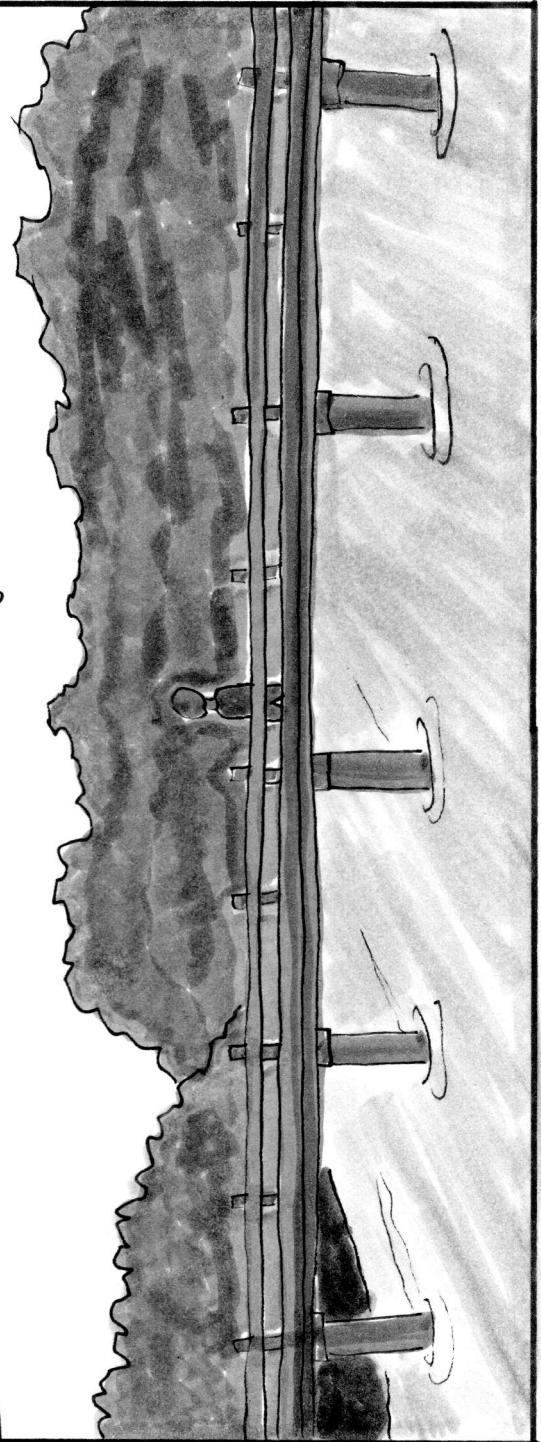




WORDS: ART  
BY  
MEL DEE

# DOLARIS

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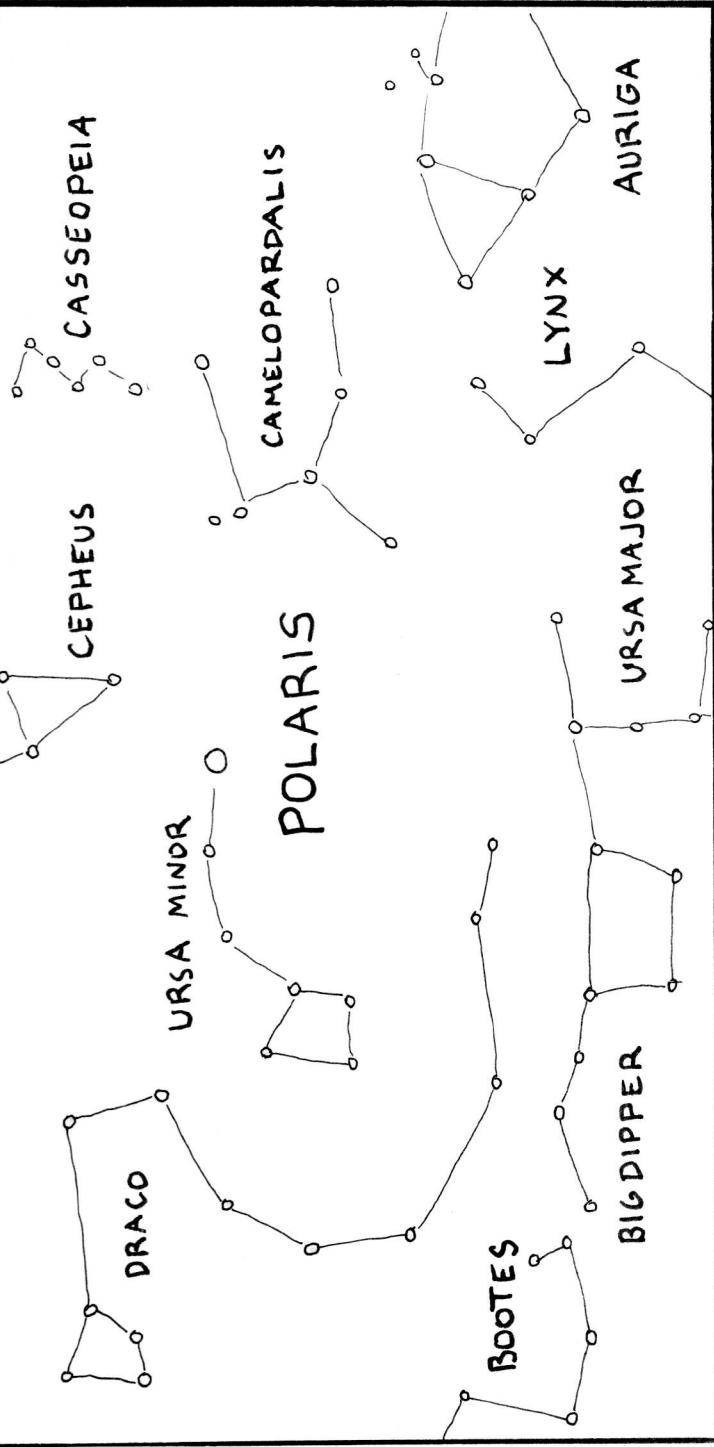


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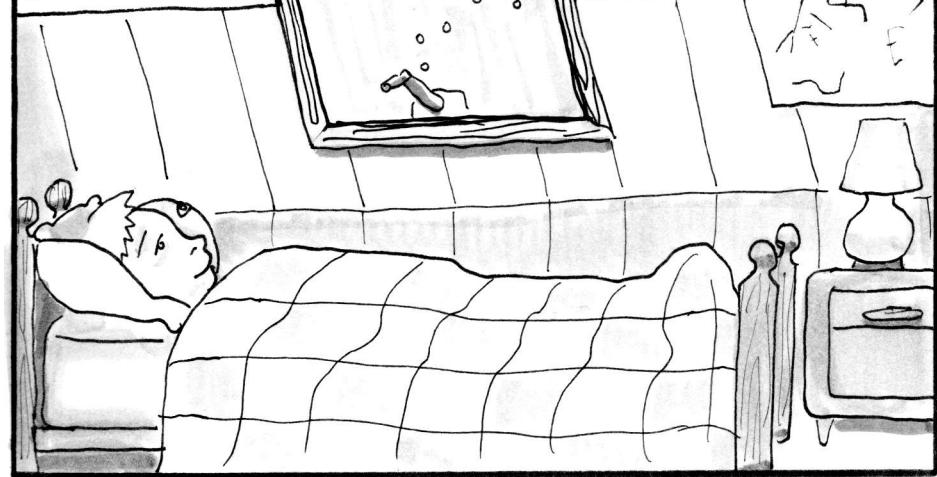
WHEN I WAS A TINY LAD I WOULD LIE IN BED AND LOOK OUT THE SKYLIGHT AT NIGHT. I NOTICED ONE STAR ALWAYS STAYED IN THE SAME PLACE. LATER I LEARNED IT WAS THE NORTH STAR, POLARIS. ALL THE OTHER STARS MOVED AROUND IT AND I THOUGHT IT WAS THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE. LATER I LEARNED THAT WAS ONLY TRUE IN THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE OF EARTH. I LEARNED THAT REALLY NOTHING EVER STAYS THE WAY IT SEEMS.



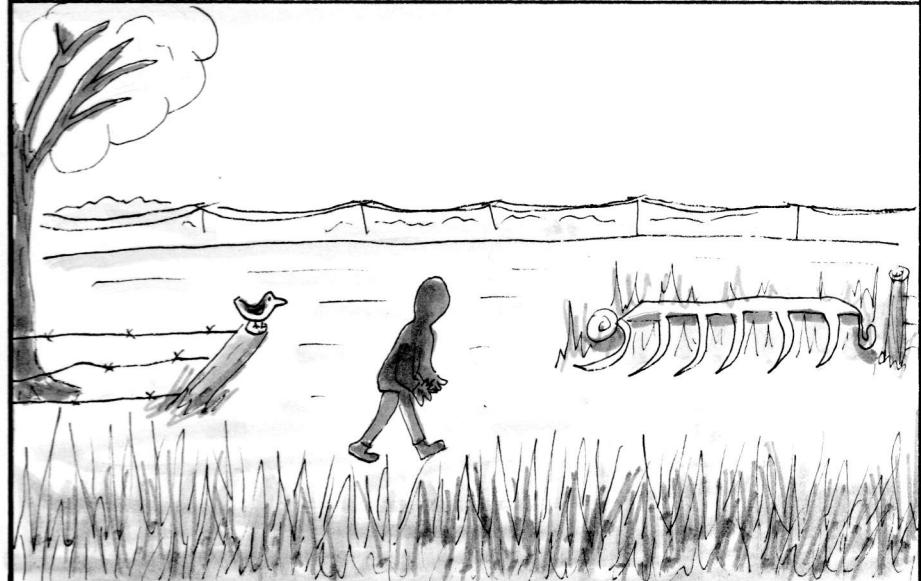
THE DAY MY MOM DIED I KNEW THINGS WERE GOING TO CHANGE, BUT DIDN'T KNOW WHEN. SHE WAS UPRIGHT IN HER CHAIR, EYES OPEN AND FIXED ON THE TV. IT WAS LIKE NOTHING WAS DIFFERENT, ONLY SHE WAS GONE.



AFTER THAT DAY I FELT LIKE ANYTHING WAS POSSIBLE. THE URGE TO HIDE, THAT MIGHT NEVER FADE. MY DESIRE TO KEEP TO MY WORLD OF THE NOT CHANGE. ME SHIFTED GREW A SENSE

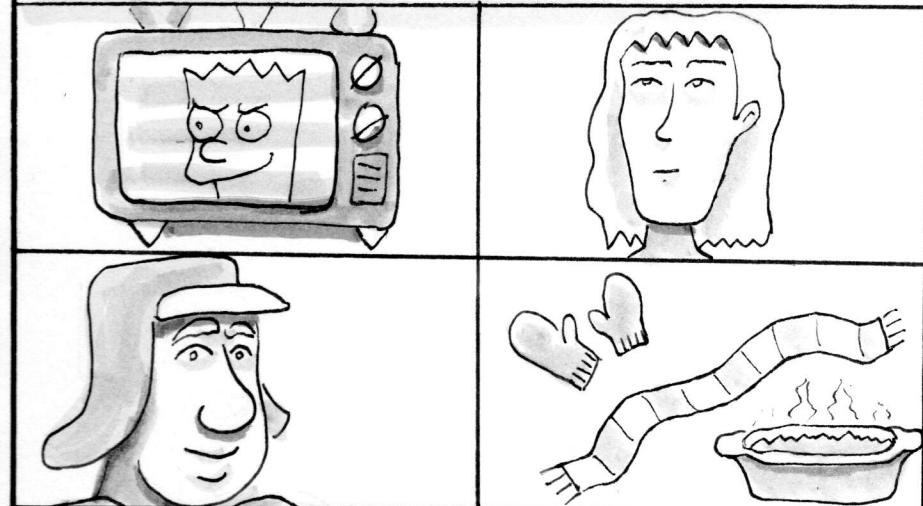


I WALKED ACROSS THE FIELDS TO ANNIE'S TRAILER THINKING ON WHAT I'D SAY TO HER. IT WAS ONLY WHEN I TOLD HER "MOM'S DEAD" DID THE TEARS COME OUT.

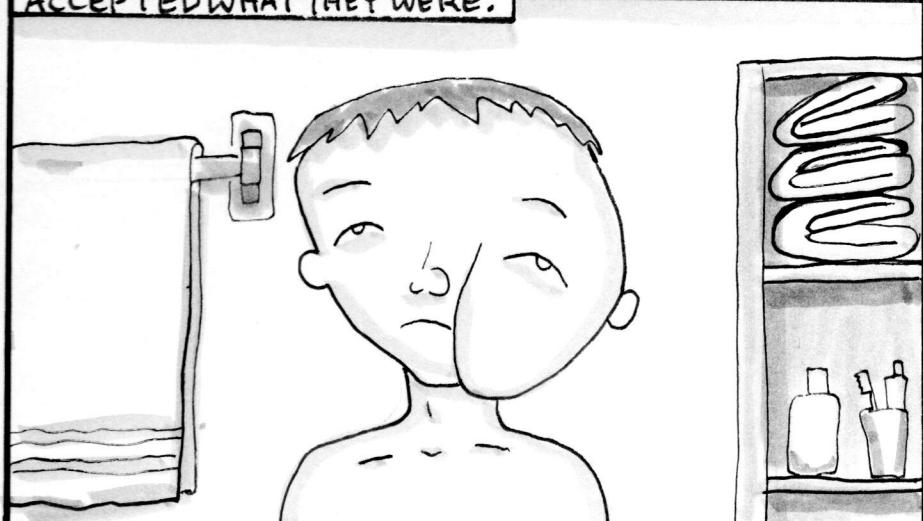




THE WORLD. I WASN'T IGNORANT TO ITS WAYS. I HAD TV, I HAD ANNIE, OUR FRIEND FROM ACROSS THE FIELD, AND FARMER JIM, WHO PLOWED THE DAME, DELIVERED CORDWOOD, AND WHOSE WIFE SENT ALONG THE OCCASIONAL CASSAROLE OR KNIT ITEM TO KEEP ME WARM OVER THE BITING WINTERS.



FROM WHAT I GLEANED FROM ALL THIS, THE WORLD WAS A MEAN PLACE THAT WOULD NOT SPARE ME ANY CRUELTY. ONCE IT LOOKED UPON MY FACE IT MIGHT EVEN TRY TO ENCRACK. THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA, THE ELEPHANT MAN, MASK, I HAD SEEN THEM AND ONCE I GOT OVER WISHING THINGS WERE DIFFERENT, I ACCEPTED WHAT THEY WERE.



WELL, IT SEEMS THE ATTORNEY - YOUR DAD'S BROTHER, HAS PASSED AWAY. BUT YOU HAVE ALL YOUR DOCUMENTATION. WE CAN TRANSFER CONTROL OF THE ACCOUNTS TO YOU, FREDERICK



MY CONDOLENCES ABOUT YOUR MOTHER. WE WENT TO HIGH SCHOOL TOGETHER. LOOK FREDERICK, I KNOW THIS MUST NOT HAVE BEEN EASY COMING HERE. WE'LL DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO HELP YOU.



I WASHED MY NEATEST CLOTHES AND SINCE MY REGULAR BOOTS WERE SO SCUFFED AND BATTERED, I DECIDED TO WEAR MY NEW RUBBER BOOTS. I CHOSE MY HAT WITH FLAPS AND A LIGHT SCARF, YES, JUST IN CASE I WANTED TO HIDE MYSELF.

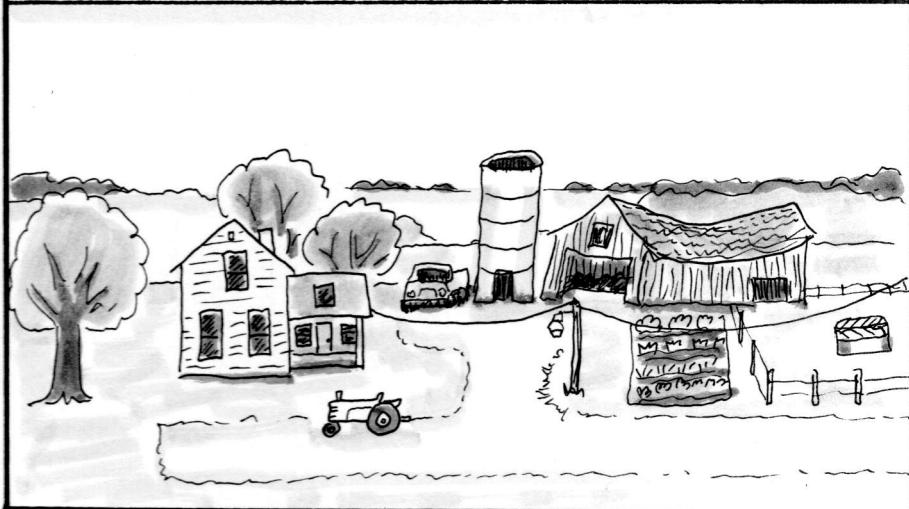


I LOOKED LIKE A FARMER, LIKE JIM. WOULD THAT BE ENOUGH TO NOT STAND OUT MORE THAN I ALREADY WOULD?

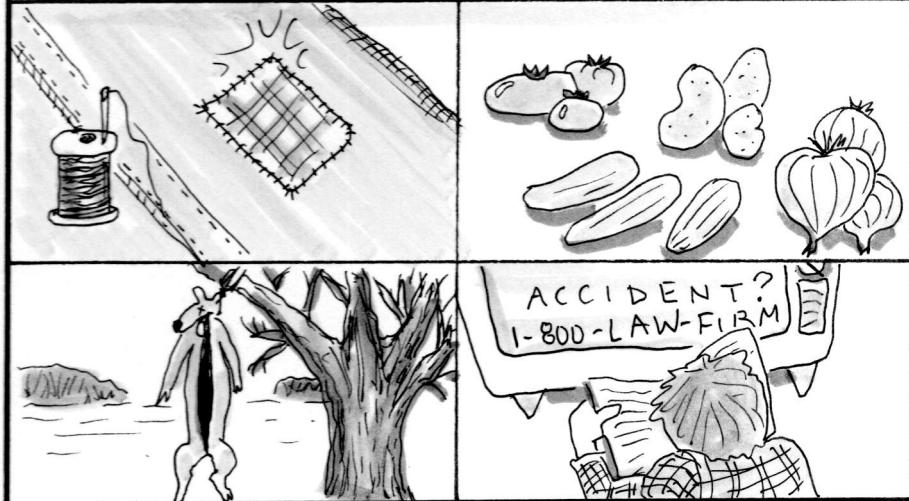
THE DAY FINALLY ARRIVED WHEN I WENT TO TOWN FOR THE FIRST TIME.



MOM AND I LIVED ON HER PARENTS' FARM, MY GRANDPARENTS BOTH DIED THERE, OMA IN HER SLEEP, OPA IN THE DRIVE SHOVELLING OUT HIS TRUCK. MY FATHER LEFT WHEN I WAS BORN AND AS FAR AS I WAS CONCERNED HE NEVER EXISTED AT ALL SINCE I DIDN'T REMEMBER HIM.



MOM, ANNIE, AND JIM TAUGHT ME ALL I NEEDED TO KNOW TO LIVE MY SIMPLE LIFE: HOW TO COOK, SPLIT WOOD, MEND CLOTHES, AND TEND THE SIZEABLE GARDEN WE HAD EACH SPRING. ANNIE TAUGHT ME TO FISH, DRESS OUT A DEER, TAN A HIDE. WHAT SPARE TIME I HAD I SPENT READING WITH THE TV ON. IT HELPED WITH THE LONELINESS AFTER MOM PASSED.



WHEN MOM DIED, ANNIE NOTIFIED THE AUTHORITIES. A LAWYER CAME AND EXPLAINED THERE WAS A TRUST SET UP FOR ME, TO HANDLE THE PROPERTY TAXES, BILLS, EXPENSES, OF WHICH THERE WERE FEW. MOM - AND FATHER - HAD PLANNED FOR THIS INEVITABILITY. I GUESS THEY THOUGHT IT THE LEAST THEY COULD DO, HAVING CHOSEN TO EXILE ME BEFORE THE WORLD COULD.



SUDDENLY, WHEN I WAS 23 YEARS OLD, 5 YEARS AFTER MOM PASSED, THE MONEY STOPPED COMING.



HI FREDERICK, I'M MAGGIE, JIM'S WIFE. THIS IS OUR DAUGHTER PERSEPHONE.

HEY!

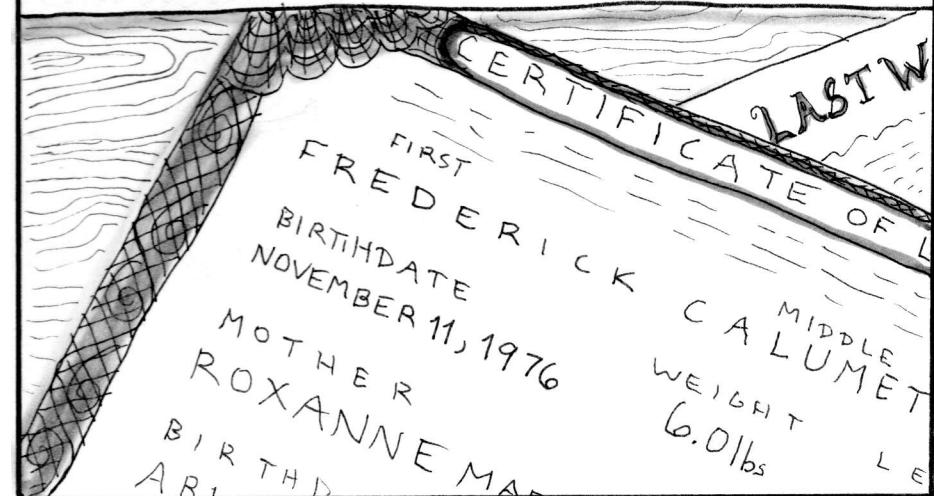


I KNOW WE'VE NEVER MET BEFORE BUT JIM IS REALLY SORRY ABOUT YESTERDAY. WE THOUGHT IT WAS TIME WE CAME AND MET YOU, AND WE BROUGHT YOU SOME CHILI.

SPLITTING HANGOVER/ CRYING HEADACHE

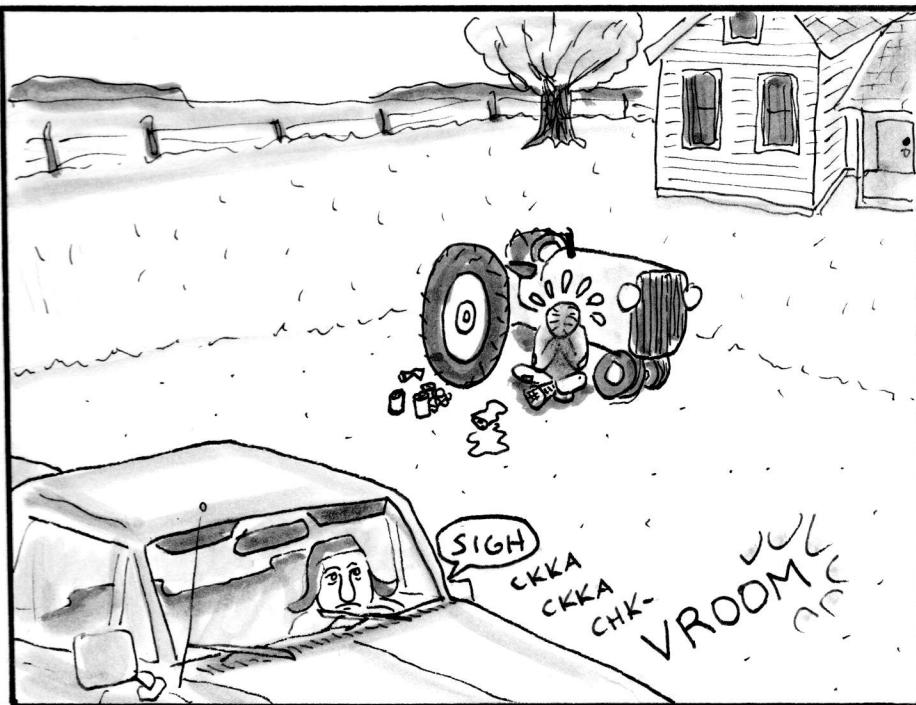
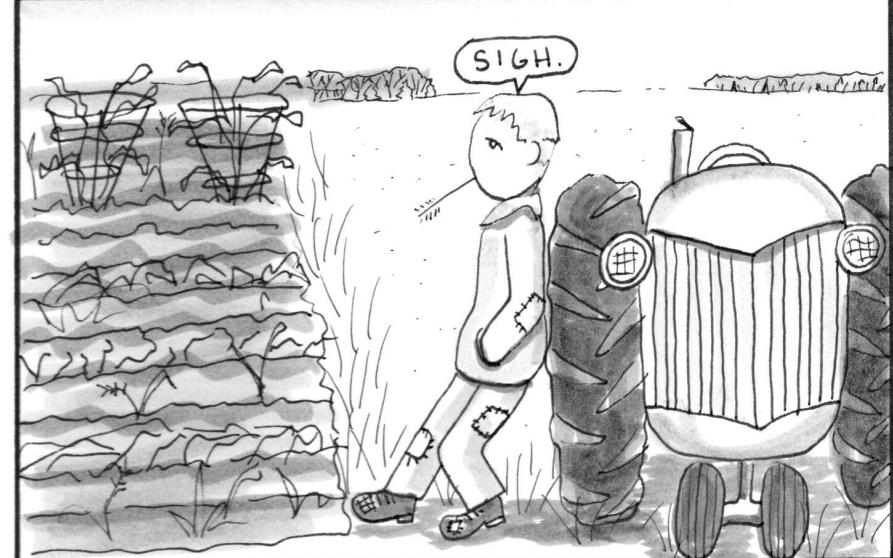
THANKS!

OVER THE NEXT FEW DAYS I PREPARED, PHYSICALLY AND SPIRITUALLY. I GATHERED ALL THE PAPERS I COULD FIND, INCLUDING MOTHER'S WILL AND ALL THE PAPERS THE LAWYER HAD BROUGHT ME IN A YELLOW ENVELOPE. I EVEN DUG OUT MY BIRTH CERTIFICATE TO PROVE IT WAS ME.

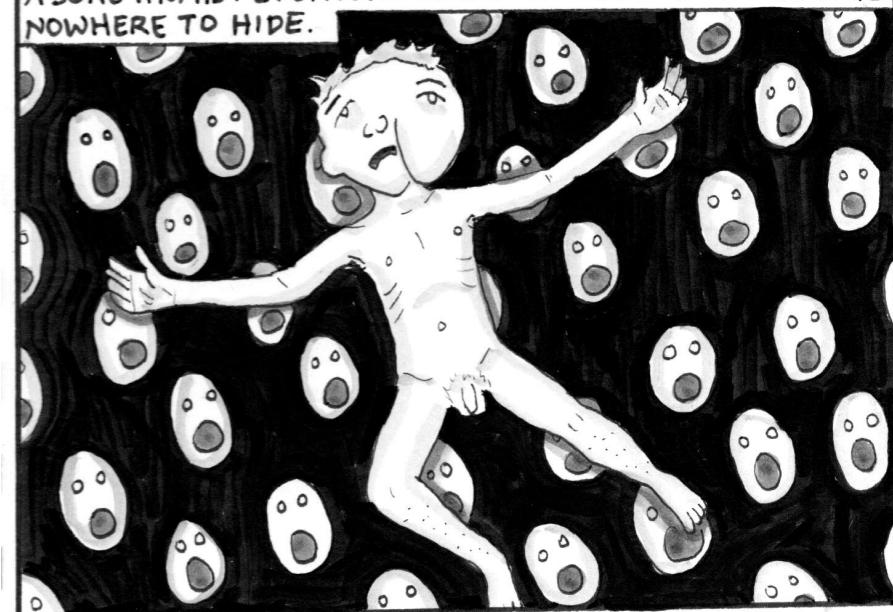




BREAKING GROUND FOR THE GARDEN THAT YEAR WAS TOUGH. IT WAS TOUGH TO GET STARTED ON ANYTHING. A STEELY COLD DREAD LOOMED BEHIND EVERYTHING...



AT NIGHT I DREAMT I WAS IN TOWN AND I STUCK OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB. EVERYONE WAS STARING AND THERE WAS NOWHERE TO HIDE.



AGAIN, I TURNED TO ANNIE.

ANNIE...

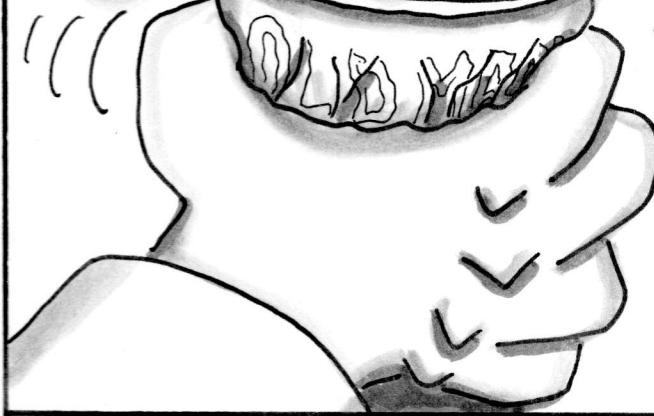
I HAVE  
TO GO TO  
TOWN

OH?



MAYBE IT WAS THE BEER

CRUNCH!



IT WAS  
DEFINITELY  
THE STRESS  
I LOST MY  
TEMPER.

REMEMBER THE TRUST FUND?  
THE BILLS WEREN'T PAID  
LAST MONTH. I HAVE TO  
FIND OUT WHY.

I CAN TAKE  
YOU FREDERICK.  
ARE YOU OKAY  
WITH IT?



YOU KNOW WHAT JIM? FUCK PEOPLE!!

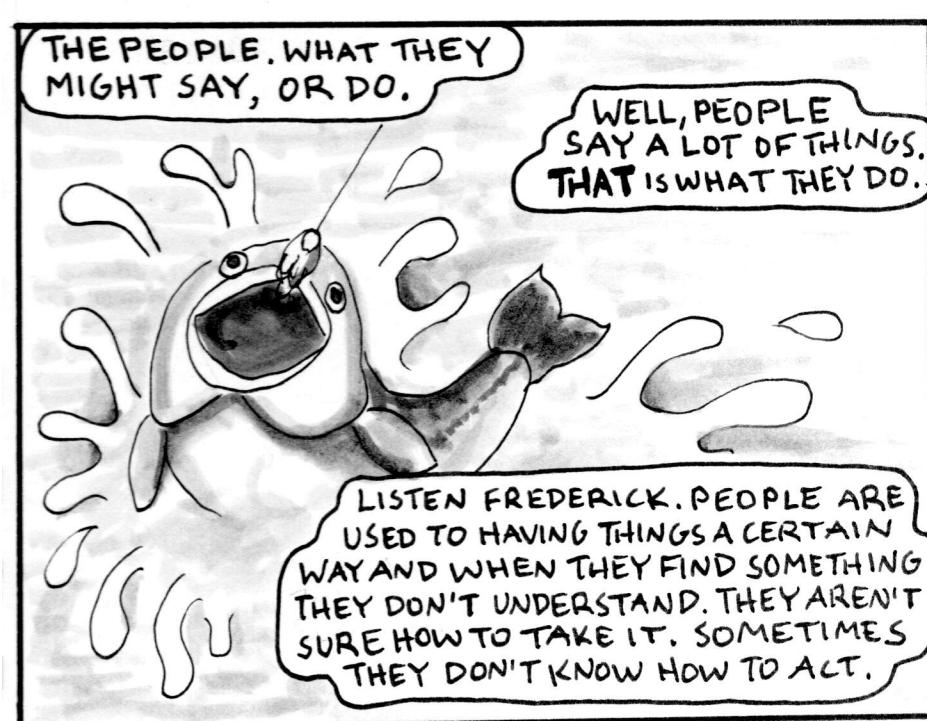
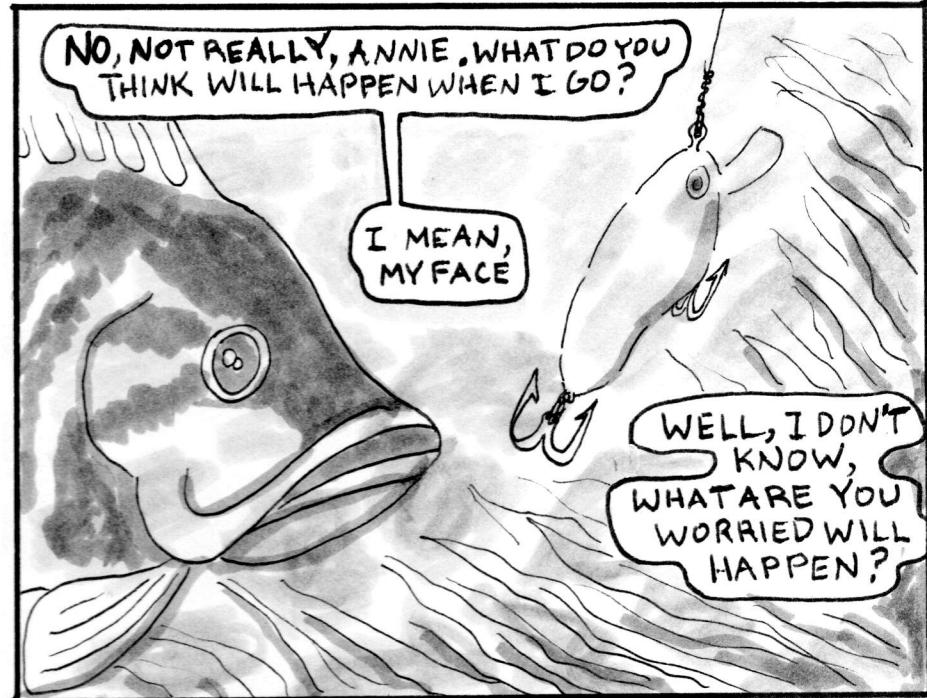
HORRID, NASTY  
LITTLE  
CREEPS

THEY'RE  
THE  
REAL  
FREAKS

GLAD I NEVER  
BEEN TO YOUR  
STUPID, SHITTY  
TOWN.

NOT  
ME!





I'LL TELL YOU A SECRET FREDERICK; THEY TALK ABOUT ME. NOT TO MY FACE, BEHIND MY BACK.

YOU?  
WHY?

BECAUSE I LIVE OUT HERE AND DO THINGS MY OWN WAY. I GUESS. AND MY LOOKS. THEY CALL ME "MANNIE", SAY I'M A MAN AND LIVE IN THE WOODS TO HIDE IT. SOMETIMES THEY LAUGH OUT LOUD WHEN I COME INTO THE STORE TO DO OUR SHOPPING, THEN THEY BLANK THEIR FACES WHEN I LOOK.

I ... I DIDN'T KNOW.  
I'M SORRY.

I'M JUST SAYING, IT HAPPENS TO EVERYONE. YOU CAN'T HELP IT. USUALLY IT'S THEIR HANGUP, NOT SOMETHING YOU'VE DONE.

THE ALMANAC SAYS LATE FROSTS. IT MIGHT BE GOOD YOU GOT A LATE START ON YOUR SEEDLINGS.

YOU OKAY KID? YOU SEEM PREOCCUPIED.

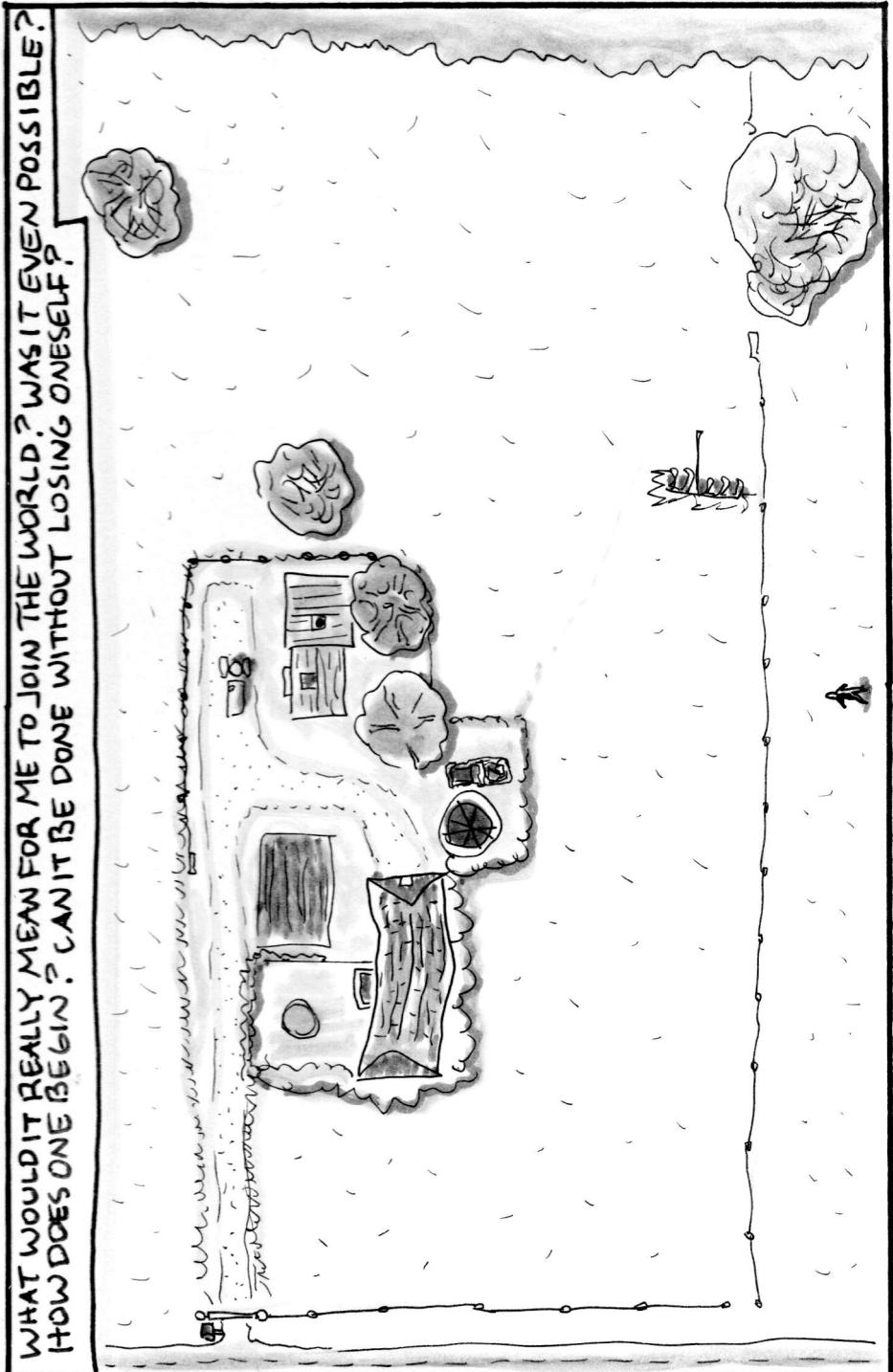
JIM, I GOTTA GO TO TOWN

ANNIE'S GONNA TAKE ME

YUP.

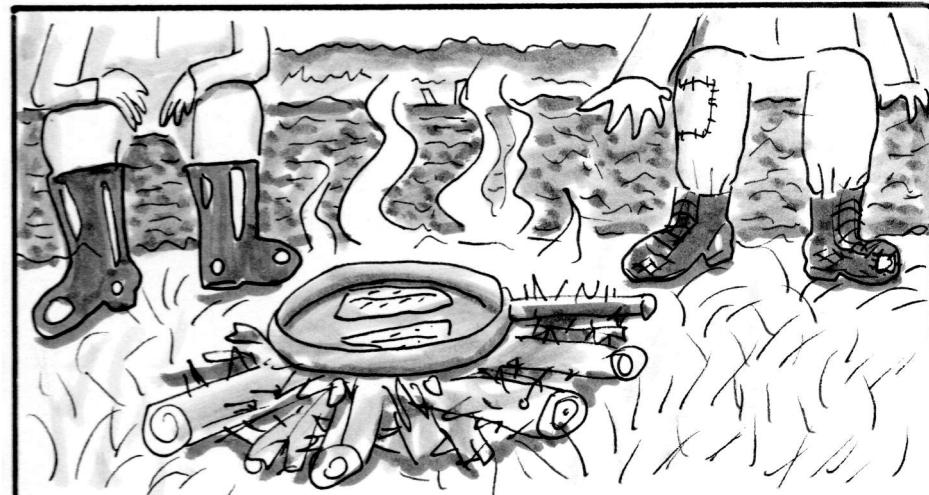


WHAT WOULD IT REALLY MEAN FOR ME TO JOIN THE WORLD? WAS IT EVEN POSSIBLE?  
HOW DOES ONE BEGIN? CAN IT BE DONE WITHOUT LOSING ONESELF?



CAN... CAN YOU HELP ME? I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START. THE BANK - I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE IT IS, I DON'T KNOW HOW TO GO IN THERE OR WHAT TO ASK FOR.





I SHOULD'VE KNOWN PEOPLE IN TOWN WOULD GIVE ANNIE A HARD TIME. TO ME SHE'S NOT DIFFERENT THOUGH, SHE'S JUST ANNIE. EVEN IF SHE WERE A MAN LIVING AS A WOMAN, I WOULDN'T CARE. SHE'S MY BEST FRIEND. BETTER TO ME THAN ANYONE, EXCEPT MY OWN MOM.

