

GROWING IN MY GRAY

a memoir

BY

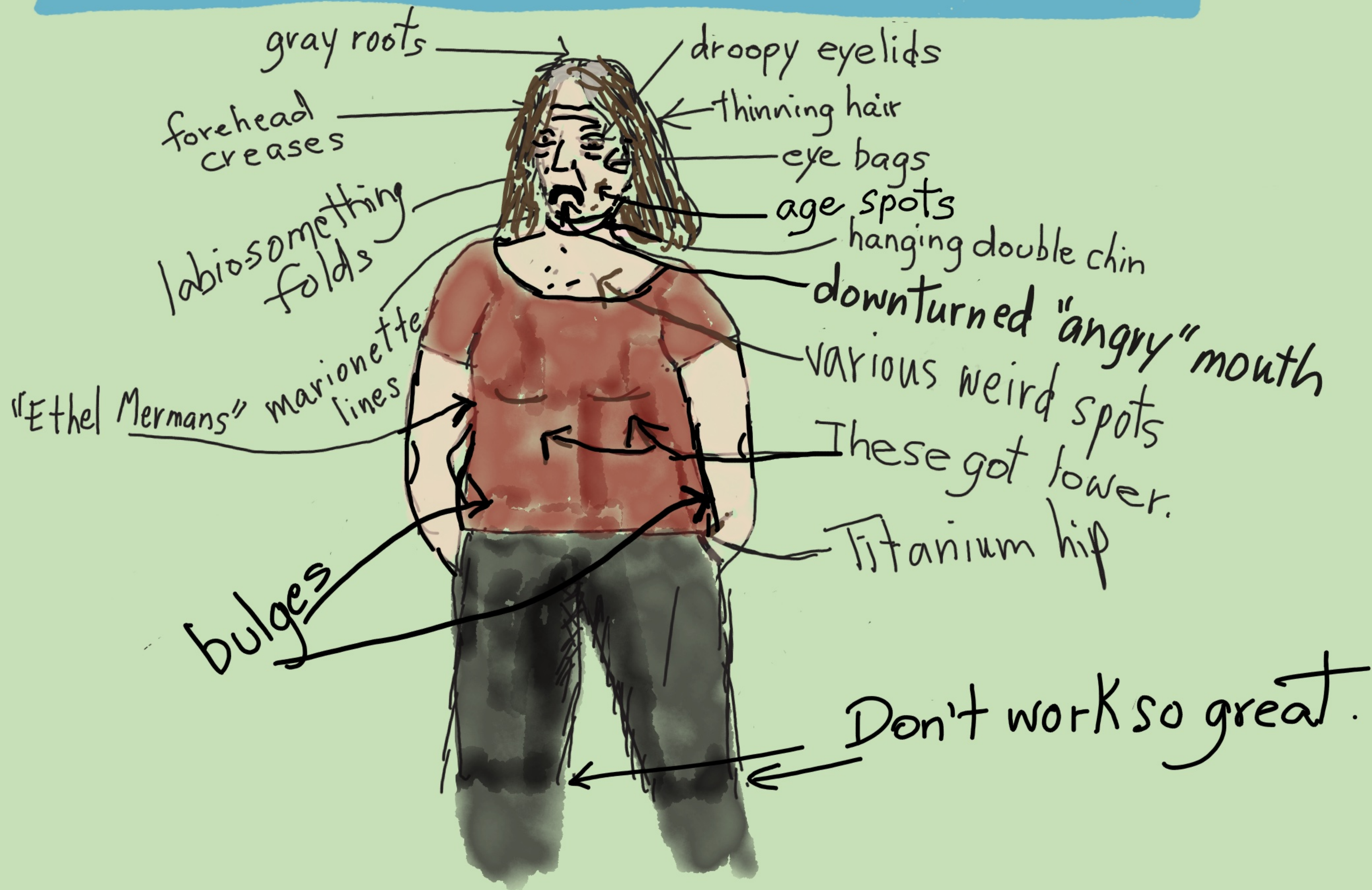
Elizabeth Margoshes



PART I.
A Time To Dye

[Written 2019 – MARCH 2020,
+ Drawn
when I stopped for $2\frac{1}{2}$ years.
Finished PART I. in OCTOBER 2022]

Apparently, I've become an old lady.



Most of these external changes don't bother me. But there is one thing that drives me crazy — my gray hair. I've been dyeing it for years, but every time the roots grow back to a noticeable degree I flirt with the idea of going gray —

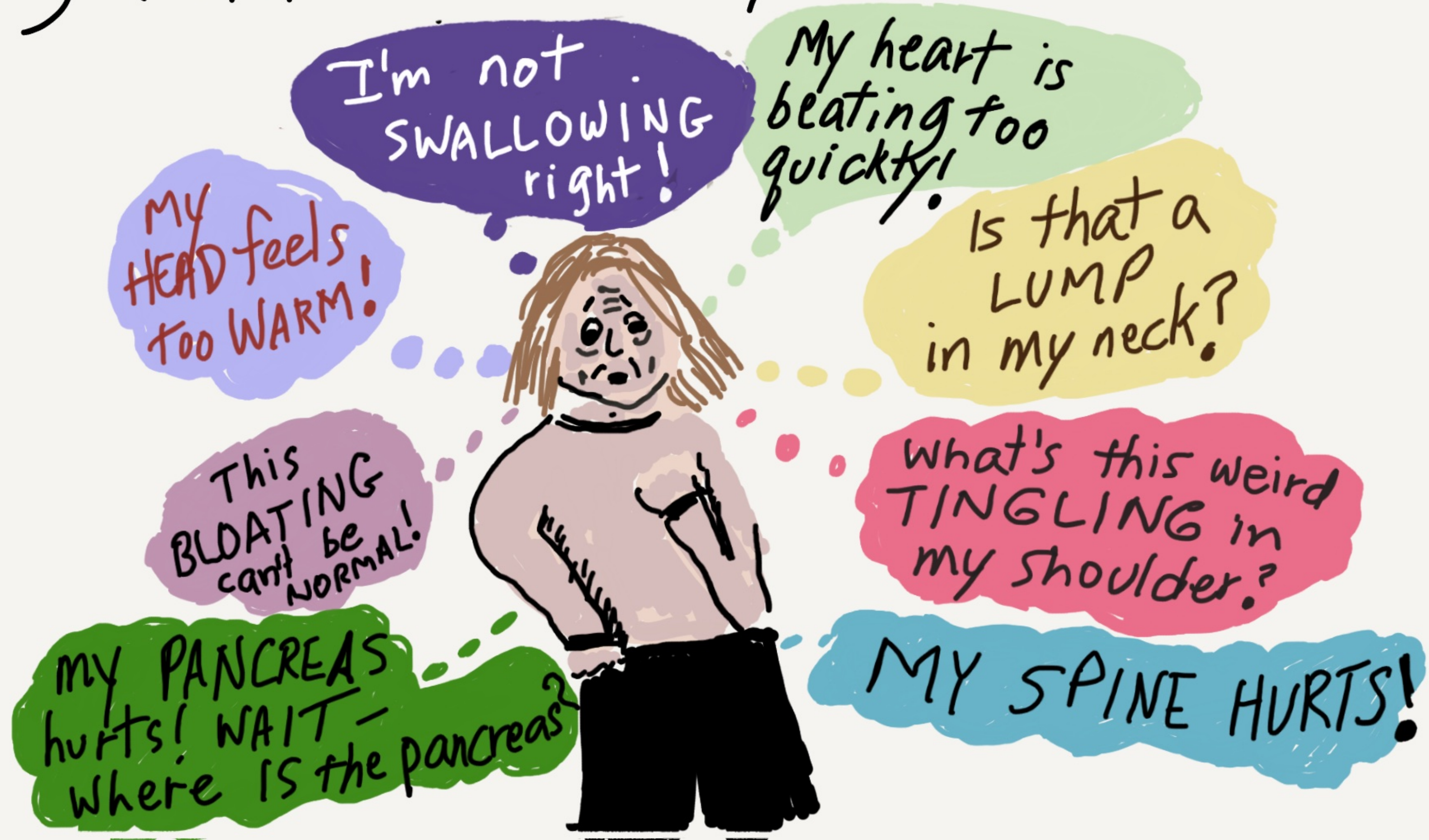


Aside from the pain-in-the-ass of dyeing my hair and the god-knows-what effects of the chemicals, I have a FANTASY that it might be a "self affirming," "healthy," and "feminist" thing to show my "true self"!

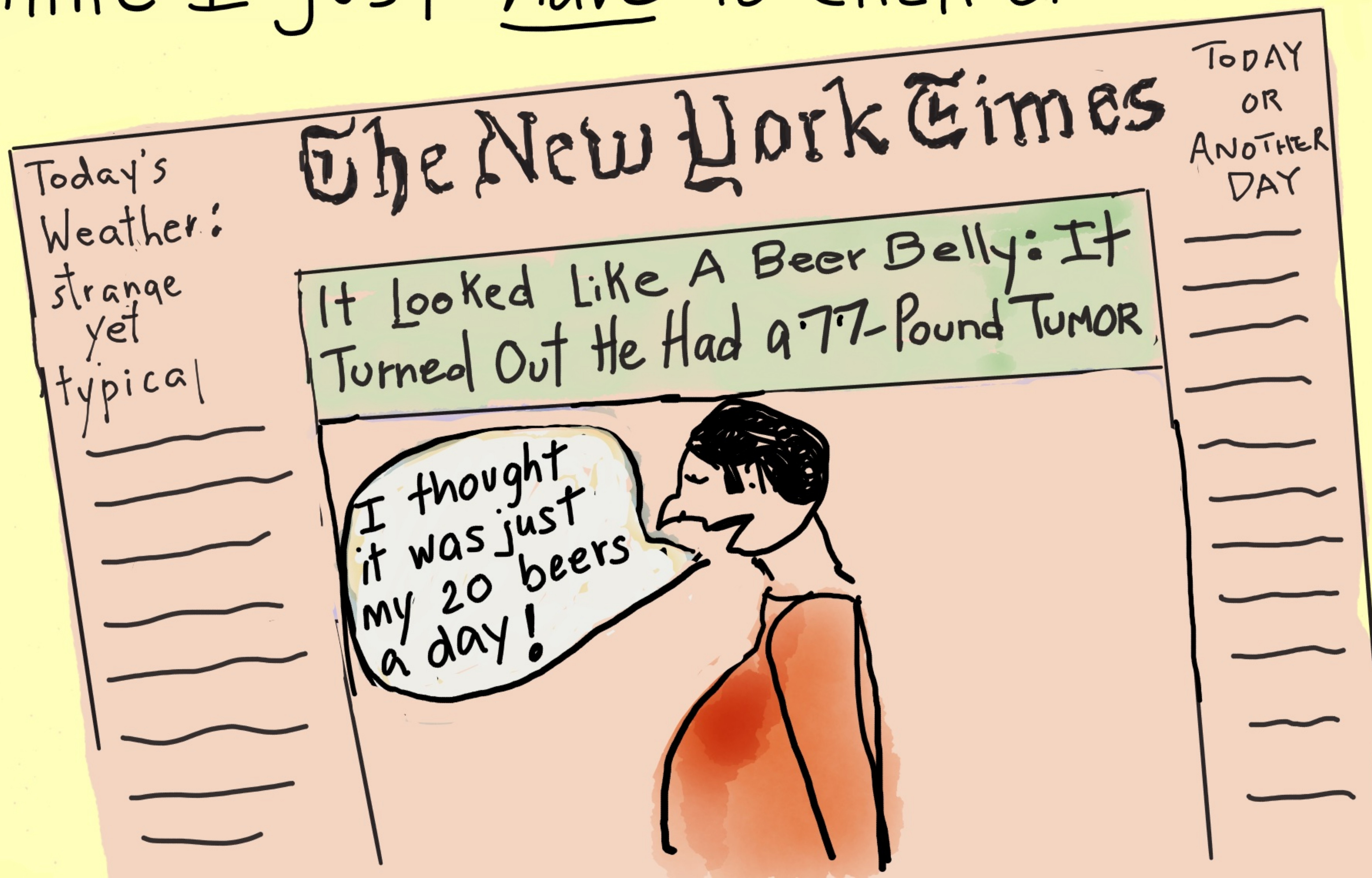


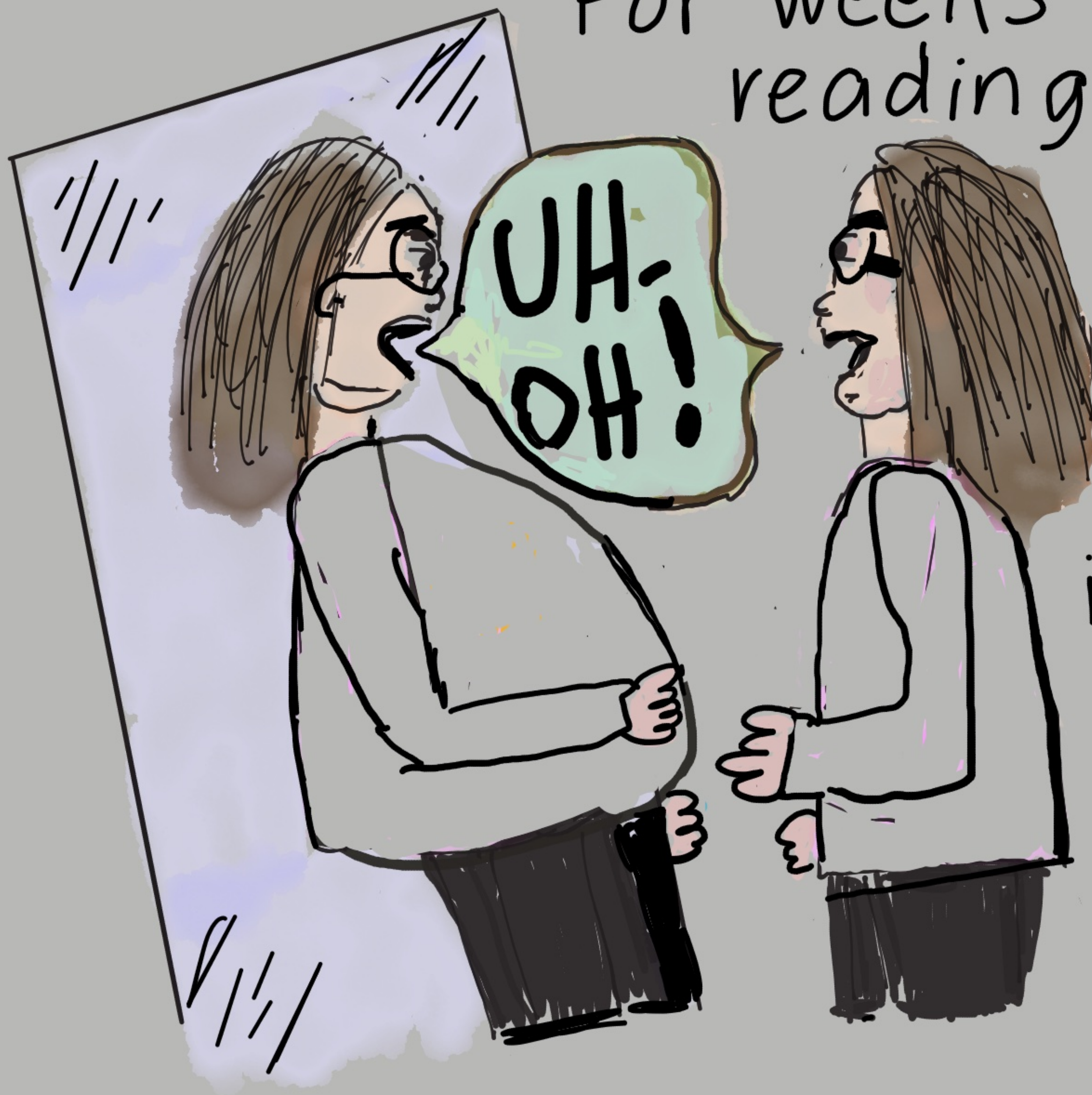
Except I just can't seem to make that LEAP to gray! For me (and ON me), gray hair is still a painful SIGNIFIER of the inescapable MARCH toward DECREPITUDE, with which, SADLY and UNCOOLLY I am OBSESSED.

IN FACT, the worst thing about my getting old is that I've developed a SEVERE degree of HEALTH and DEATH ANXIETY. I spend WAY too much time PANICKING about all the terrible things that could be wrong with me at any moment.



I'm mostly terrified of cancer,
and try to avoid all mentions of it.
But when I see a headline about
it online I just have to click on it:





For weeks after
reading that article,
I couldn't
stop checking
my stomach
in the mirror.

When I was younger
I did have the occasional
hypochondriacal crisis,
but a phone call to a
reassuring friend
could get me
out of it
quickly.

Oh God,
I cut my finger!
What if I don't
CLOT PROPERLY
and I BLEED
to DEATH?!



But, more recently, I've become really afraid of doctors: their ability to look inside you with their seemingly SUPERHUMAN POWERS OF KNOWLEDGE and OBJECTIVITY.

I always got straight A's and the world seems totally LOGICAL.



OKAY!
LET'S HAVE
A LOOK



ARCHAIC PATHOGENS
PESTILENTIAL ROT
TUMOROUS FISTULES
OH GOD

GOWN W/ OPENING TO
THE BACK AS INSTRUCTED

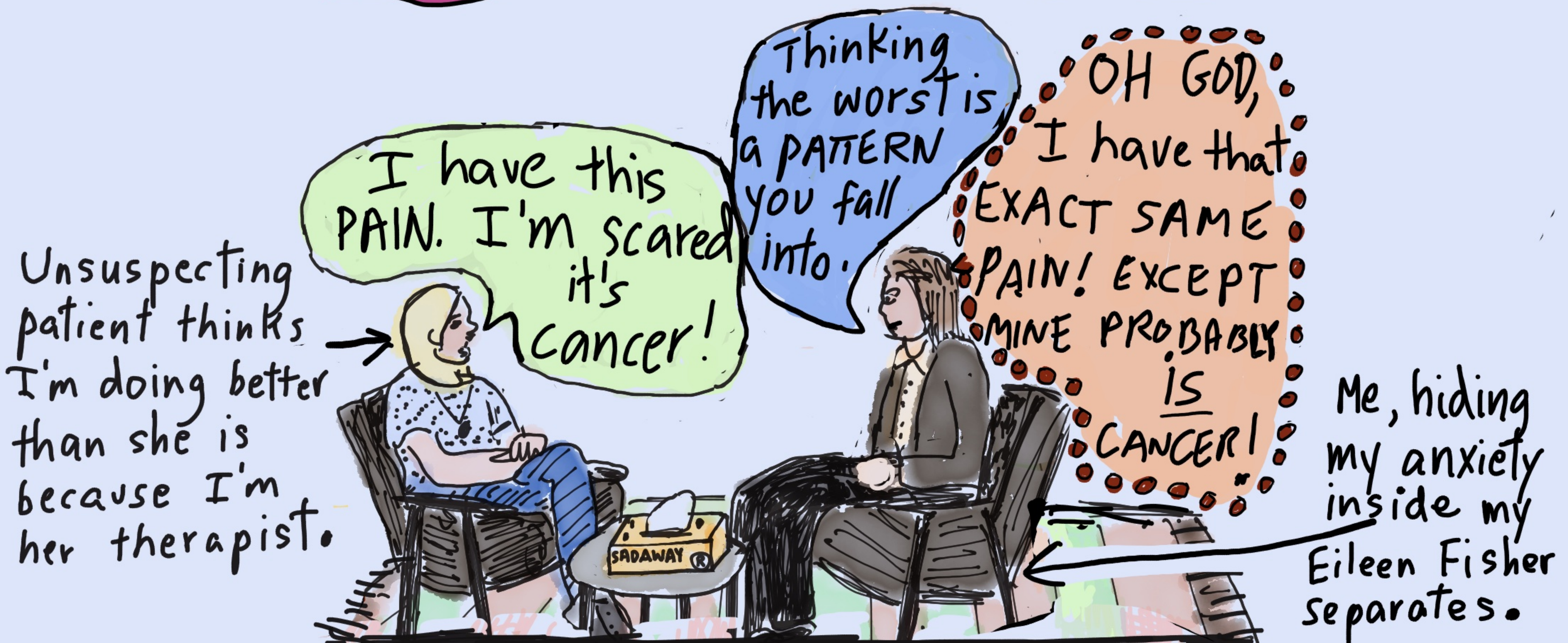
LUDICROUSLY STILL
WEARING SOCKS +
SHOES

As a result, I find that I compulsively ask too many questions and doctors become annoyed with me. I've learned that you're only allowed one "volley" back + forth before they become completely disgusted with you:



AND ALARMING
The strange[^] thing, though, is that I'm a therapist!
A psychologist! I help people with THEIR anxiety,
often at the same time that I'm experiencing
my own irrational fears. This makes me feel

WEIRD and **SECRETIVE.**



Health anxiety isn't my only problem. Throughout my life I've had many other fears. Although I don't let it stop me, I'm afraid of travel. I always think a catastrophe will befall me in a strange place where I am unknown.

Devrions-nous appeler de l'aide?
*

I can't get up!

Non, il suffit de la contourner.
**

* - Should we call for help?
** No, just walk around her.



I have lots of social anxiety too. In my dating days, I suffered from massive fear of rejection. Although normally a highly verbal individual, when out with a man I often couldn't think of anything to say.

so... what movies have you seen lately?

Um, I...
um... thing...
well...



And making friends has always been hard for me.
The anxiety and fear of rejection usually makes
socializing "not worth it."



OBVIOUSLY, as a therapist myself, I've sought treatment for my "issues," and I've been fortunate to have benefitted from MANY years of excellent psychotherapy with a NUMBER of therapists who have provided me with:

INCISIVE INTERPRETATIONS

Everything
SCARES
me.

Your physical symptoms
are a METAPHOR for
the damage you feel
inside of you.

Modern
Perspectives
on
Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalytic
Perspectives
on
Modernity

Modern
Psychoanalysis:
A New
Perspective

Emotional Understanding

I think
there's something
TERRIBLY
WRONG WITH
ME.

Given all that you've told
me about your personal
history and experience, it
makes **PERFECT SENSE** that
you would feel this way.

Interesting
cultural
artifact
from
trip
abroad.



FREUD VOL. 1	FREUD VOL. 2	FREUD VOL. 3	FREUD VOL. 4	FREUD VOL. 5	FREUD VOL. 6	FREUD VOL. 7	FREUD VOL. 8	FREUD VOL. 9	FREUD VOL. 10	FREUD VOL. 11	FREUD VOL. 12
FREUD VOL. 13	FREUD VOL. 14	FREUD VOL. 15	FREUD VOL. 16	FREUD VOL. 17	FREUD VOL. 18	FREUD VOL. 19	FREUD VOL. 20	FREUD VOL. 21	FREUD VOL. 22	FREUD VOL. 23	FREUD VOL. 24

AND COMPASSION.

THE AMERICAN
INSTITUTE OF
EMPATHY
awards
~ ~ ~, Ph.D.
Diploma
June 1975

It all
makes me so
SAD -- and ANGRY!
It wasn't my FAULT!
-- WAS IT??

NO.
IT WASN'T.



And all that therapy HAS HELPED!
FOR EXAMPLE, I fell in love with a
WONDERFUL MAN
who brings me
COFFEE
IN
BED
EVERY
MORNING!



(*I can only say "sweetie" ironically.)

I HAVE

FULFILLING WORK

CREATIVE ACTIVITIES

I
FEEL
BAD.

I
understand.
*

♀
YOU make me
FEEL like a
NAT-u-ral WO-man!

*It takes a graduate degree to know when to say this.

Letting Loose when
Work is done.

And a wonderful grown son

[redacted for his privacy]

-- And 2 lovely cats--



And some really good

FRIENDS

ONLINE

AND

I.R.L.*



Who tolerate me even though I rarely
get together with them in person.*

*In Real Life

*maybe they prefer it??

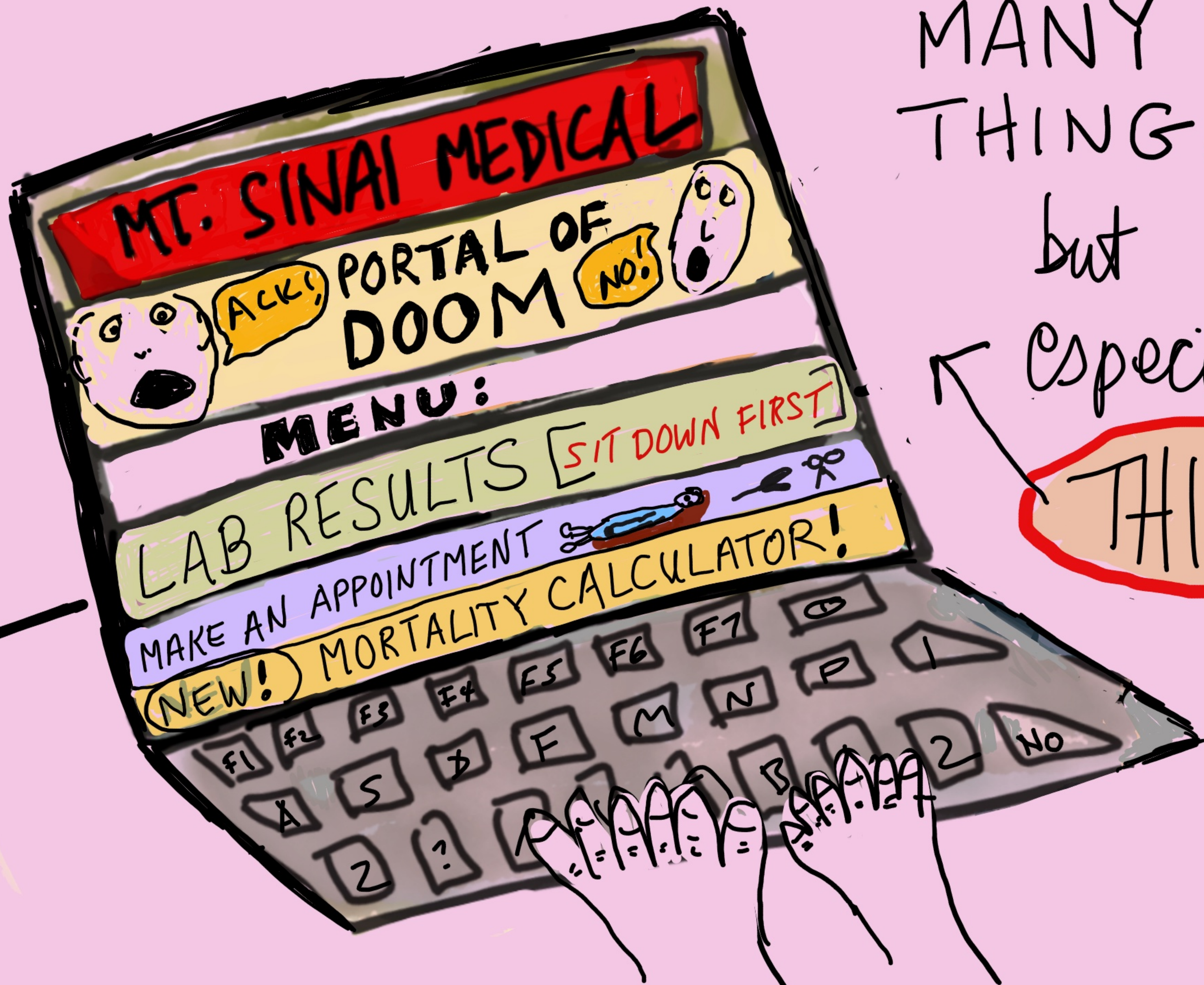
But I am still afraid of 50

MANY
THINGS —

but

Especially,

THIS



Of course it's occurred to me
that maybe I need another pass
through therapy -- like a sculptor
continuing to shape his work to
get the details more and more
PRECISE...



... But all my therapists are DEAD!

WHO COULD I GO TO NOW?

Someone my own age who presents themselves as having some special wisdom?

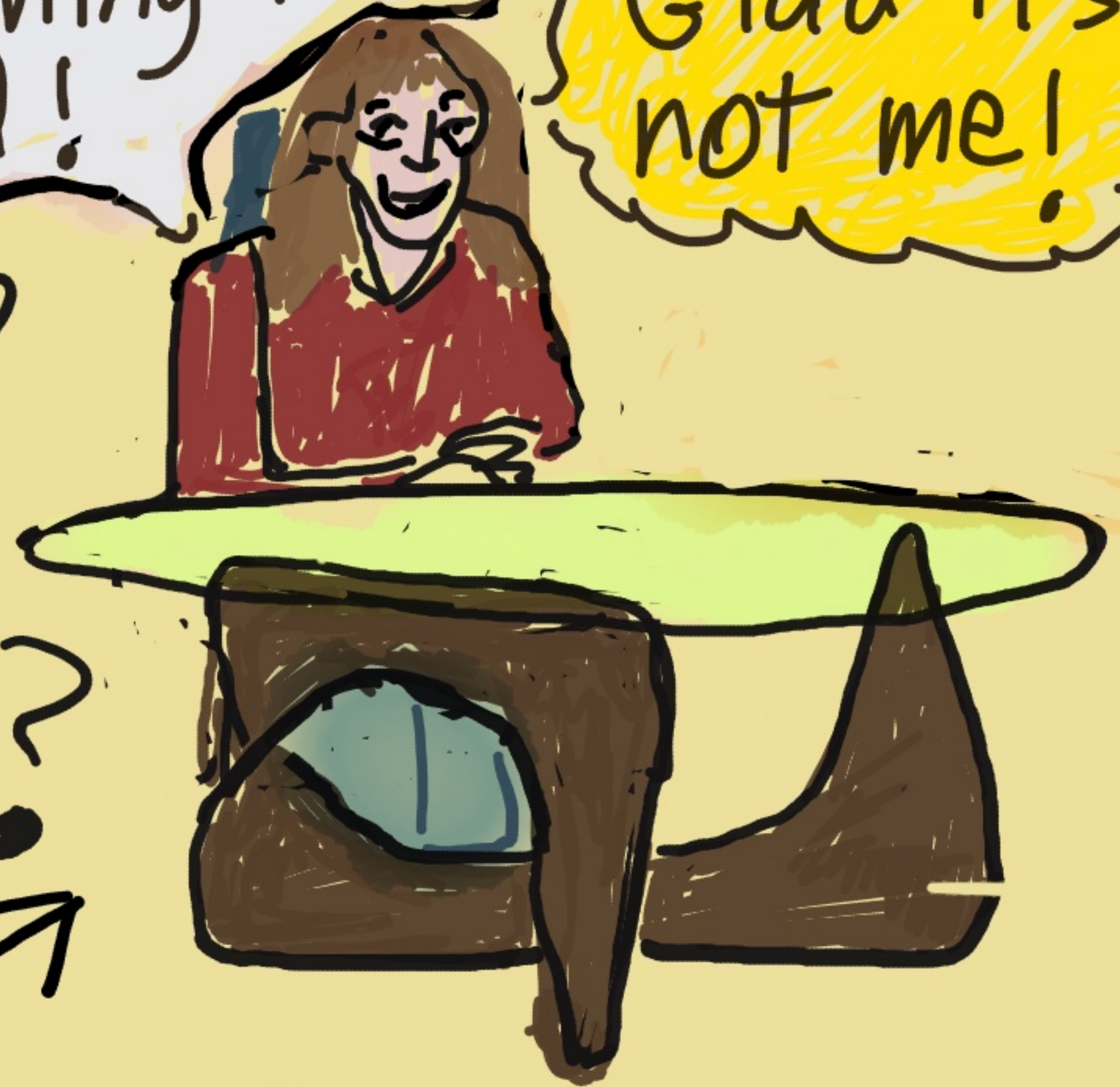
Or a YOUNGER therapist who just doesn't get how to deal with the horrors of aging?

Life is about MEANING and PURPOSE

I have to pee again?

It must be frightening to be old!

Glad it's not me!



MID-CENTURY MODERN COFFEE TABLE BOUGHT IN 1950

MID-CENTURY MODERN COFFEE TABLE BOUGHT ON ETSY IN 2022

Going back into "psychodynamic" therapy just doesn't appeal to me. But I have, from time to time, tried other types of treatment for anxiety disorders, such as:

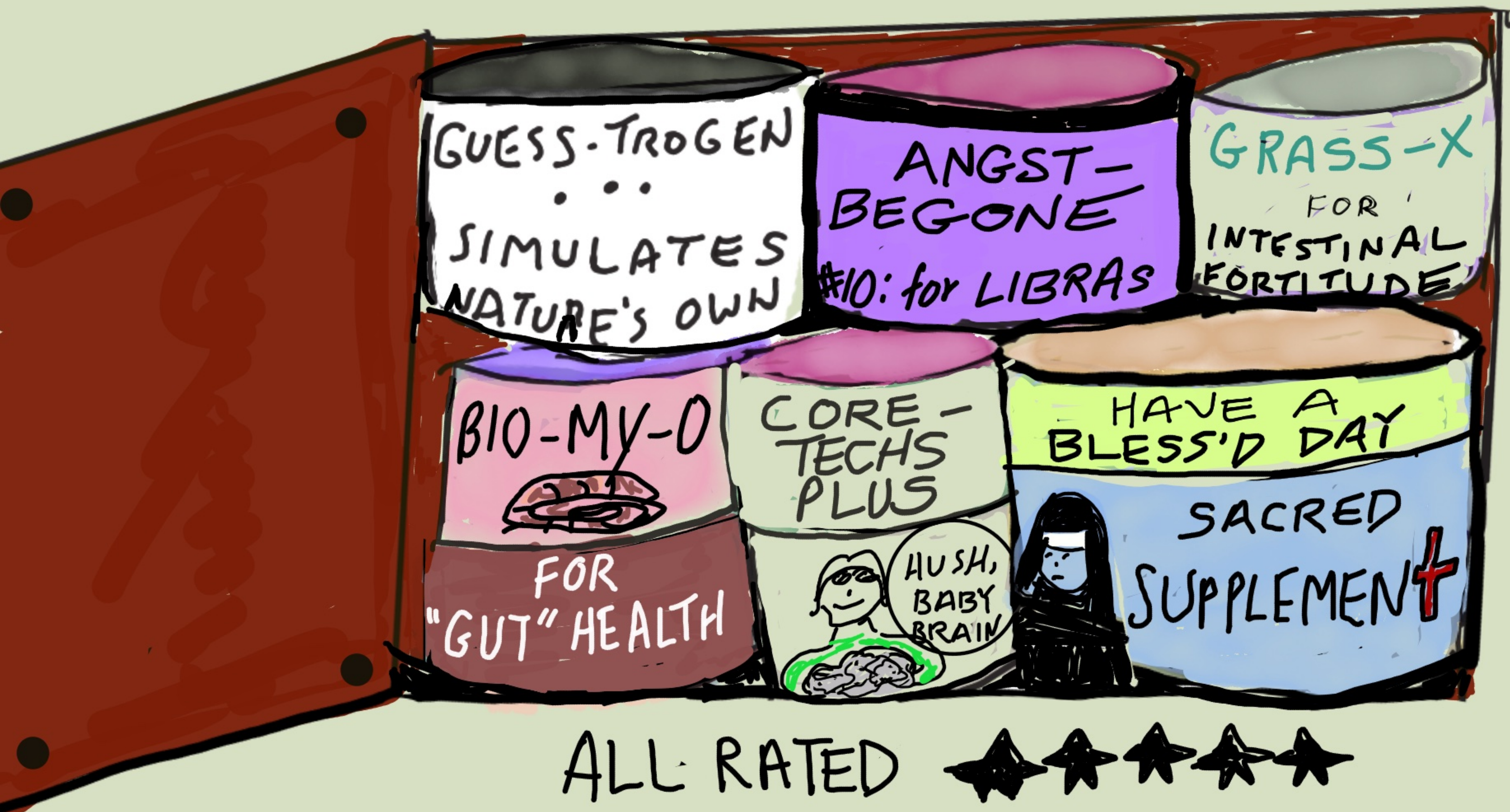
COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL THERAPY:

Your thinking is **IRRATIONAL!**
If you look at this **LOGICALLY**
you'll realize that there is
only a 1 in a THOUSAND chance
that your symptom will prove
FATAL! So
STOP WORRYING!

But all those
"1's" aren't **EQUAL!**
If *I'm* the
1, then **I'M DEAD!**



-- all sorts of supplements --

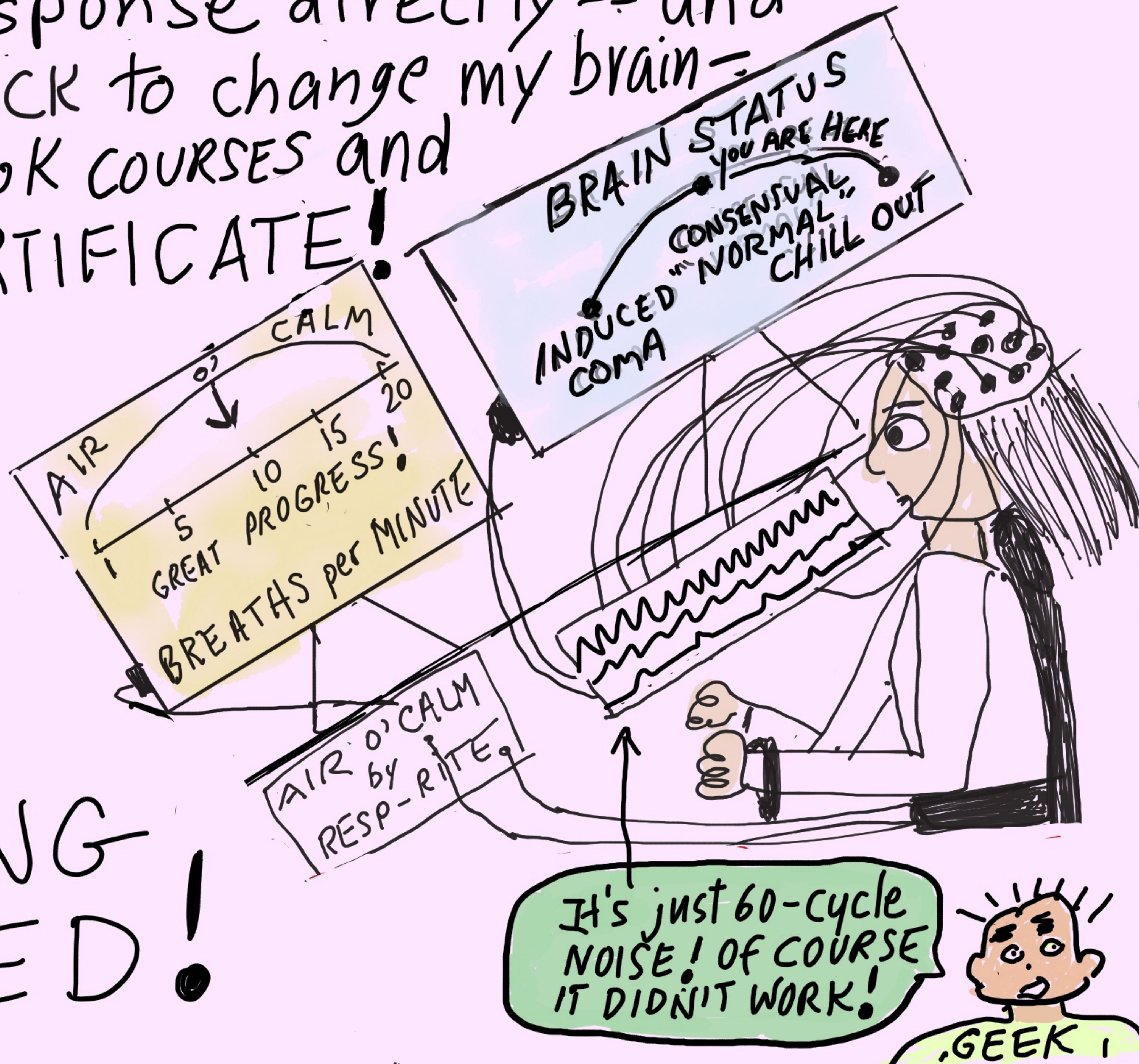


which, sometimes, SEEMED to help,
MAYBÉ, except did they really? or was it
the PLACEBO effect? or NOcebo? or SORTAcebo?

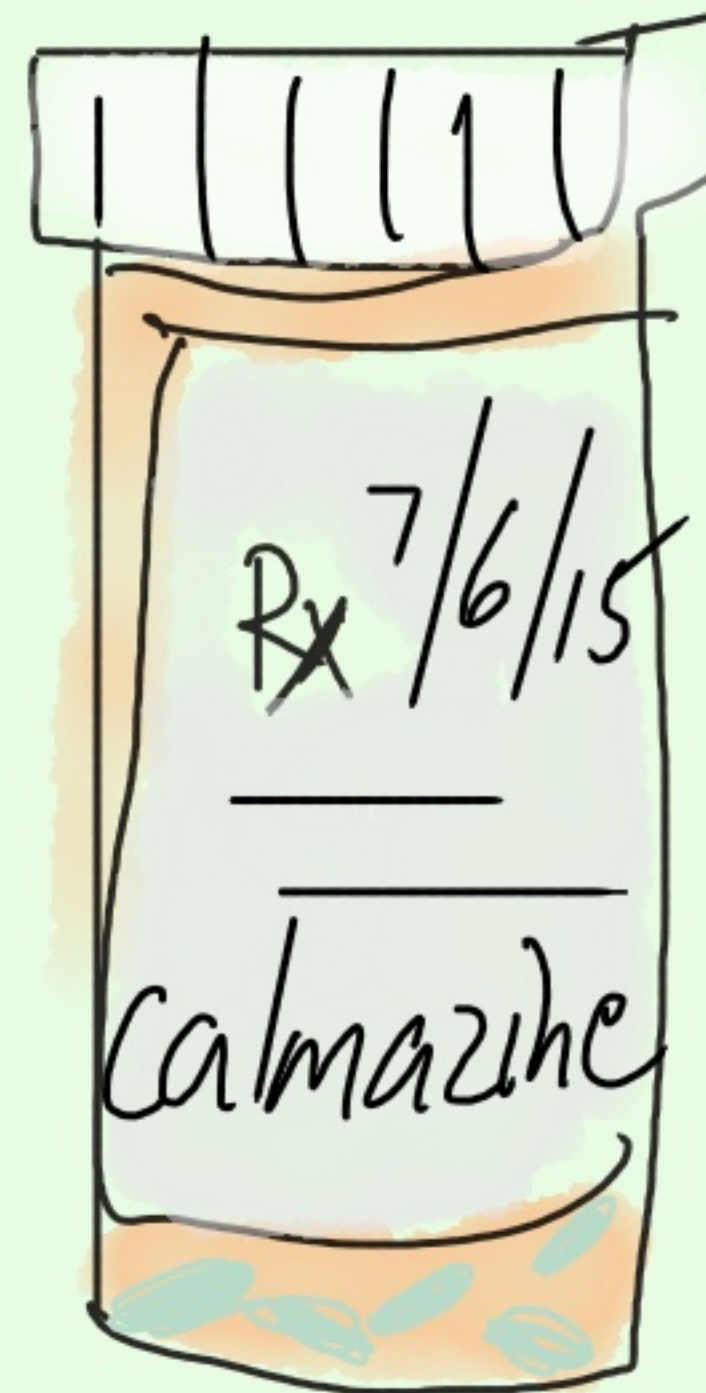
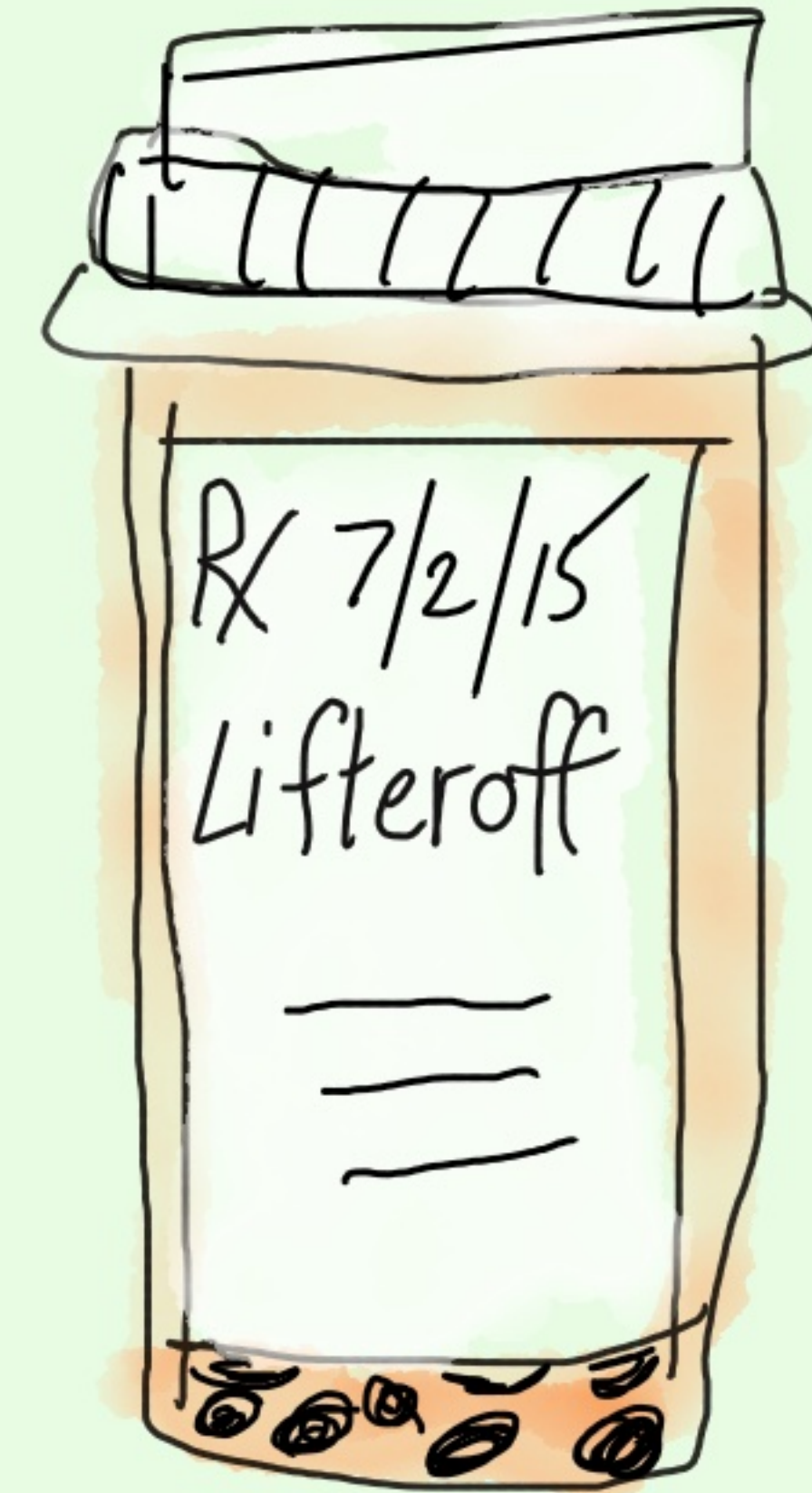
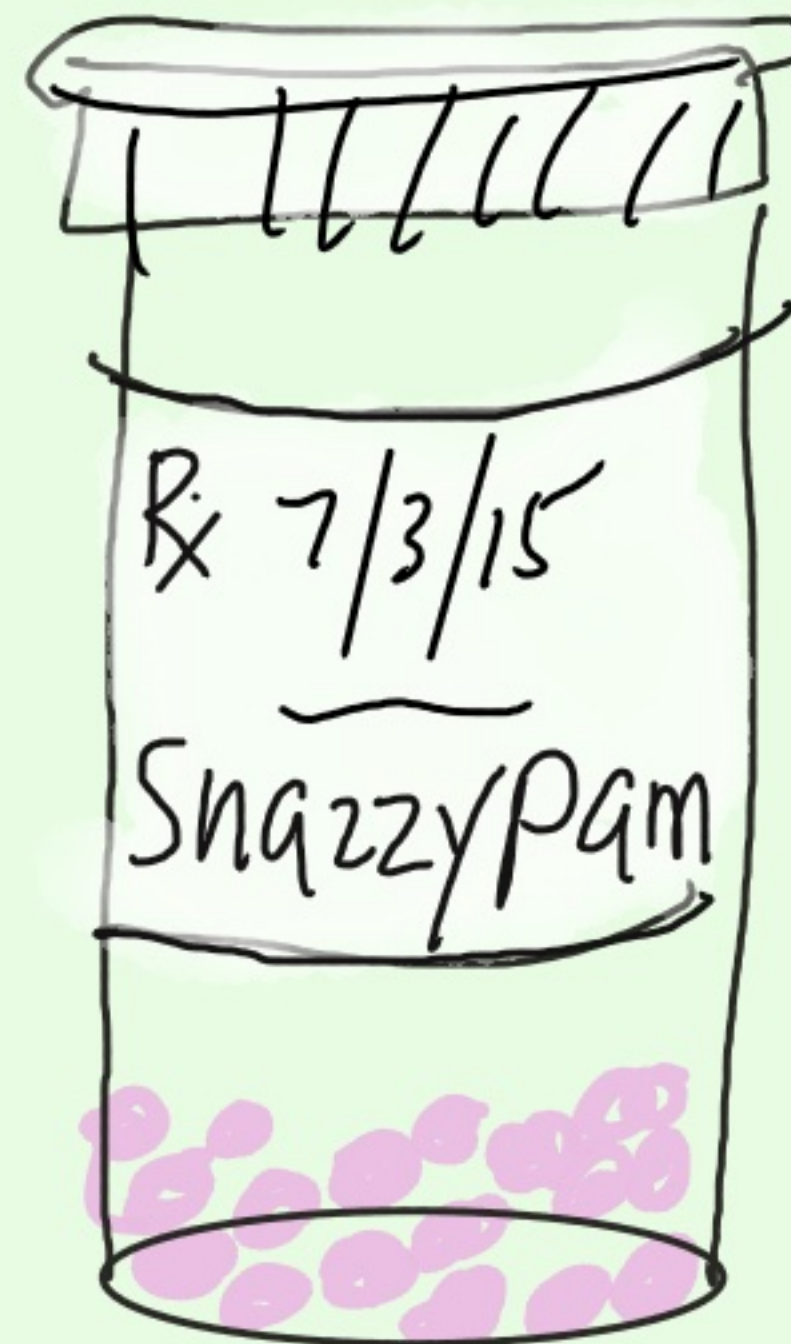
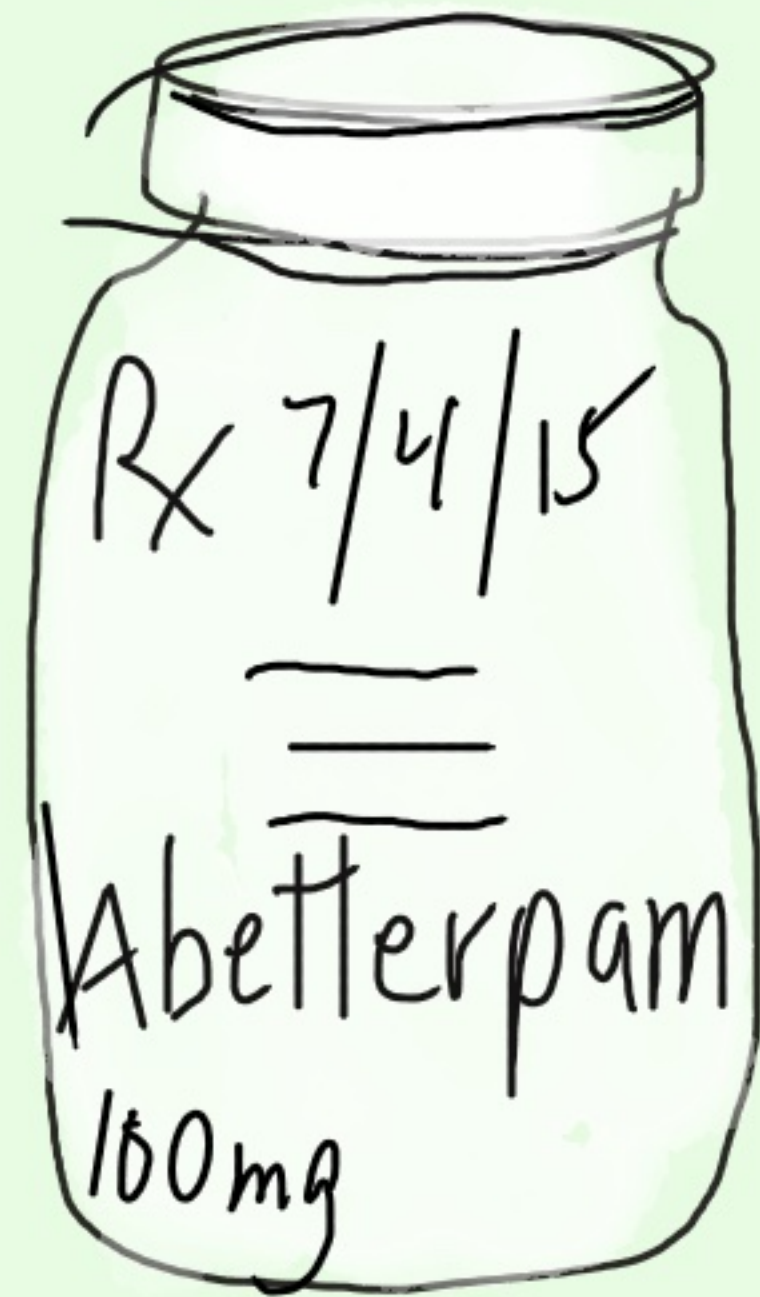
I've tried BIOFEEDBACK to calm down
my stress response directly -- and
NEUROFEEDBACK to change my brain --
-- I even took COURSES and
earned a CERTIFICATE!



BUT
NOTHING
CHANGED!



And of COURSE: Prescription Medications:



They WORK!
often

Until [^] they DON'T.
unless

I've also tried the hippest, grooviest technique (or, as they say, "practice"): MINDFULNESS. Except that focusing on your body doesn't make you less anxious when it's your BODY that you're anxious ABOUT!

Now pay attention to your breath...



Oh god, how many breaths do I even have LEFT?

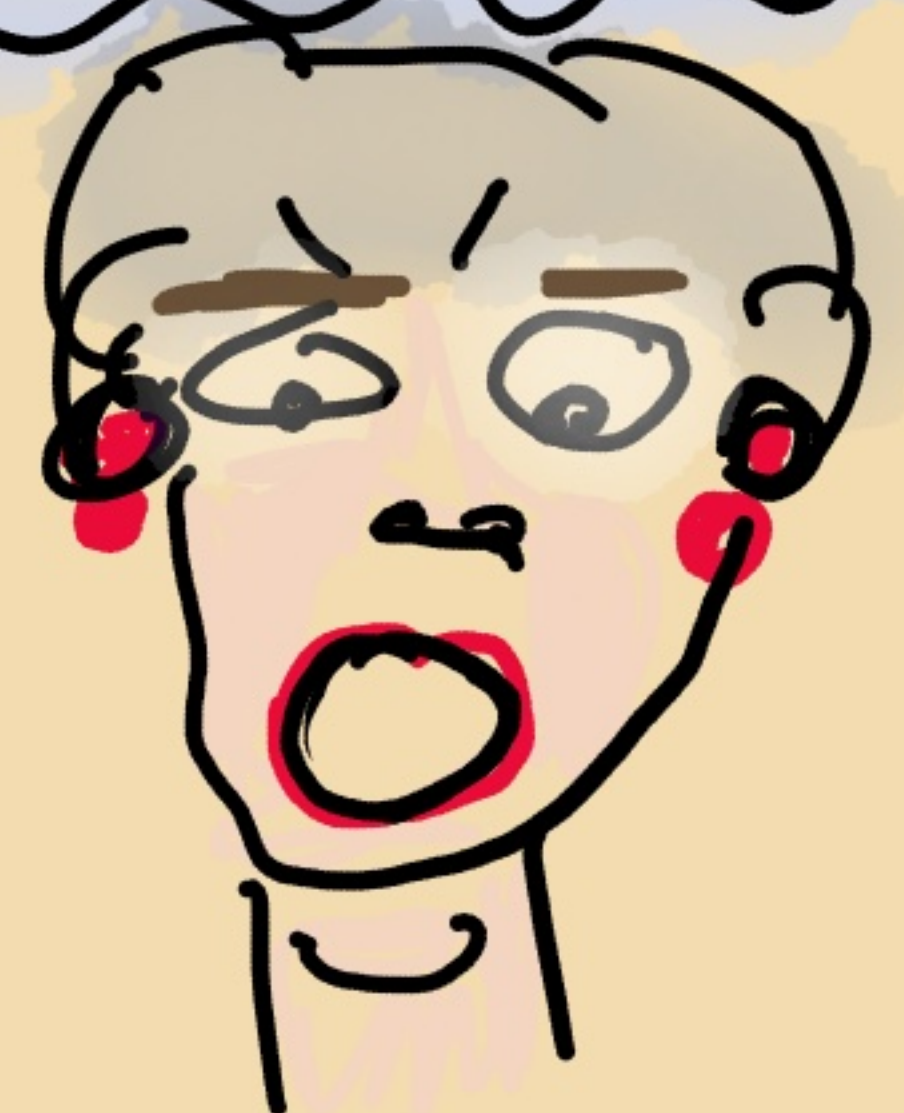
"But hey," you're thinking, "you ARE REALLY OLD!"
Of course you're concerned with illness and death! And, to a certain extent, you're RIGHT!

I just had
2 CT scans,
3 MRIs, and
an ultrasound
and they still
don't know
what's wrong!

Everything
is
STIFF!

WHAT? I
CAN'T HEAR
YOU!

Is it
ROBERT
Shakespeare?
Clyde Shakespeare
MICK???



Also, at ANY age, isn't fear of death NORMAL?
Ernest Becker, an anthropologist, wrote a book called The Denial of Death*, which academics love. He argues that the ills of the individual and society itself can be reduced to the terror of death -- and, thus, its denial:

Man is literally split in two. He has an awareness of his own splended uniqueness in that he sticks out of nature with a towering majesty, and yet he goes back into the ground a few feet in order blindly and dumbly to rot and disappear forever.

If a person admitted this utter lack of control, that death lurks at every breath, and let it rise to consciousness, it would drive him to fear and trembling, to the brink of madness.



[* first published in 1973]

So then, is my anxiety just a sign that I am more "woke" than the majority of my fellow humans, who live their lives in a delusional fantasy that, since everything seems fine for the moment, why worry about the future?

And getting old is significant just because it brings the inevitable realistically closer?



And I musn't forget that there are also

CULTURAL FACTORS at play:

I am a NEW YORK CITY JEW
coming from a LONG + GLORIOUS
Eastern European tradition of

PESSIMISM and DREAD!



Lenny Bruce



Richard Lewis

Larry David



Franz Kafka



Woody Allen



Isaac Bashevis Singer



Philip Roth



"FUNNY" --
NO WOMEN!

We were making
dinner, taking
care of the
children, doing
the laundry, and
god only knows
what else ...



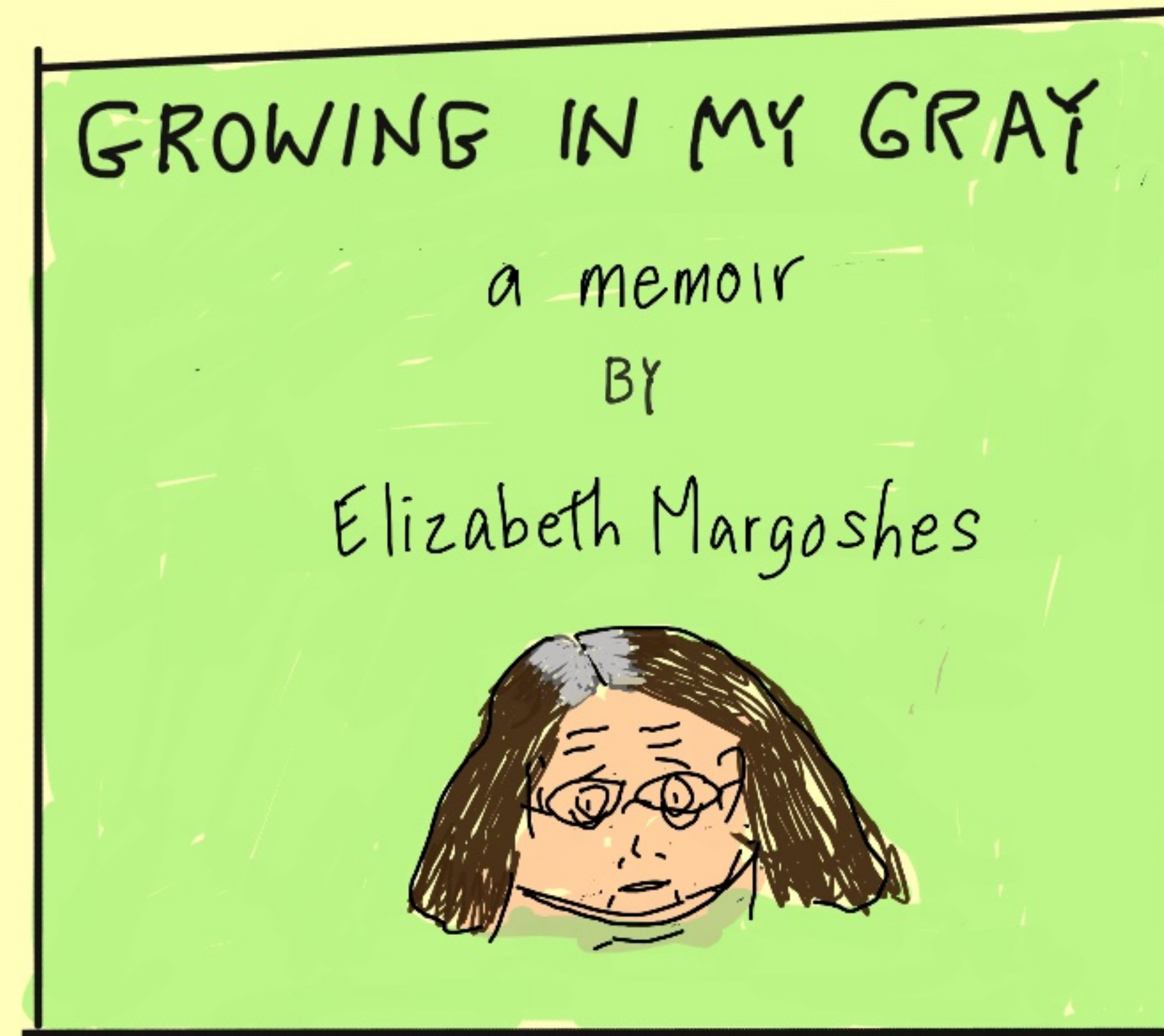
LITERARY
WIFE

OKAY, then, FINE! I have good reason to be scared.
But other people my age and of my culture
seem to have a MUCH BETTER
ATTITUDE than I do!



Is there anything left to do about my anxiety? Well, there is **ONE THING** that I WANT to do, and it is

THIS:



I want to tell my life story -- to **YOU**.

WHY?

Because I have the idea that telling my life story, including how all this **ANGST** developed, would be **THERAPEUTIC** for me, and maybe for others too, and, and, and...

...because I crave ATTENTION!
Whereas, so far, I've portrayed myself as an anxious,
phobic, socially avoidant, introverted person
(all true):



There is another side to me:

THE PERFORMER

[clever
retort]

[slightly
irreverant
comeback]

[not-
bad
witticism]



For example, in school,
I was always

THE CLASS CLOWN



And I've written songs and performed them,
and have done some **STANDUP COMEDY**:

WELCOME
TO

★ THE DUPLEX ★

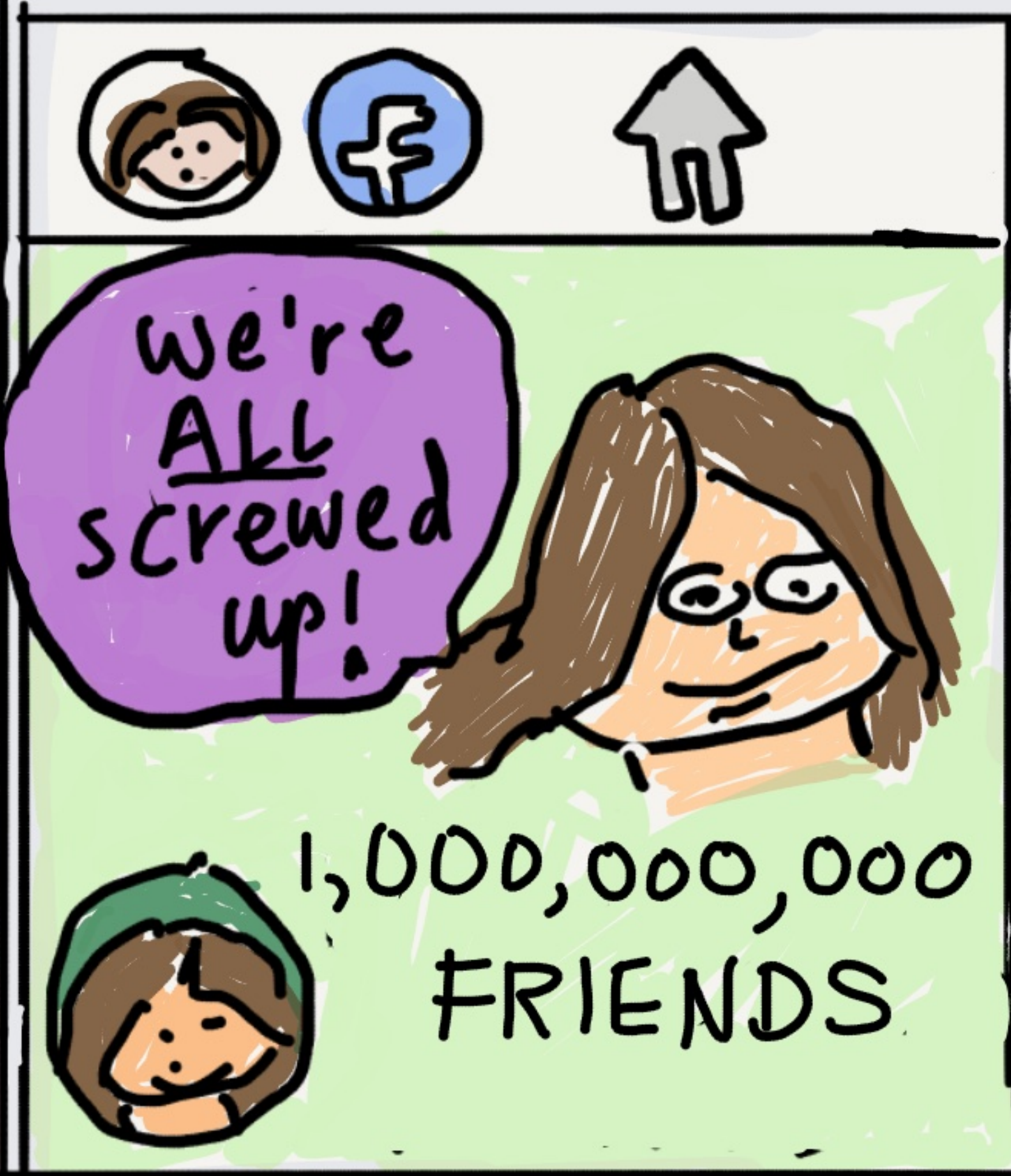
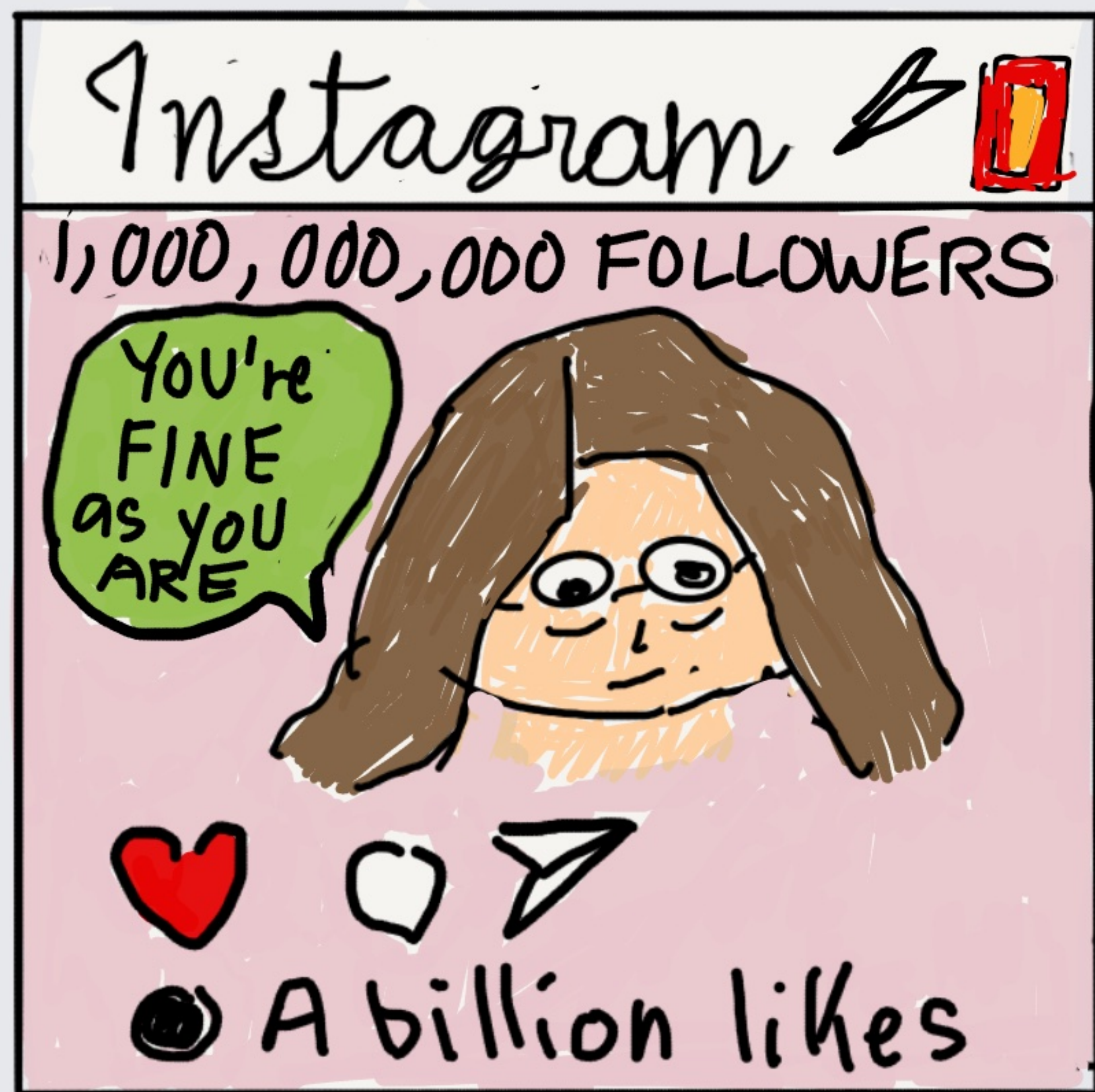
(1990)

my best joke



The night before
the serial killer
Ted Bundy's execution
he was visited by his
FIANCÉE! A convicted
MURDERER has a better
social life than a
single woman in
NEW YORK CITY!

So now I have a fantasy of telling you all about my life, including everything that went wrong, but also the parts that are HILARIOUS and HEARTWARMING, and we will all LAUGH and CRY and HEAL TOGETHER, and I will be so BELOVED, and my life will be WONDERFUL, and all the BAD STUFF I went through will turn out to have been COMPLETELY WORTH IT.



But when I pick up my tablet and pencil, I FREEZE — and all I can think of are **OBSTACLES:**

OBSTACLE: I CAN'T DRAW!

IF graphic memoirs by
ALISON BECHDEL, ALINE KOMINSKY-
CRUMB + ROZ CHAST



exist in the world, who am I to think I have a place in that world?

OBSTACLE: I'm a psychologist

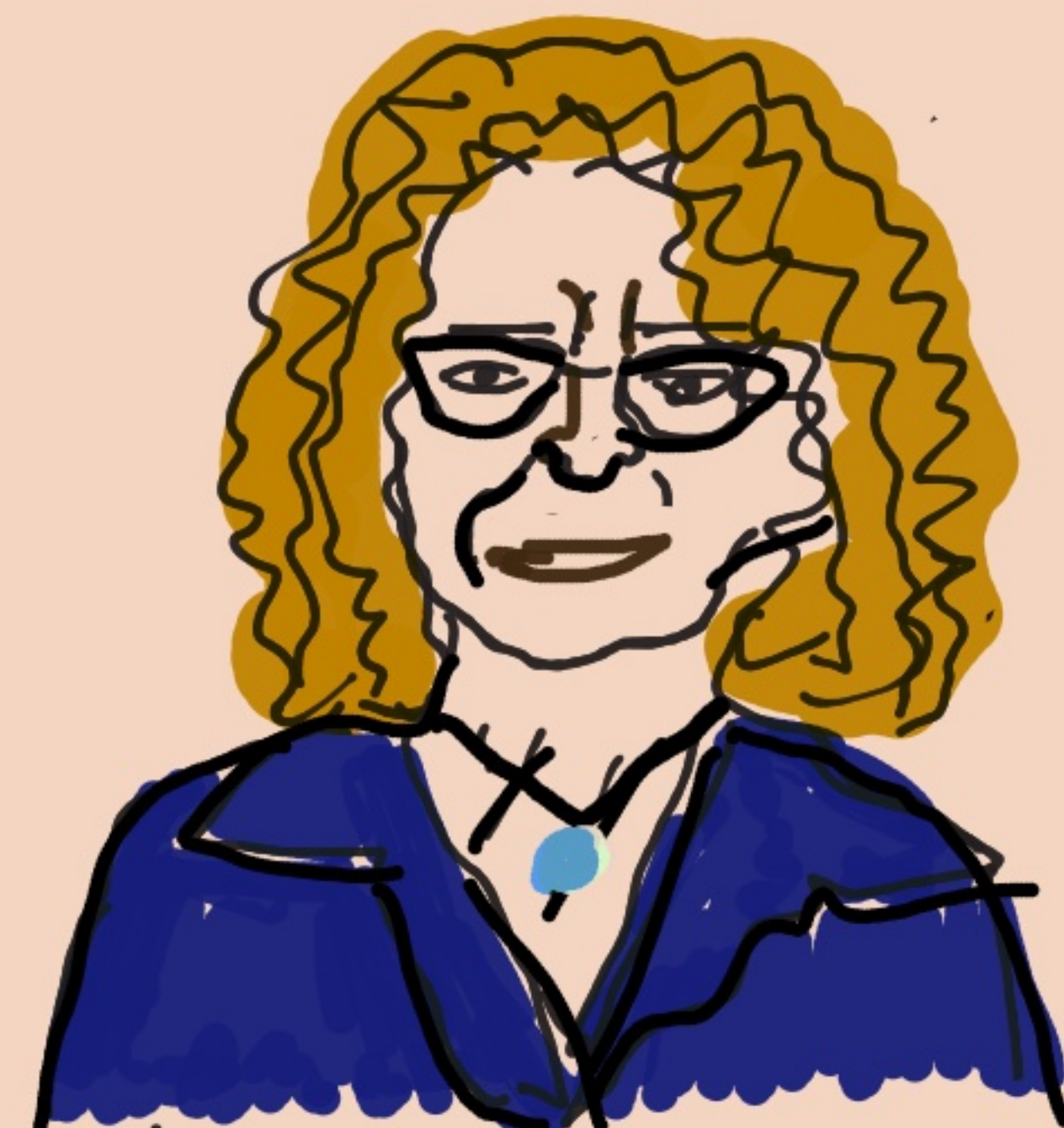
My work is supposed to be DEEP and THEORETICAL, like that of these BRILLIANT FEMALE PSYCHOLOGISTS:



Darlene Ehrenberg



Beatrice Beebe



Jessica Benjamin

They all have BIG IDEAS (+ BIG HAIR!)

OBSTACLE: How much of my TRUE HISTORY can I reveal without being CAST ASUNDER by my fellow humans??



COROLLARY: There are some people who might be very SAD to read about some of the things I've gone through.



OBSTACLE: My FEELINGS toward
others aren't always
so NICE.



I just read
your memoir--
I didn't know
YOU HATED
me!

That's not
what I
MEANT!

OR
WAS
it?



OBSTACLE: Why do I think the story of my life would be interesting when I am just another privileged white woman?

I have Access to Excellent goods and services,

THE BEST MEDICAL CARE...

and the feeling that I can walk around in (relative) safety.

Welcome to Luxe-Mart

CATCH OF THE DAY

Farmed in the purest water STOLEN from poor communities of indigenous peoples



FILETED BY BABIES

\$100/lb.

CREDIT

DermaLove

SKIN LOTION



GUARANTEED SAFE



Rest Assured.

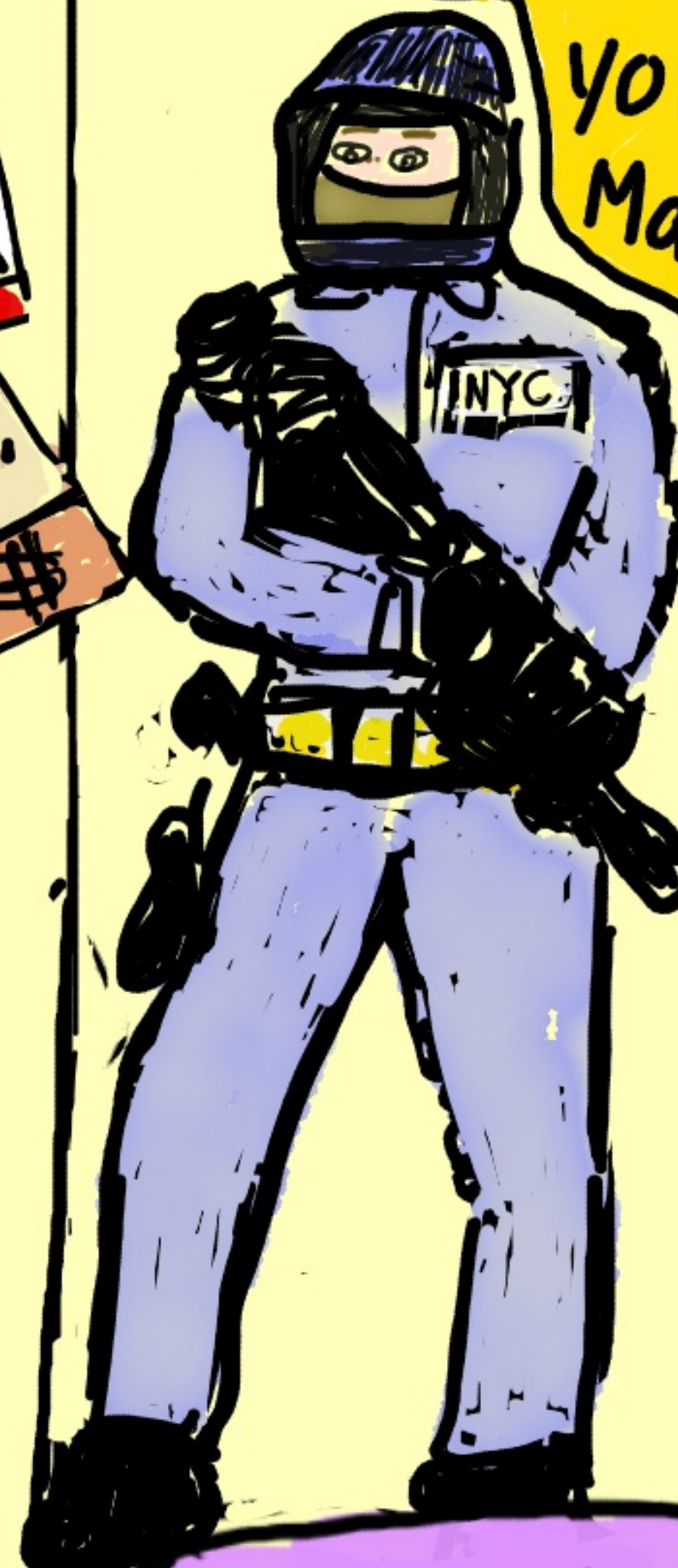
MEDICARE
MIDDLE CLASS
WHITE LADY

#58,412,397,264R

SUPER
SUPPLEMENTAL, Inc.

WITH EXTRA SCANS

(although obviously it scares the hell out of me)



Enjoy your day, Ma'am!

UM, Thank you, officer.

POLICEMEN LOVE ME

COROLLARY: It's all been DONE already



COROLLARY: If it HASN'T been done already, it probably shouldn't be done by ME.

Here I am, writing about myself, with the implication that my problems and feelings are "relatable" — — because they have a certain UNIVERSALITY — — when it has been brought to the attention of many of us privileged people that problems in living are also quite SPECIFIC, in terms of class, race, gender, and other characteristics that remain UNDERREPRESENTED. So maybe the middle-class white lady should STFU?



Can't we ALL have a voice?

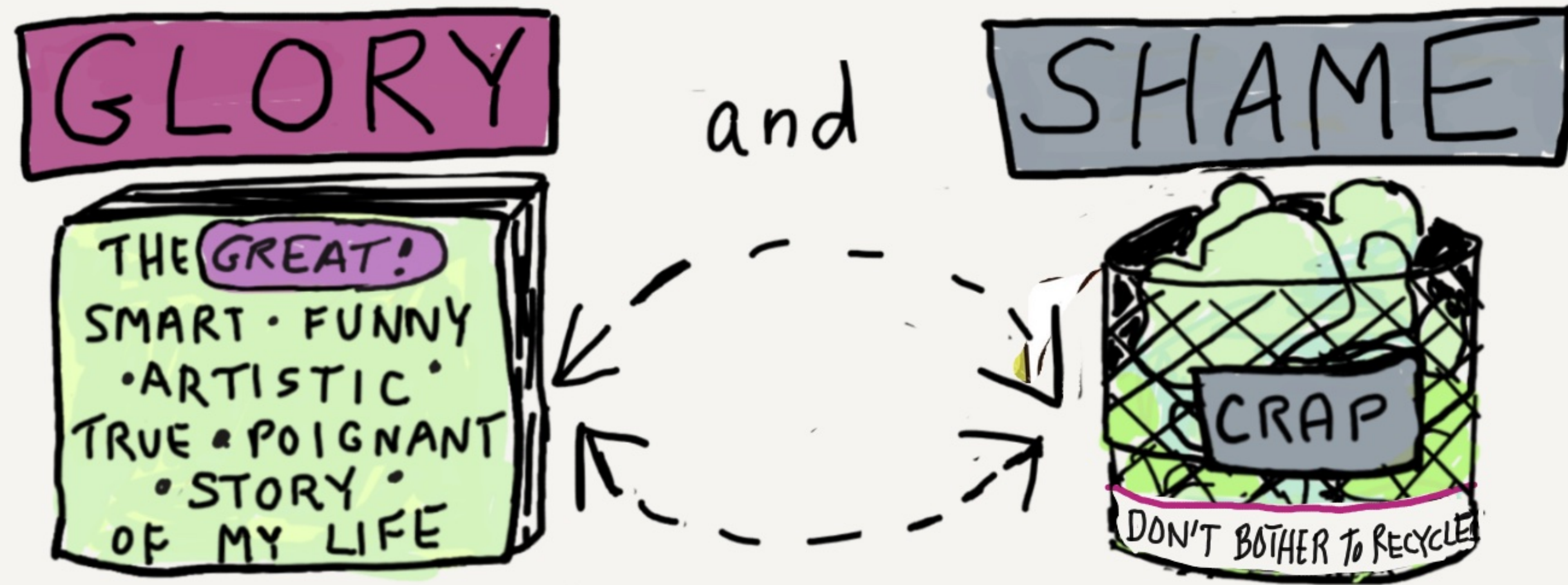
OK, BOOMER!

Your voice perpetuates certain "norms" and contributes to the difficulties others have of being heard.



Younger person who knows more about this than I do.

So, IN SUM, my memoir could be terrific or it could SUCK. Terrific, SUCKS, Terrific, SUCKS, back & forth, in a perpetual OSCILLATION between



And, therefore, I remain STUCK. It's an EXHAUSTING way to live



For those of you following along with your copies of Psychoanalytic Diagnosis: Understanding personality structure in the clinical process*, I am describing "narcissistic personality organization":

The term "narcissistic" refers to people whose personalities are organized around maintaining their self-esteem by getting affirmation from outside themselves.

concerns

with

"narcissistic supplies,"

or supports to self-esteem,

Narcissistically structured people are

afraid of falling apart,

of precipitously losing their self-esteem

(e.g., when criticized).

* by Nancy McWilliams, Ph.D.

excessively self-preoccupied.

fear of the fragmentation of their inner self

hypochondriacal preoccupations

and

morbid fears of death.



People with narcissistic personality organization depend WAY too much on the approval & reassurance of others in order to feel okay, "whole," "intact," healthy, smart, attractive, and whatever else they value.



But the good feelings are, necessarily, temporary —
because "The phone calls are coming from INSIDE
THE HOUSE!" *

I'm afraid
I have some
BAD NEWS

Growing In My Gray
a memoir
by W. Maoshes

OH
GOD!

This memoir
turned out to be
DISAPPOINTING.

I
just realized
that you DON'T
make me Happy.



The Other Shoe Must Always Drop

*paraphrased from the movie "When A Stranger Calls"

NOTE: Narcissistic personality organization is very common and must be distinguished from its more severe manifestation,

NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER



in which an individual is so broken that they compensate with extreme grandiosity and a lack of empathy for others.

ANOTHER NOTE: Psychiatric diagnosis is tricky. It can be helpful, but also, putting people in grossly descriptive categories isn't nearly as scientific as people think.

I'm narcissistic with elements of obsessiveness, depression, and masochistic tendencies



Cool! I'm a Libra with Pisces in retrograde and a house full of scorpions!



BUT
I
DIGRESS...

QUESTION: How does a person become like this?
That's what my memoir is ABOUT- if I could only write it!
The CENTRAL QUESTION seems to be: HOW can I
navigate the PERILS of exposing my history (including
not only events, but my TRUE FEELINGS), while
allowing myself the ACTUAL REWARDS of EXPRESSING

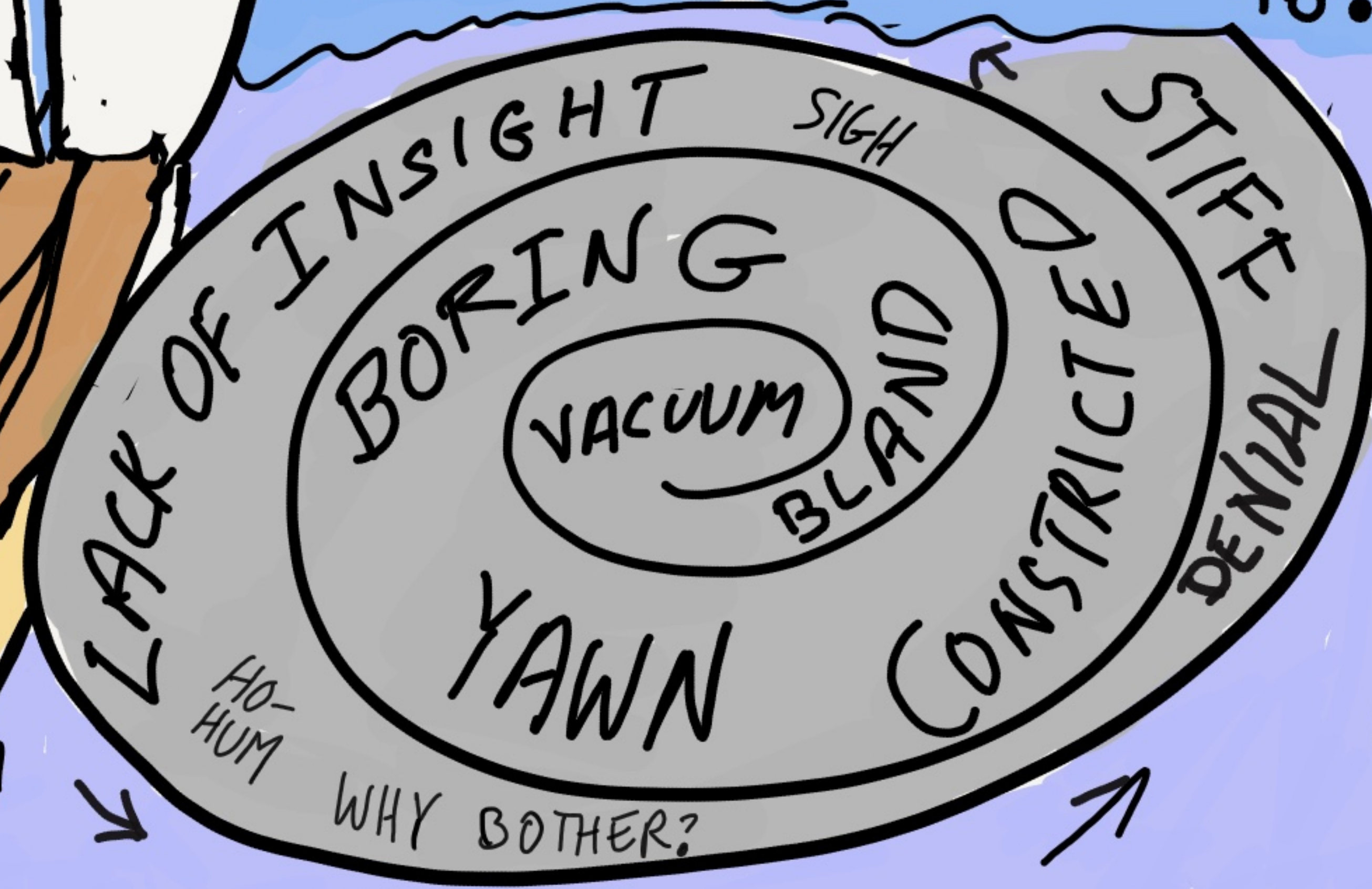
?? My Authentic Self ??

The SCYLLA OF
LETTING OUT TOO
MUCH INFORMATION
leads to:

ASH
GUILT
SELF-HATRED
ENVY
RAGE



The CARYBDIS OF
"Withholding"
INFORMATION leads to:



Oddly Enough, is this not the SAME QUESTION that comes up when one considers GOING GRAY? that is: How can I let my AUTHENTICITY reveal itself even if that TRUE SELF isn't what we "normally" think of as ATTRACTIVE, or APPEALING? Well yes, it's a Very Similar issue! LUCKILY, there are MANY EXPERTS on GOING GRAY that we can turn to for ADVICE!



Don't worry--
we've got
you, um,
COVERED

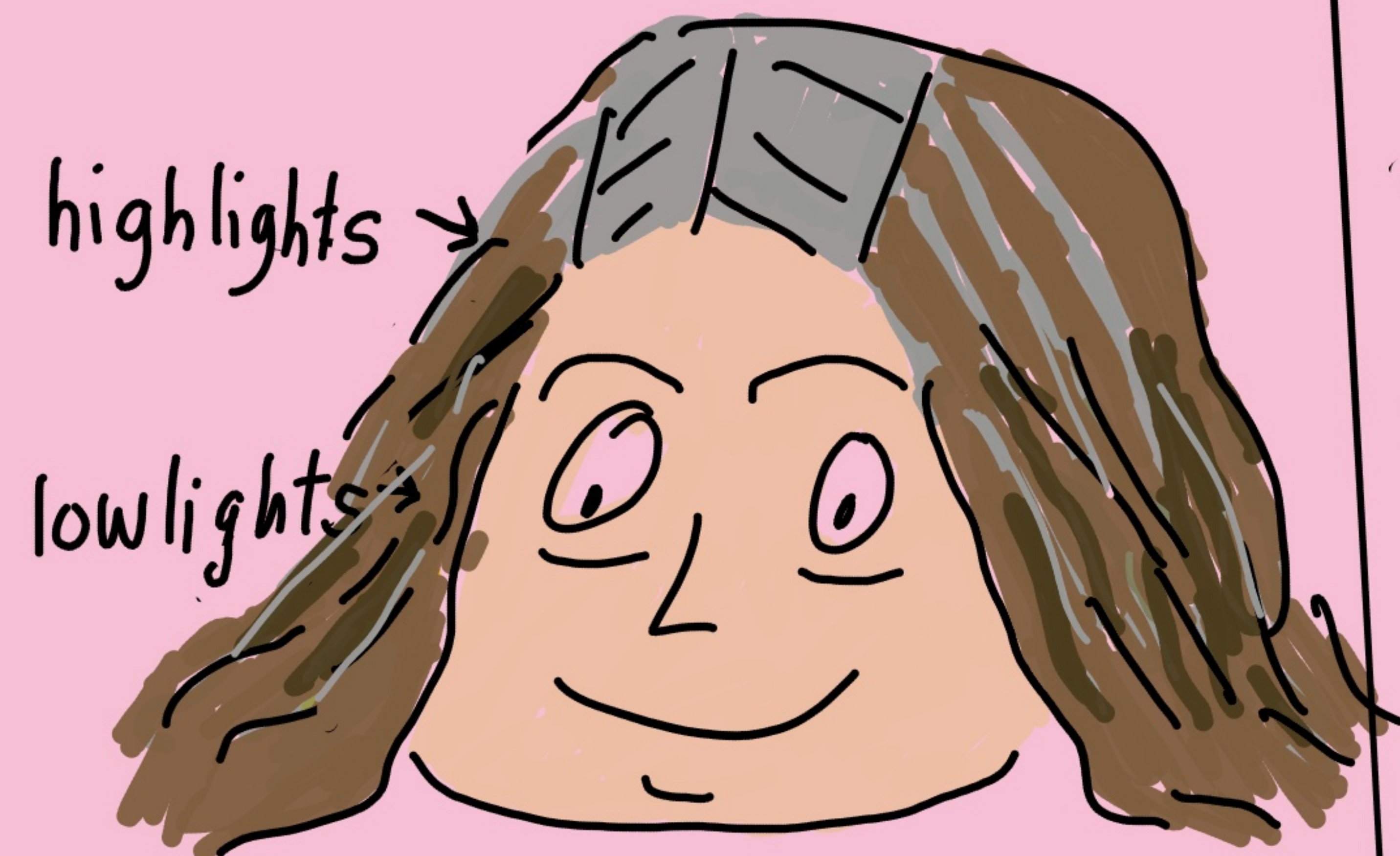
We're HAIR
for you,
GIRL!

WE won't give
you the SHAFT

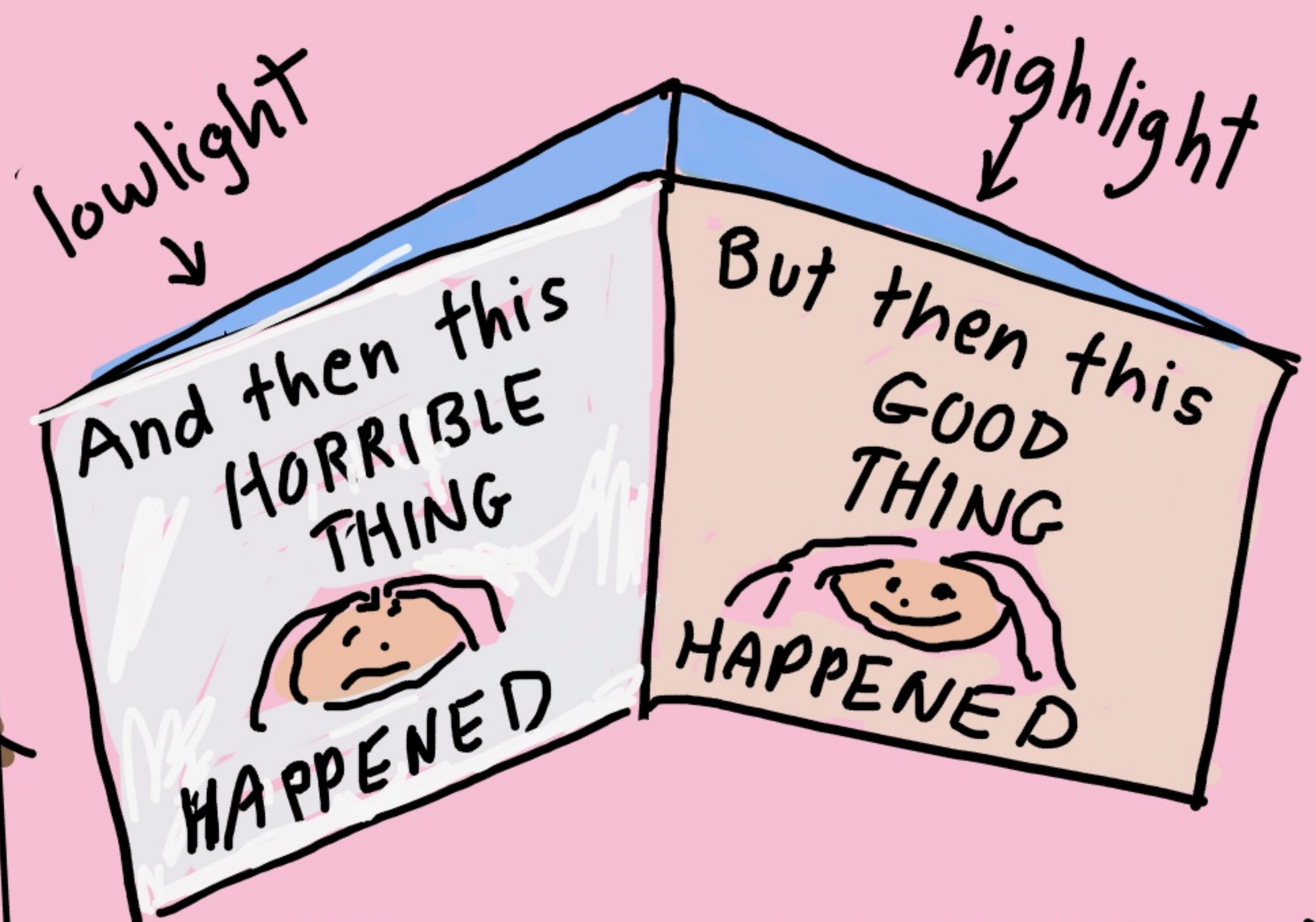
We've got
LAYERS
of
wisdom!

"When it comes to gray hair, integrating a series of highlights and lowlights can help create a mixture of natural-looking colors for a multi-dimensional 'do that's full of movement. This modern technique allows you to embrace your grays in a stylish way."

--- L'Oreal, Paris



GOING GRAY



WRITING A MEMOIR

"Keep changing and trying out different styles."

--- Mara Kadish at Warren-Tricomi Salon



GOING GRAY

and then
this very
difficult
thing happ-

Tragedy

COMEDY
But then this
REALLY FUNNY
THING HAPP-

Individuals with the anxious-pr
holds others in a higher regard.
it hard to trust...They are hyper
make them feel anxious...

...aggressive and libid.
were also decisive such
hypochondriac symptoms w
of their interacting cau

COLOR!

What a strange
life it has been...

Chiaroscuro!

WRITING A MEMOIR

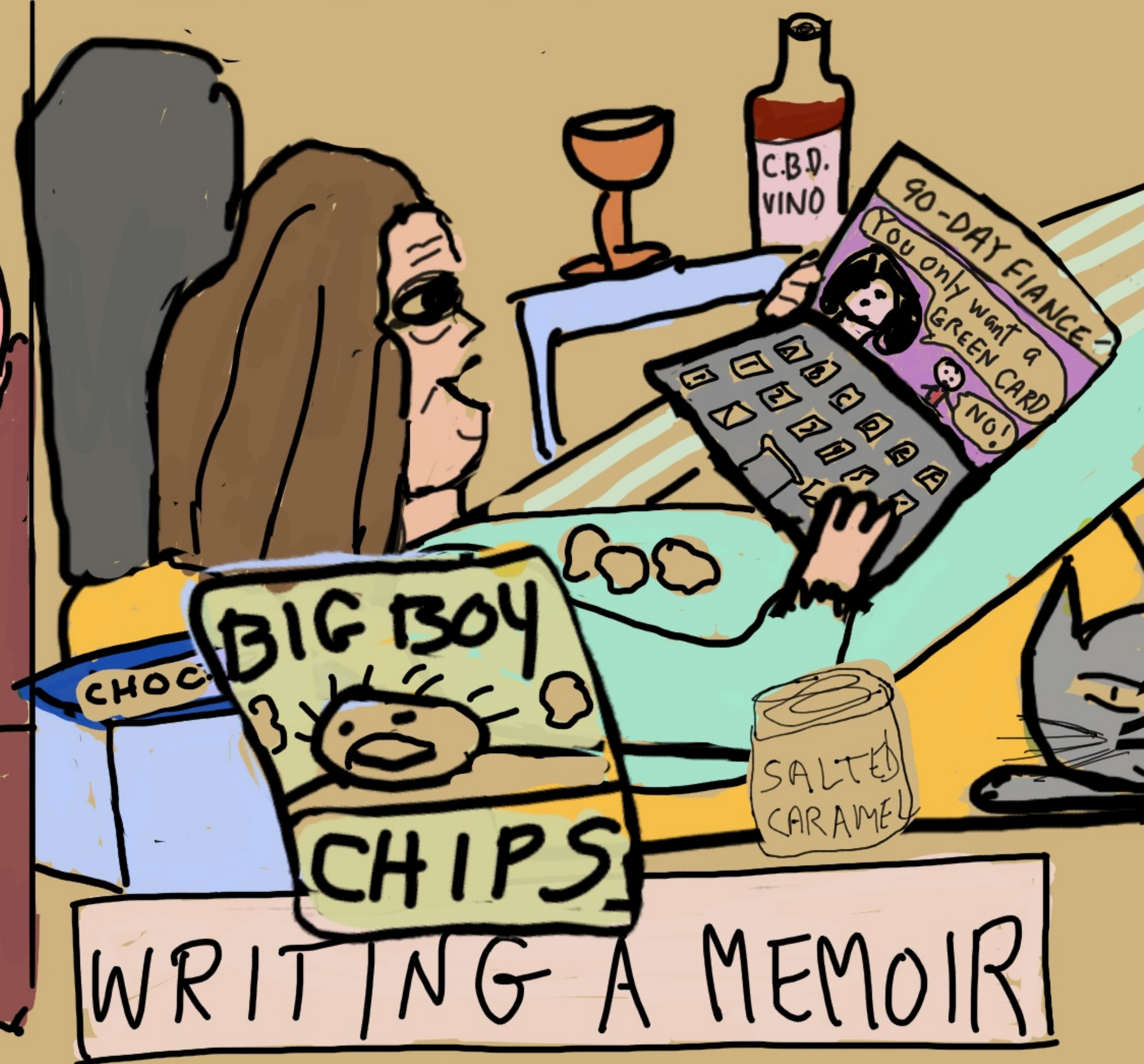
Gray hair can have a frizzier, more wiry texture than you may be accustomed to. Tame tresses by using a silk bonnet...at night and by getting sufficient hair-healthy nutrients in your diet... Be sure to also drink plenty of water.

--- Jonathan Colombini, Celebrity Hair Stylist

"Time Out For Hair Care"



"Time Out From the Memoir"

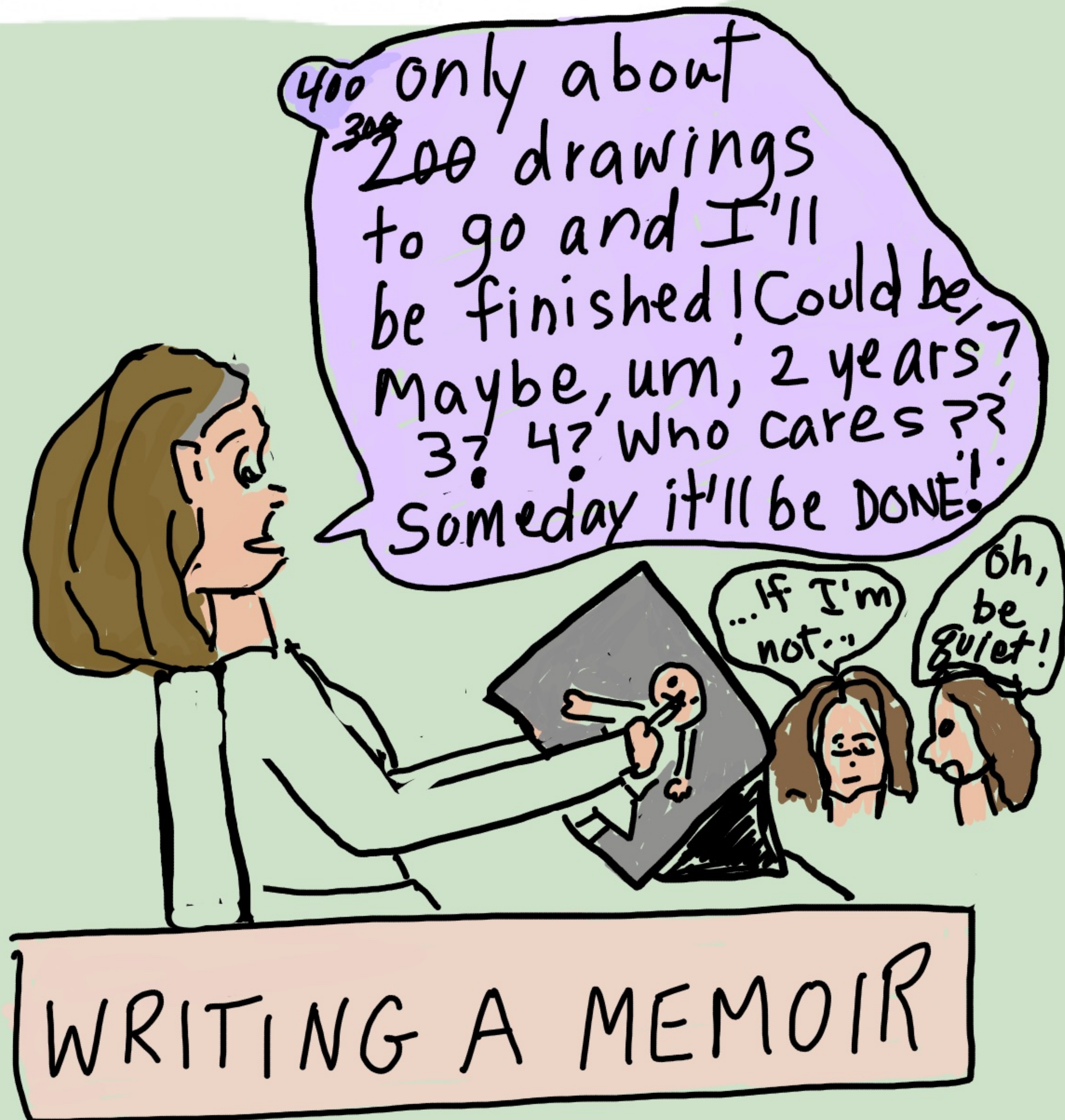


"It will be a shock to the eye and maybe some emotions will arise too, but focus on the end result."

--- Lauren E. Hack, Celebrity Colorist



GOING GRAY



WRITING A MEMOIR

And now, having "paid the toll" of pre-thinking every possible reason NOT to write my memoir, everything that could be wrong with it, and deferring to unseen but all-powerful authorities for "permission," I think that I am finally ready to go forward -- I mean -- BACKWARDS -- to the BEGINNING...



more to come...