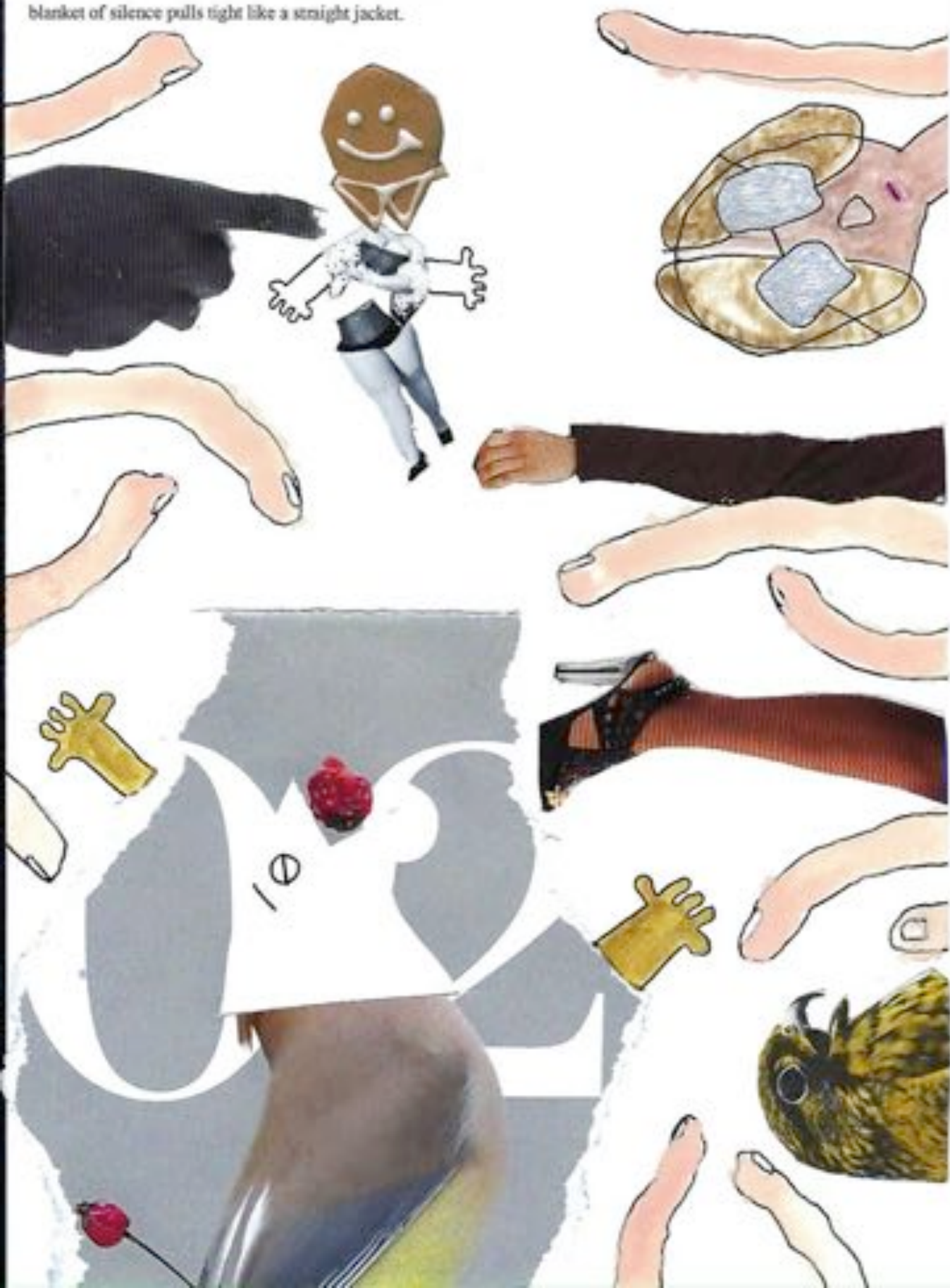
"It is better to be in control than to understand," I venture.

Spiritual
Connect

Coll continues: "There might have been a sister long before they found Ishi on the freeway medium just north of Los Angeles. Ishi speaking a language that no living soul could understand. Like all of us. But we have the comfort of make believe."



I want to flee the small room. The dark night fell so long ago. Without the explosions to break the monotony, the blanket of silence pulls tight like a straight jacket.





Colt doesn't even see me. "You don't even see me," I say. Then again. "You don't even see me?"

The dark night fell so long

ago.



Without the explosions to break the monotony, the blanket of silence pulls tight like a straight jacket.



CONSUME.
LOCAL
Y ORGÁNICO

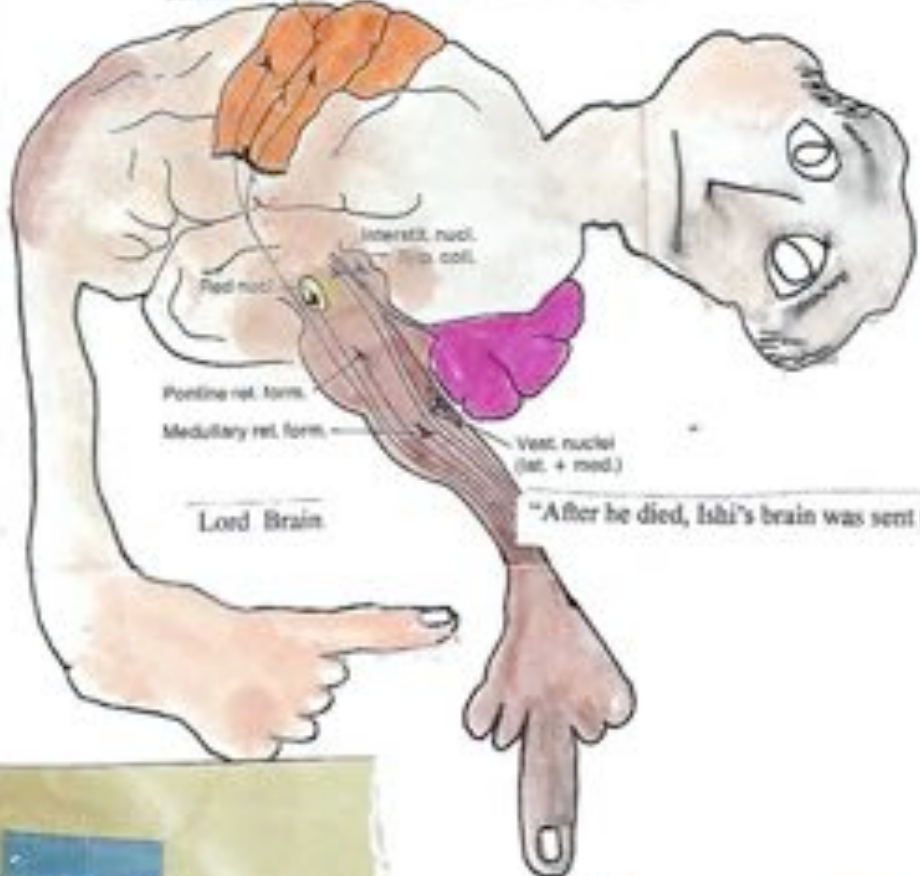
"What did Ishi live on?" He takes the last sip of the mezcal.

"Did he gather nuts and berries along the freeway median? Hunt feral cats and squirrels? Kill and skin them and cook them over a small twig fire? Did Ishi fish small frogs out of drainage canals?" Coll sobs.



Cell sobs. I wipe his chin.

Central sulcus



Lord Brain

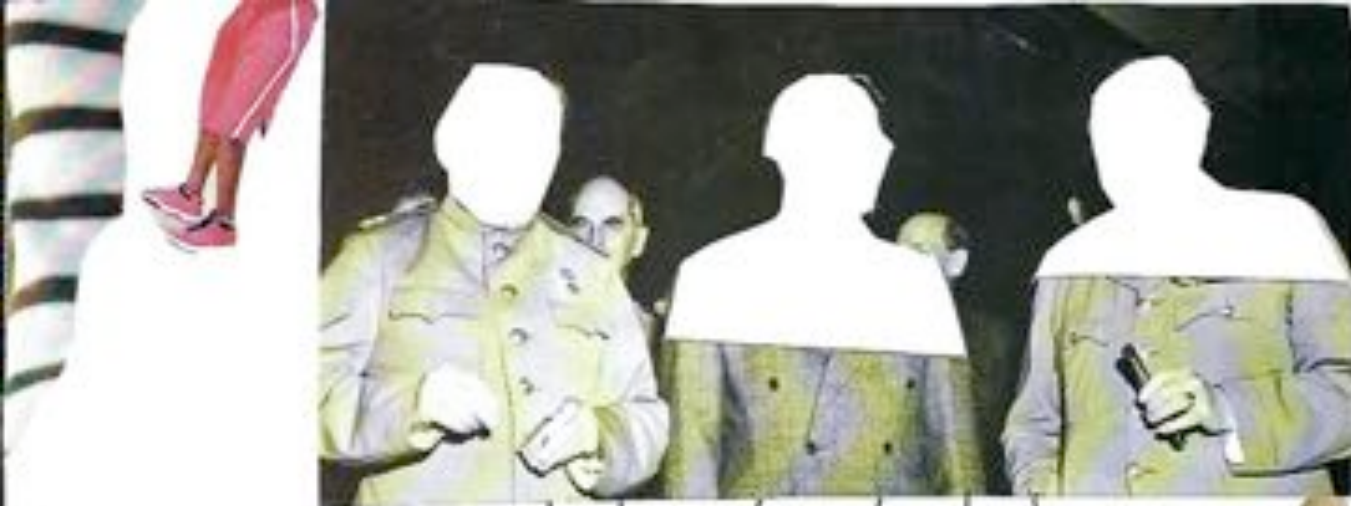
"After he died, Ishi's brain was sent to the Smithsonian Institution



order neurons projecting to the dorsal column
 found evidence of synaptically activated units
 injecting horseradish peroxidase into the dorsal
 scribed a large number of labeled cells in the sp



because that is what we do with our most
 precious commodities."



I think: What of love? What of ambition and time pieces and offices and all of the things which give our lives such intense and proud meaning? What of those? Then out loud, clearly and without irony: "proud savage."

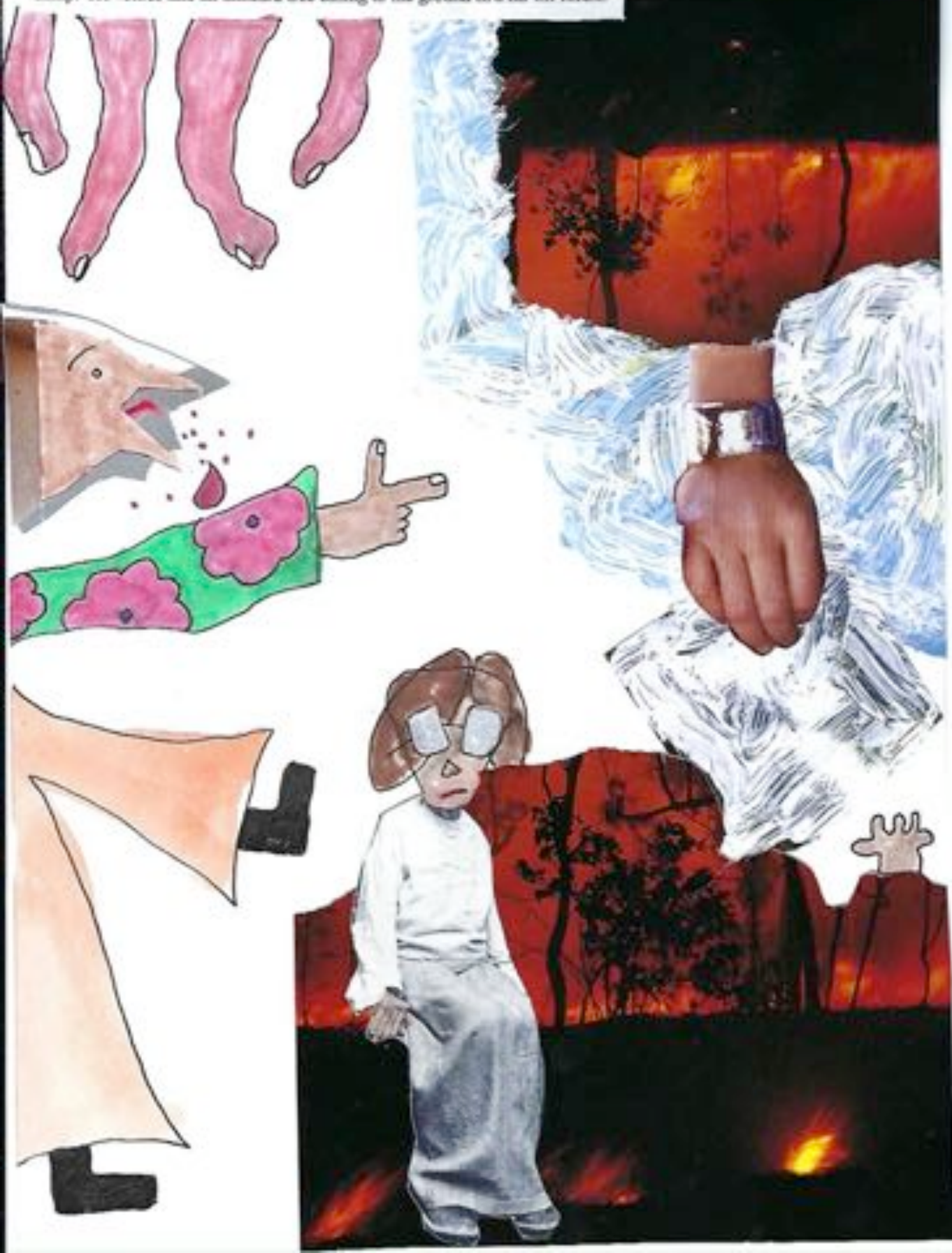


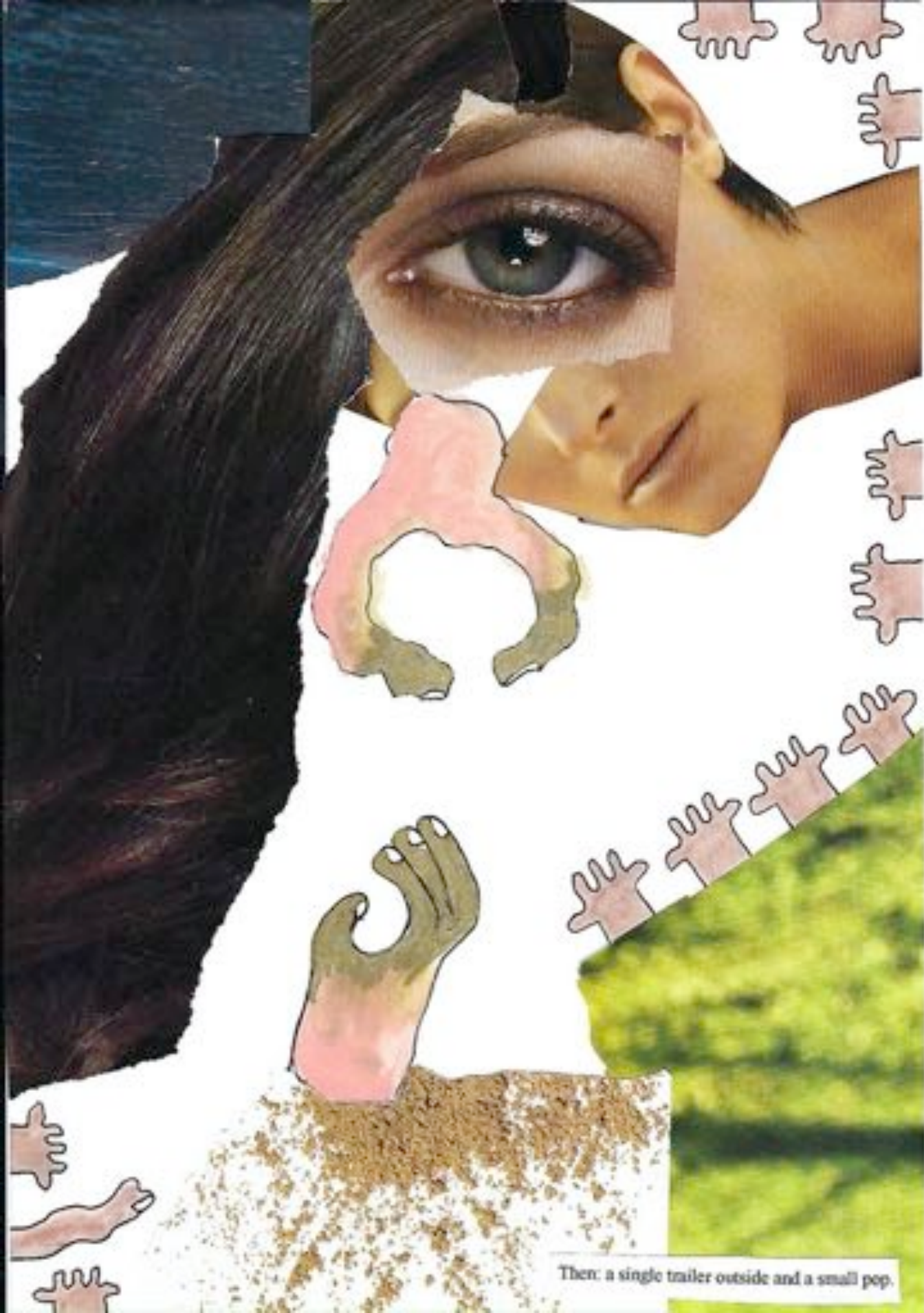
"But how do you love when no one speaks your language?"



He rolls over the on the bed.

"I will tell a story now," he says stifling a sigh. Some kind of eruption from deep within him, resonant, full and damp. He settles like an unheard tree easing to the ground in a far-off forest.





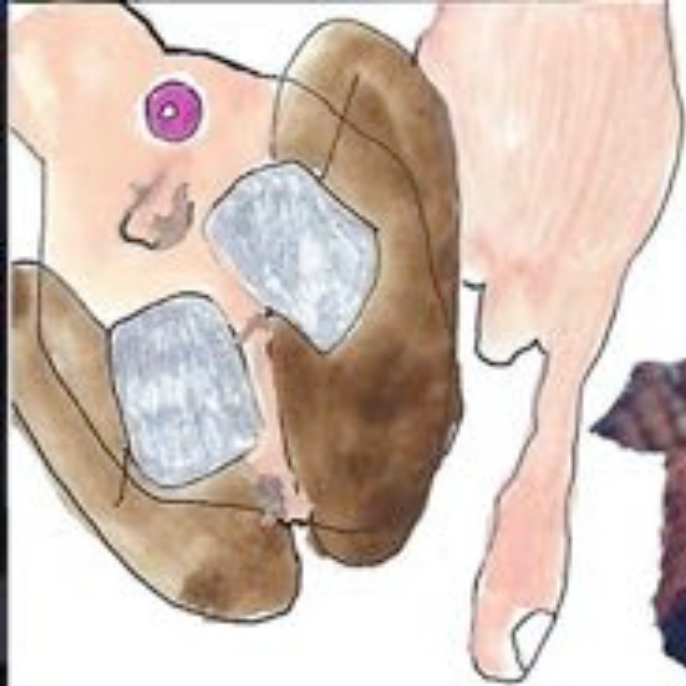
Then: a single trailer outside and a small pop.



Something crinkles in passing. Time bunches up and the single light bulb throws the semblance of understanding around his head: a halo.

hypoglossal nucleus, 319 ff.
 lesions, 319 ff.
 hypothalamic, 319 ff.
 intercalated, 319 ff.
 perihypoglossal, 319 ff.
 interpeduncular, 319 ff.
 interpositi, connections, 416, Fig. 6-10
 interval, of Cajal, 39, 485, 541
 intertrigeminal, 520
 intralaminar, 94, 429
 lateral cervical, 92
 of lateral lemniscus, 619
 lentiform. See Pallidum; Putamen
 locomotorless, 416 ff., Fig. 6-10
 connections, 416, Fig. 6-11
 functional aspects, 418
 of medial longitudinal fasciculus, rostral inter-
 peduncular part
 mesencephalic part of trigeminal nerve. See Nu-
 cleus, trigeminal
 midline, of thalamus. See Nucleus, thalamic
 of oculomotor nerve, 533. See also Nucleus of
 Edinger-Westphal
 lesions, 571 ff.
 olfactory, anterior, 648
 olivary, inferior. See Olive, inferior
 olivary, superior. See Olive, superior
 paraventricular, 727, 735, 739
 perihypoglossal, 352 ff.
 pontine, 319
 connections, 320 ff.
 of posterior commissure, 485, 541
 precerbellar, 319 ff.
 prepositus hypoglossi, 352 ff., 557
 rostral, 541, 542 ff.
 spongy, protrusion of. See Disc, interver-
 tebral
 trapezoid, 399, 411 ff., Fig. 6-8
 afferent connections, 414
 efferent connections, 210, 412, Fig.
 6-9
 functional aspects, 415
 red. See Nucleus, red
 reticular
 lateral, connections, 345 ff.
 of medulla oblongata, mesencephalon. See
 Reticular nucleus
 paramedian, 351
 tegmental, 343 ff.
 of thalamus

tract, 511
 fibers to
 tract of
 See Nucleus, trigeminal
 trigeminal
 thalamic
 fiber connections, 221, 224 ff.
 lesions of, 265, 247
 structure, 213
 supraoptic, 727, 739
 supraolivary, 520
 thalamic, 94 ff., 427 ff.
 anterior (A), 96, 668; connections, 668 ff.,
 671
 centromedian (CM), 95, 218, 225, 430
 dorsomedial (MD), 96; connections, 653,
 656, 823 ff.
 intralaminar, 94; connections, 110 n., 429;
 properties of cells, 104-105 n.
 lateral geniculate. See Body, geniculate
 lateralis dorsalis (LD), 96
 lateralis posterior (LP), 96
 medial geniculate. See Body, geniculate
 medialis dorsalis. See Nucleus, thalamic,
 dorsomedial
 midline, 94, 429, 431
 "nonspecific," 99, 427 ff., Fig. 6-12, 442;
 connections, 429, 431 ff.
 posterior group (PG), 97 ff.; connections,
 119; properties of cells, 104
 pulvinar, 95, 393, 837 ff.
 reticular, 94, 429, 433 ff.
 "specific," 99 ff., 427, 429 n.
 ventralis anterior (VA), 96, 288 ff.; connec-
 tions, 365 ff.
 ventralis intermedius
 ventralis lateralis
 connections, 225, 226
 ventralis posterior
 ventralis posterior
 102; connections,
 properties of cells
 ventralis posterior n.
 502, 514; connect-
 514 ff.
 trigeminal, 510 ff.
 central connections, 511 ff.
 main sensory, 510, 514, 521, 524; lesions,
 142
 microcephalic, 319, 510, 518, 540
 motor, 511
 organization, 511, 520 ff.
 physiological studies, 522 ff.
 principal. See Nucleus, trigeminal, main
 sensory
 spinal tract, 510, 515, 521, 524; lesions,
 142
 trochlear nerve, 533
 lesions, 571
 dorsal, 727, 736



He continues: "In 1911, aged 50, Ishi emerged at a median strip between two freeway carriageways, two miles from downtown Oroville, California.



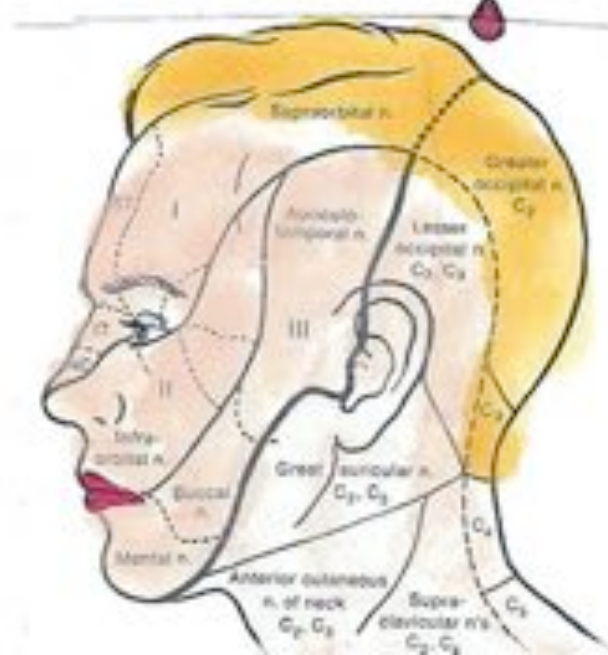
Ishi was taken in by anthropologists at the University of California, Berkeley, who both studied him and hired him as a janitor. Indians were known to be fastidious and the anthropologists were powerful-pleased with his abilities to keep the musty old offices clean and neat."



"I studied anthropology. For that's what Ishi was. The books say that to this day, though they also note" (with fresh vengeance) "that the indigenous world to which Ishi had been born, even referred to by some in the contemporary canon as his 'birthright', had been destroyed by the White Man."



honorary degrees from the University of






lying on his side in the mussed bed.



"I didn't flunk out of school I just stopped right before

finishing."



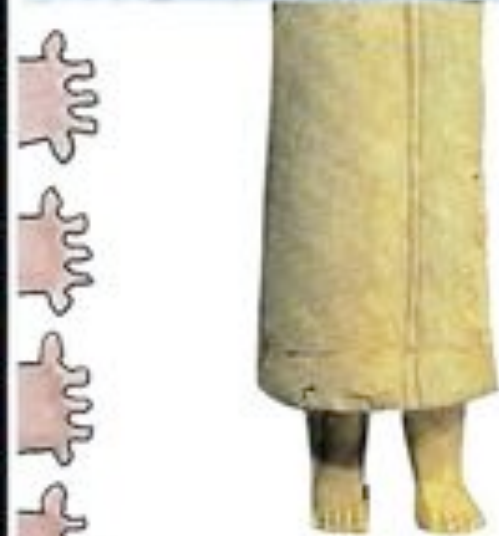


"Have I told you about Grimes?" he asks.

- I'm
Grimes.



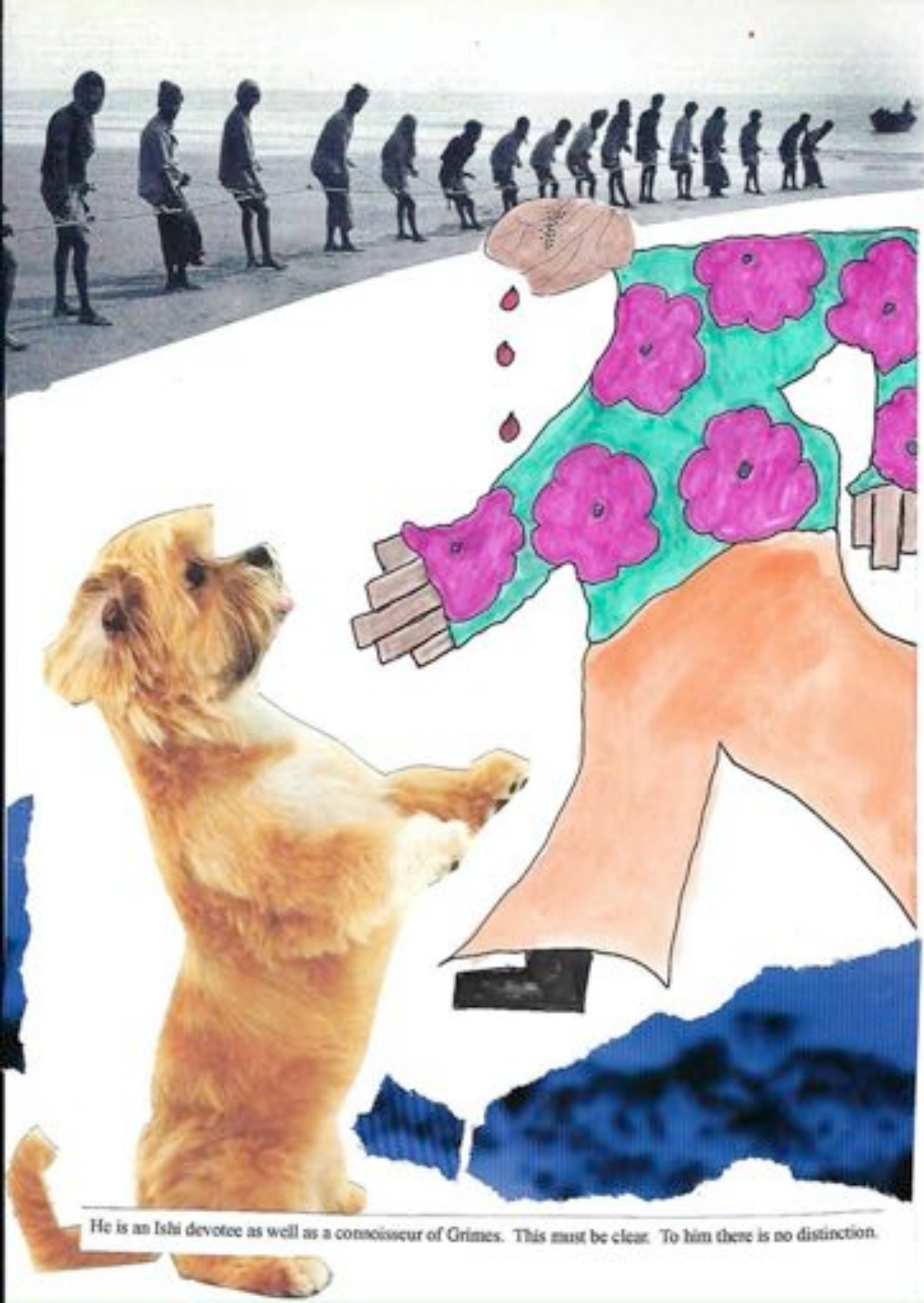
Coll most certainly has told me about Grimes.



Coll: "I can see all of it in my mind's eye. The man on the frozen ice the broken ship receding into the horizon the leather boots rotting off in the frigid snow. Grimes knew what to eat."

fennel salad





He is an Ishi devotee as well as a connoisseur of Grimes. This must be clear. To him there is no distinction.

Reflection



Coll sees himself in the savage's destiny hemmed in on all sides by the sounds of the passing cars on the freeway median while trying to scrape a life out of squirrels and some kind of fern or grass with not a single soul to whom to



Ishi knew what to eat and in Coll's telling he would know what to eat as well.

think like a chef



Ishi knew what to eat and in Coll's telling he would know what to eat as well.



Grimes certainly knew what to eat.

How to survive.

"I don't remember if Grimes lived I imagine that he didn't," the Monsignor lies.





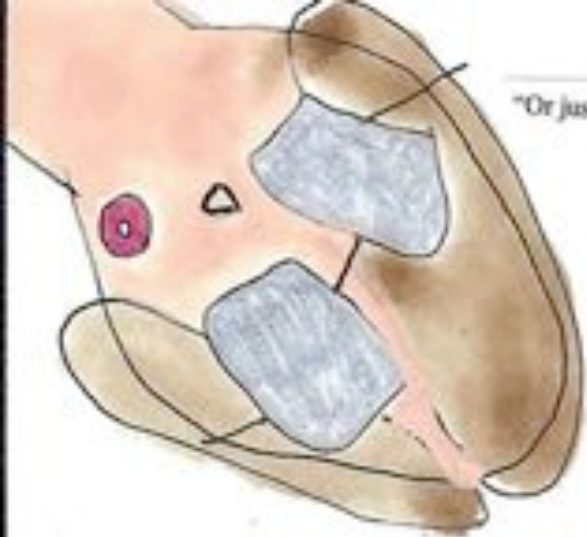
"In any event he would be dead by now no doubt. Ishi would be as well, even if his civilization hadn't been brought to its knees by the more advanced and more deeply religious White Man who at that time was zooming around the freeways of southern California."



ordinary development of granite

"I think it might have been before Hollywood," I venture.

"Or just at the beginning, before the talkies swept the nation."



in and the
been con-
and about
ed forth in a
within
tes.
art
ce-
ve-
red
be
rot,
ing
lus of the



It is a story of
which might w
Israeli Kibbutz.
build up
golden
when
and b
Wh
epi
But
the
ma
nal
B. C.

ould have
ermed the
gness that
culturalists
different
rea. It was
reated
by Le-
its ex-
chards,
h later
myths



Right:
Amay;
Niska
rea wh
the or
Yahw
cost t
tion c
ring;
Aan
long
We
11th





"We do love to know."



Then he says it again: "We do love to know."

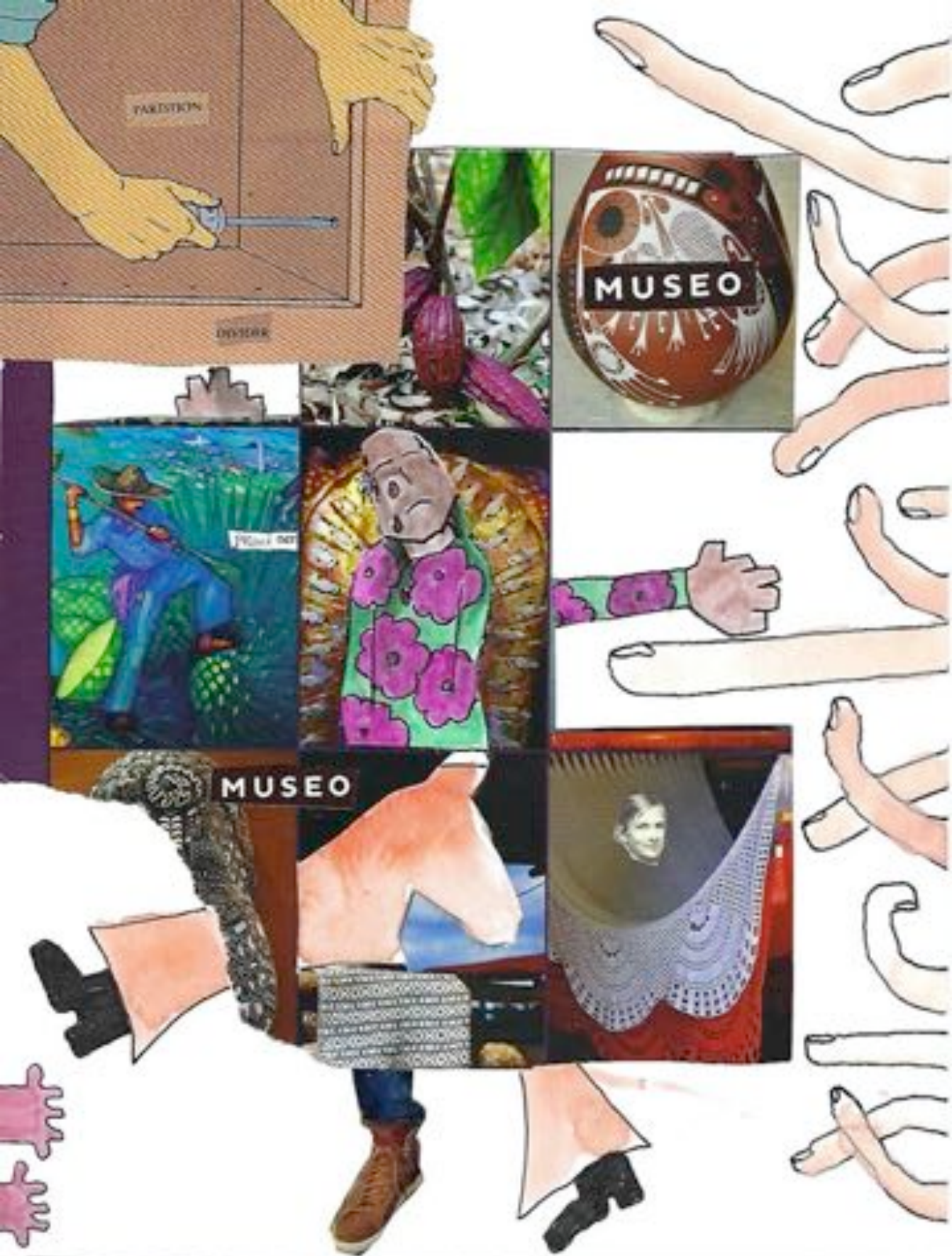


He rubs into his reddened palm.



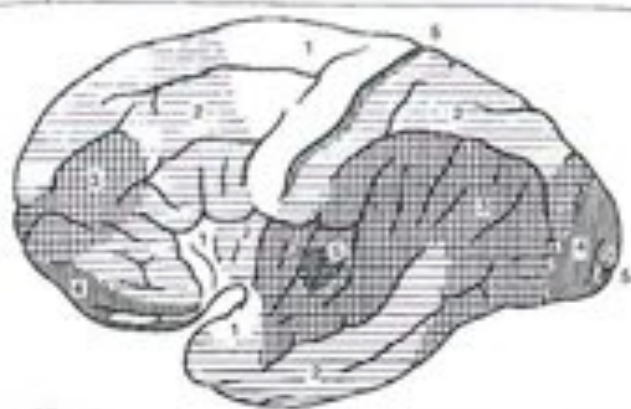
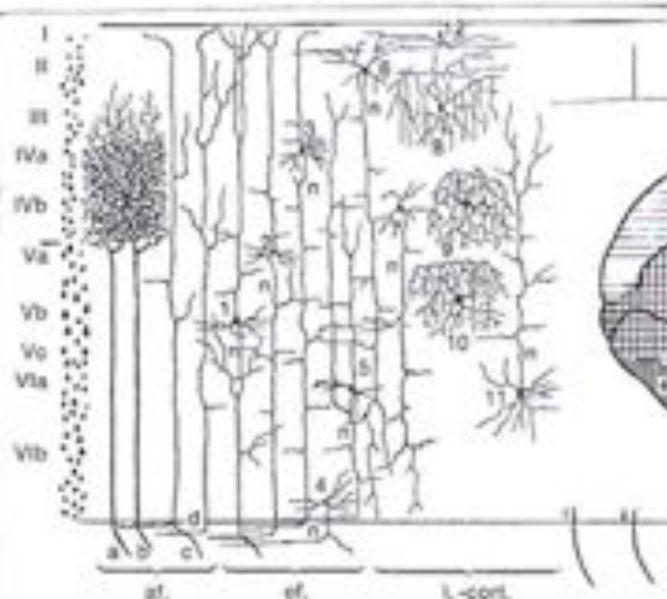
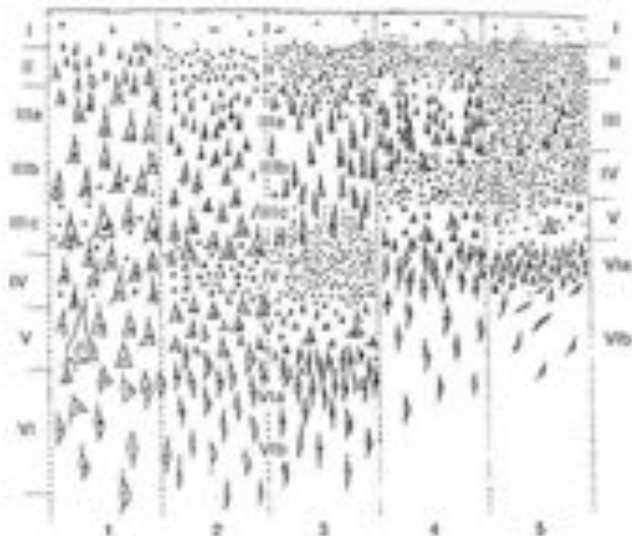
By the time Coll arrived at Berkeley, the janitors were Mexicans, though like Ishi, they were fastidious and quiet. The anthropologists pitched in at the holidays, purchasing them sweaters, new socks and other small trinkets and





Coll watched the Mexicans closely, though clandestinely. He noted how they related to each other versus how they related to the anthropologists. He charted their family lives, including births, deaths, marriages and *quinceañeras*.

He made charts and created spreadsheets.



SYMPATHETIC

Organ	Pregangl. neuron	Postgangl. neuron	Action
Eye	Th ₁₋₂	Sap. cerv. gangl.	Dilatation of pupil
Lacrimal gland	Th ₁₋₂	Sap. cerv. gangl.	?
Submandibular and sublingual glands	Th ₁₋₂	Sap. cerv. gangl.	Vasoconstriction, secretion (?)
Parotid gland	Th ₁₋₄	Sap. cerv. gangl.	Vasoconstriction, secretion (?)
Heart	Th ₁₋₄ (?)	Sap., middle and inf. cerv. gangl., upper thor. gangl.	Acceleration. Dilatation of coronary arteries
Branchi, lungs	Th ₁₋₄ (?)	Inf. cerv. gangl., upper thor. gangl.	Dilatation of bronchi, vasodilatation (?)
Stomach	Th ₅₋₁₁ (?) Gr. splanchn. n.	Celiac gangl.	Inhibition of peristalsis and secretion. Contraction of pyloric sph.
Pancreas	Th ₅₋₁₁ (?) Gr. splanchn. n.	Celiac gangl.	Weak secretion (?)
Small intestine, colon asc., rectum	Th ₅₋₁₁ (?) Gr. splanchn. n.	Celiac gangl., sup. mesent. gangl. and other ganglia and plexuses	Inhibition of secretion and peristalsis
Colon desc. and sigmoid, rectum	L ₁₋₂	Inf. mesent. gangl., hypogastr. plex. and other ganglia	Inhibition of secretion and peristalsis
Kidney	Th ₁₀₋₁₂ (Th ₁₀₋₁₂)	Celiac gangl., renal plexus	Vasomotor changes
Uterus, bladder	L ₁₋₂ (Th ₁₀₋₁₂)	Hypogastr. and other plexuses	Vasoconstriction, const. of int. sph. in circulation
Adrenal medulla	Th ₁₋₁₂ (Th ₁₀₋₁₂) Lateral spl. n.	Cells of adrenal medulla	Secretion
Head, neck (skin, muscles)	Th ₁₋₂ (?)	Sap. and middle cerv. gangl.	Vasoconstriction. Sweat secretion. Piloerection
Upper extremity (skin, muscles)	Th ₁₋₂ (?)	Scalene gangl., upper thor. ganglia	
Lower extremity (skin, muscles)	Th ₁₀₋₁₂ (Th ₁₀₋₁₂)	Lower lumbar and upper sacral ganglia	



He wrote a paper and published it under an assumed name.

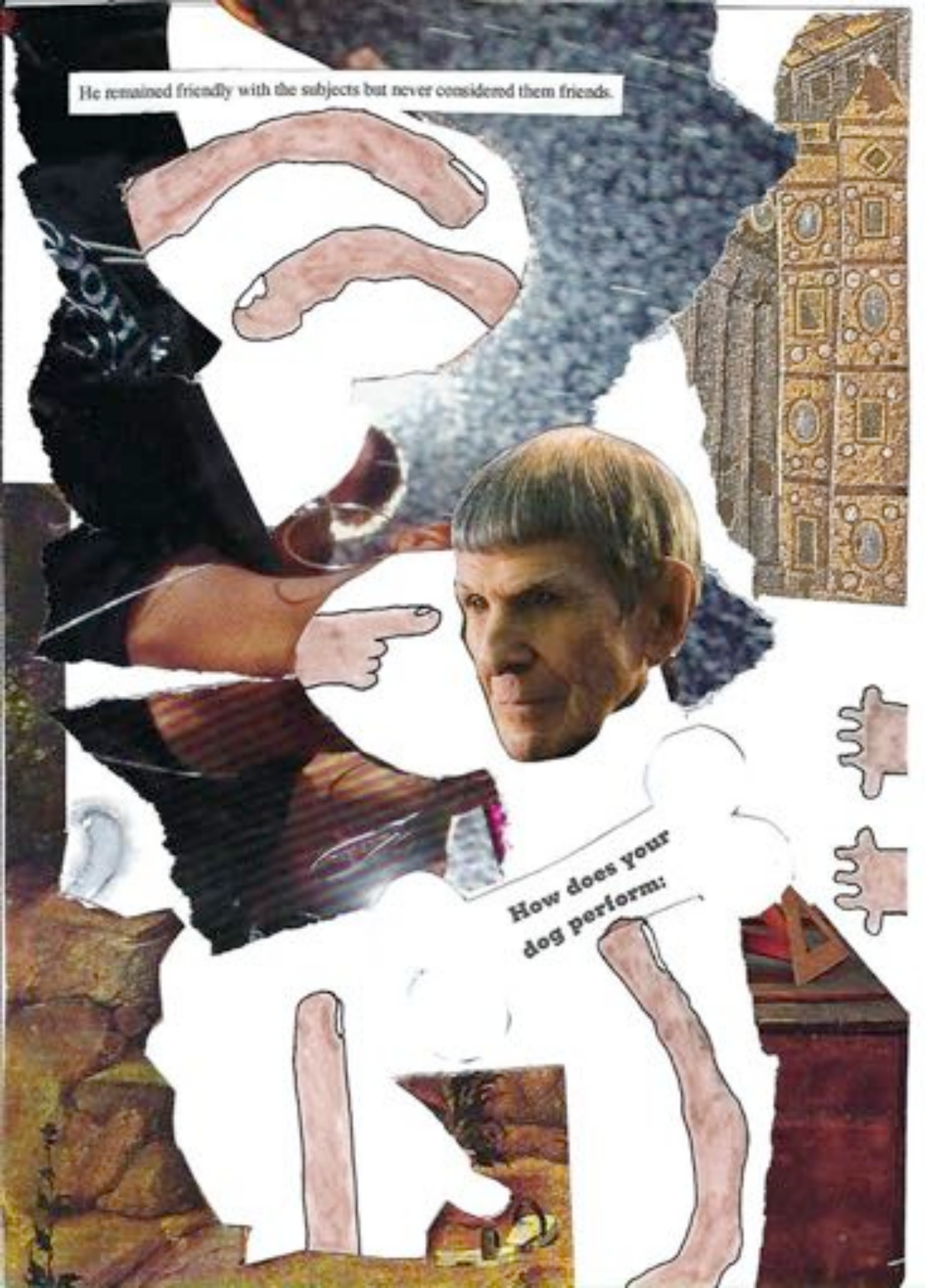


studies in these species

out of the University of Idaho at Boise.

He remained friendly with the subjects but never considered them friends.

How does your
dog perform:





He left before graduation to enter the novitiate. At Our Lady of New Clairvaux Abbey, in Vina.

HOW SMART IS YOUR



"Grimes considered the fellow explorers friends so when he ate them he felt the tug of remorse, although he was able to cook them they tasted a bit sweet and the texture was tough and sinewy. Grimes found this all to be disagreeable, though his previous friends were keeping him alive.

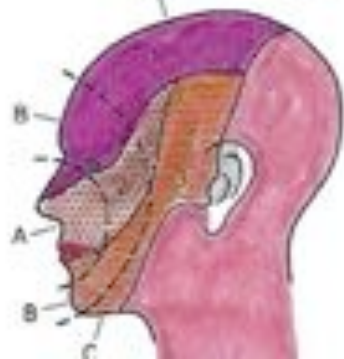


muscles of the tongue,

medulla

fibers to the muscles

vagus.



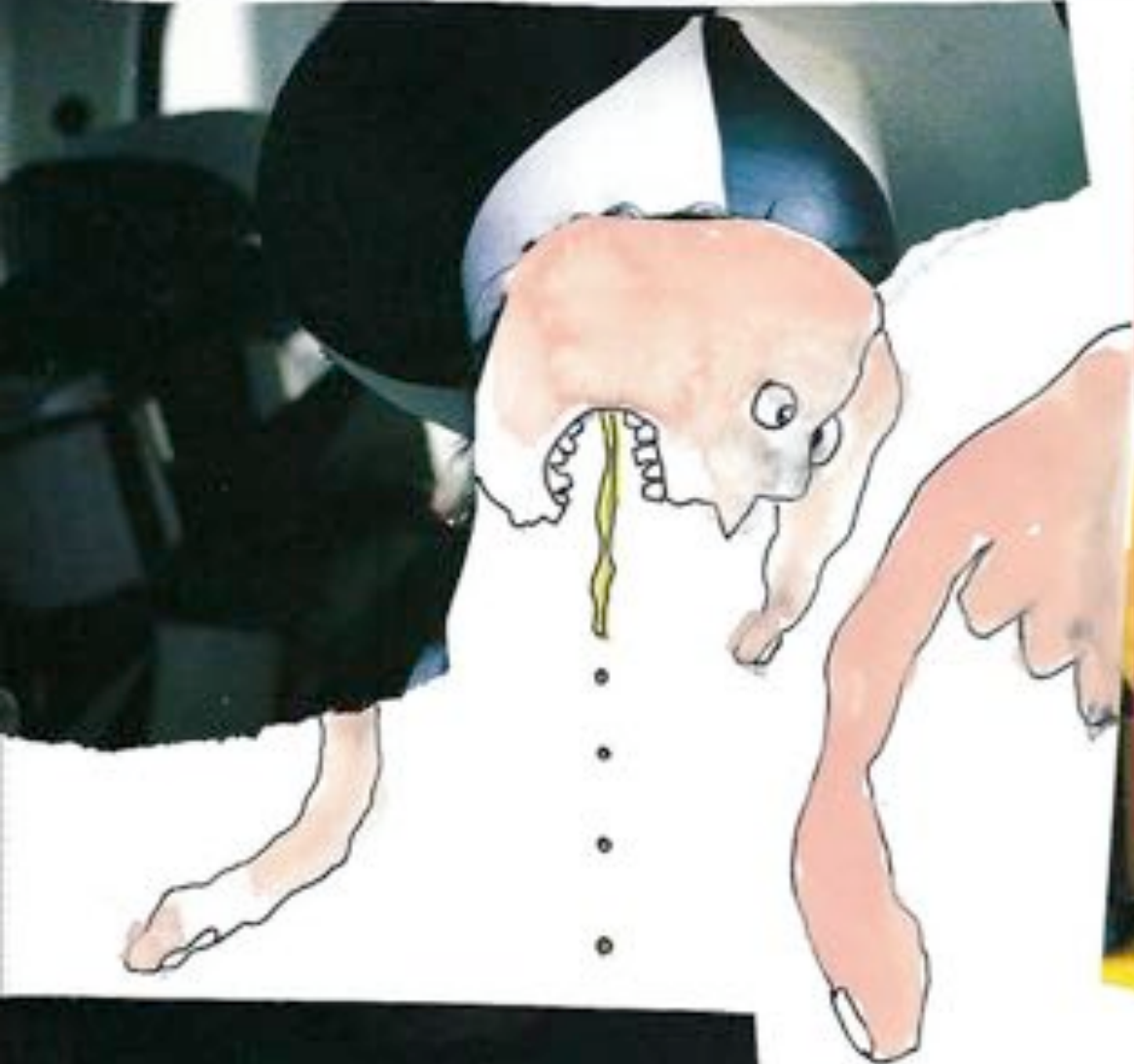
Think Like a Chef.



like a chef

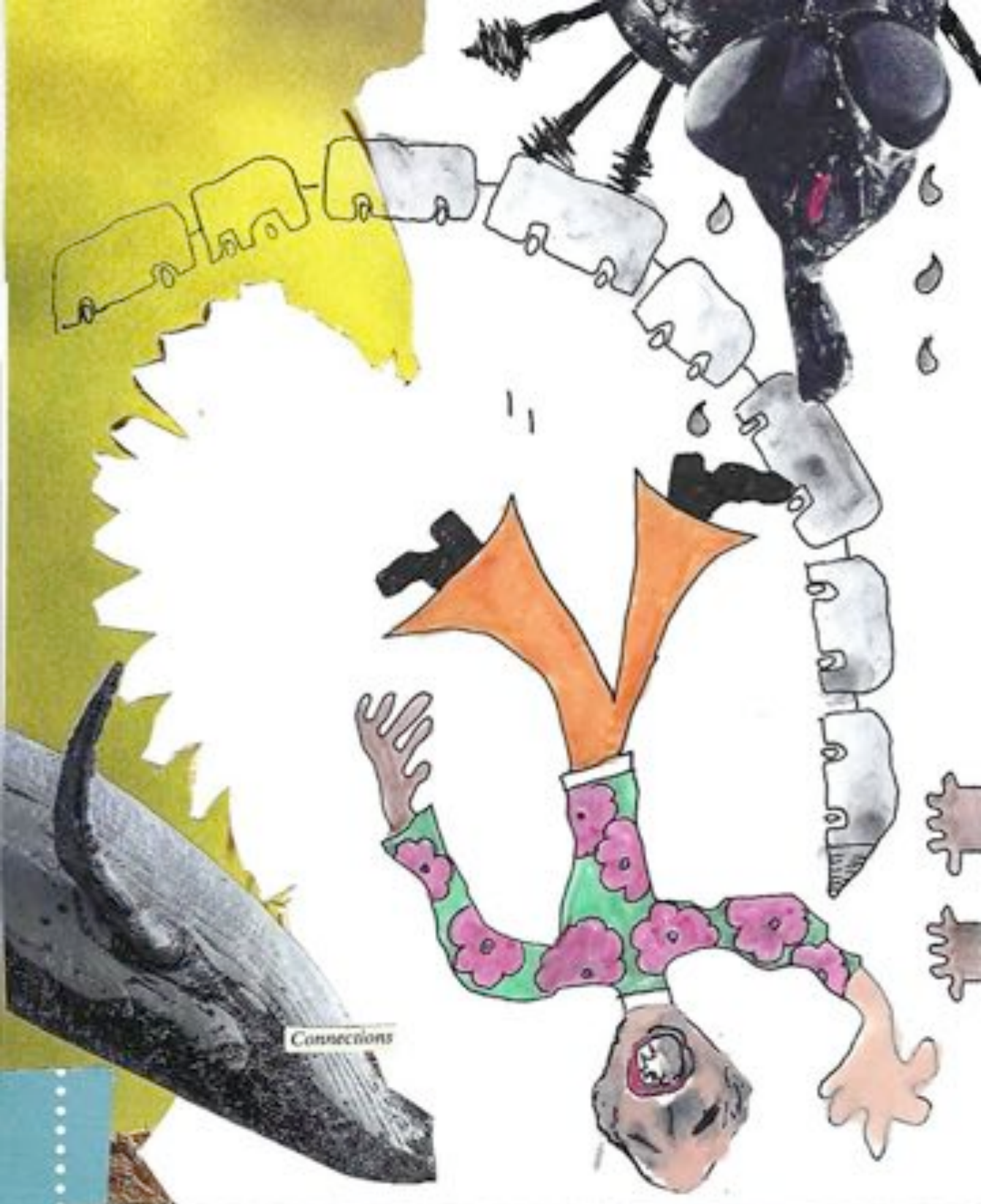
"Once he finished his first meal, he tied the rest of the carrion to the sled which he now had to pull himself. He lashed the conveyance to his waist and continued moving overland deeper into the Antarctica."

"Grimes was a fierce egalitarian," I offer. I feel sick. Darkness descends. I climbed into Coll's bed hours ago.



Darkness descends. I had climbed into Coll's bed hours ago. My shakes are gone. I feel exhaustion and nausea in their wake. I toss on the mattress. He lies by my side, with his back to me, ignoring my plights.





Connections

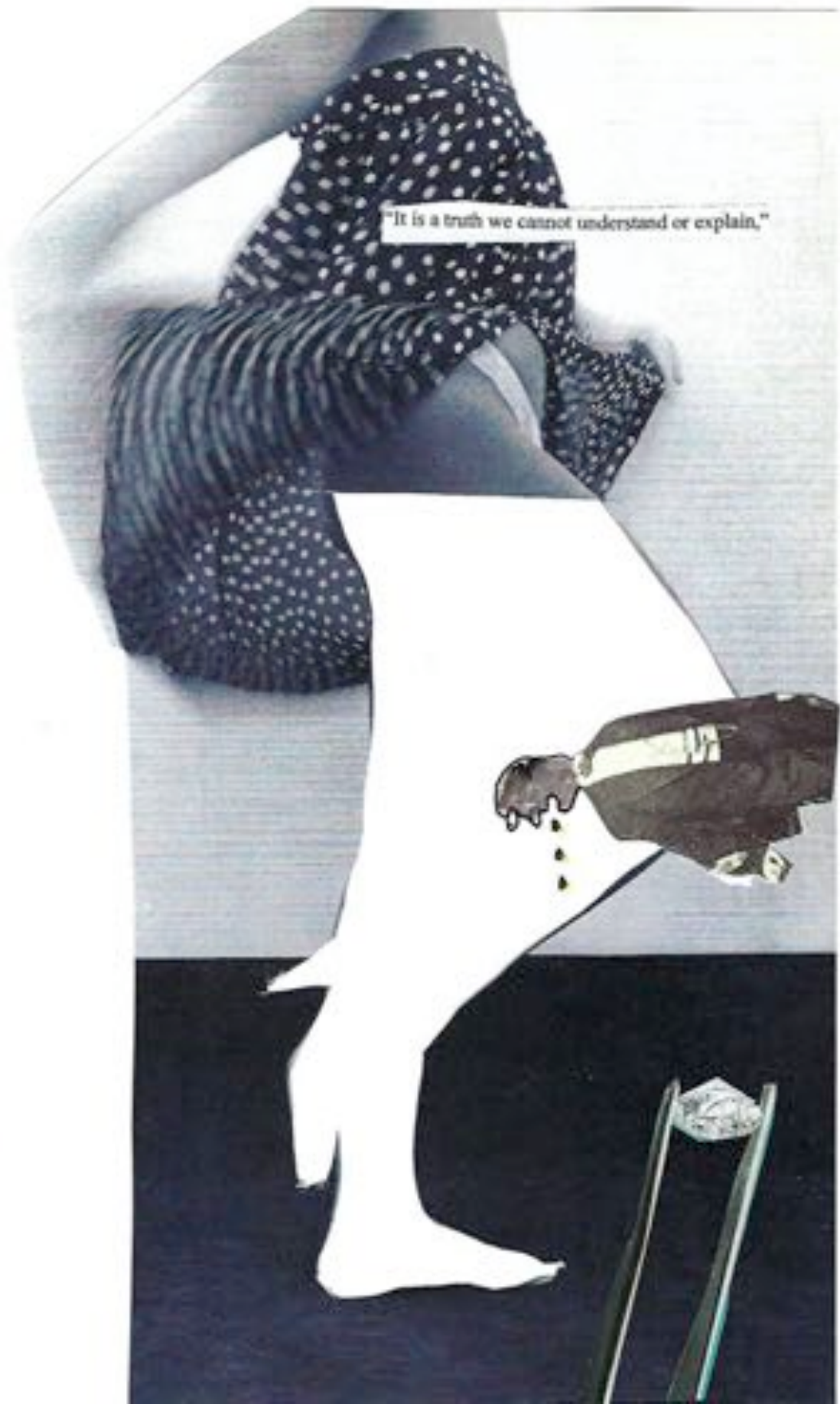
The explosions start up again. The freight train which moves beneath the window grinds slowly past, complaining against the cold with groaning joints. It staggers deeper into the night, toward the east and the ocean.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

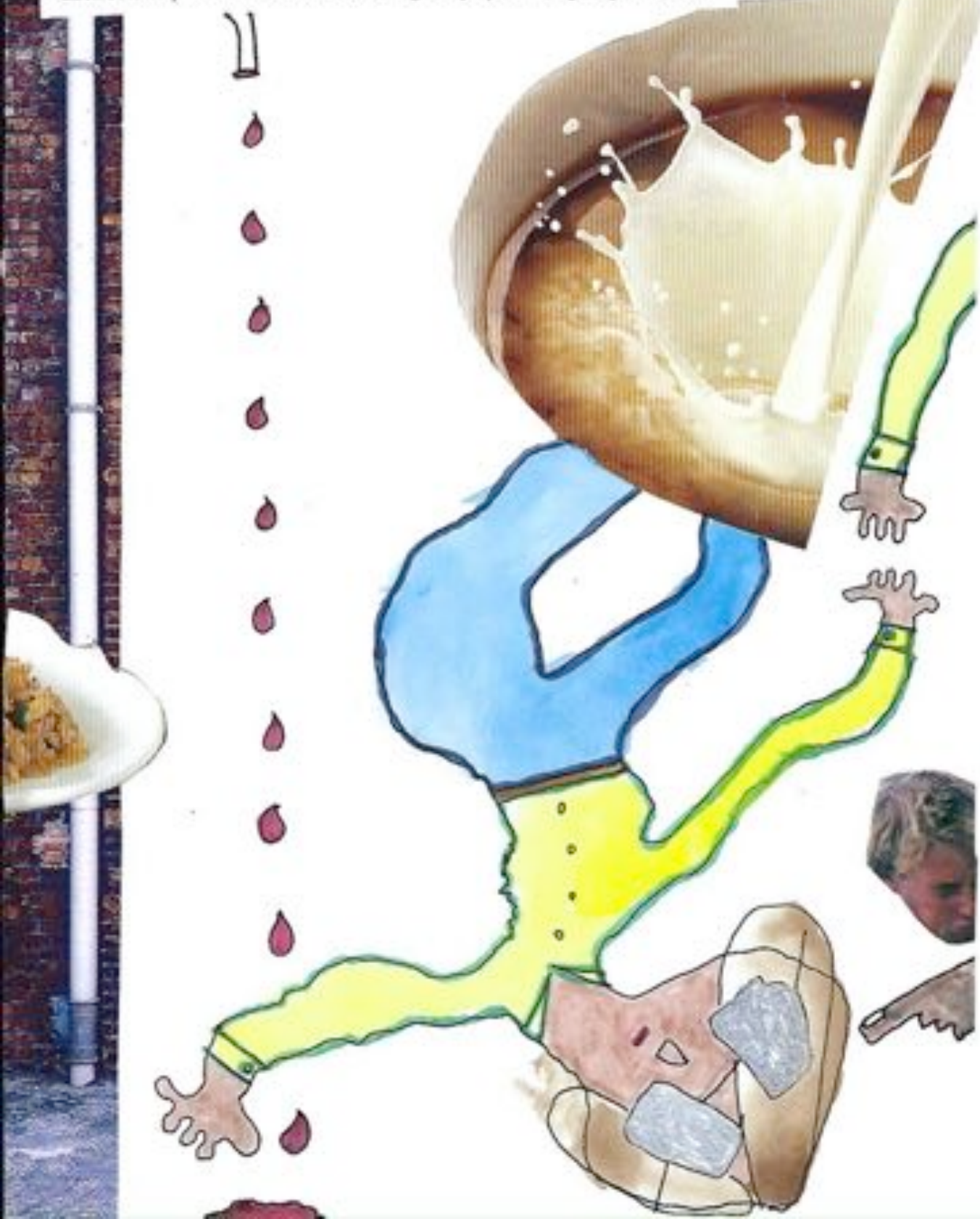


"It is a truth we cannot understand or explain," Coll says, his bony back shoved toward me.

"It is a truth we cannot understand or explain."



I lie back. I stare at the ceiling. The freight train moves off into the distance, leaving a heavier stillness in its wake. The explosions have stopped, for the moment. How many times in my life, either next to Coll or alone, have I stared over me at some ceiling or another? A crack in the plaster wandering into a shadow? The tendril of a disembodied spider web? A bit of dust or single lazy fly scattering the pristine view.



How many ceilings in how many rooms at how many different ages and always looking for the same thing: an answer which never appears. An imagined future, which slowly becomes crushed beneath the gathering sands of time to be suffocated, like



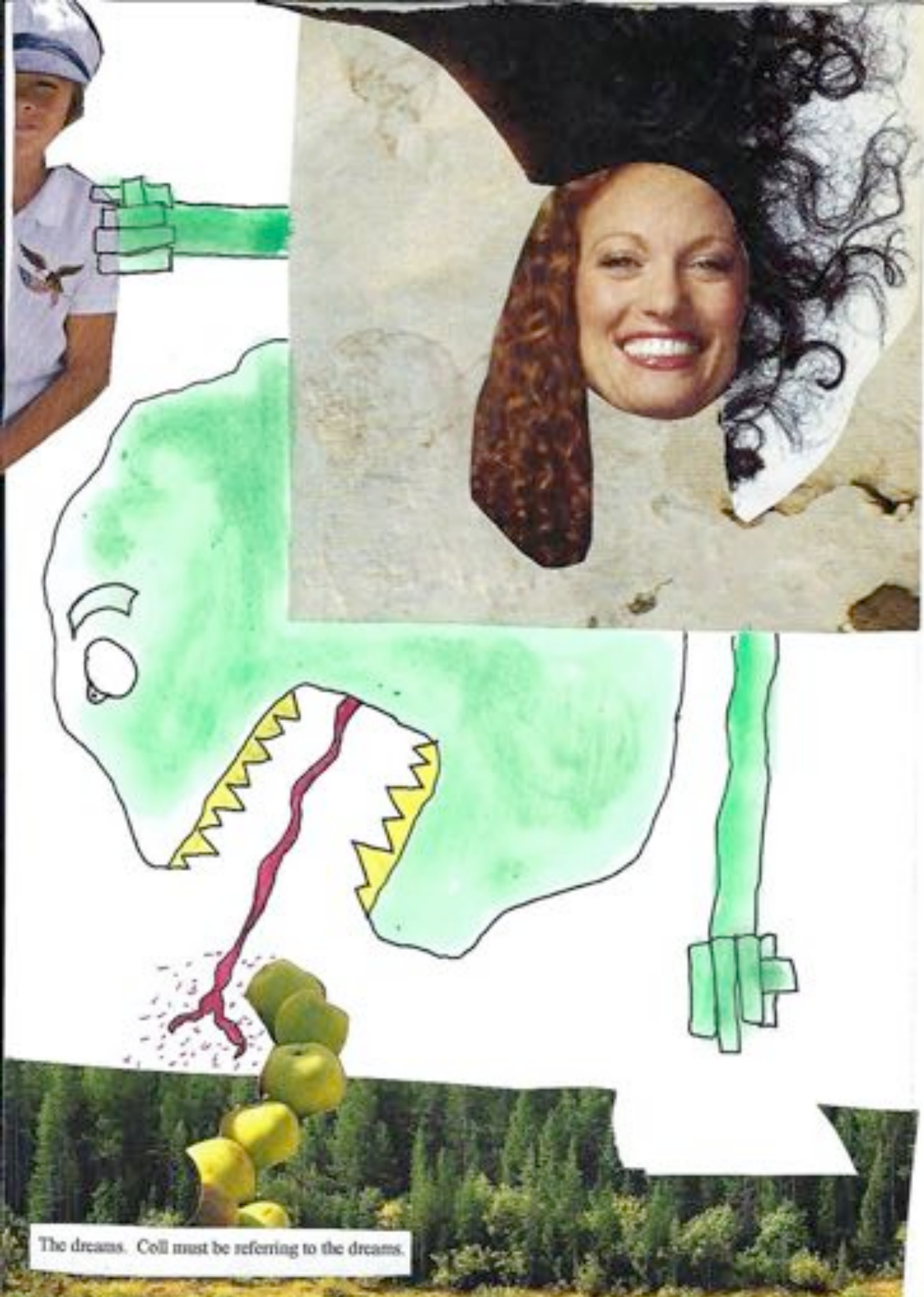
He laughs beside me, his back heaving.



His mirth dissolves into a fit of coughing.



Then he sighs. "Still?" he asks. "Really?"



The dreams. Coll must be referring to the dreams.

The explosions start up again. Closer together now and more persistent. Another freight train passes more quickly toward the east. The rails sing beneath the pop and crash of the detonations. A siren screams through the empty streets.





Virginia Woolf walked into the sea and Pessoa sat alone watching himself from across the room and Van Gogh shot himself in the side.

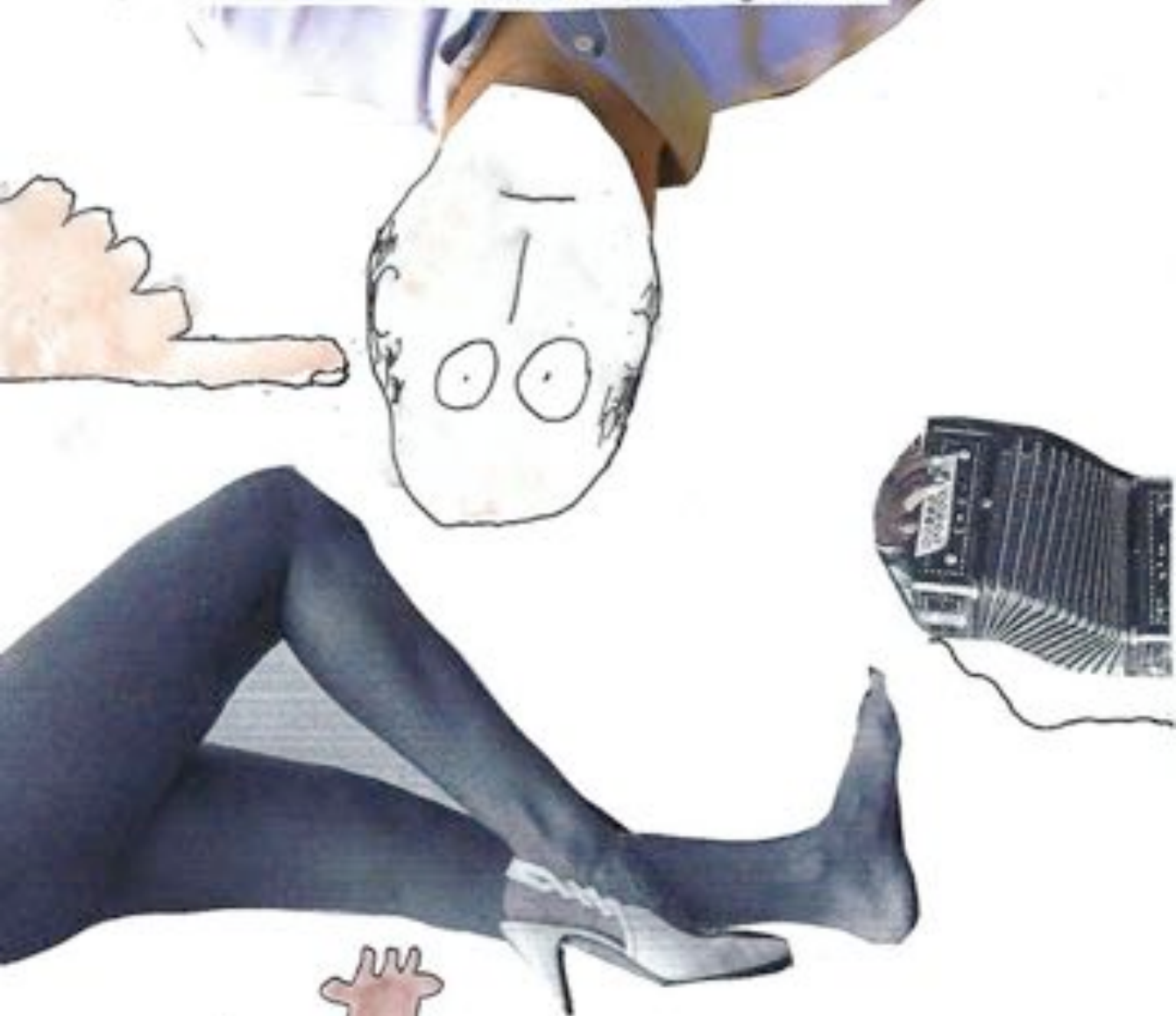


Take comfort. Nietzsche went insane.



"This can't really be happening" I say aloud to the shriveled man by my side. This can't really be happening.

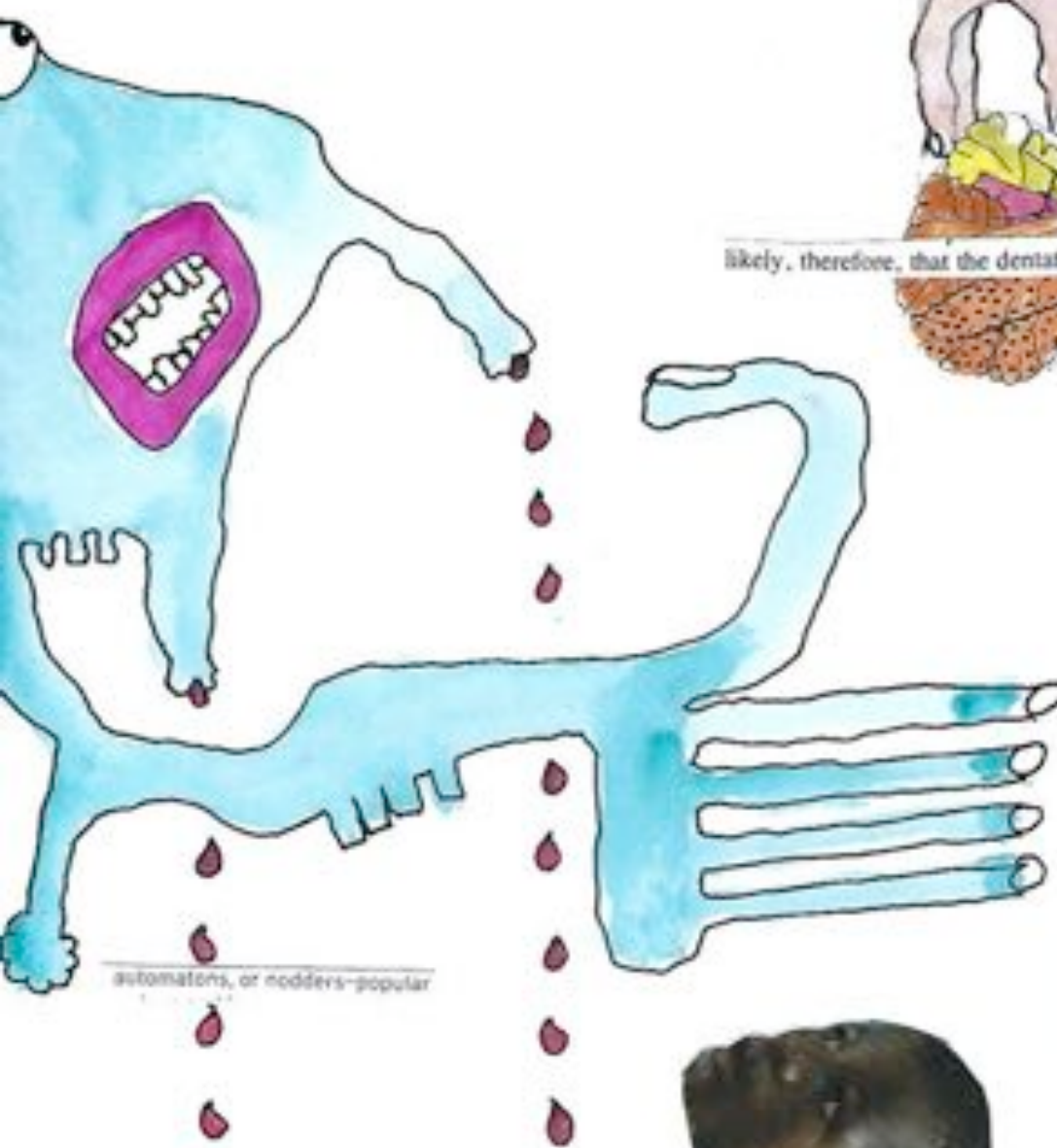
"Grimes stood over the bodies, panting. The two-man saw, rusty and scabbed now with human flesh and tendons and frozen blood, had been a rough chore with just him to manage it. But placing it carefully in the joints and sawing through the frozen flesh allowed him to cut the bodies into manageable sections.



braised artichokes, arugula, and ½ tablespoon



He stucked these like corded firewood on the sled.

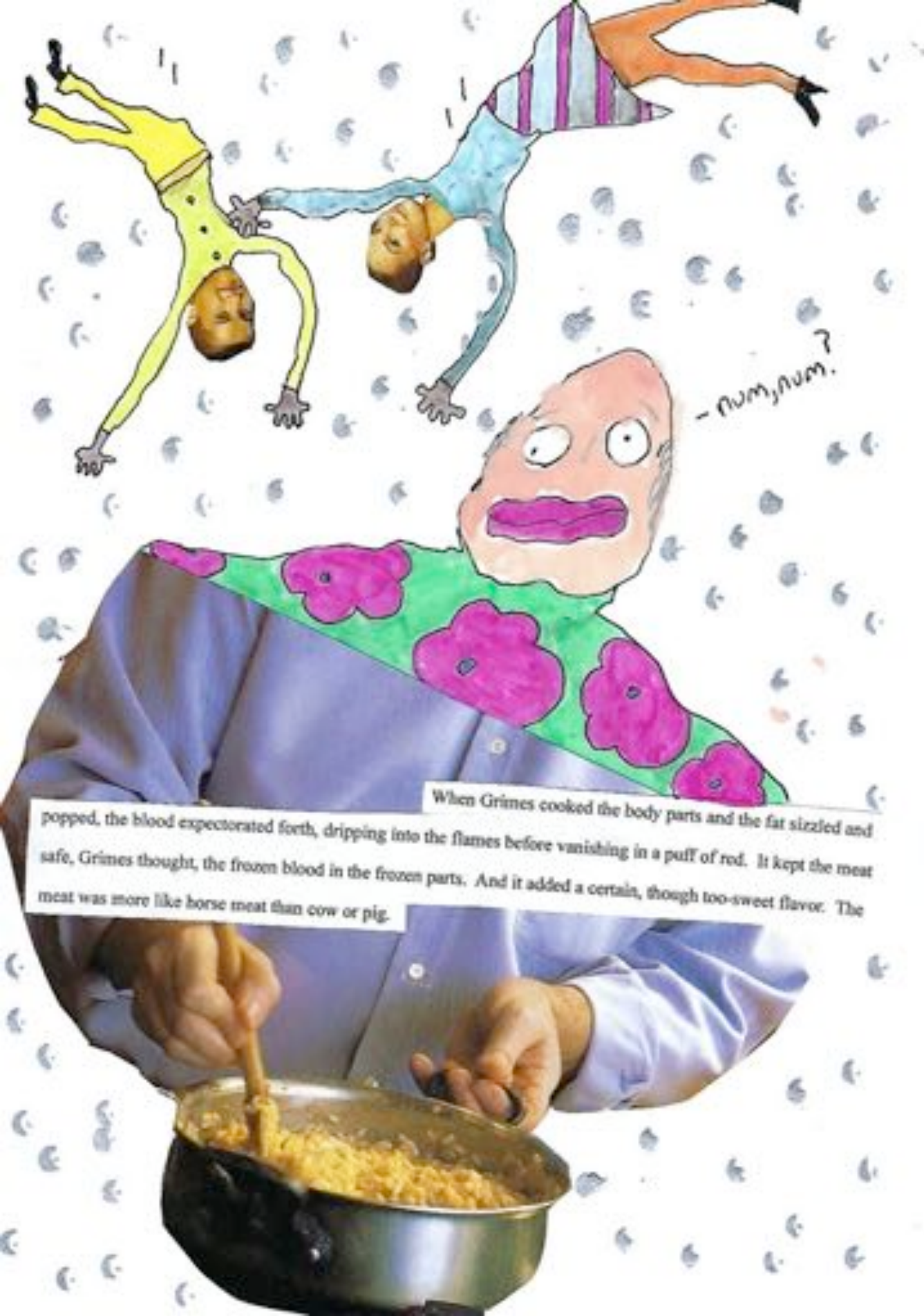


automatons, or noddys-popular



likely, therefore, that the dentato-oculomotor fibers





- num, num?

When Grimes cooked the body parts and the fat sizzled and popped, the blood expectorated forth, dripping into the flames before vanishing in a puff of red. It kept the meat safe, Grimes thought, the frozen blood in the frozen parts. And it added a certain, though too-sweet flavor. The meat was more like horse meat than cow or pig.



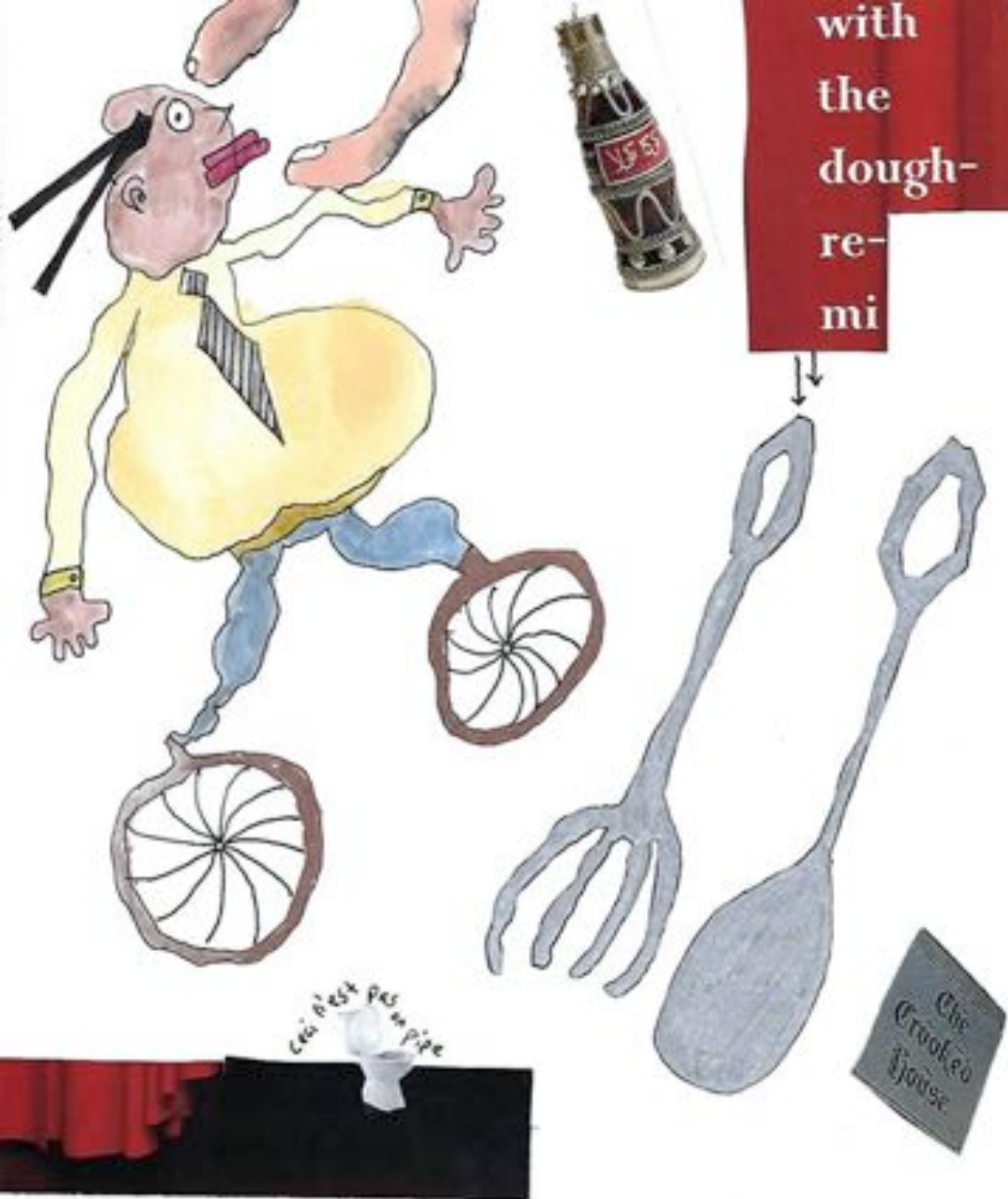
"Stacked on the sled was enough food to get Grimes to the South Pole, where he would plant the flag and claim the land for the Crown. And then continuing on to the port at the Bay of Whales on the Great Ice Barrier, where he was certain to be met with a well-deserved hero's welcome.





Donut
Hot Dog Bun
Hot Cross Bun
Riz de Veau
Bangers + Mash
Pot Pie
Potato Chip

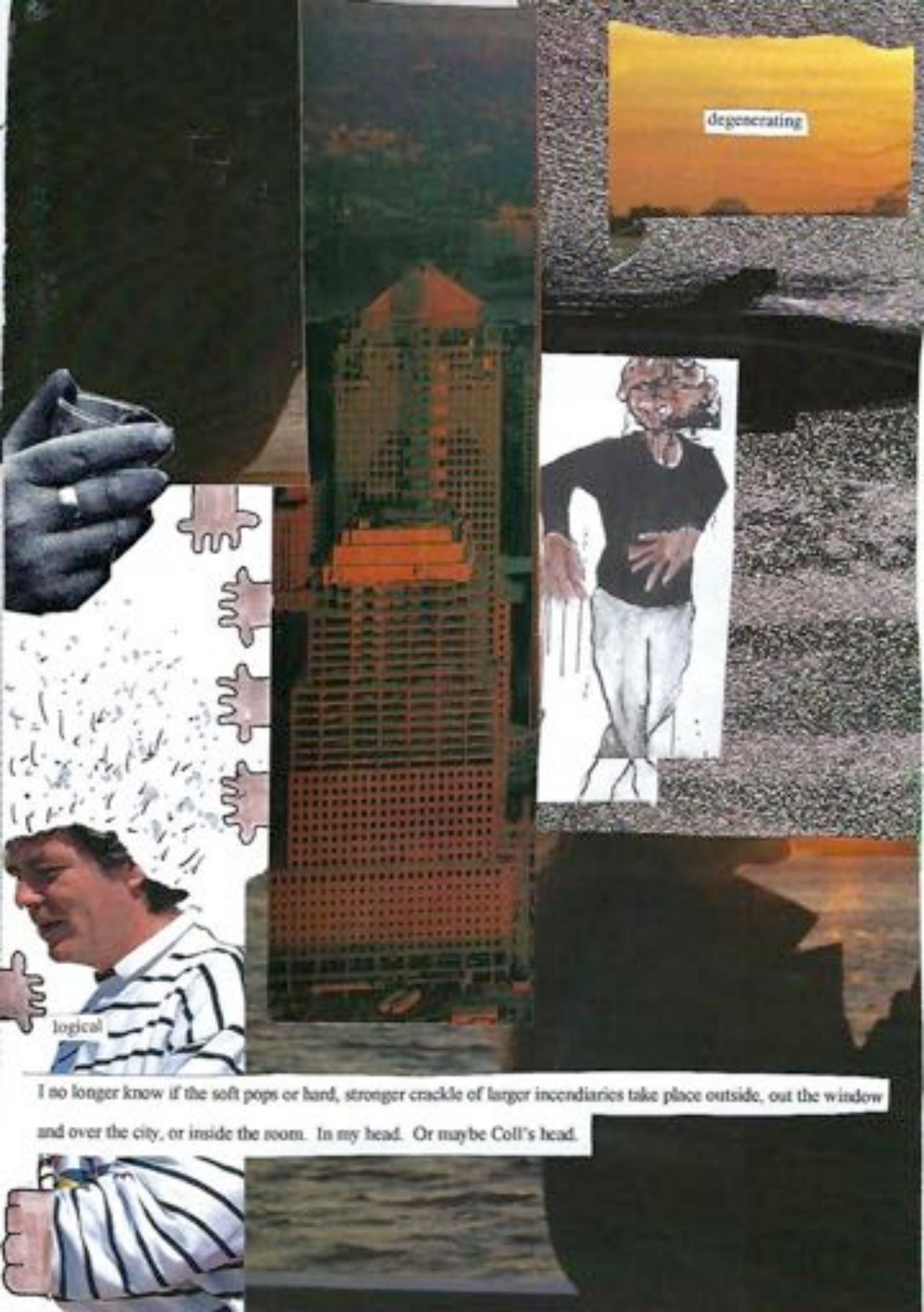
"He tied the carrion tighter onto the cutter. A misting snow began to fall. He could see through the gathering darkness, a heavier snowfall in the distance. He hitched the sled to his waist and began to move south by southeast. He would make as much headway before the snows and dark stopped him, and then bed down for the night."



Coll rambles rustily on: "Ishti grew fecund with the fat of the anthropology department: that which he found in the vending machines around the University of California Berkeley as well as hamburgers, fried chicken and french fries brought to him by his friends the anthropologists. Ishti learned to wear a tie and tie his shoes. Ishti learned the art of silverware and how to clean the bathrooms to the specifications of his friends the anthropologists. Ishti learned to ride a bike and one time he even took the bus to the market to pick up a Coca Cola.



"Ishi's story has been compared to that of Ota Benga, an Mbuti pygmy from Congo. Ota Benga's family had died and were not given a proper mourning ritual. Then Ota Benga was taken from his home and culture. During one period, he was displayed as a zoo exhibit in the Bronx. Ota Benga shot himself in the heart on March 20, 1916, five days before Ishi's death."



degenerating

logical

I no longer know if the soft pops or hard, stronger crackle of larger incendiaries take place outside, out the window and over the city, or inside the room. In my head. Or maybe Coll's head.

mushroom "bolognese"



To stubbornly to refuse to admit that life is a tragedy.



the

un born

and

the

pad

Coll's eyes stare at the ceiling.

A small water droplet appears in the corner of his left eye.

Coll's chest rises and falls in a labored cadence.

I reach over to wipe the water away but stop myself.