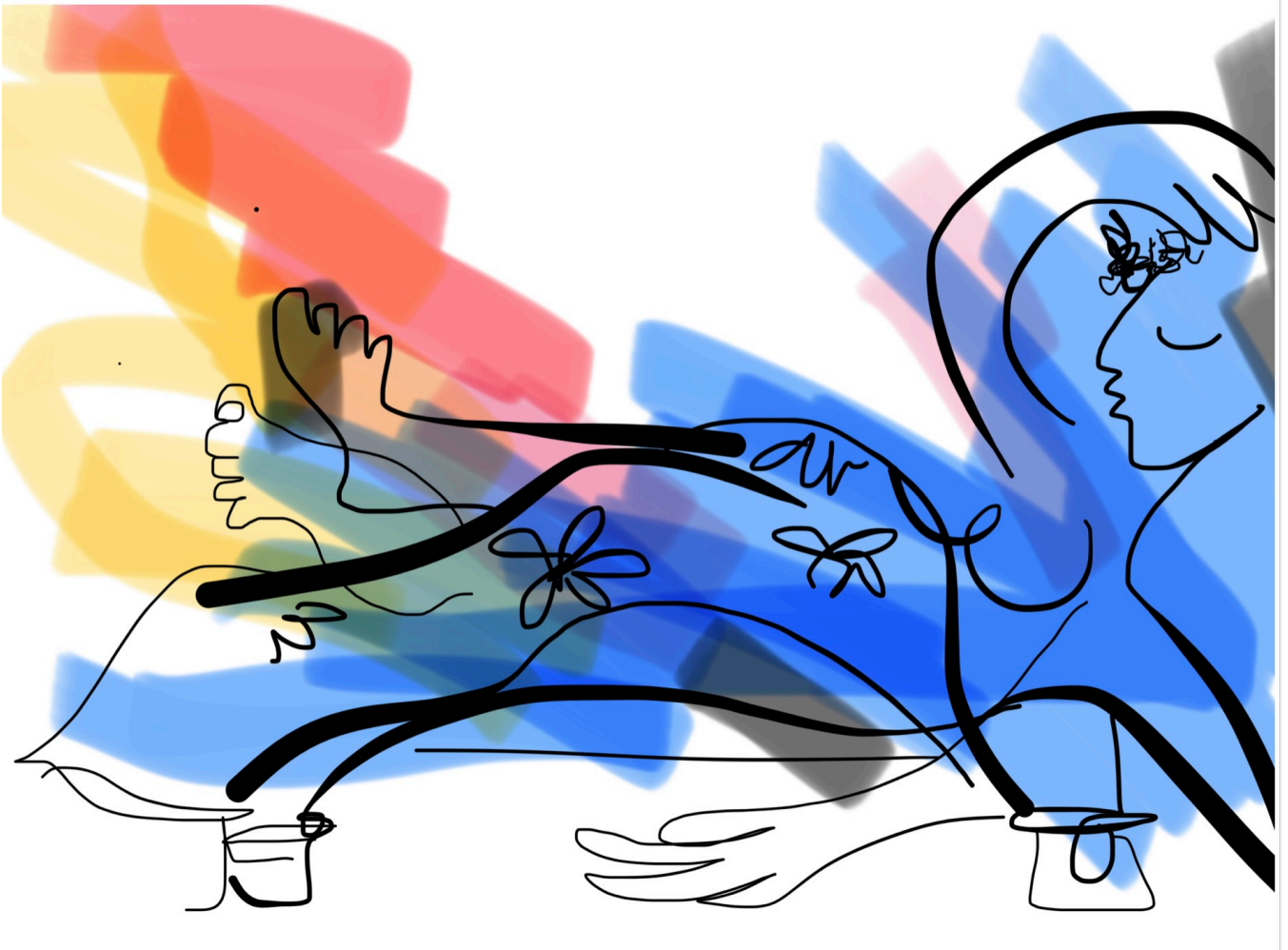


'Off sick &



... Gina's
Sketchbook
diaries'

Geraldine Walsh

'Off sick & Gina's sketchbook diaries'....

The diaries are made up of words and images where the fictional character 'Gina', acts as an alter ego playing out some of the themes that occur in her long-term health condition. The diaries are fragmented. They act as little pockets or views through a window where we get a glimpse into Gina's world & her desire to make sense of what is happening in her life and for a cure.

About the author...

Having studied fine art, visual art has always been a primary tool. In 2007 when health issues including what looked like multiple allergies amongst other symptoms began to take over my life, I started putting words and images together. What to eat, what to wear and anything else I come into contact with became a minefield within a fog of both physical and cognitive exhaustion. Diagnosis was unclear. Primarily it was a private diary that was useful as a memory aid to feed back to my health practitioner. I also found this cathartic.

Giving Gina a separate life of her own has given a sense of creative license to the experience, 'a play on reality'. It is semi autobiographical - with a wry look at the experience and the complexities of a long-term health condition and how this weaves into all areas of Gina's life.

Having started the initial process of making the diaries, I then struggled with what was at first glance a pragmatic list of symptoms. One day I was going through my diaries to throw things away as these endless descriptions were very depressing & repetitive - I had thought to myself - 'If I die tomorrow I do not want this left as a legacy of my life'. As I was tearing up the pages I would occasionally read snippets and would put the odd page aside to keep - after a while there were many pages. To add to this, at some point later on, my homeopath suggested I write down my dreams to access the unconscious.

'Off sick & Gina's sketchbook diaries'....

So I found myself writing dreams. As for some of the dreams, I would only remember an image. I would at times wake up in the middle of the night and find myself drawing in the dark. This transformed much of the difficulty in expressing or sharing the experience.

Hence the cathartic process began. So when the character 'Gina' emerged she gave permission to expand beyond the illness itself. Even though it is somewhat autobiographical, I have given myself license to play.

. . . .

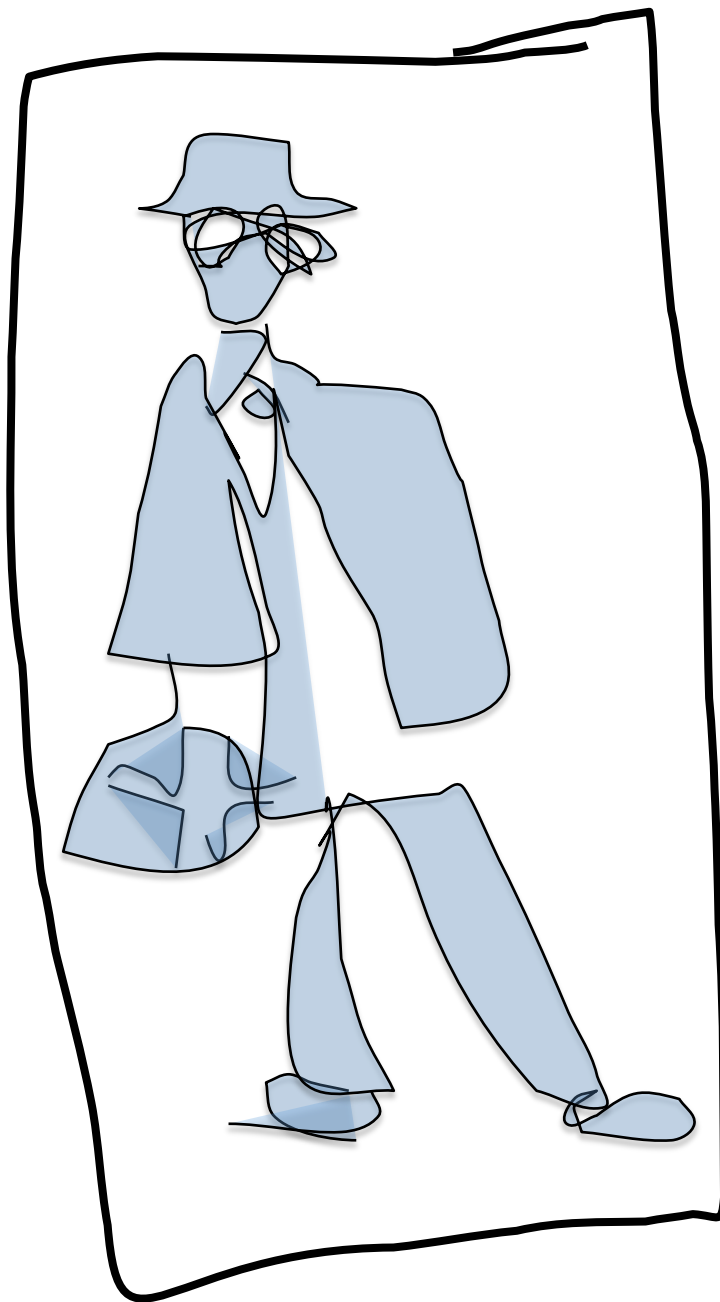
Disclaimer:

Gina's diaries are based on a fictional character - nothing in this book should be interpreted or construed as medical advice or instruction. The author will not take any responsibility in this respect. Instead, readers should consult appropriate health professionals on any matter relating to their health and well-being.

Chapter 1

Right Diagnosis!

At some point in the beginning of a never-ending virus, it looked like it might have been an immune disorder with Chronic fatigue type symptoms. But appearances can be deceptive, as her homeopath said - 'To find the right diagnosis - you have to be like a detective!'

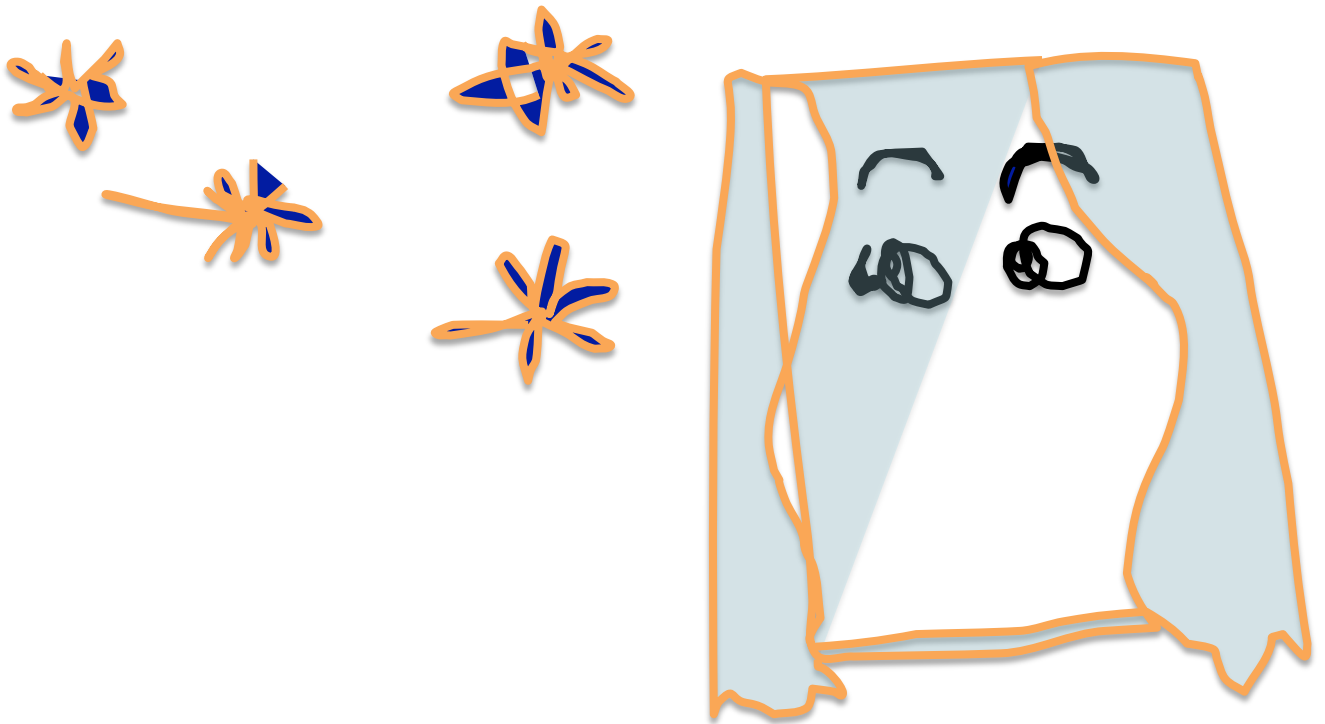


'A greater realm'

That night on the radio she listened to stuff on comets - and the realm from which they emerged - Gina new that somehow there was

a bigger purpose

to all this - and that she could connect to a greater realm.



'Consequences of a small incremental change'

The woman, who sat down next to Gina in the meeting, spoke to her 'My friends son is bed ridden and has to be spoon fed'. The woman looked directly at Gina - then after a pause she said, 'you look like your ok'.

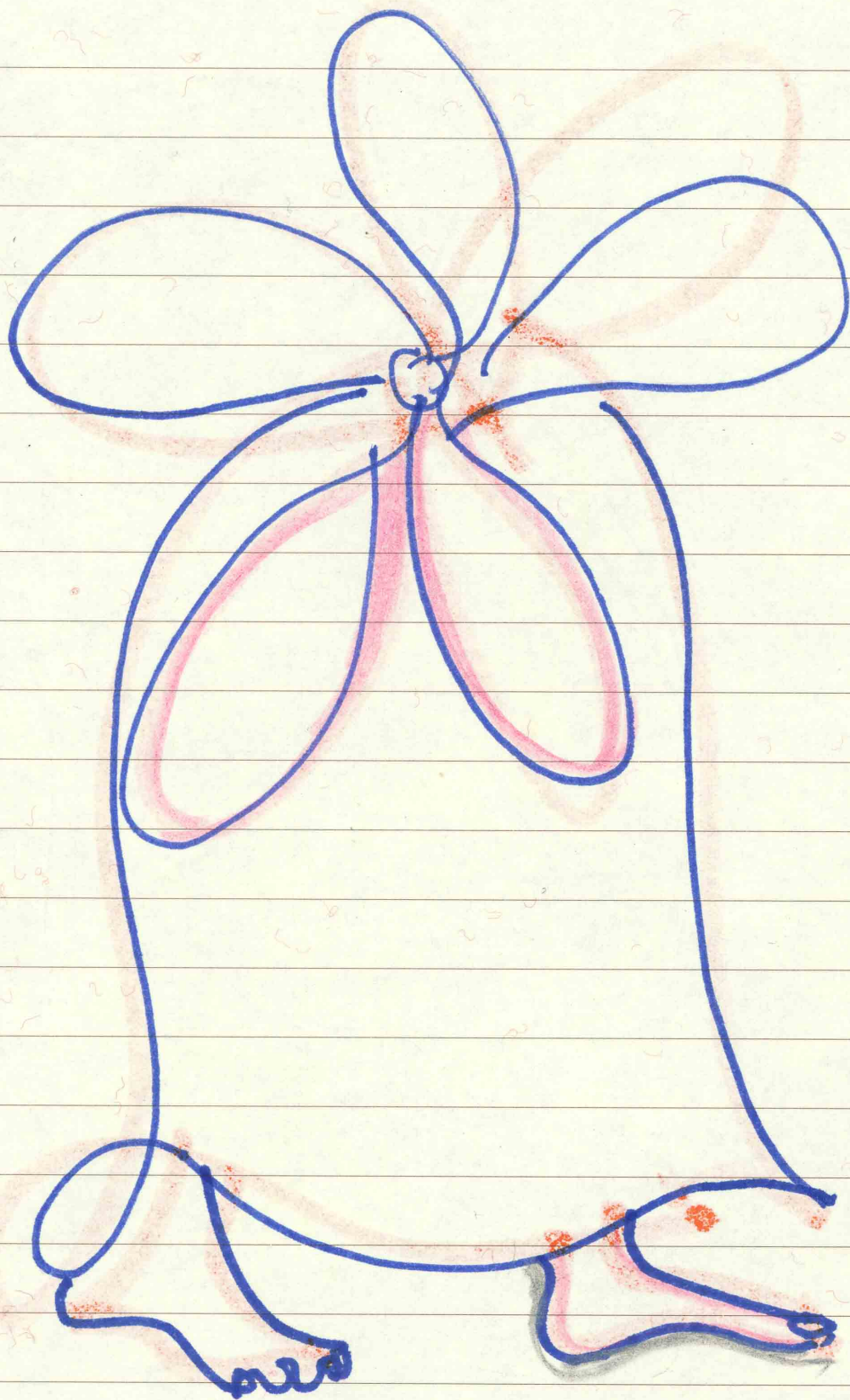
Looking ok was good, and not good. It was deceptive. In fact it was a full time job to keep the illness at bay. How she looked, Gina didn't really ever know - the mirror lied to her.

Somehow she had, through her own trial and error, worked her own medicine to keep the full onslaught of symptoms at bay. None-the-less it always had its foot in the door - afraid if she ever let go, the door would swing right open, and in would come all its truthful appearances - but maybe far too late then to send it back out.

A small incremental change in her diet had consequences, never quite knowing the effect & the endless hours of waiting for symptom's to wear off, but most importantly not knowing if they would wear off.

17 friday

july



Gina & her mantra's

Musical lyrics run along lightly in the back of her mind. She had started to sing in the kitchen to her-self while washing up. Mostly her voice sounded awful but of late a different tone had emerged & she wanted to make the most of it. She was used to sounding harsher tones, forcing out weak vocals. Now a rather softer more melodic sound was starting to emerge when she wasn't tired. Washing up was no longer a chore. Another lyrical theme floats through her mind almost transparent in other thoughts, and 'I will deal with it' she mantras.

Gina had attempted notes, writing her catch up health diary to report back developments - but nothing much emerged today.



'Weather forecast.. In two months time'

'I reckon you should be better in two months'

Gina looked at the homeopath and pondered on how she was going to last that long given the current state of affairs. The list of symptoms was taking its toll - her Doctor had said that there were too many symptoms for it to be a real illness.

Gina despaired - either too little or too much to make any sense.



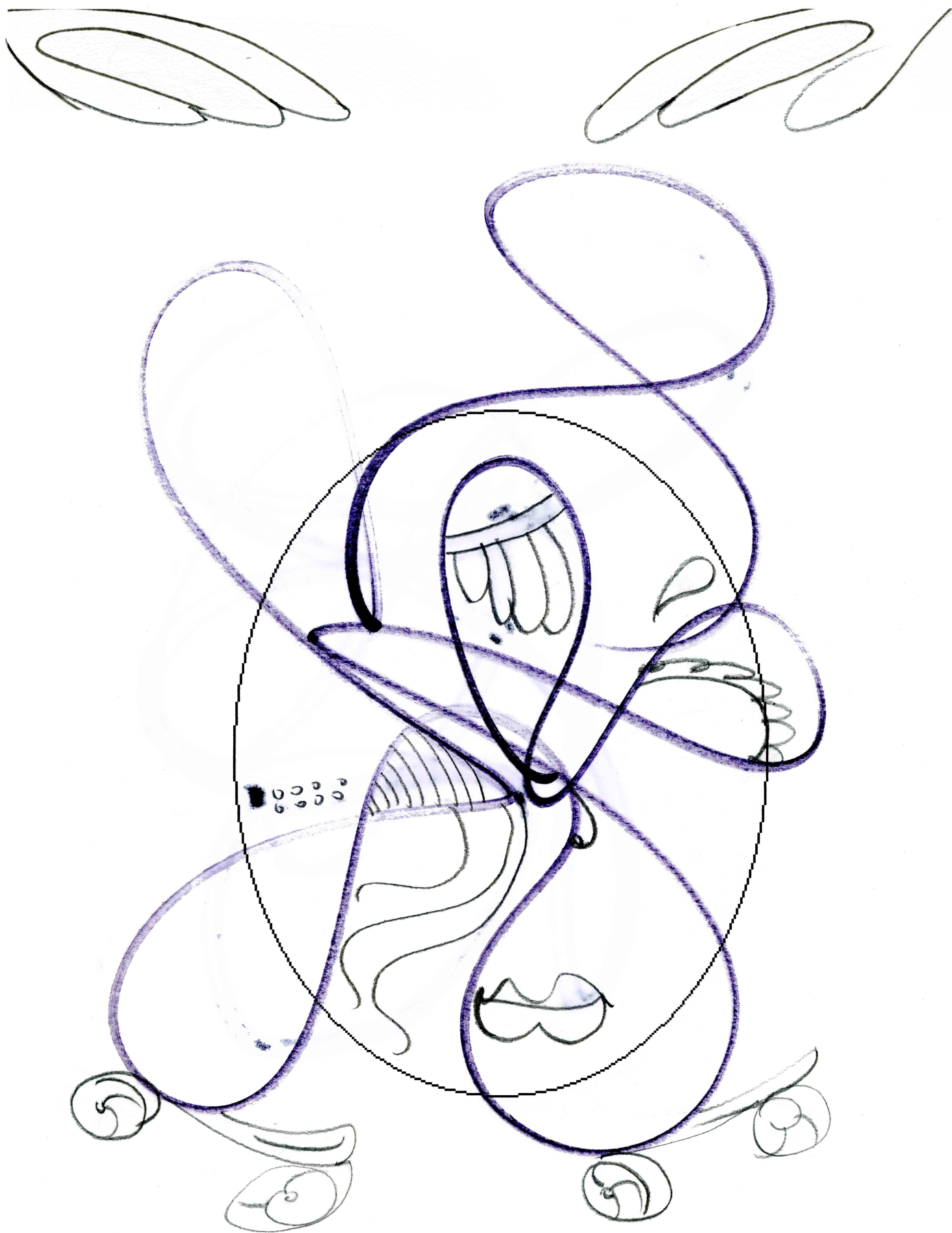
Symptoms today...

Vertigo/Brain fog/Blurred vision/Pins and needles/numbness in extremities, muscle stiffness, weakness of limbs, restricted clumsy movement/Cold in extremities & inner body coldness/Pressure in head/ Vocal exhaustion.

'Metaphorical Sand'

Staring at the glass of water - Gina imagined it containing sand. When shaken the glass of water would cloud. Gina likened this to her illness. This one moment of activity, internal or external, & the illness would participate producing a reaction. Anything like everyday activities - both good and bad stuff - just every day life itself. When still symptoms can lay low. How still or low Gina had to remain was a constant object of her attention - even thinking disturbed the metaphorical sand!





'Symptoms of the day..!'

Gina had kept a health diary, but after two years of writing endless lists of symptoms that never abated she decided to end it., she had written down everything she ate and resulting reactions.. a menu of 'symptoms of the day' so to speak, to report back to her Doctor. No more lists now, she thought, 'if I die today I don't want this to be my remaining legacy!'.

'Noticing pins & needles at nighttime, .. Periodic stomach pain...tongue swelling ..'
Jan. 26th

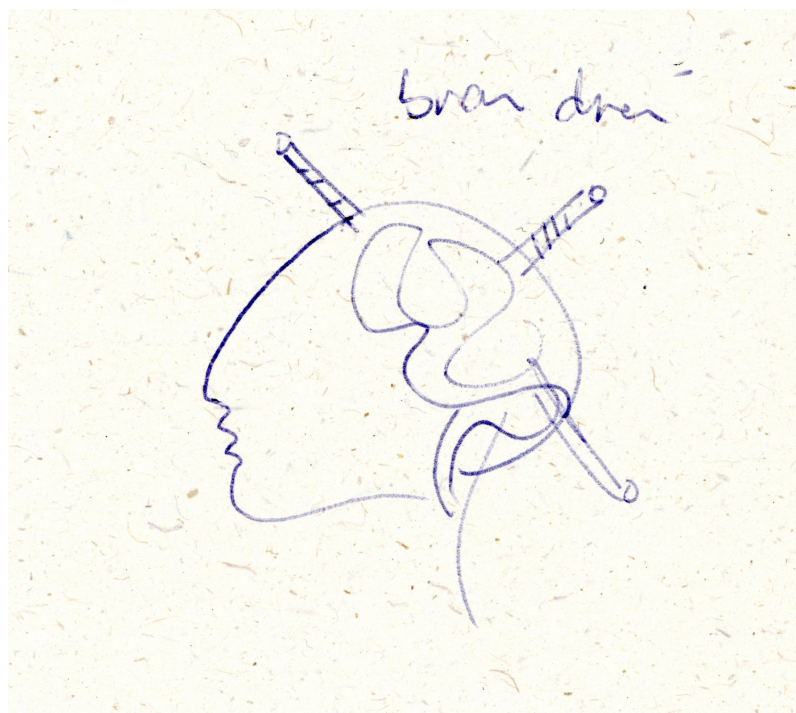
So she tore up page after page, keeping just a few.. just in case she ceased to remember & as a result possibly disbelieve what she had experienced. As if all in a dream... it may never have happened!

'A sick friend has likened reading to 'weight lifting words off a page!... 'I understand' replied Gina.
Feb. 5th

On a bad day struggling to find words to describe anything

noises too loud - lights too bright - conversation exhausting - navigating overwhelming - an onslaught on the mind and body....

Chewing gum brain - pressure in head ...! March 3rd



'Skipping breakfast'

A fantasy Gina had often entertained was about adorning the countenance of an Amazonian figure in possession of mighty strength, who in her modern day incarnation, can skip breakfast & grab coffee on the go, without passing out on her journey or getting the jitters from caffeine over load!.



'The taxi driver and the metaphorical club'

Gina recalls one night coming home from another late shift at work, queuing up for a taxi at the station. As she took a step on entering the cab, she hit her head on the ridge of the doorway, because she had raised herself up into the cab too soon. For a few seconds Gina saw stars (she had up until that point believed that concussive stars, were just a metaphor!). Anyhow the concerned driver tilted his head back and shouted 'are you alright love' Gina opened her mouth to speak and all that exited was a tiny high pitched voice repeating 'I've hit my head... I've hit my head... In a punctuated manor he said 'do - you - want - me - to - take - you - to - casualty? Gina believed she repeated her same sentence again a few times and he his. Eventually she managed to convey that homeward bound might be an okay option. When she got home she lay pros-straight on the floor to allow things to sort and re-arrange themselves in her wounded head.

...

While lying on the floor, Gina remembers a novel she once read, with a story that goes like this - A man hits his head after a fall- he disappears from his family and wanders in a concussed state. As a reader you know what has happened but his family and friends don't. One day he returns many years later - his family take him in and look after him - none the wiser of his experience or the cause of his absence or condition.

2009

September

261-104

Friday **18**

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Evening

Notes

September

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
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7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

'Valentine's cure!'

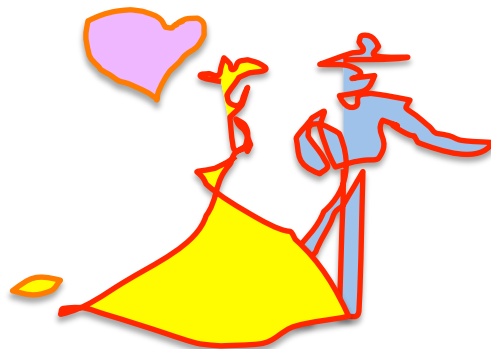
An appointment with the specialist, on Valentines day - with no breakfast allowed for the test, Gina caught a cab to the hospital to ward off fainting on the train. Still, nausea filled her in the hospital waiting room. Her thoughts of 'will I last long enough for them to take the blood test' occupied her mind.

The doctor commented that a virus can bring up strange and diverse symptom's - so much so that confusion is created about the cause - but that the illness tends to go between two to ten years. 'Great!' thought Gina, 'only five years left then!'. She held that thought. The up side was that maybe her sentence was coming to an end.

After her appointment Gina wandered into the local market. There to her surprise she saw Prince Charles and Camilla heading back towards a car flanked by men in black suits and police. 'It must be royalty, otherwise they wouldn't have so much security' a lady conversed into her phone amidst the crowds forming. Gina grabbed the opportunity to take pictures but achieved nothing spectacular other than backs of heads and hoards of people. The blurred distant picture of Camilla looked like it could have been any one of the many shoppers that day.

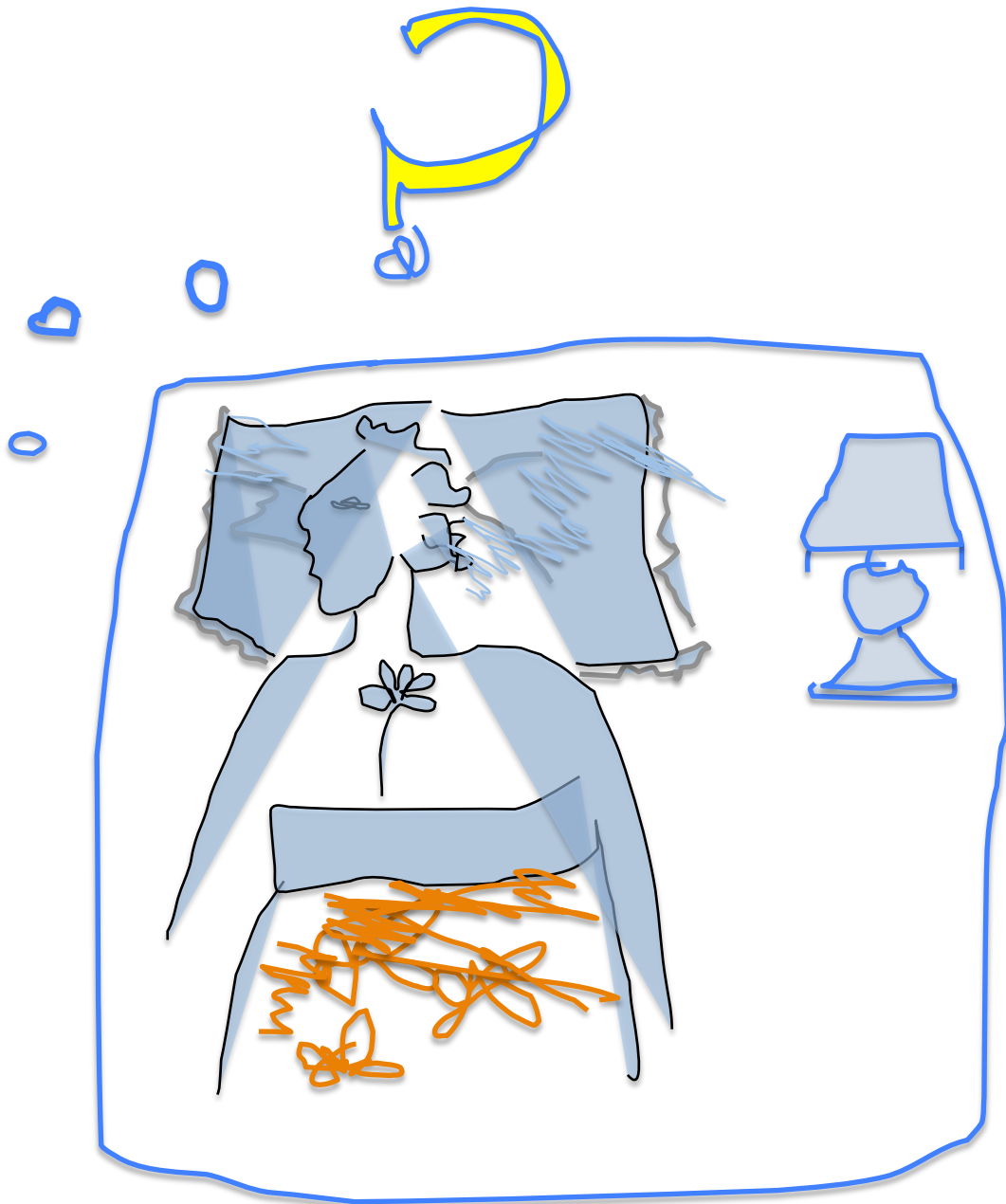
She wanted to buy a friendly valentine gift. There were lots of pretty little cakes and heart shape chocolates, but Gina decided a casserole was a more congenial option. As the man chopped a piece of yam she noticed his beautiful skin. Afraid that her gaze might cause him an accident with the knife! - she averted her eyes.

Gina's recipe for a cure: main ingredients.. *time, attention & a little faith*



the questioning dream...

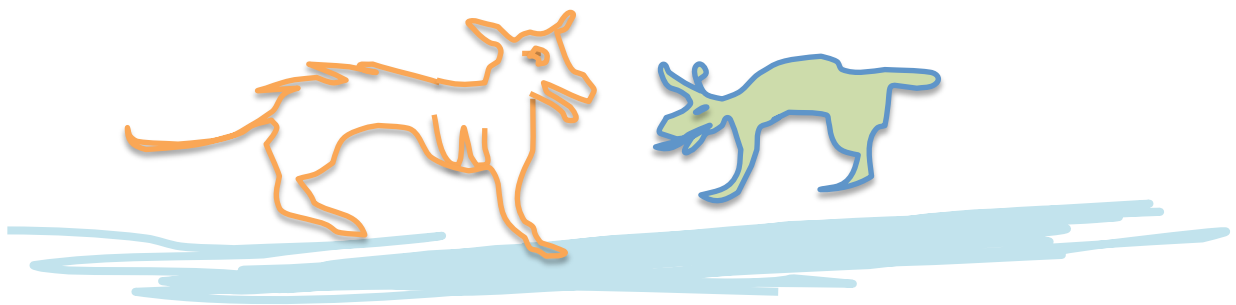
Somewhere there was a solution - a question she would sometimes present to herself - just before she went off to sleep - in the hope it might conjure up some answers.



Asleep thirteen hours!

Even though having slept thirteen hours that night, Gina wanted to sleep more on waking. In her eyes, more sleep was deemed unacceptable! So she forced herself out of bed.

The whole morning was then spent in hospital taking her mother through various departments for tests. The cardiologist, having done with the examining, passed Gina five pieces of paper each one with details of tests to be done that day. 'So very confusing! Gina thought. Reading Gina's mind he said, 'Just tell them my name and you'll be directed to the right department'... and so, even on that clue, most of the time they were lost in very long hospital corridors, exhausting themselves climbing 'to nowhere' staircases. They got very tired & started to have the look of stray hungry dogs!.

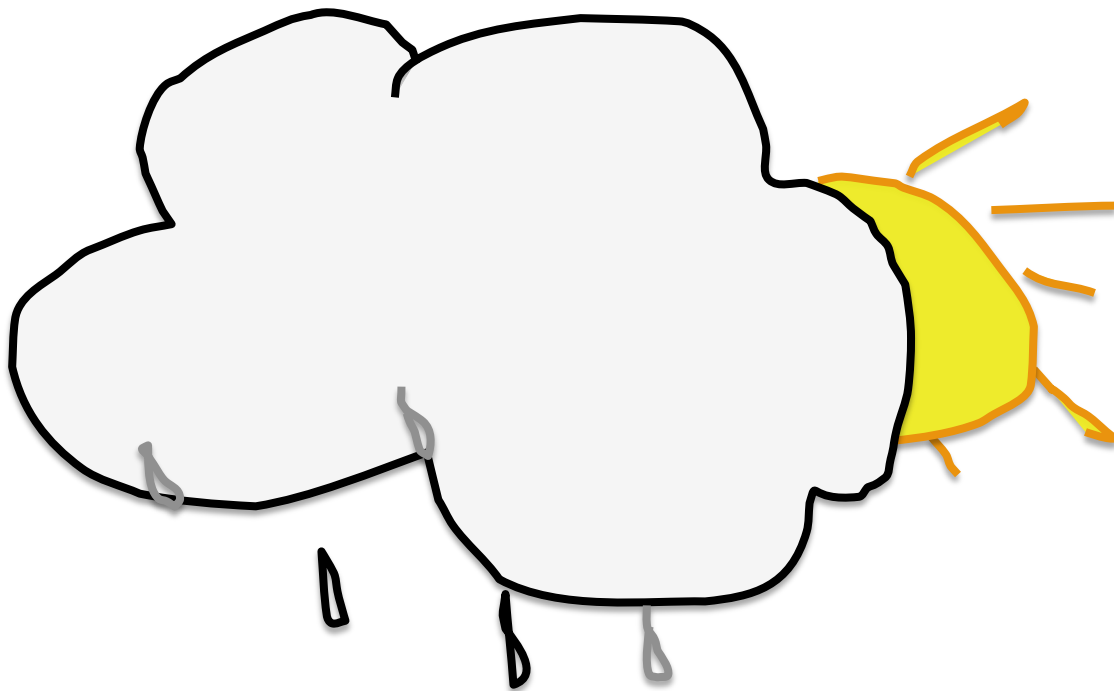


'The thought behind the cloud...'

Her throat was sore and her chest ached & she had a fever. Gina questioned 'was this another healing crisis?' none-the-less, 'it looks like a real cold!'

The difference was getting very cloudy.

'How do you tell the difference between a healing crisis and just being ill?' she once asked her naturopath, 'you feel an underlying improvement in your core health underneath the healing crisis symptoms!' she replied.

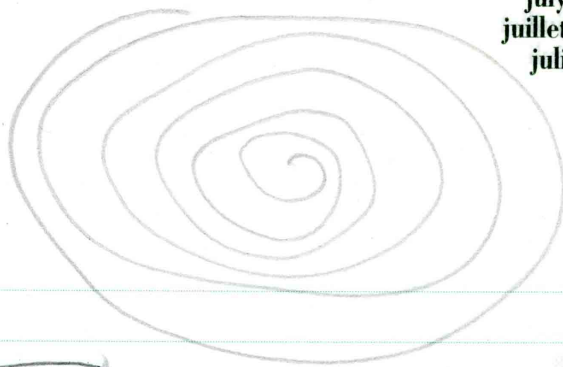


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friday
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s. brigida

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Chapter 2

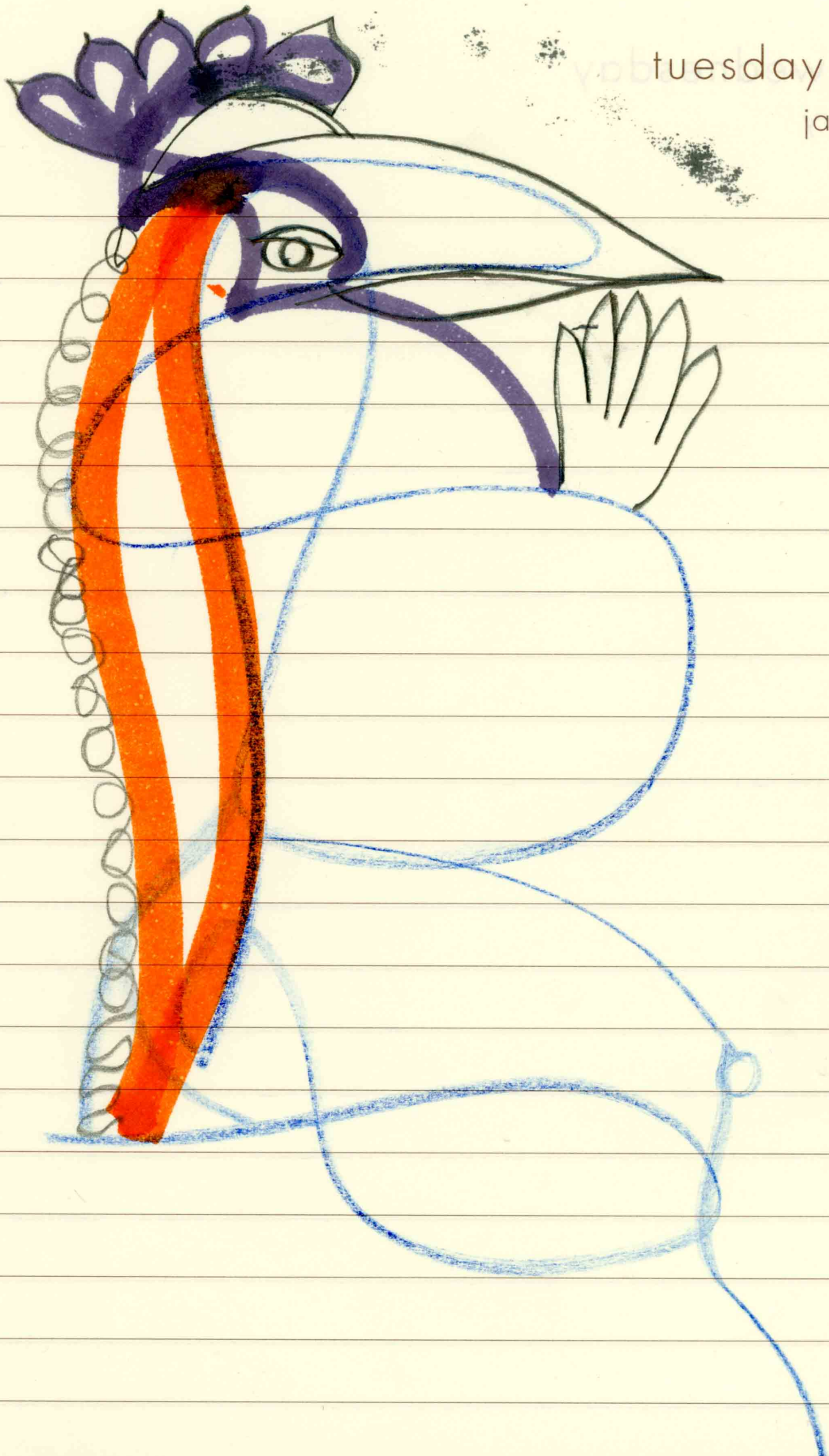
Gina's prayer

(with wings)... and the
chemistry of autogenics!

'I am going to recover and be healthier than I was before' she told the acupuncturist, in their conversation on autogenics - 'this is my exact prayer' Gina reported.



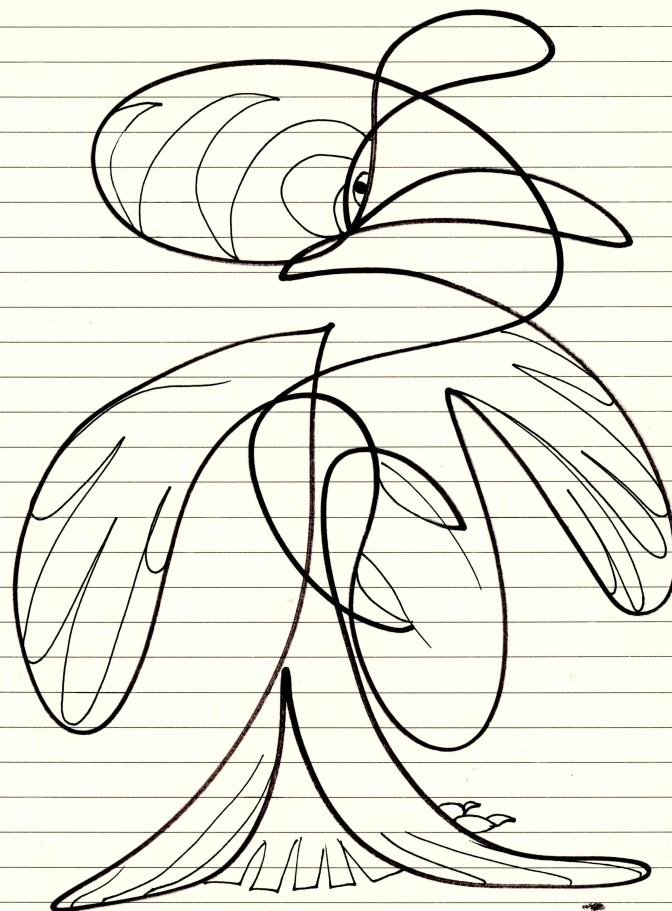
tuesday 27
january



The tooth fairy

Gina wrote 'At the moment eating is agony - a drawing sensation starts in my mouth going through my teeth, neck, head & lungs - then includes my arms and shoulders - until it feels like my whole body aches...liquid foods tomorrow!'

As she walked Gina's eyes watered in the cold - her nose ran - her vision blurred. Using her handkerchief she would wipe away the excess, which would immediately reform. Her eyes by now wearing a pinker sheen. It became unavoidable to not look like she was on the brink of tears. By this time Gina would steal herself to not look anybody in the eye.



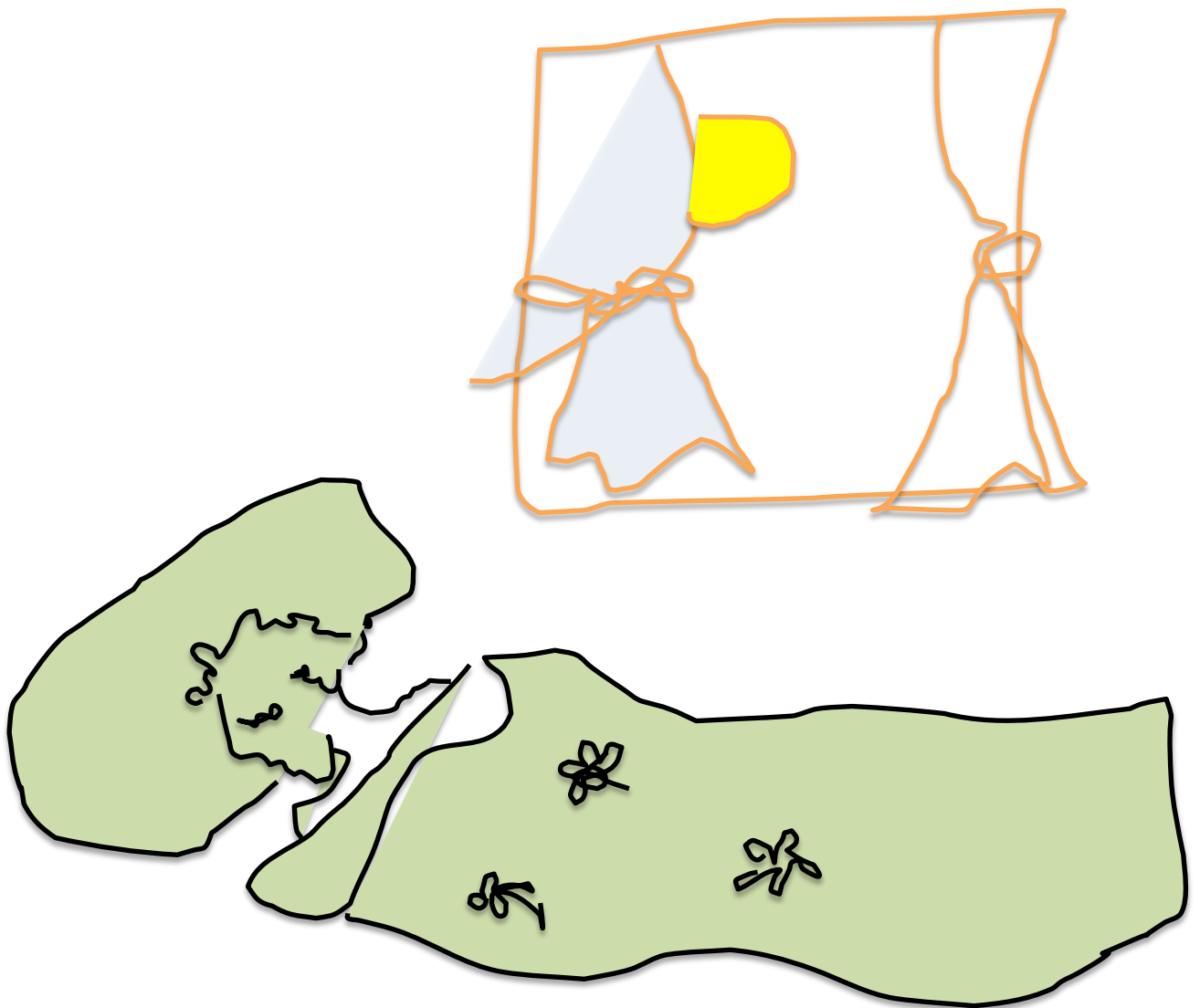
new year's day

thursday 1
january



New food!

Tried a new food yesterday. Today brain fog - disorientation - weakness. Waking up late - the morning disappears into the day - afternoon becomes evening.

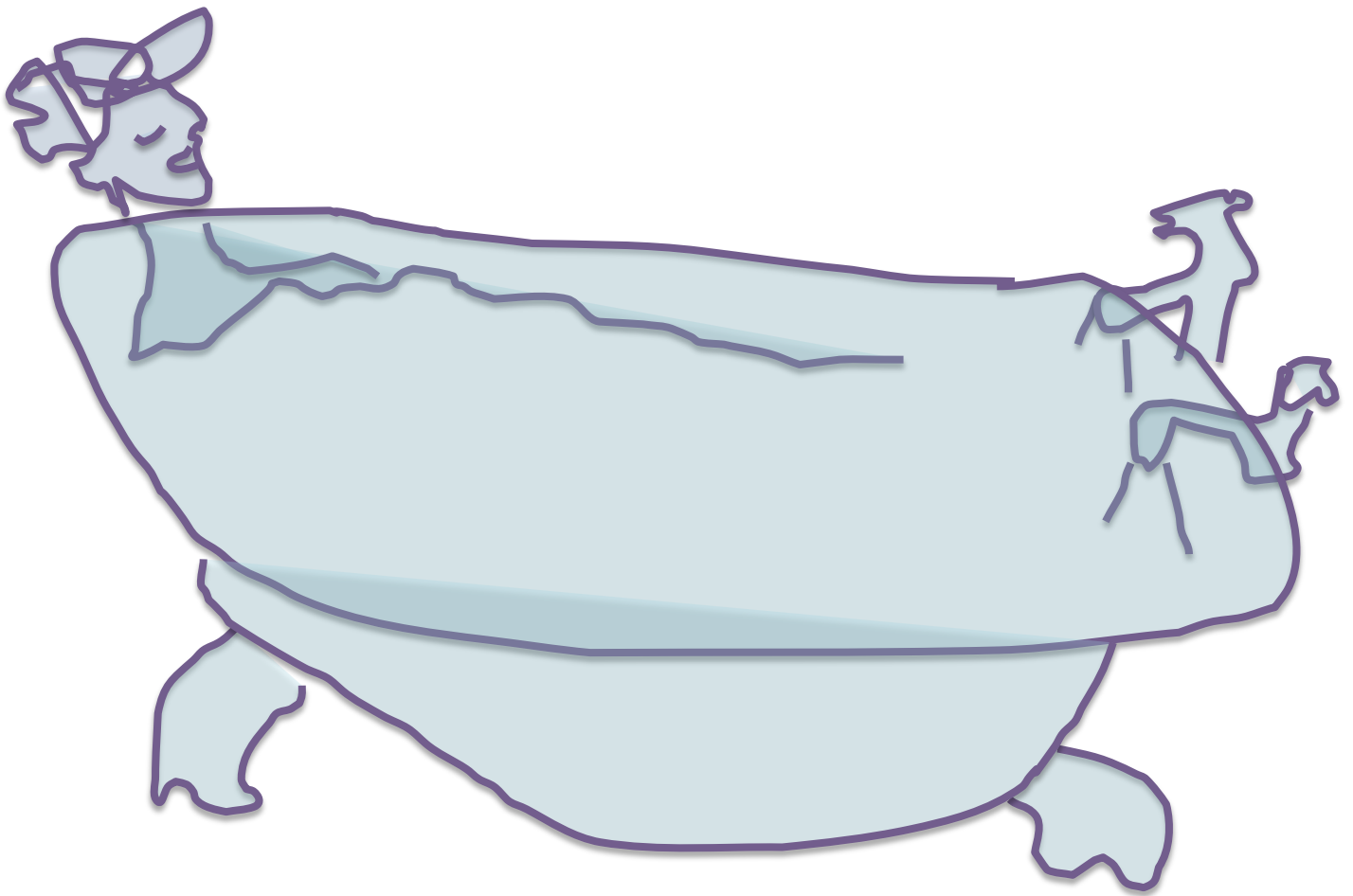


monday 2
february



just clay & water

Gina lay in the clay bath, just clay and water.
'How ironic' she thought 'the very stuff from which life
came from'.



Dawn

Gina pondered on her current mental state.
The illness had left her with a gross lack of self-esteem
- she kept trusting and hoping that 'dawn will come - and
this illness will end' and that 'a new life will emerge'.

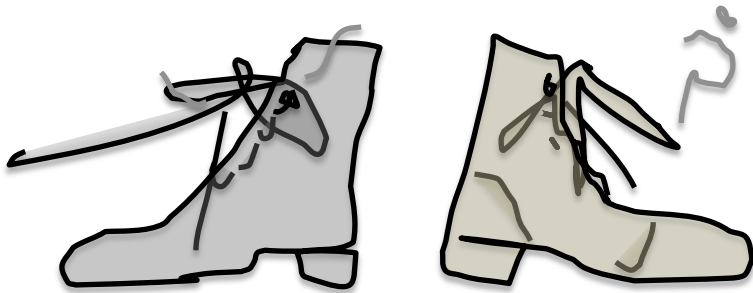




Comfort and design!

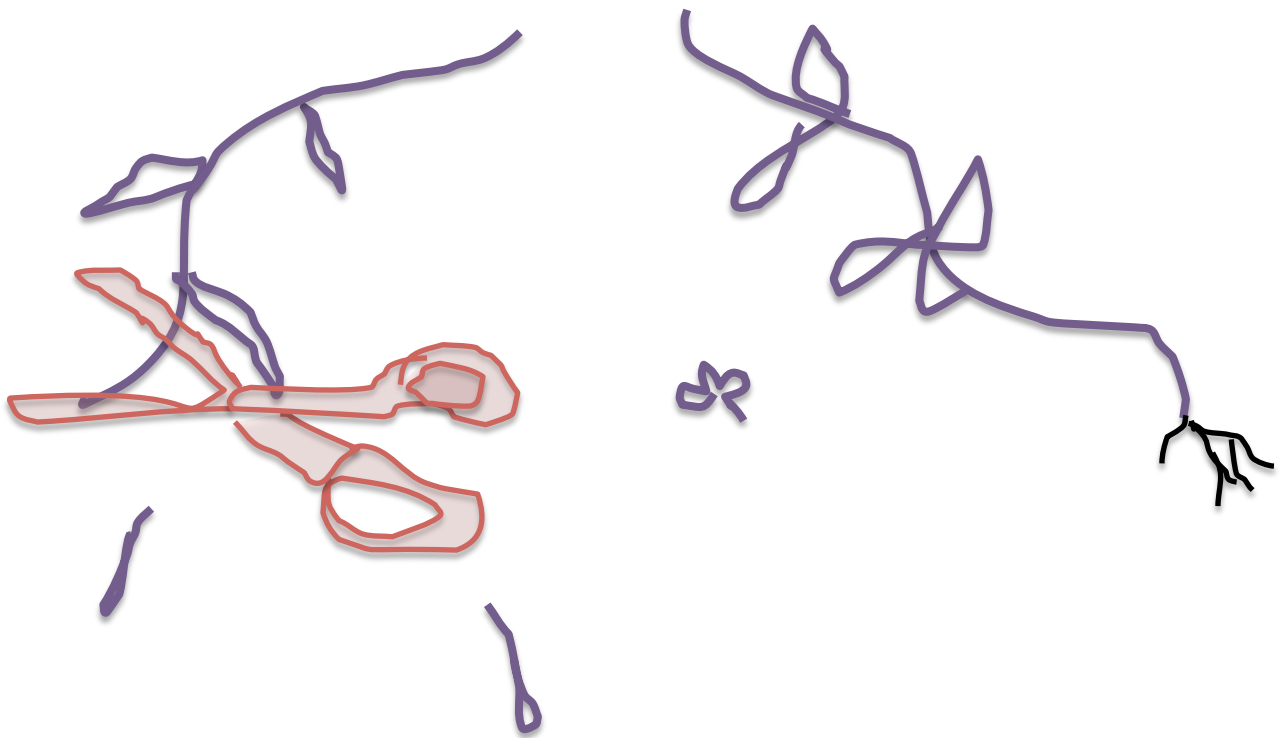
Gina looked at her new boots -

they had sat in the box for over a month now - they were somehow different from the other pair... There was little in comfort - the leather was hard, inflexible. The black dye had smelt so strong that it had filled her home with a petrol like, pervasive odor. She gagged on opening the box - she wanted to wear them, not die from them!.. and why had she not realized this at the time of purchase? - Maybe health, allergies, chemical sensitivity was not a conversation she wanted to have in the shop.



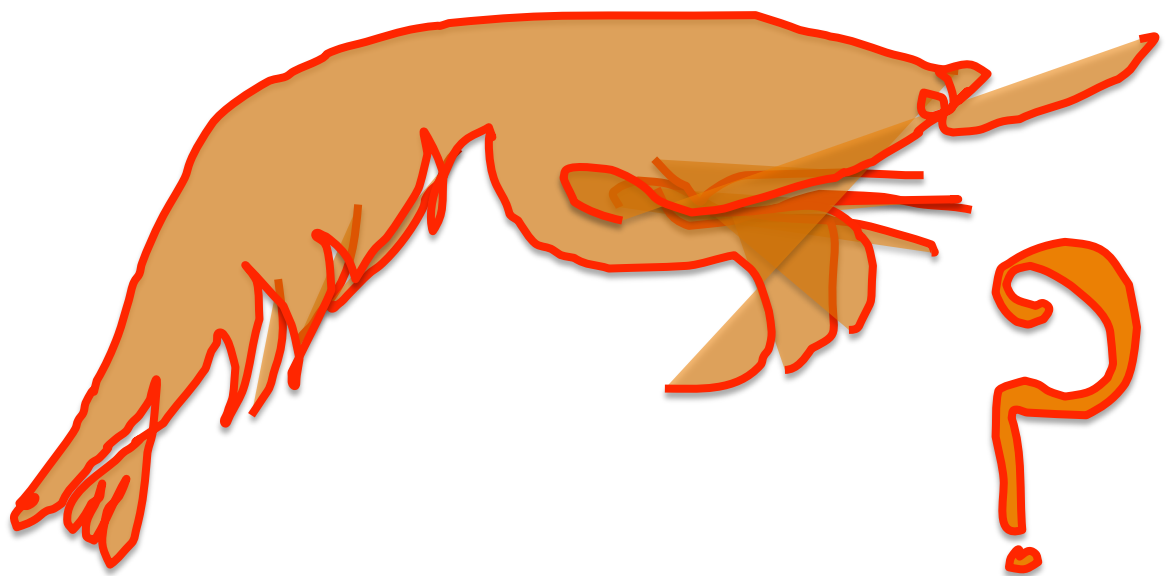
'Deleted Jasmine'

The Jasmine plant died - it never recovered the onslaught...As Gina lay in the bath she pondered on the first days of her illness when she had rambled down the ironwork steps to her garden and started pruning the jasmine plant. Why had she done this when she felt so unwell? - it was like she was trying to reach for the earth - to find roots - through the mist of vertigo and nausea.



Small amounts!

Was Gina experiencing anaphylaxis? She'd had dark chocolate that day (*usually a no-no! but irresistible and cautioned by small amounts*) or was it the mushrooms? - She settled for accusing the prawns and into the bin they went. As she had sat and ate, she noticed a little more effort was needed to swallow - so more effort she took - but the back of her mouth was far too dry for an easy descend and her tongue felt a little too thick to fit comfortably between her teeth. Her heart beat in thick volume-full pounds. Gina was about to take another mouthful having been used to her bodies unusual responses to foods - but something about this time made her stop and push aside the plate of food. As she got up she needed to steady herself as the room appeared to shift ever so slightly and a little cotton wool like brain fog blurred her senses. She walked both cautiously and with purpose to the cupboard and picked up her remedies and took them. Sitting down, she then waited.

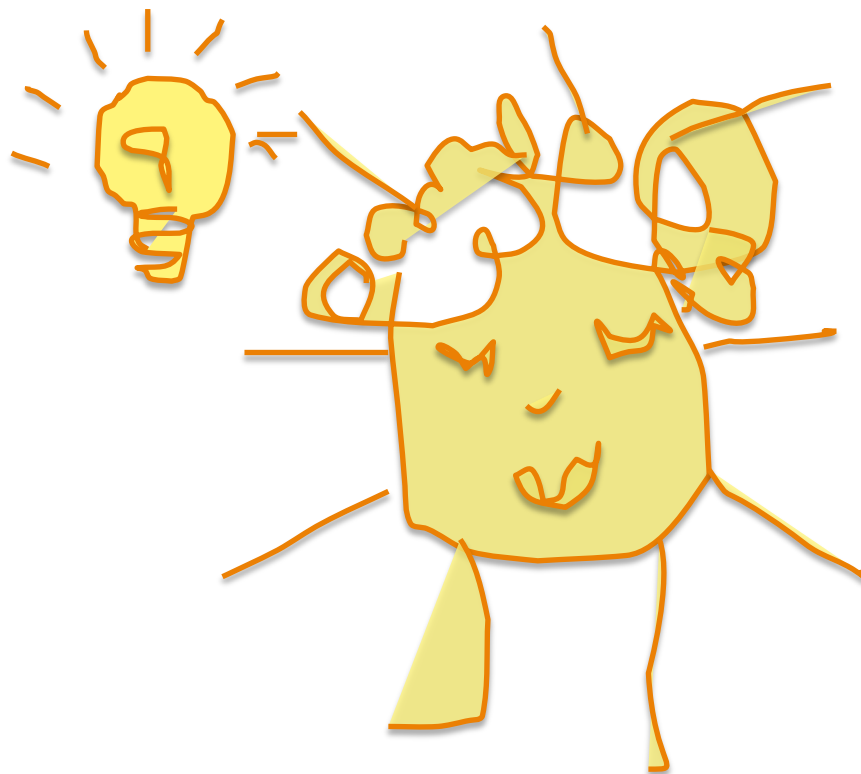


The enlightenment of needles!

'Maybe the last of the needles!' Gina pondered on her appointment for the following day.

She liked acupuncture but was somehow feeling a need for closure. Closure on what? Was Gina feeling no progress? That wasn't exactly the case. However it was unclear what worked and what didn't.

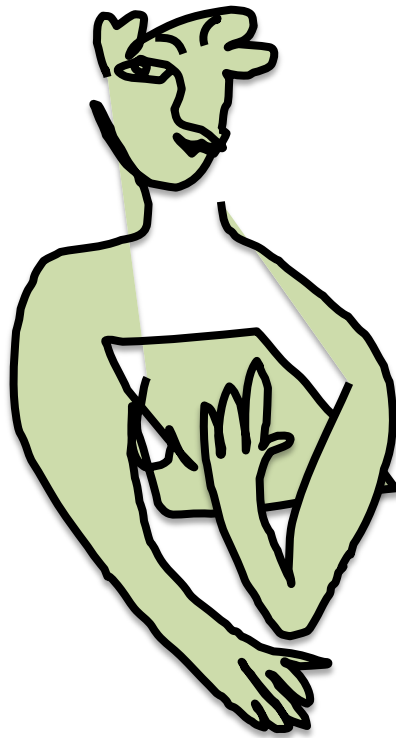
One thing Gina did always feel after a session - was that bit more enlightened!



'The Naked Campaigner!'

Had a new generation of cloth created a monster in the weave? Gina's allergies extended to clothing - no acrylic or wool - and then the other unknowns - but of late, cotton for the first time became an issue. Having brought three 'pure' cotton jumpers that she was happy to find (not always being available mid winter!). On wearing, found herself with breathing problems. Maybe it was the dye? Gina embarked on soaking them in vinegar, three times for 12 hours. Nothing changed. Gina enquired if it was remotely possible that the jumpers had been mislabeled. Fortunately customer relations were responsive and had the jumpers tested. Six months later the reply was 'yes' they were cotton...with little additions of nylon etc. around the edges.

Another web search... and what about Genetically Modified cotton? 'who knows!' Gina thought, as the labeling told her little of what she needed to know. Gina was tired now. A thought flickered across her mind... 'maybe I will have nothing too wear... the naked campaigner!' Suddenly her old clothing took on a new light - 'keeping' was the new de-cluttering.



15 Thursday

288-77

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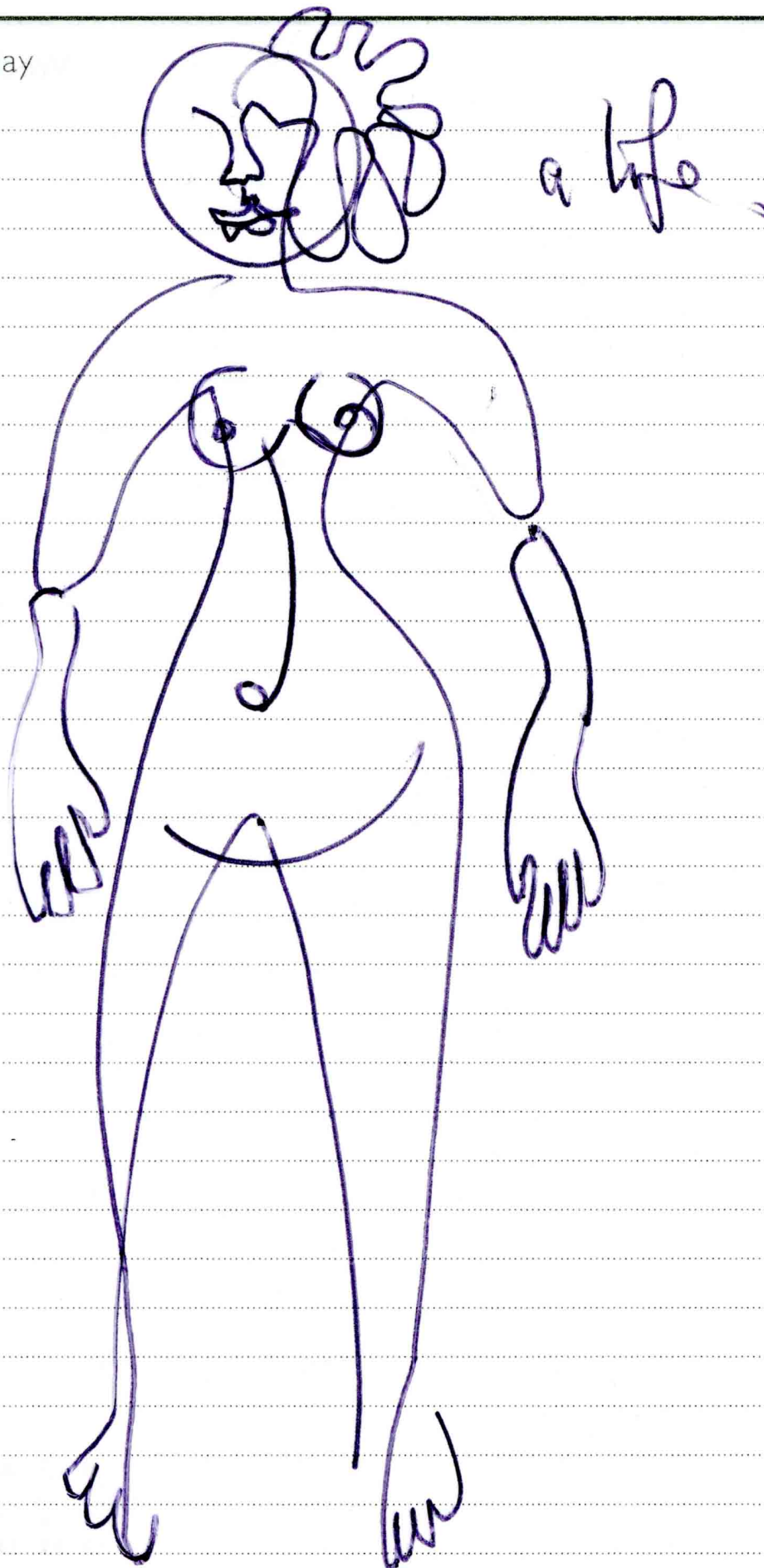
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Evening

Notes



The dream doctor

In the dream Gina dreamt an answer to her question - 'what will make me better?' - she dreamt of a bottle - a brown glass bottle - inside was some clay - hydrated clay. When Gina woke she took note and later that day on encountering a health shop, she found to her amazement a brown glass bottle containing edible earth - 'wow! - is this it?' she murmured. It was just earth - that was all - a particular brown dusty earth in a bottle. This she discovered was about to make a significant impact.

'Tell me about it again?' her friend asked

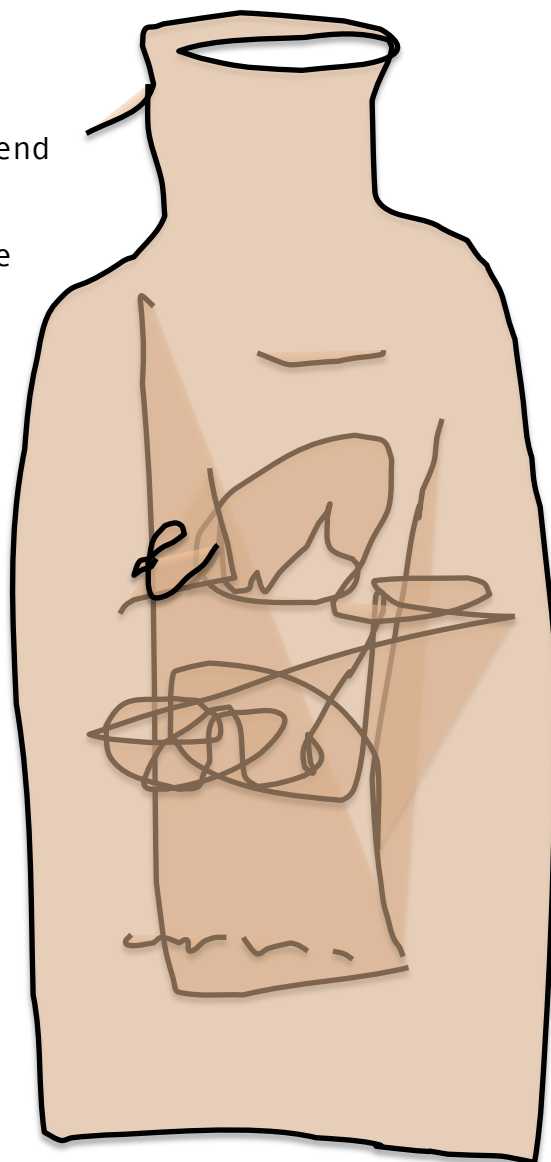
'About the clay? said Gina'

'No' she said 'what you did before the dream, . the question you asked' .. she went on 'not everyone will have the same answer'..

'Oh.. Gina replied, I just asked the question before I went to sleep, what will make me better?' and then in acknowledgment Gina continued - 'of course, your right, not all our cures are the same'

... a

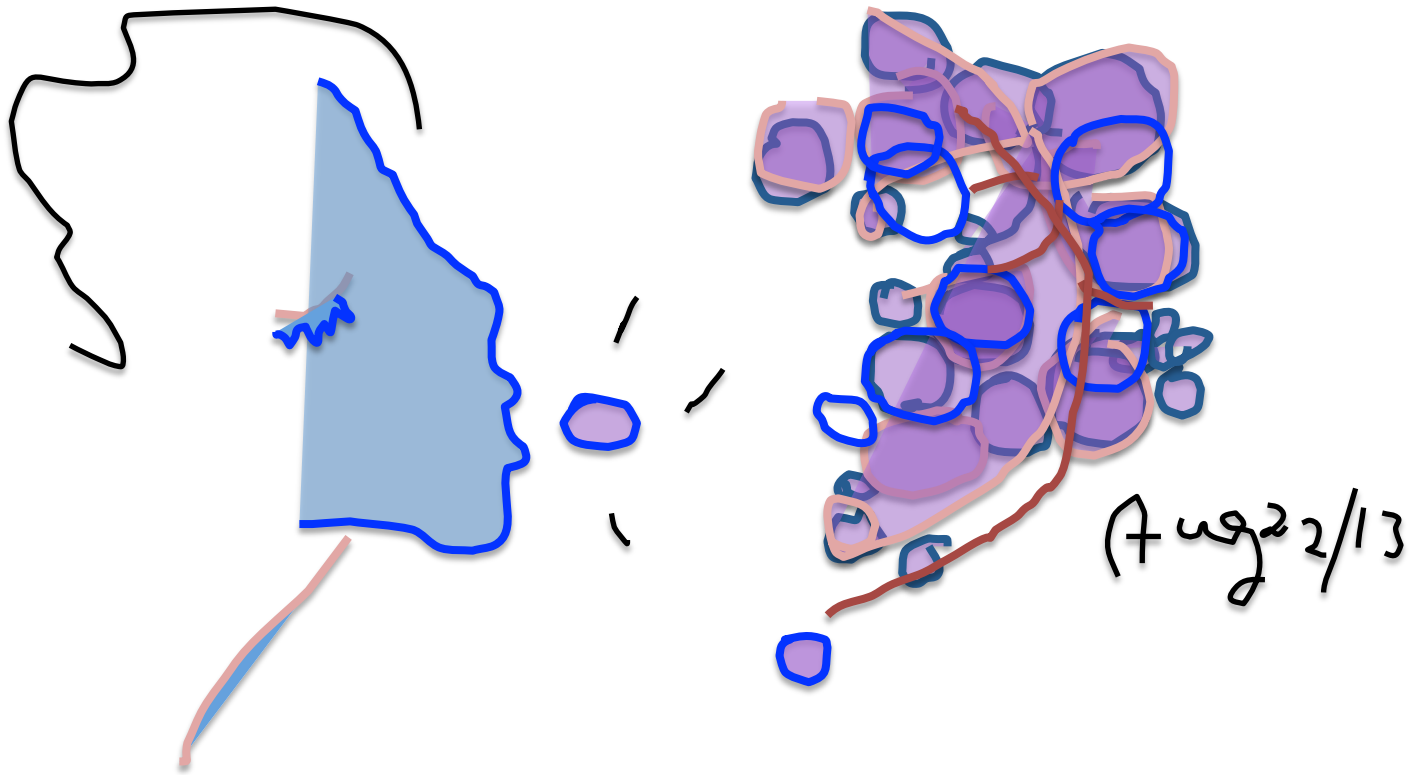
message in
a bottle



Chapter 3

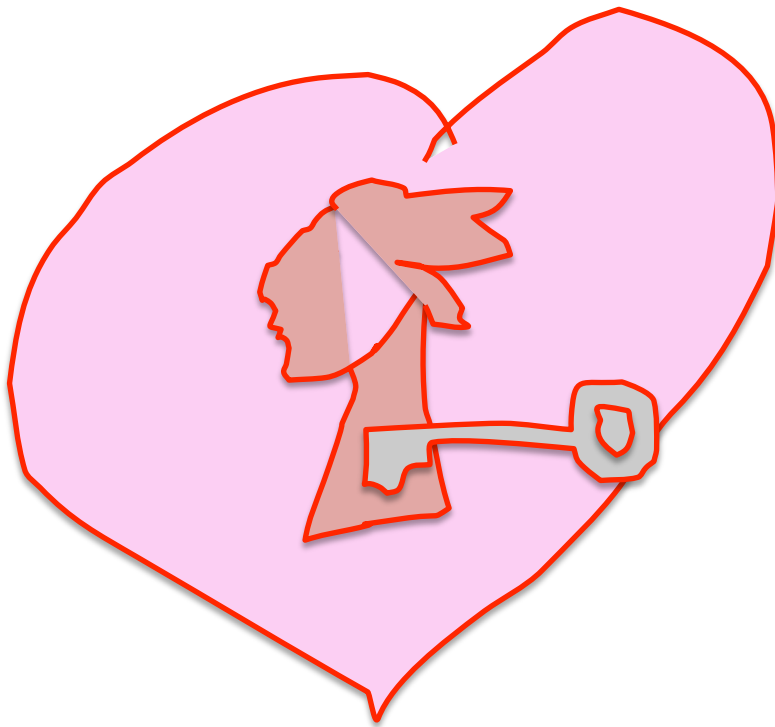
Two days later

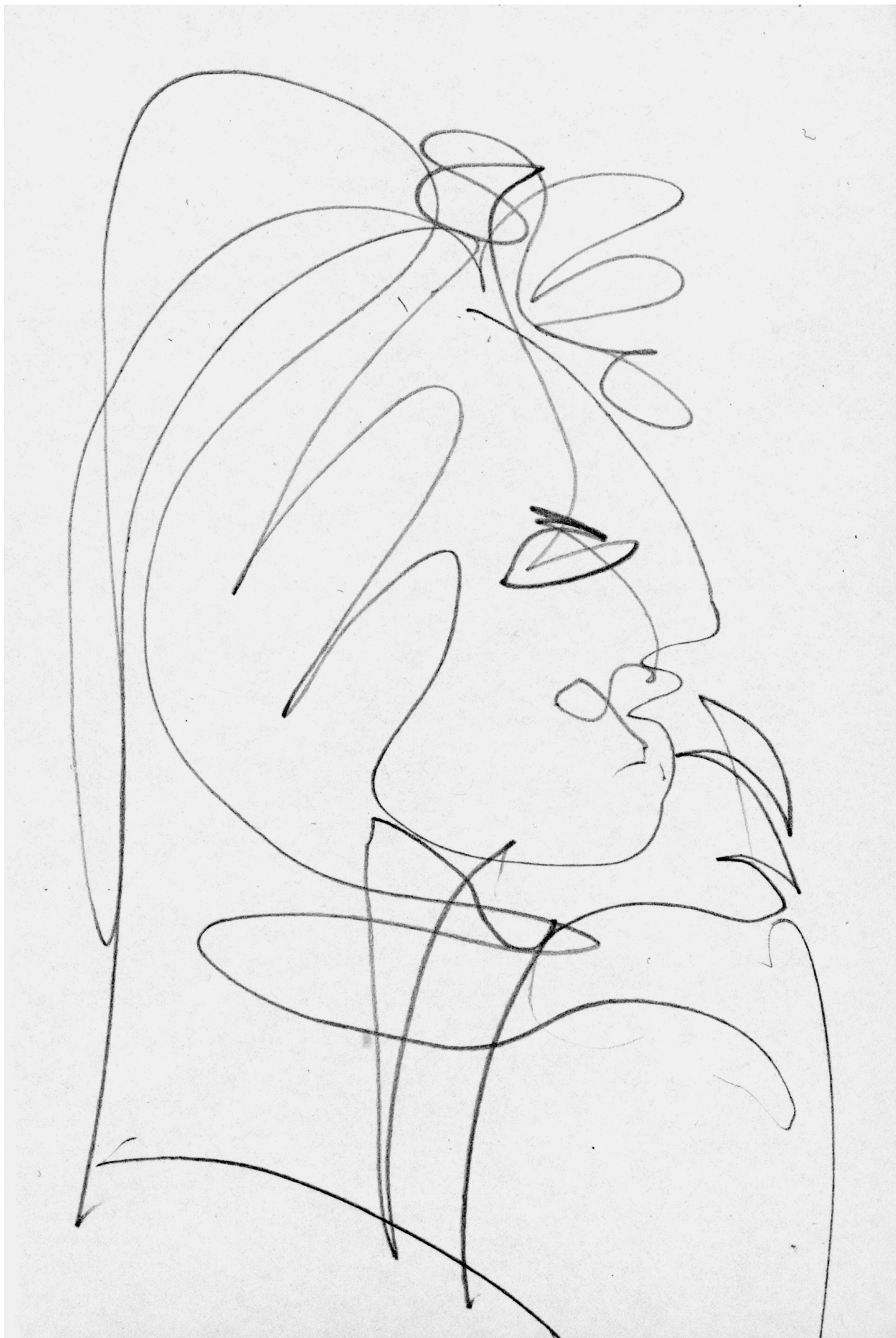
After testing various foods she discovered she could eat grapes! Eating a fresh organic grape after two days of clay, water and lemon was indescribably delicious.



Focus on good health
& healing
Love myself and others
Trust in intuition

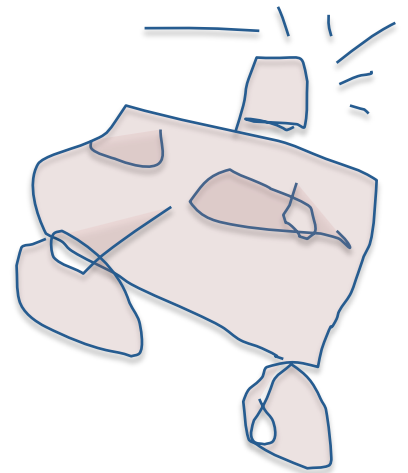
Oh how the words so easily strolled onto the page - but reality & action was tougher - how do these words translate into action - what did she need to do next - Her heart was a good starting place - what did her heart say? Whatever Gina wanted she knew she had to seek that from within herself.





'Self medicating... and the paramedic!'

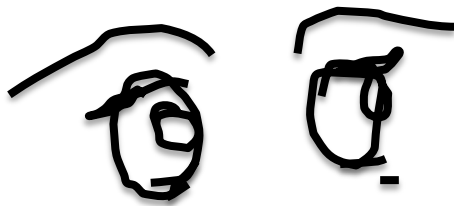
Gina called it anaphylaxis because that's what it felt like both episodes. Somehow self-medicating seemed to solve the problem, at least temporarily anyway. So by the time the paramedic came on Monday she was fine. He said, 'they told me you were having difficulty in breathing' - 'yes I was then... but since self medicating things have died down' Gina replied. 'What were you taking?' he said, 'clay' she replied hesitatingly, wondering if she was being extremely foolish. Gina did her own research when allopathic meds failed her, but there were moments when putting all the successes aside she wondered if she was doing the right thing. She was convinced it had saved her life, but having stopped the reaction, she now had little proof that it had happened in the first place. On the other hand, if she had waited, she may not have lived to tell the tale. Understandably then diagnosis was difficult. 'I'm not in a position to comment on that', said the paramedic, then taking her wrist, he carefully observed her pulses.



On receiving her diagnosis for glaucoma she responded to the ophthalmologist with... 'You have very clear whites to your eyes' - 'thank you' he replied - 'nobody has ever said that before!'

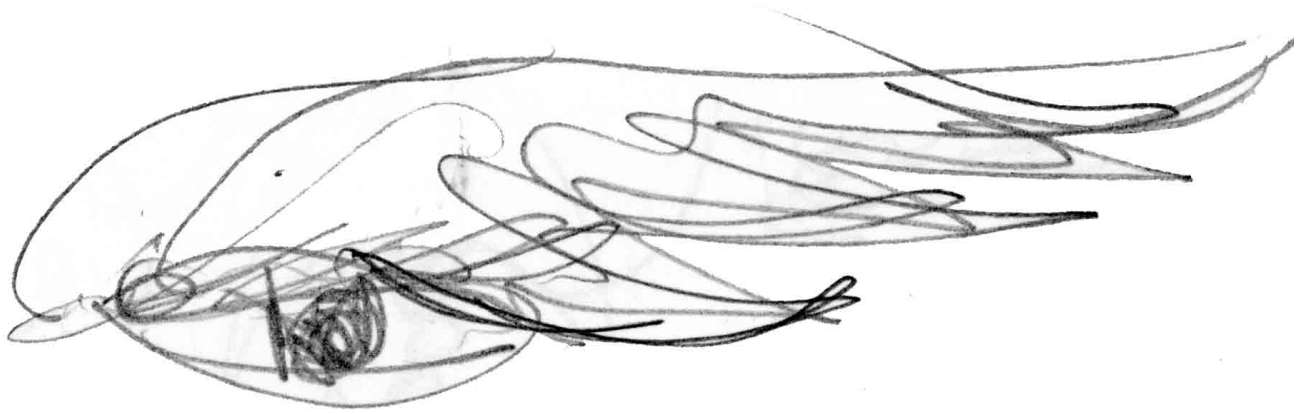
She received the diagnosis like she was sitting an exam,

wanting to perform her best! The results would come much later.



If she thought about the reality - then an uneasy queasiness and panic occupied her stomach, it radiated outward, threatening to occupy her very being - 'no! ... that isn't the place to go' she commanded of herself. Instead she filled this space with a clear vision ... 'this is not going to happen.... I am going to fight this' she inwardly declared.

'By the way...how long does it take to get used to wearing glasses' Gina asked just as she was about to leave. 'You don't, the ophthalmologist replied, 'but it gets a little easier after about five years.'



Having been at home for several days fighting off flu, Gina ventures outside. However recovery was

way too soon a presumption.

In the shop that familiar fogging and all over weakness consumed her. She breathed deeply and rummaged in her bag for any snacks for a quickie energy boost. A handful of almonds was what was on offer - but then wondered if she fainted would the nuts get stuck in her throat. The cold virus had sat in the wings, off center stage for over a month now - it had finally made its on stage performance. She managed to get back home to the comfort of tea and an all too familiar environment without incident.



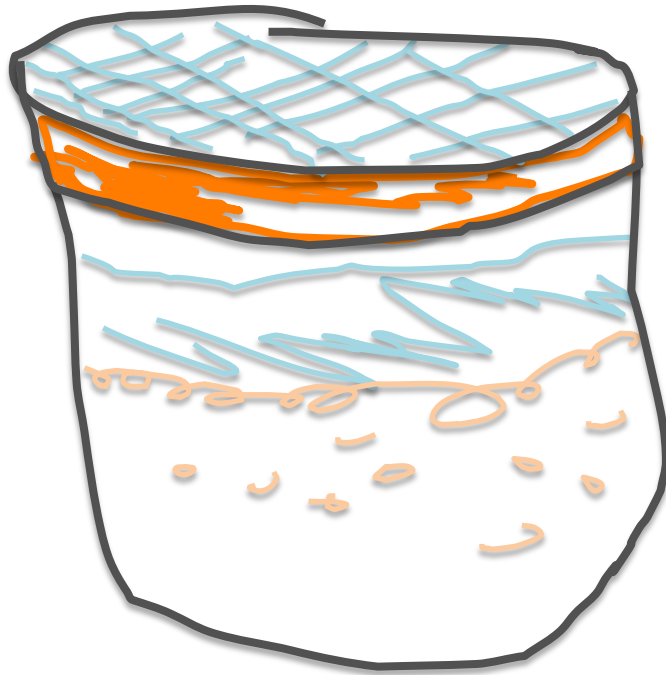


'... her story'

Pressure in head - a fuzzy brain - She might have equated it to drinking large amounts of coffee - way beyond energizing. Gina feels like her head is about to lift off. Although coffee never worked for her she was very tempted by the aromatic smell. At one time she'd had a coffee at a local café - she had asked which coffee was recommended, a Colombian brew was selected. As a result Gina was on a caffeine red alert for the next three days. Today however she'd had no coffee - in fact none for a few years. She lay down on her bed and allowed herself to float as the radio plays in the background, a play on the stealer of songs. An old Irish melody melted the stress away. She wondered what would be her song if she wrote one. One that told her story.



Making probiotics!



Jar
water
Rice

'Gina and the waves'

She saw homeopathy like an under water stream. Invisible to the eye, it worked its currency underground. She however was experiencing the ebb and flow of surface waves. Determined, she swam furiously, yet ever unclear of rising above enough to survive the journey.



'Improvised allergy test!'

She would monitor for the delayed reaction of stomach pain.

Gina had taken a tiny, micro amount of one of her potential allergens - followed by her antidote - her tongue still blistered - she followed on with more antidote.

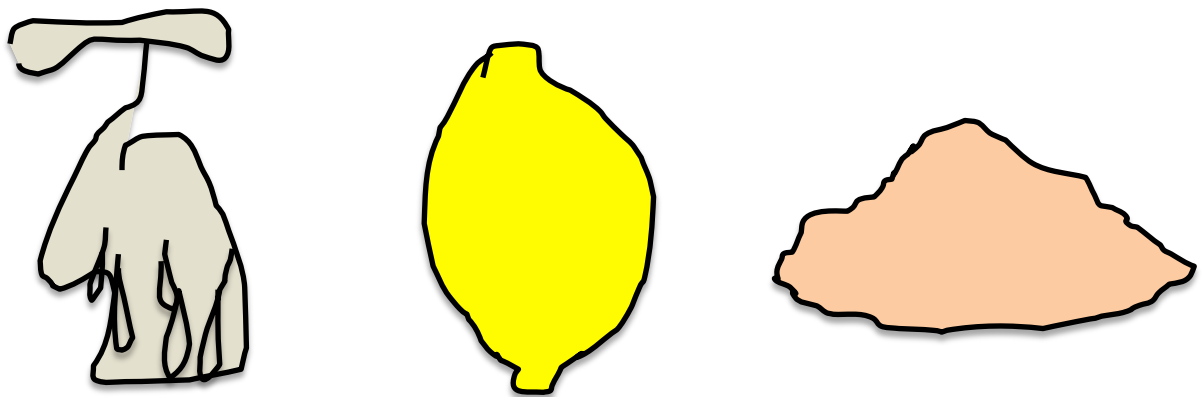


Allergy Test!

'Just clay, lemon juice and water..'

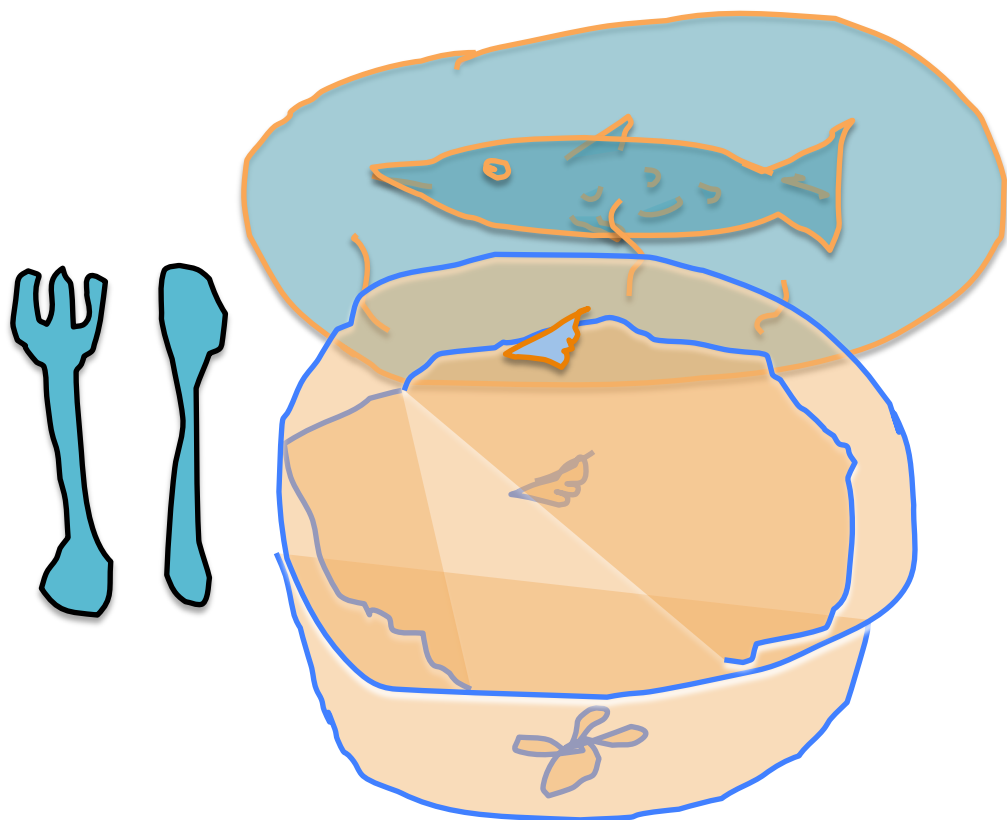
Looking at the ingredients to hand she tried to sum up all the dishes she could make with lemon, clay and water. Baked lemon served with a dash of Clay, clay pie with lemon dressing, baked clod of earth & ... so on. Instead she went for the detoxing clay water lemon drink.

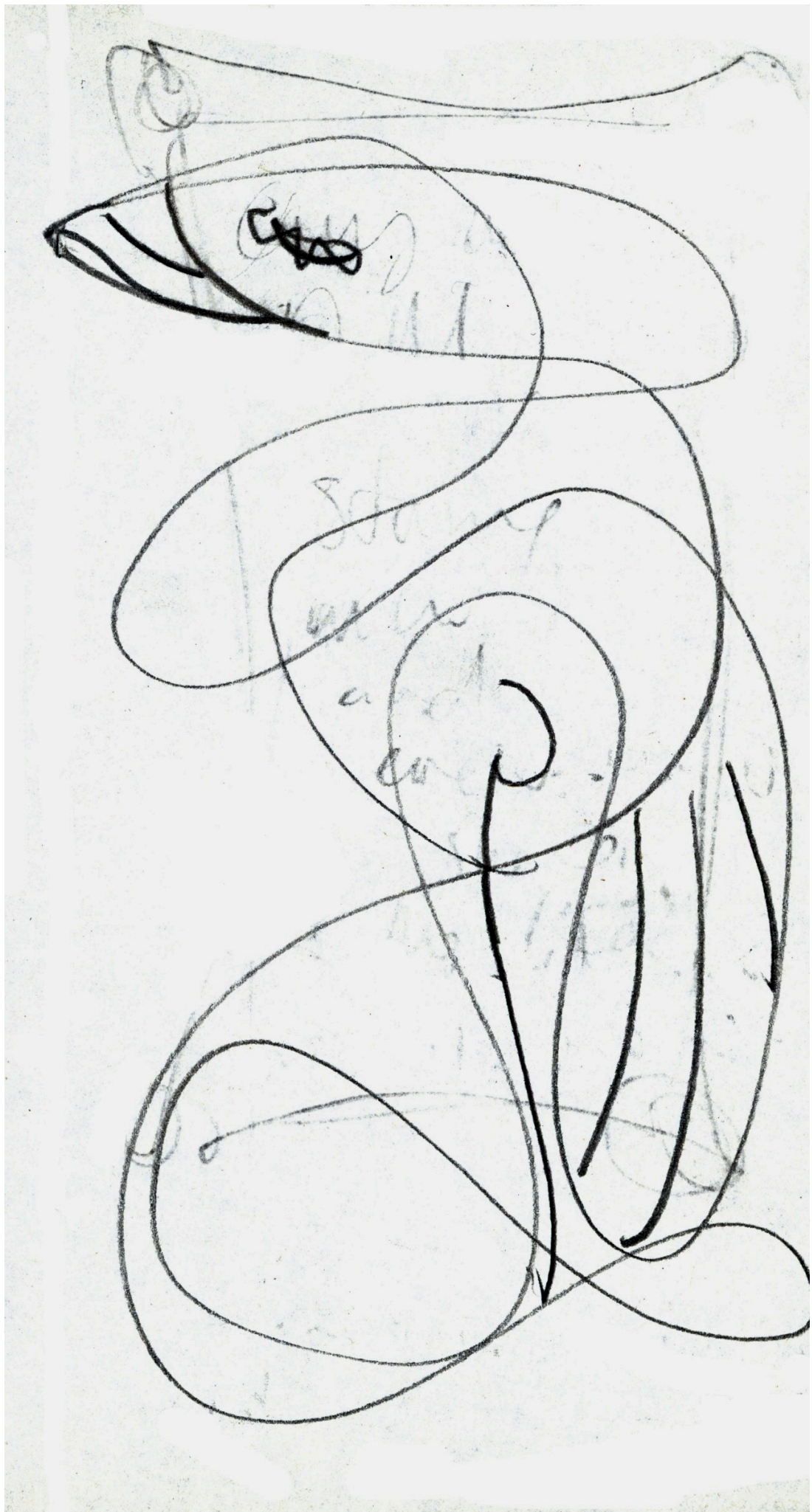
After getting advise from her doctor & the always reassuring voice of her homeopath, Gina took to facing her remaining dietary options.



'Now Gina was back on foods'

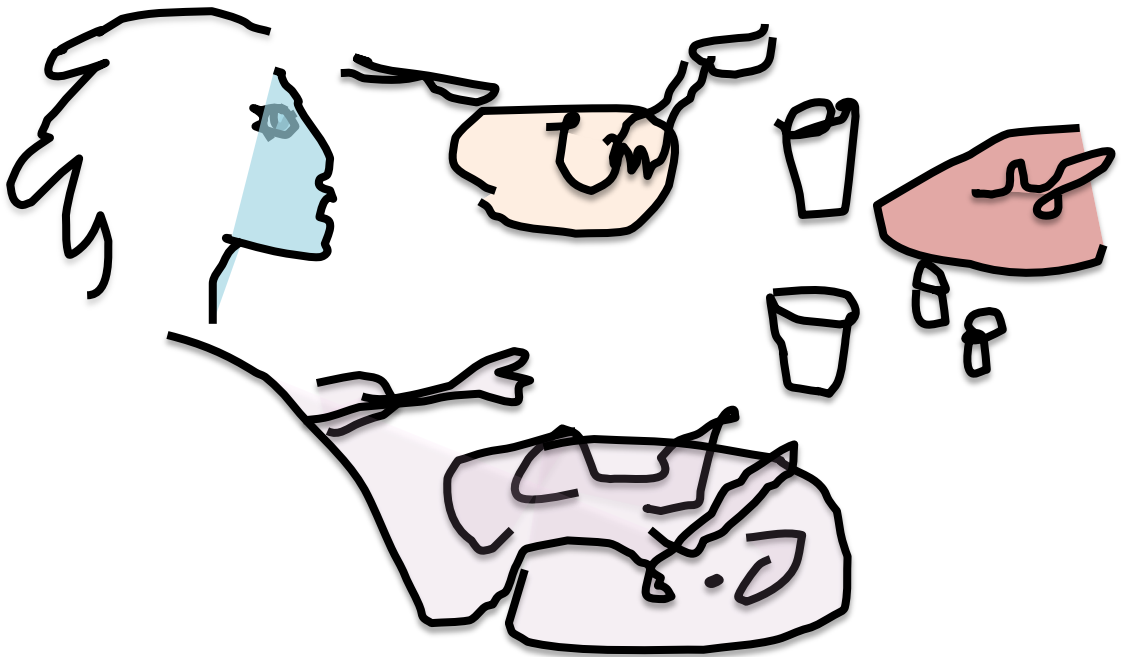
Following the guidance on slowly re-introducing foods, Gina took her first micro bite of fish mixed in with the rice. Feeling starved from her grape, carrot and rice only diet – the taste was divine. It was most likely no more than a teaspoon of actual fish – but it was flavorsome – something she had missed sorely.





'Shall I take your plate?'

It was a very early start to her day for a long journey to the course. It could have been any day out with chatting away in the car and chatting away at the hotel. However, before long Gina's voice turns into a horse whisper against the din of surrounding background noise, not even that noisy, just the sounds people chatting, laughing. Gina's battery is performing very low. With a familiar pressure in her head and lungs - she can feel her energy gravitating to the floor. Physical weakness has engulfed her by lunchtime - by the time she sat down to eat she was desperate to breathe freely without it being the demonstrative inhale and exhale of a marathon runner. So as not to worry anyone she tried to maintain composure & do her very best to just continue chatting, eating & breathing! In the end Gina gives up and leaves the almost full plate of food behind her. 'Shall I take your plate' the waiter calls, 'yes' she replies 'that's fine'.



'Veg out days!'

'Sometimes you need a veg out day' - Gina would say this often, but being that there is a lot to do, she didn't always head to this thought. Maybe if I heeded to my own advice I would get further' Gina reflects to herself - 'One day off and one day on - but health often takes over.. still not enough days.. in reality one day action often resulted in the next day relapse. Gina's plan was floating away - Although it was nice to float a little, a little spontaneity perhaps to let go a little - to make a plan, then let it go, rest often, create often - plan and take action often - take on small tasks with big goals - bite off only what you can chew - then let go of the rest until its time to bite off another piece.

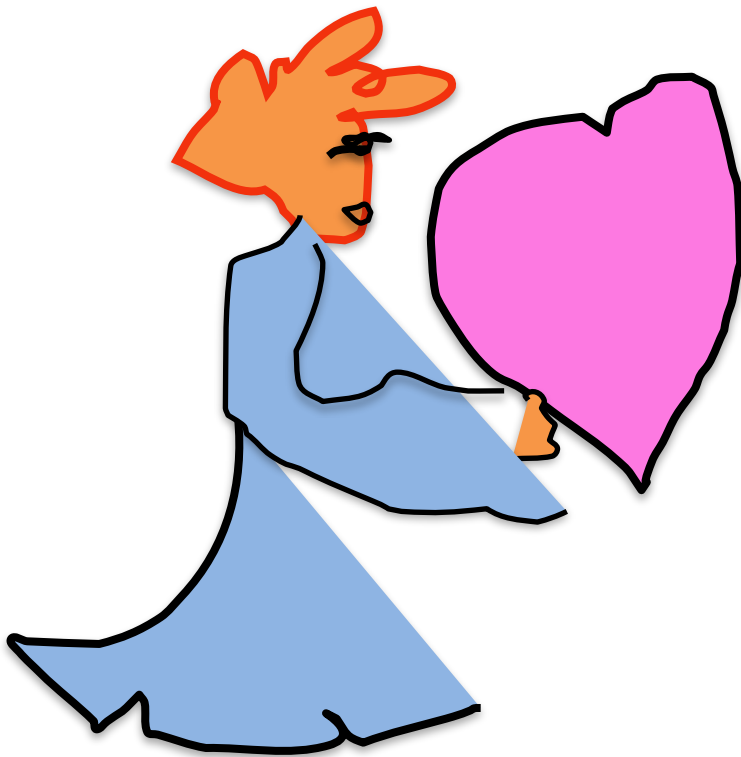


Existential Gifts

Somebody once had asked 'what do you want to be healthy for?' an interesting question! - In Gina's mind some people have great health and yet squander it on destroying the lives of others and yet some others who only have a small peek of energy can happily gift it away.

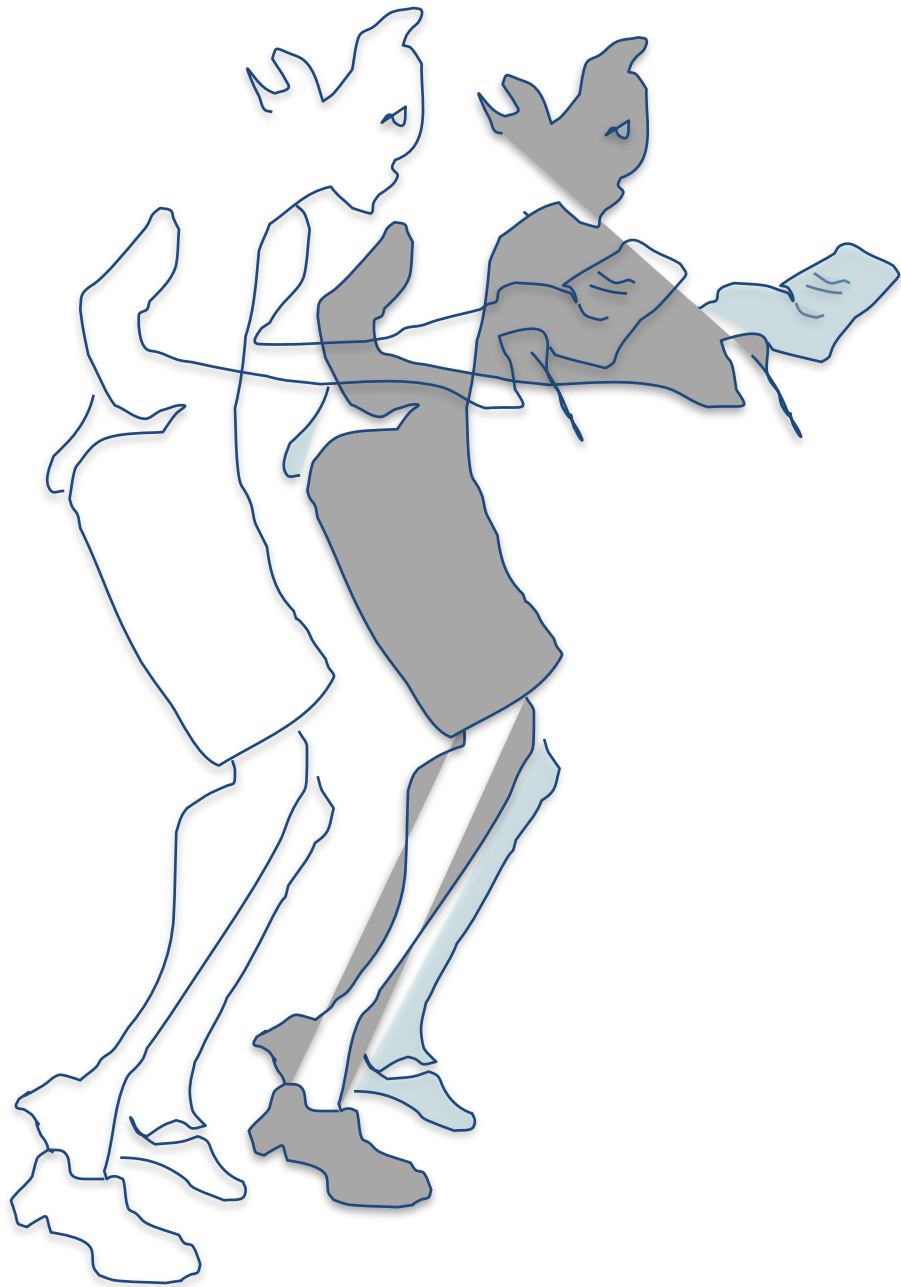
Gina had been ill for so long that she had forgotten what she wanted from life. Happiness was a key factor whether ill or not. To be ill happy, To be better happy! - Both being equal, the preference was to be happy & better!

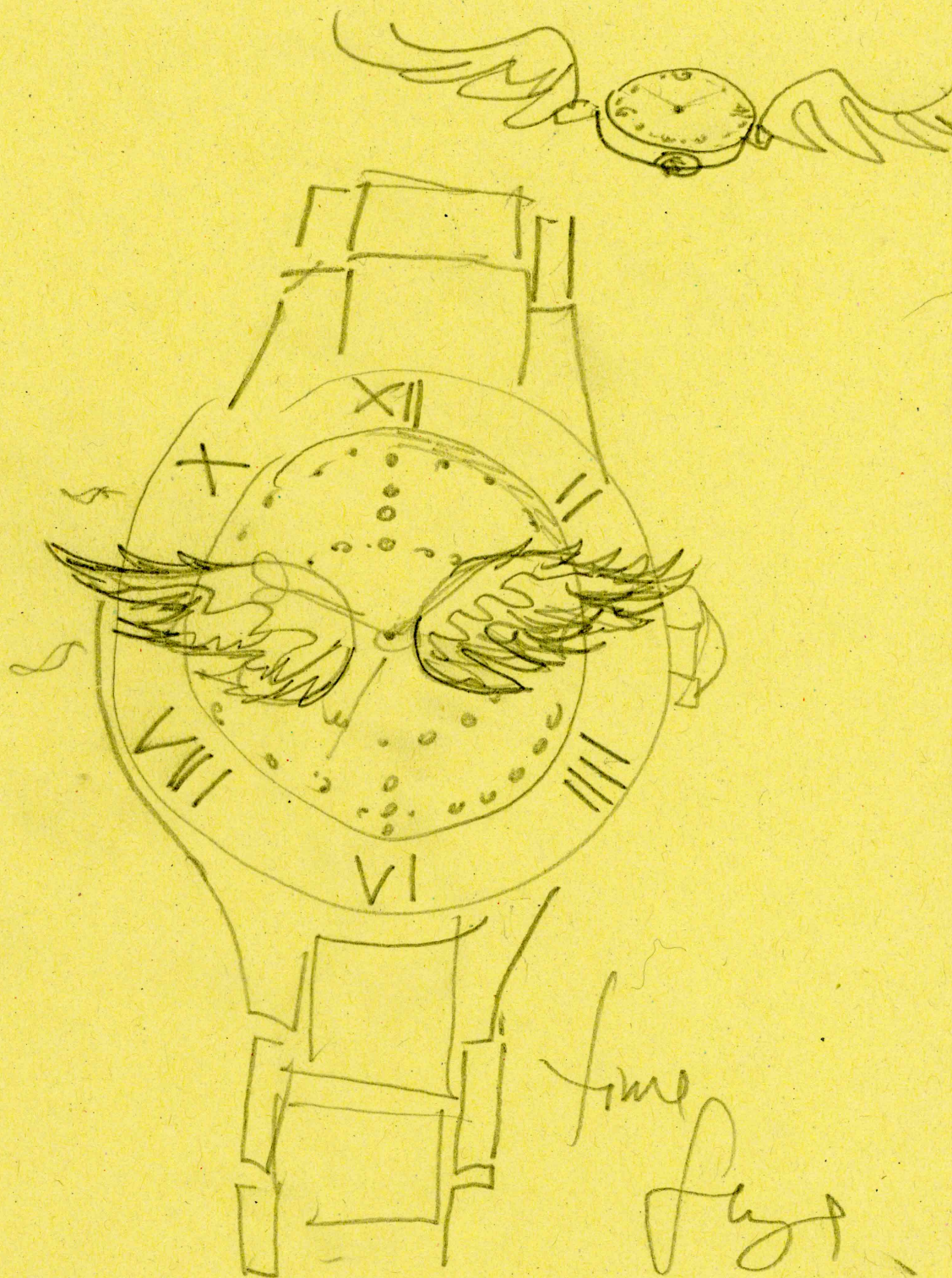
Life = Gift = happiness!.



'Stealer of time'

Somehow there was always so much to do - she was always chasing time, this didn't feel quite right. 'This is my life' thought Gina, 'it is for living, is it not?... Why then am I always on to do lists - where is being in the present moment gone.' She was always running ahead or behind herself - never quite with it.

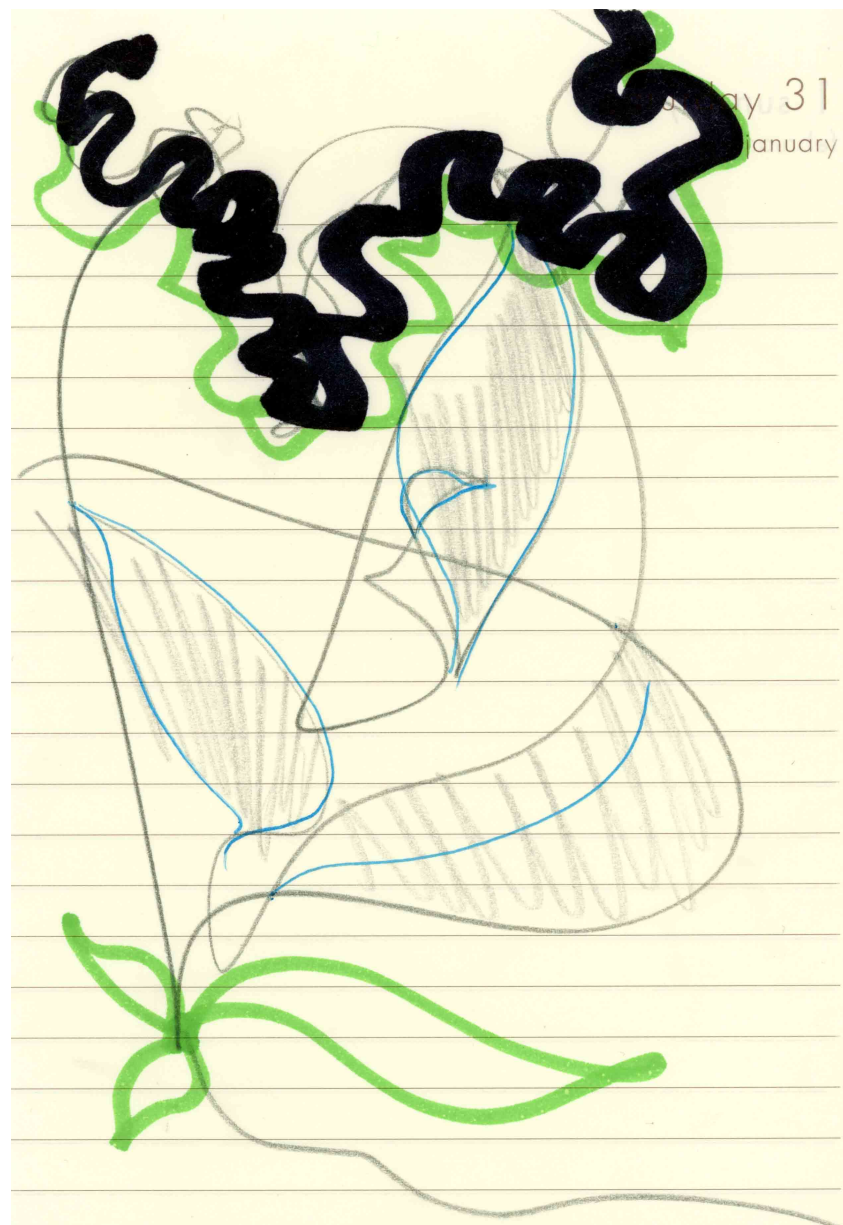




'Take me to the orchid room!'

Being creative feels like part of the medicine
Like being in nature or eating healthy food.

Sometimes a sense of emergency follows Gina about
being afraid that there is not enough time to do just
that, be creative! as there are too many practical things
that get in the way & there is so much she wants to do.
At the same time the illness eats away at dreams.
Gina forgets where she is going, as the destination is no
longer relevant. A new direction has to emerge
'Take me to the orchid room' she muses, 'a place where
dreams can be created'.



'The assessment'

Sitting herself down, she read the 'fit for work' response from the assessment. In some respects she was ok with this as she didn't want to be defined by what she was not able to do. Still, she wasn't quite sure of where she would need to place herself for this to work out. On one level Gina felt that she was fully capable of working but it was only as long as she could manage her own time as her symptoms fluctuated wildly. The alternative was somewhat worrying - she wondered about all those people who struggled to define their health issues in relation to what they were capable of doing on a daily basis ..and how easy it is to slip through economic safety nets. Ah! She thought .. 'so much for the self sovereignty of health'.



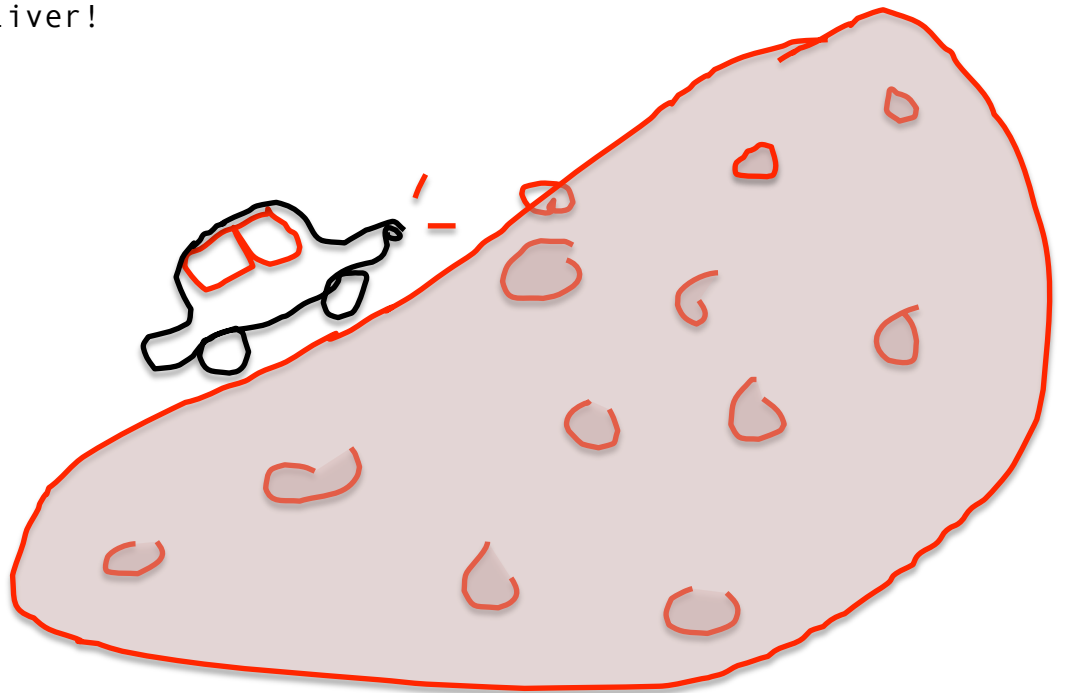
'The hole in the road'

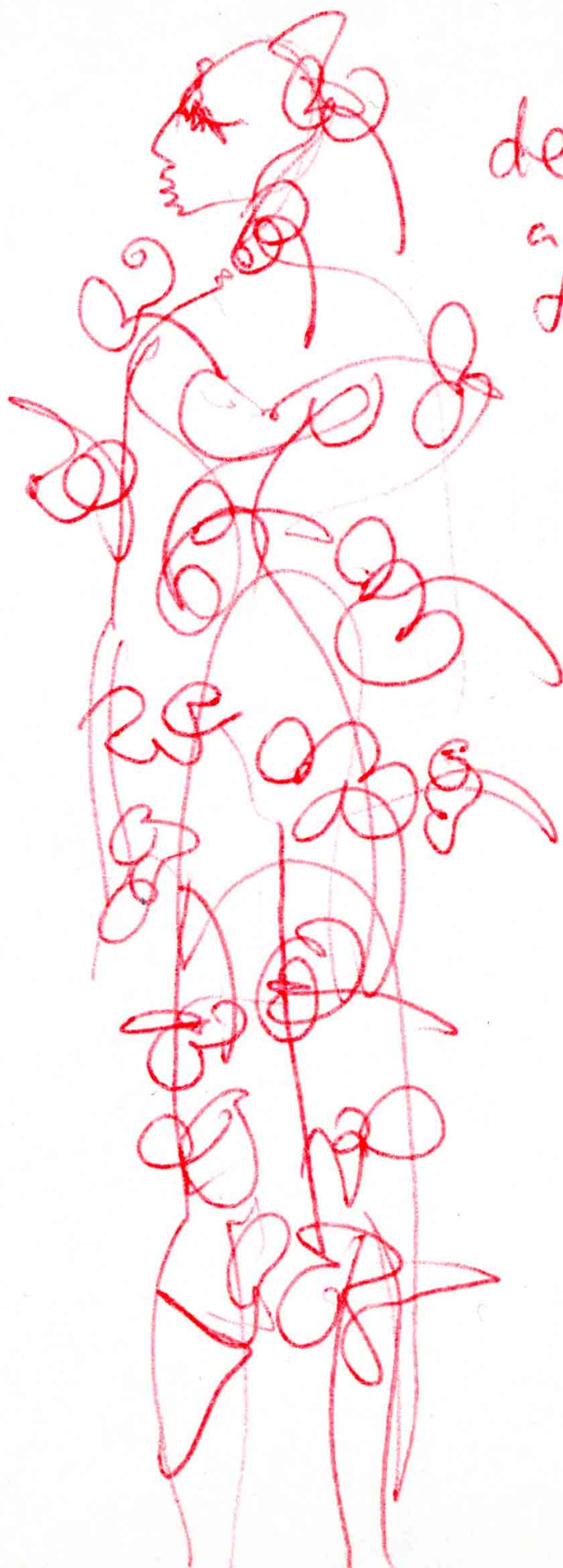
Gina saw the doctor today
They talked about the holes in her liver and their state
of play
Gina was pleased to find them,
Though, 'odd' to be happy you may say
& the Doc, he said, he was sorry to be the bearer of bad
news
for Gina, she knew there was a hole (metaphysically)
but not known what form, how or where.

He then added that they were benign
Nothing to worry about he said

Like driving on a road knowing there's a hole
But not where
A type of madness sets in
As the hole in the road could be anywhere
& Gina asks - 'are you sure you've seen it there?'
Now she knows there is a hole in the road
she can fix it - or navigate around it -
they can become friends
and be on their way
Gina will be aware
Now she knows about the hole in the road

Is in her liver!

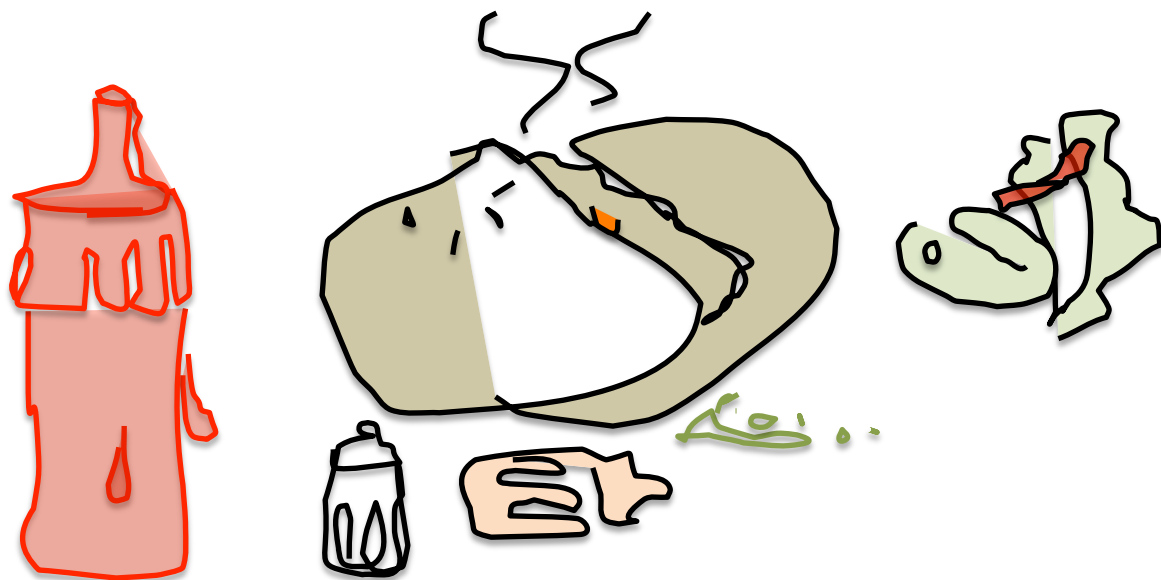




death of
a life
to live
another
life.

Gina, eating out, at a seaside resort. In a greasy café - she sits staring at brightly coloured sauces decorated with **fossilized dribbles**. What's that in the pepper cellar that looks remarkably similar to what's on the unswept floor? - An innocent jacket potato arrives at her table upon which, a hint (whisper) of salad stares back at her on a plate. After a few mouthfuls Gina's throat becomes thick - followed by difficulty in swallowing and breathing labored - even with her own dressings brought from home - she has to resort to her medicinal remedies - that prove their worth again.

Food fear!



'How was your journey?'

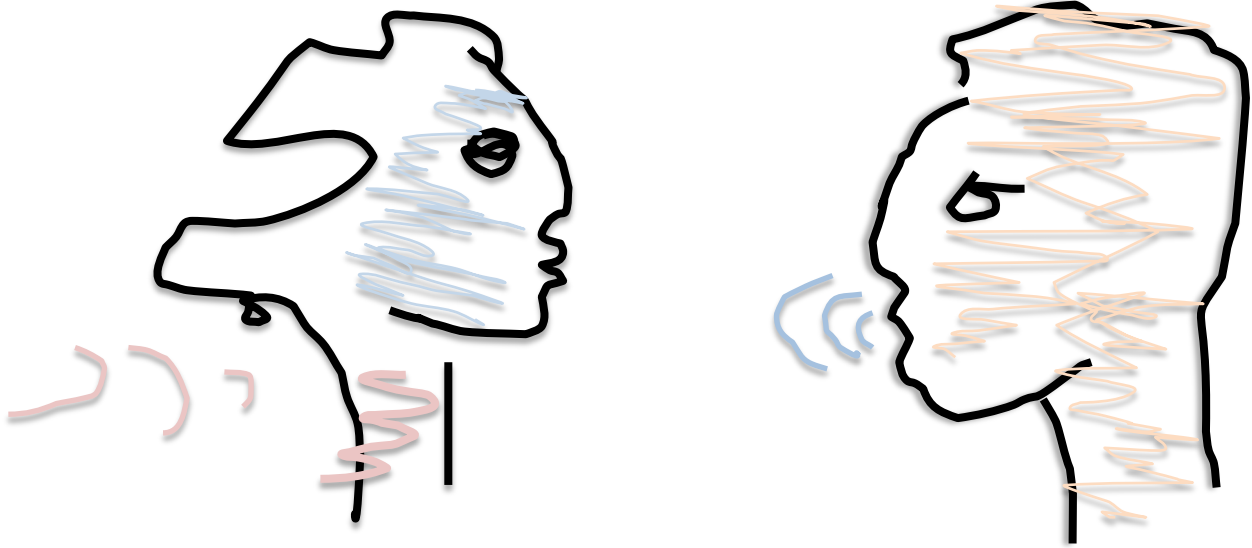
'What do I do?' thought Gina - 'should I go home or continue my journey? -The train will arrive any minute.. do I have the strength to travel?'. She made the decision to go and made that step onto the train. Gina now regretted the decision to go alone to her hospital appointment. Throughout her whole journey she went in and out of nausea.



Gina managed to arrive at the hospital unscathed. She paused looking at the herbalist wanting to tell him about her journey. 'How are you ...?' he said looking at his notes - 'so have you had any progress with foods?' - (her mind quickly darted around which aspect of the question was she going to answer and guessed what was required was something practicable). Gina listed the grapes and rice, coconut oil and clay - the main protagonists.

She had been advised by the dietitian to add lots of tiny amounts of different foods into a meal so that she might trick her body into accepting them - for this Gina would find every mouthful a potential threat! - It only took less than a pea sized bite to trigger an allergic explosion!.. Then there was the powdered food (a kind of substitute for those for what ever reason were unable to eat real food) she had received in the post that morning, 'Have you tried it yet?' he said, 'Gosh no!' exclaimed Gina, suspicious of anything that didn't look like real food!, but she edited her words - 'well not yet anyway' only as a very last resort.

Homeward bound - armed with red and green grapes - she made her way back.



Gina's voice felt trapped in her throat - it was difficult to breathe an in and out breath - every time she tried to project her voice the sound was just

Lost in the air Her body weakened with the effort. Instead she stayed silent... trying to listen - but with her energy stolen it took all focus away.

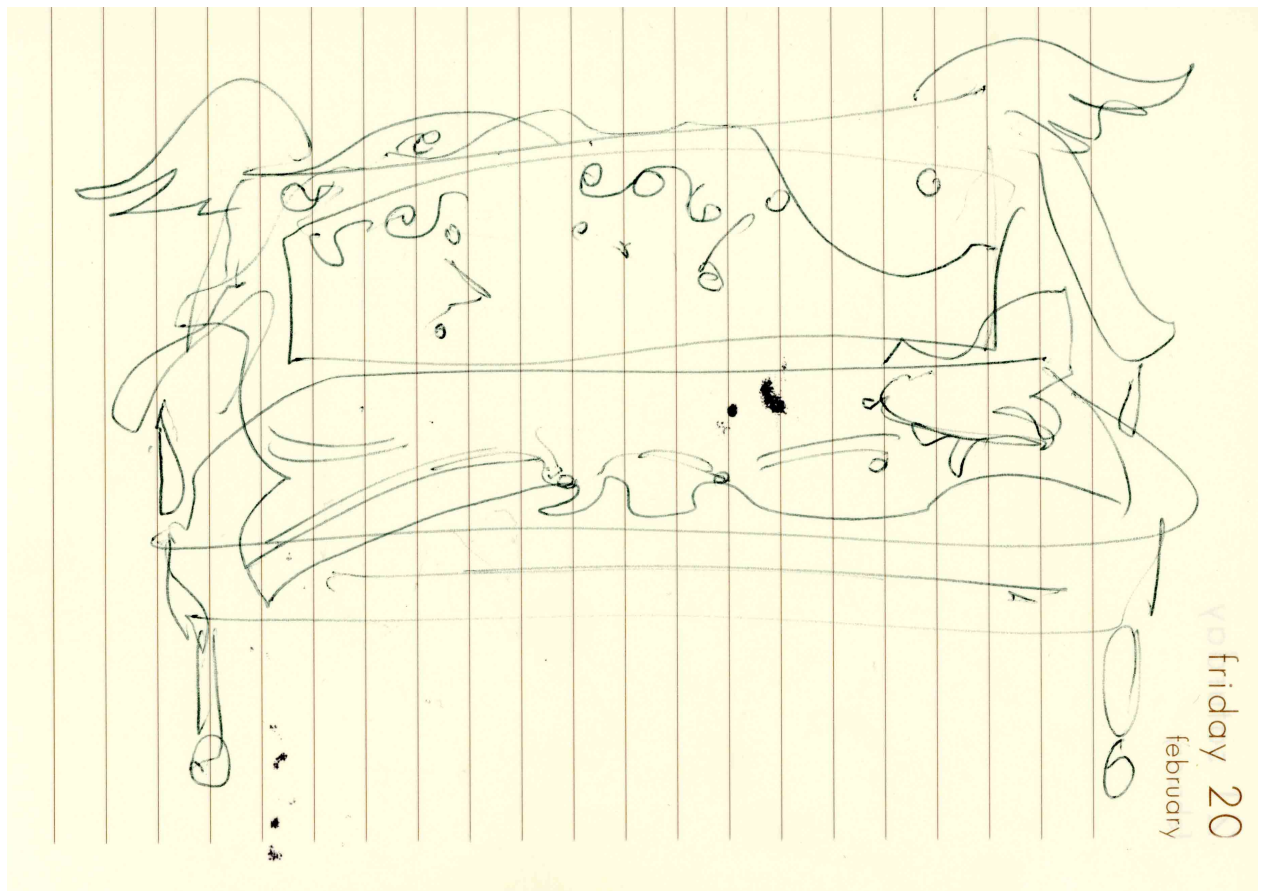
"Not sleeping in the day"

Her shoulders had been hurting for several days now
Hopefully a temporary healing crisis! Exhaustion
orientates her mid afternoon & eve she ponders 'I have to
pace myself to stay awake .. Maybe I need to give up the
fight and just give in'

Feeling sleepy in the afternoon - more like overwhelming
tiredness. Gina decides to ignore the Cognitive
behavioral therapy advice of "not sleeping in the day"

Gina's Focus

'Cultivate good health & healing
Love myself and others
Trust in intuition
Use healing power'



Strange food

Her tongue thickened at the back of her throat again. This time she thought 'well, if I'm going to test a food, then what better way than to try and eat something I like. If it doesn't work, then at least it would be a pleasurable exit' Gina then took another dose of her allergy antidote or her 'self meds' as she liked to call them - it dampened the reaction, but not enough to allow an unfettered experience. The cashew nut ice cream in its coldness numbed her tongue and throat - so it was harder to distinguish the allergy and the food sensation. At the end, when there was an empty bowl, she allowed herself to feel the intensity of swelling in the tongue - the gradual numbness around her mouth, the fogginess in her brain - deciding that 'that was a little too close to the edge for comfort!'. Gina never knew how far the reaction would go - would one more spoonful just push the boundary lines too where? - would her tongue thicken so as to block her breathing? Strange food.



'15 min a day on a Wish!'

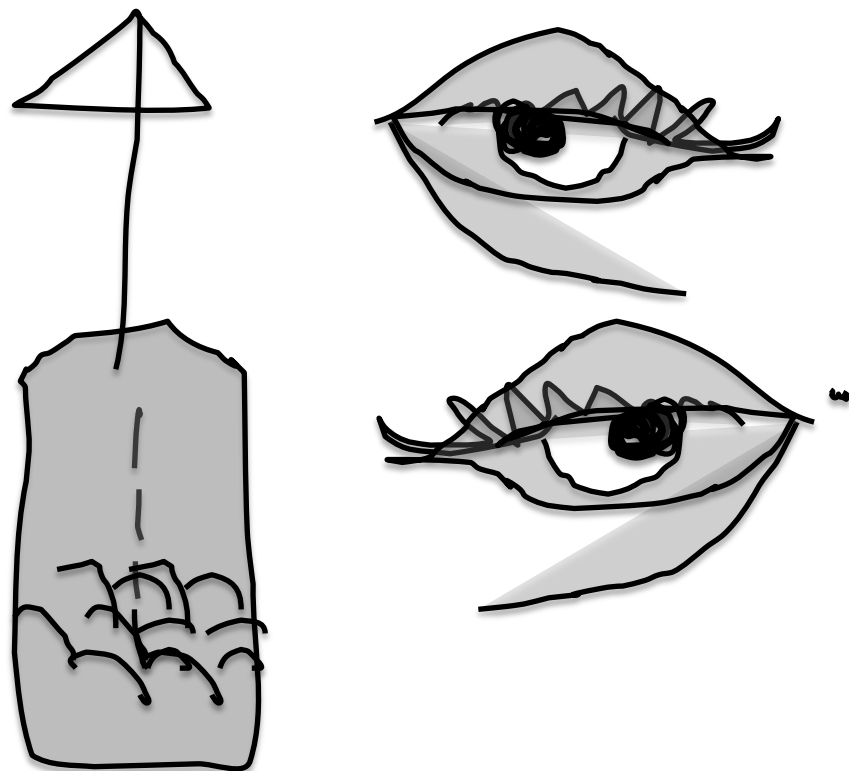
Scribbling, doodling, making art was so much part of her vocabulary she had hung on to its continuation like a squirrel with a nut. However she had to adapt. Gina's sight was not the same as it was before. So far writing was at a 15min a day schedule. On a good day she would return periodically to do more. The eye drops prescribed had made her ill, with reactions she had become all too familiar with. As Gina completed her morning prayers, a thought came to her mind, 'what if by the end of this week, I regain my full sight?.. she held that thought, it inspired her. 'Why should I not entertain such a thought?. as impossible as it sounds, was this not one of my goals?' The end of the week came & went, nothing happened. Still, it had motivated her to seek out new things - to keep trying again, & again.



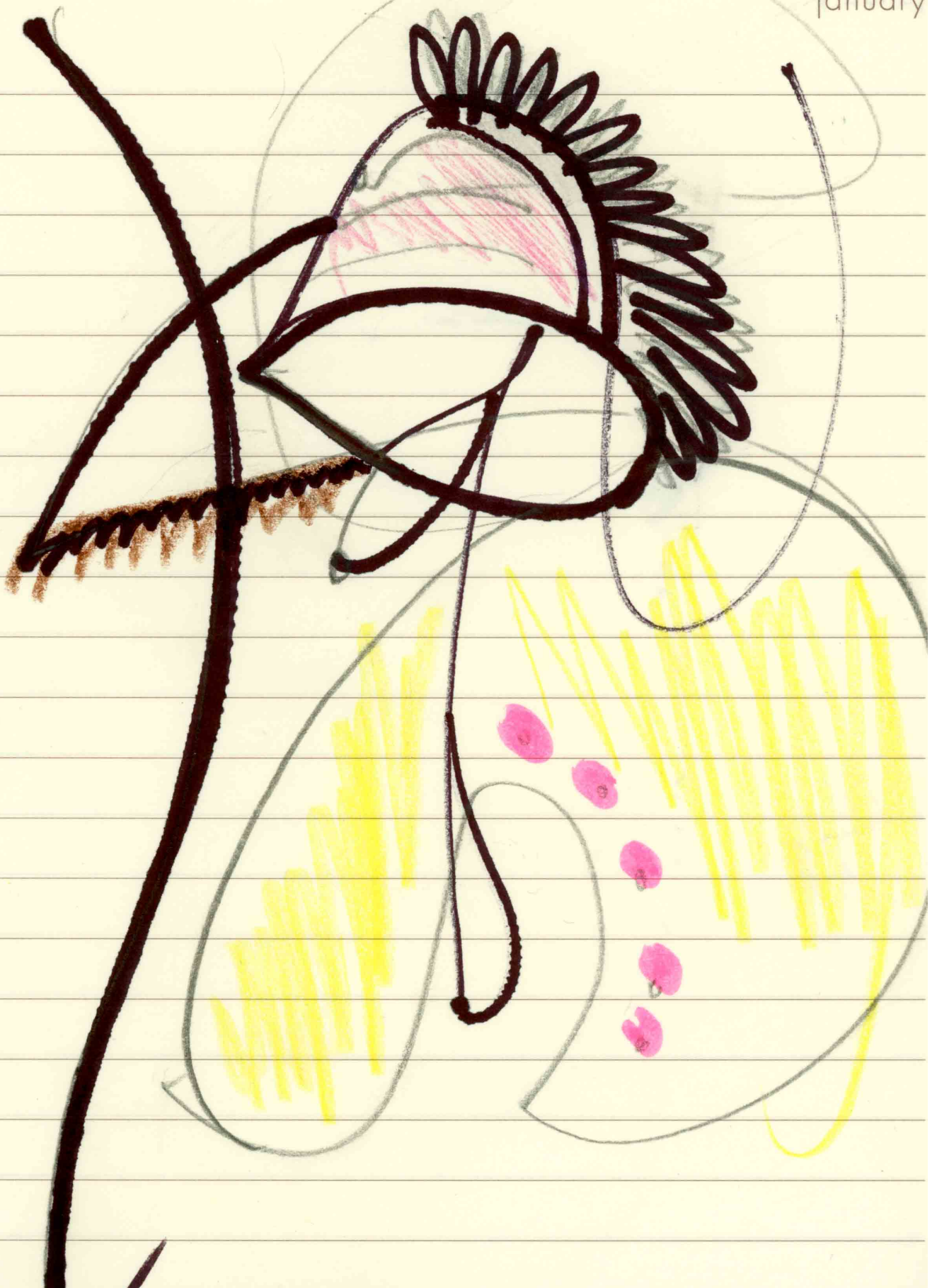
'The Accidental Charcoal eyes!'

Gina could never find anything that would prevent the charcoal from seeping through onto her skin, as she realized one day when she had answered the door, not knowing until too late, that she had two black eyes. The deliveryman, looked confused. He was most likely unable to ascertain if he should be worried and approach with a sympathetic turn or just ignore. He chose the latter. For Gina, she, for whatever reason - found herself saying 'So sorry'. For what? she could not explain. 'That's ok' he replied, brow slightly furrowed. 'Sign here' he then said, with eyes averted, presented a request for her digital signature, in return for her parcel.

In one of Gina's many online searches, she had come across the following instructions, of placing charcoal, into, opened, empty tea bags and as directed.. to then place them over dampened eyes and leave, for a certain amount of time. It said, for good medicinal effect.



saturday 17
january



Chapter 4



'A measure of distance'

In thinking about her next counseling session, Gina wondered if she had come very far - in fact, had she gone anywhere at all? The first session she was hopeful, excited. The second, she saw a means to progress, but since then, not much action seemed to occur. She did know however, that progress often occurred in incremental steps.

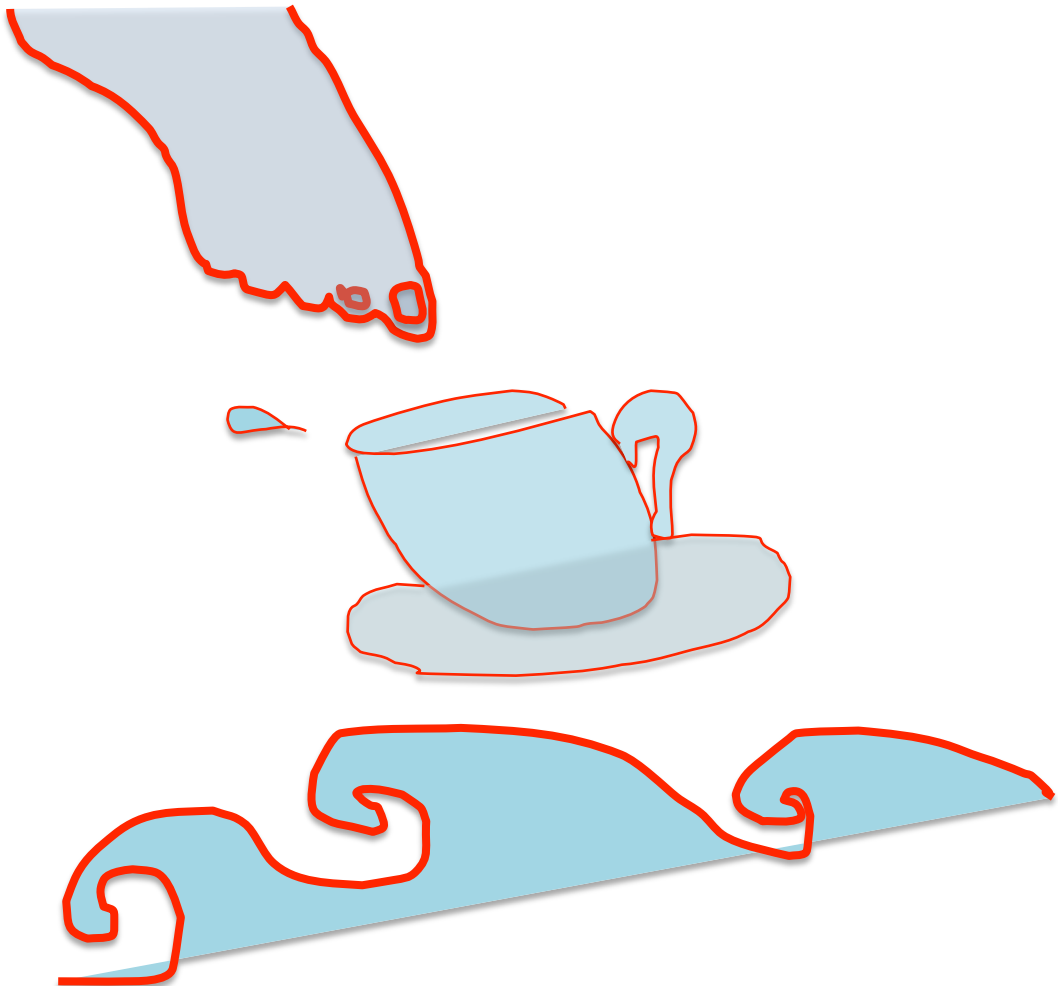
She saw it like this - that she had dipped her toe into the shallowest part of the pool. The next step was to get in. This seemed plausible from the position she was in, i.e. comfortably seated on her sofa, observing the situation, mug of tea in hand. So, in her mind, next was to go towards and into the deeper part of the pool.

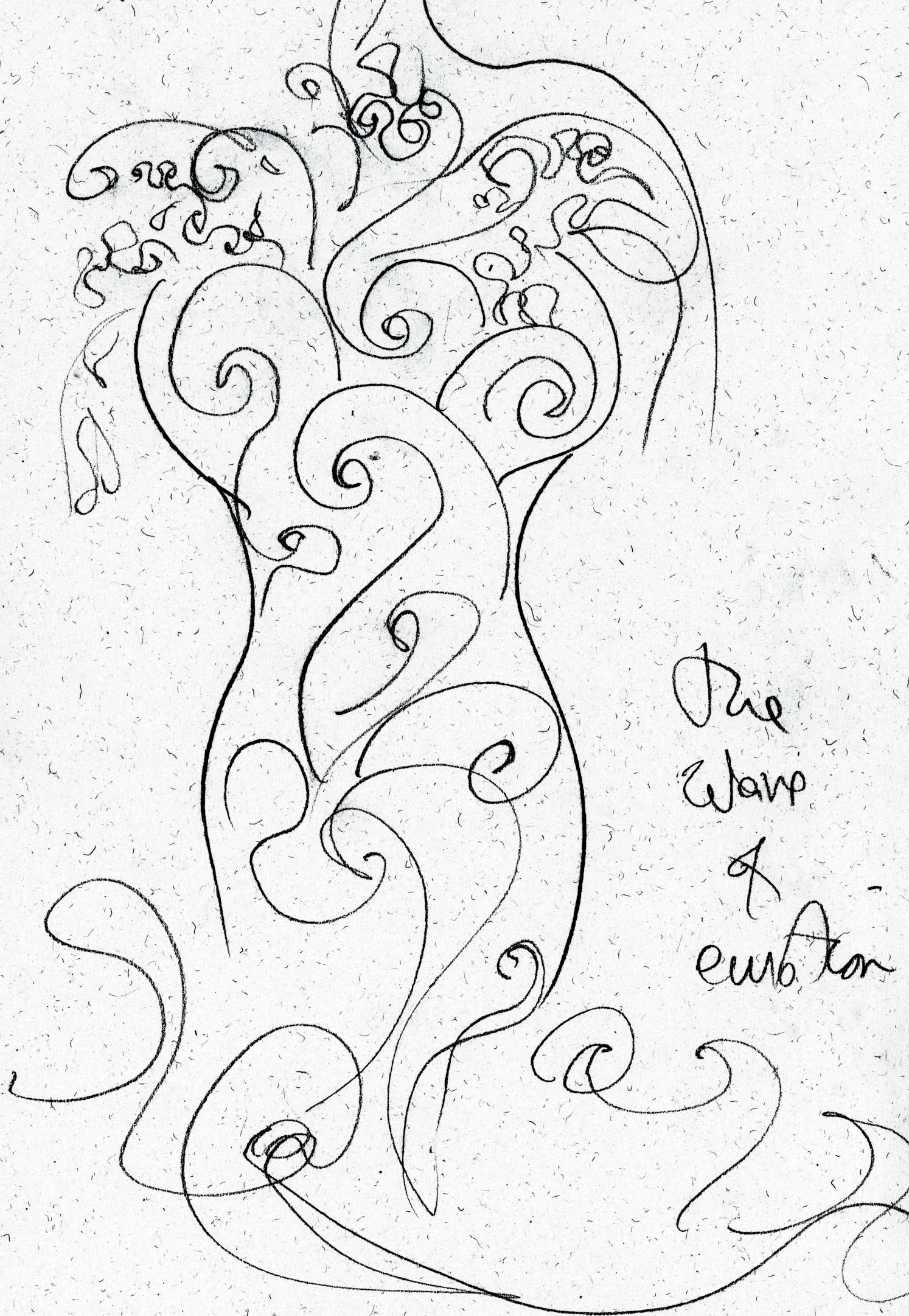
Having achieved that, she could then consider the next pool - larger and deep at the onset. This unnerved her. After that, there was the ocean, not even larger - just vast - with no visible edges - it just goes on and on - and the experience with it.

At that moment, a flicker of fear danced across her abdomen, so sharp it felt as if to puncture her anatomy.

In its wake, left behind a wave, weighted with nausea.

'Okay', thought Gina, 'back to step one and repeat'.





The
Warp
&
weft

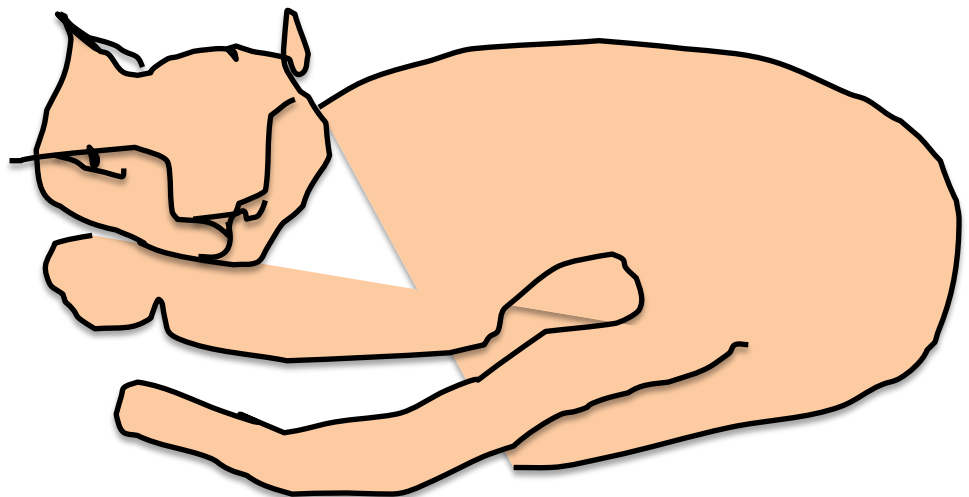
'at just a
squint....'

Gina closed her eyes...

'Now listen to the clock on the wall', Fazing out other sounds, Gina focused on the clock -

'Now listen to the sounds outside - the traffic - the music - people talking'. Gina could feel herself relax into her own heartbeat and comfortable breathing - she felt the warmth of just being. However, even though comforted, somewhere she was alert. This was not at home relaxing on her metaphorical sofa. This was the counseling session - she couldn't totally be at ease, just in case some thing might interrupt the safety net. Like a cat sleeping - deeply purring but with one eye a fraction open, at just a squint.

~
~ ~



The question of why Gina reacted to so many foods was an unknown. The odd allergy here and there appeared to be a norm, but to react to over a hundred foods? The councilor was suggesting that this was caused by stress.

‘Your focusing on a possible reaction’ said the councilor – that in itself might be the cause of the reaction.. so if you just stopped worrying then you may find that nothing happens!.’ That was the theory anyway.

You see according to Gina, stress was one of the consequences of the illness .., the chicken and the egg, which came first. This was the elephant in the room. None-the-less, today we weren’t at an allergy clinic, we were at a counseling session, so for now, this was where the action lay.

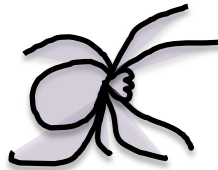
‘Well you could just try the foods without worrying and see what happens’ said the councilor.

‘What about anaphylaxis’ Gina enquired?

‘Do you have an Epi pen? the councilor asked,

‘No,’ said Gina, ‘I self medicate with alternatives’,

‘Do that then’ she replied.

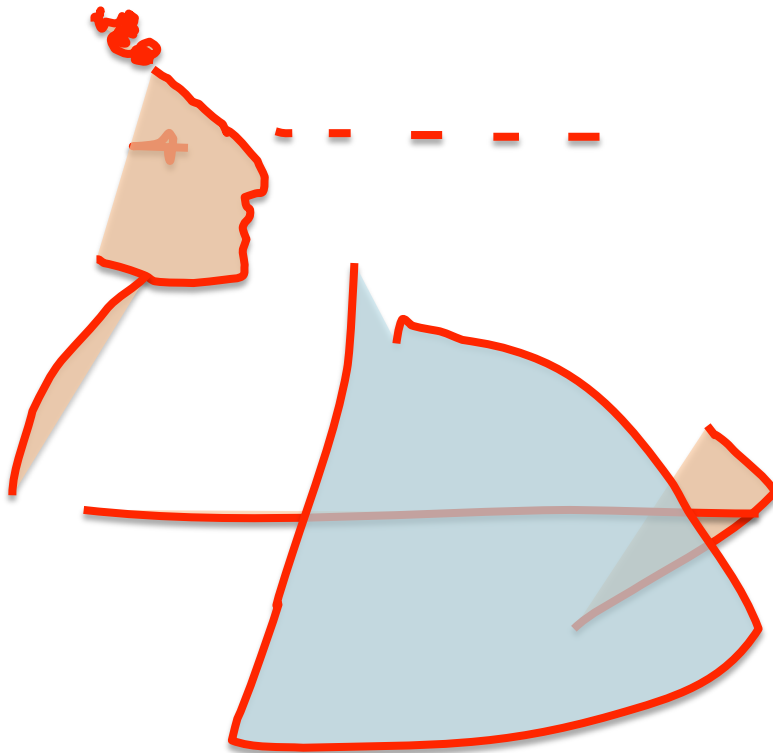




'Learning curves and signs'

'What did you learn today?' the councilor asked. Gina paused, it was cold, her body felt stiff as she dug her hands into her pockets for warmth. 'To look for signs & signals that enable progress & solutions. . 'Like reaching for water when thirsty'. Pausing again she tried to recollect her thoughts - her mind had gone blank with the cold - her body was already heading home before her! 'To allow negative thoughts to just pass through - through to the exit, just like a draught, ..to exhale!' she paused again and said 'to remember where you are going .. That there is a target - so you remember why you are here'.

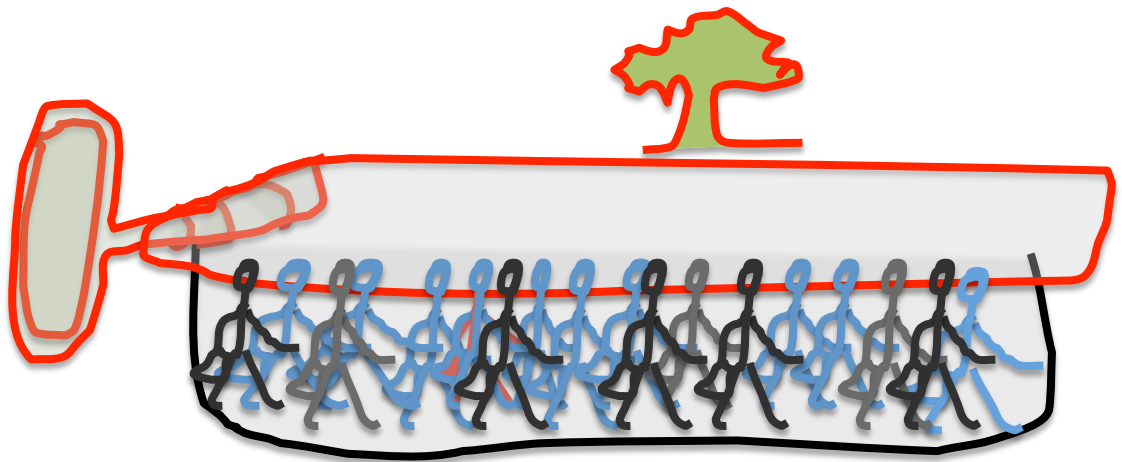
Her mind drifted into a vision where she saw arrows just flying aimlessly through the air - and one targeted arrow...it remained impressed on her mind.



'Under Over-ground'

Gina found that the old trains with their cold & drafty isle's, in comparison, a desirable option. With doors & windows that opened manually and where safety was determined purely by the character of the passenger. The risk was part of the thrill of the journey. Not getting your head axed while leaning too far out of the window, or opening the doorway before the start of the platform, was part of the thrill. It gave way to a 'Health and safety' etiquette.

The new trains had become an *Under-overground* - far too safely sealed in. The outside landscape, becoming too far removed to maintain human nature.





Blue Tues



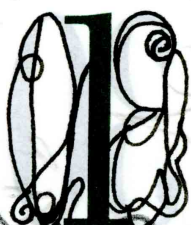
On repeat - Gina is exhausted - so much so that another achievement feels like just another exhausting day. From a distant light she had managed to get back into the second metaphorical pool - but inside she didn't feel progress. Why? because she still felt that she was always on the edge of decline - in a few days or even moments later she might back slide into the oblivion of no go. Still the achievements of today cannot be ignored. Where to next in this fatigue?.

There was something about being accountable for feeding back to the councilor. Gina needed that, without is she may have drifted into endless non-action.

luglio
july
juillet
juli

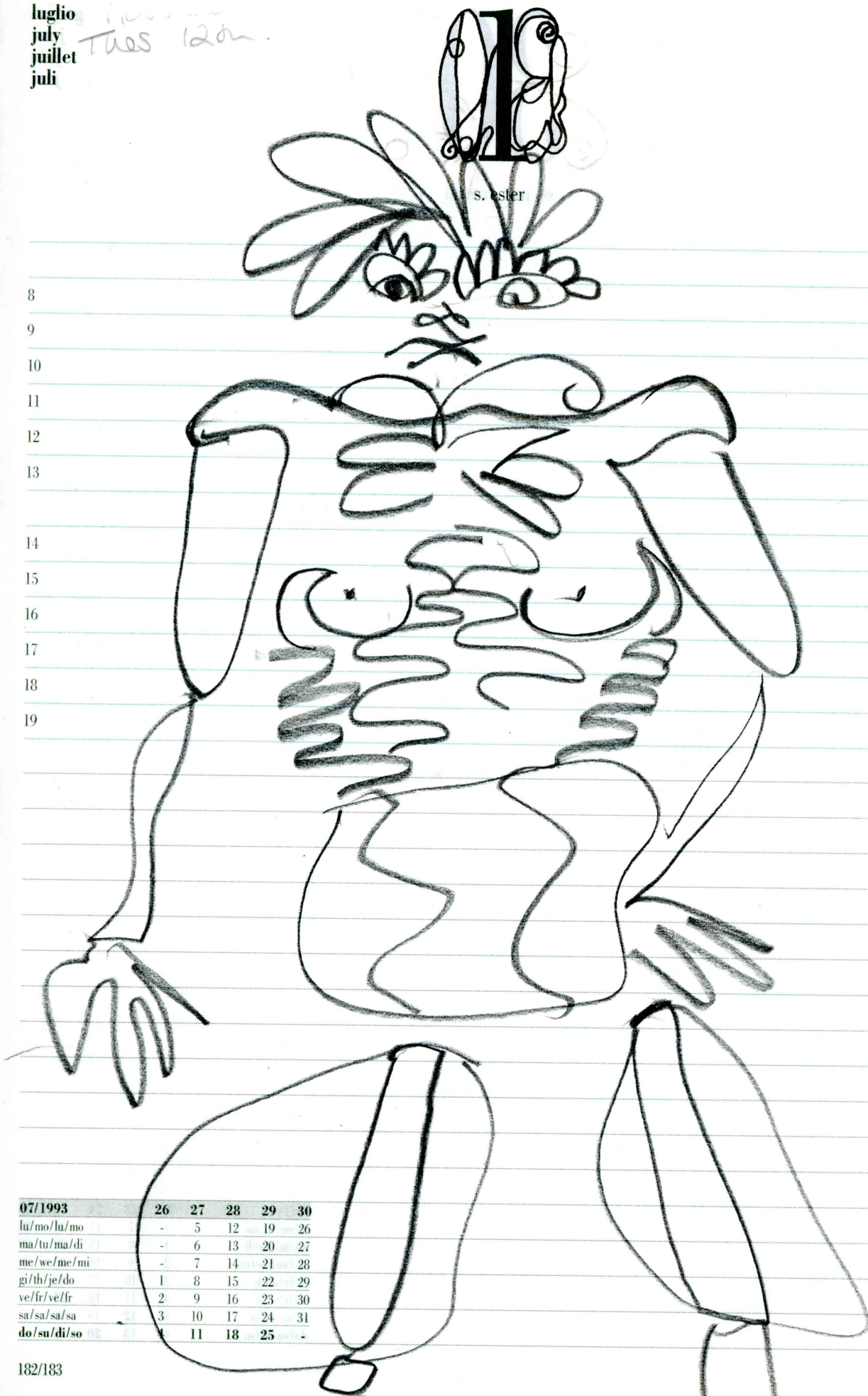
Tues 12th

giovedì
thursday
jeudi
donnerstag



s. ester

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07/1993	26	27	28	29	30
lu/mo/lu/mo	-	5	12	19	26
ma/tu/ma/di	-	6	13	20	27
me/we/me/mi	-	7	14	21	28
gi/th/je/do	1	8	15	22	29
ve/fr/ve/fr	2	9	16	23	30
sa/sa/sa/sa	3	10	17	24	31
do/su/di/so	4	11	18	25	-

Love ... while on this earth

Before Gina has even the chance to say 'Good Morning' her mother hugs her, kisses her on the cheek and takes each of Gina's cold hands and rubs them in turn - its like she wants to give her as much love as she possibly can while she is still here on this earth.



8

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10

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Evening

Notes

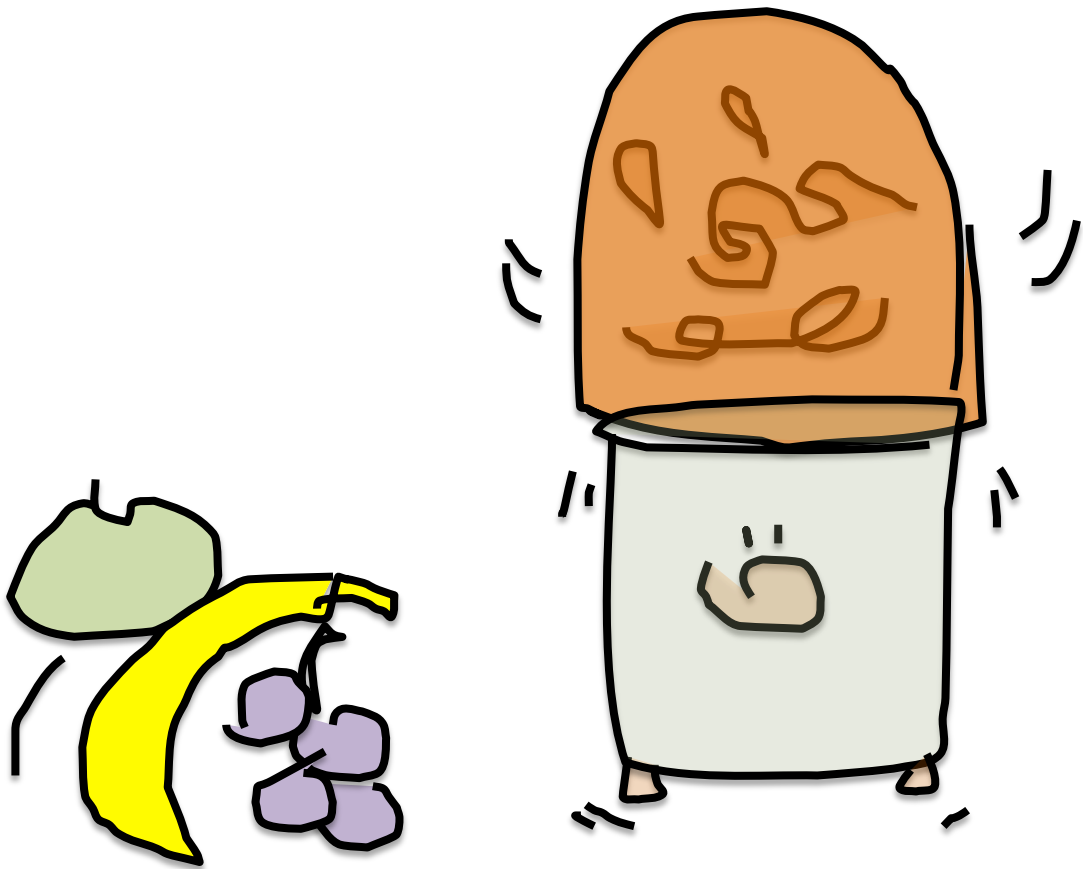
June						
M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

special
diet!



The smoothie maker...

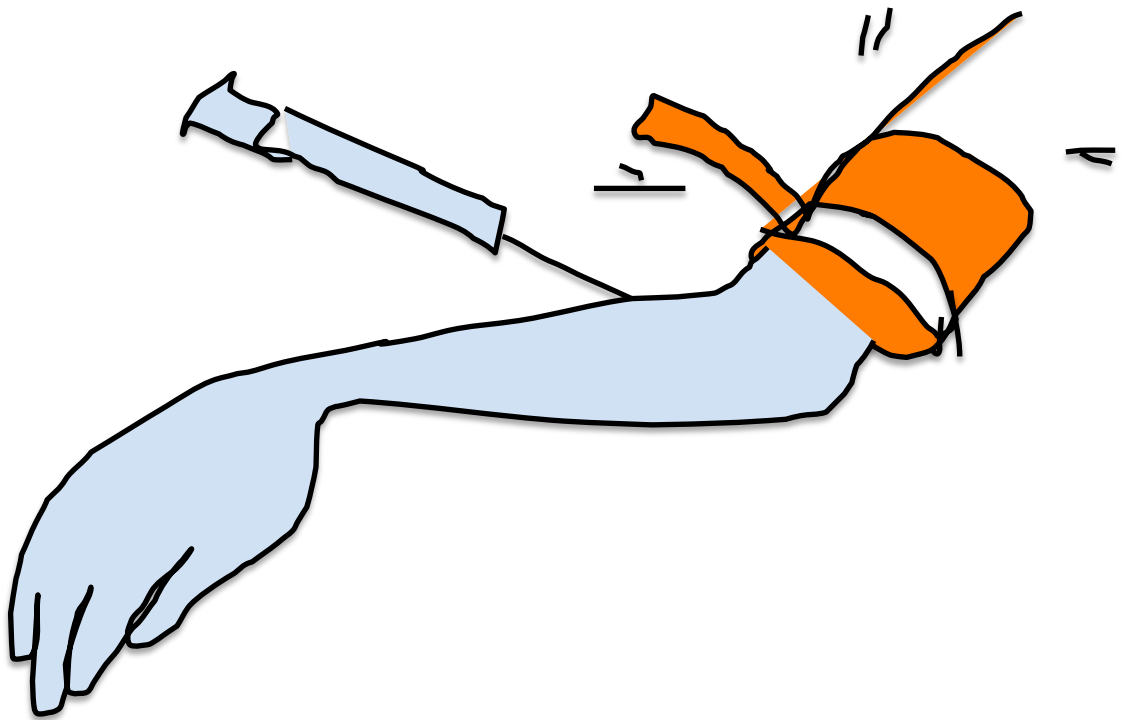
'This' Gina thought 'is it ... the solution'. Breakfast was now going to be a no brainer - no more boiling whole grain rice first thing in the morning. She could now enter realm of fast food. At one click of a button... a moment's pause and breakfast was done. A new life lay ahead!.

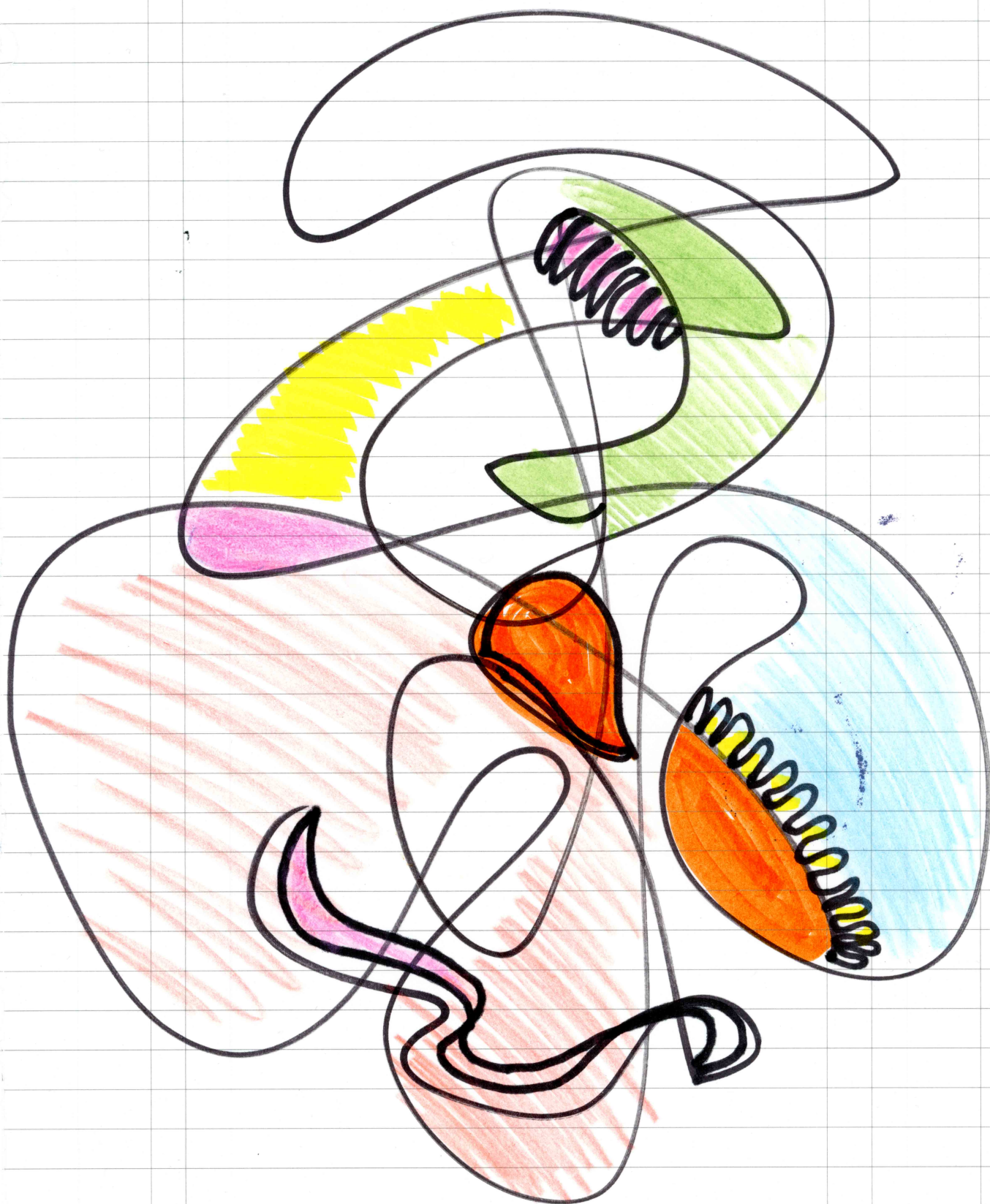


Today's diagnosis

Today Gina had called the hospital - she hadn't yet received the results of her second stage of allergy testing. This time they took blood, as before she'd had a skin prick test, all of which came out negative. The doctor on the phone located the letter yet to be sent - she went through the various substances & foods tested, giving her the degree to which the allergy manifested. At the end of the call she said 'yes ... you have oral allergy syndrome'.

On the day of the test Gina remembered having her arm strapped to find the vein - it was so tight she thought she might lose her arm! - as a result no blood came through - the strap had to be loosened.





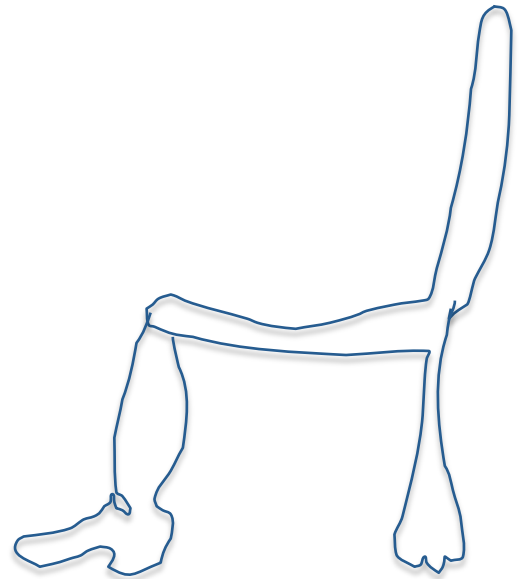
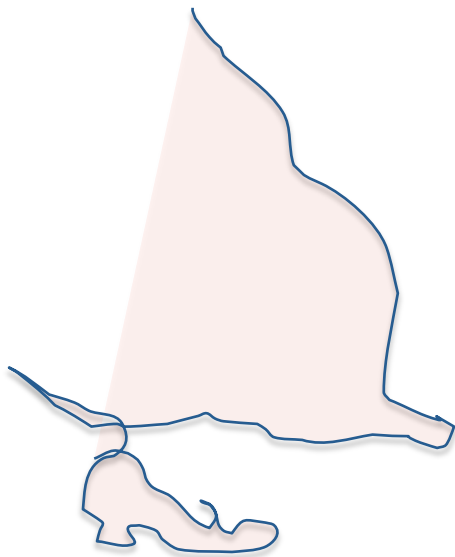
'Gina goes Flamenco'

She stayed at home and occupied herself with some small domestic tasks, just so that she would have enough energy for the class - and boy did she need it!

Twenty minutes or so into the session and she'd maxed her energy chart and had to sit out and watch. For her though, this was the tops in choice of dance classes. Inspiration had hit her hard. Her legs ever failing to lift high enough & arms that were now wanting to hang limply at her sides through weakness. It was hard to imagine how to master such footwork let alone say upright. She was told to adjust her flaying limbs. Her core energy had already died but the excitement kept Gina going enough to ignore her body's signals to stop.

Inevitably though, that signal, when she allowed herself to feel... a small warning... a slight fogging before a fall. She wandered over to a chair, sat down and allowed weakness to engulf her, not so much so as to render her onto the floor, just enough to warn her, that this was more than enough, in fact, far too much for today.

Tomorrow she would need the luxury of time - to rest and recover, to then ponder on a life she once had.



Chapter 5

'In the Looking glass'

She looked at herself in the mirror. It was now day nineteen of just rice, grapes and the virgin coconut oil. Trying not to look too thin played on her mind while dressing, not wanting to wear her circumstances on her sleeve so to speak. The jumper once fashionably too big now hung oversizing her skinny limbs.

venerdi
friday
vendredi
freitag

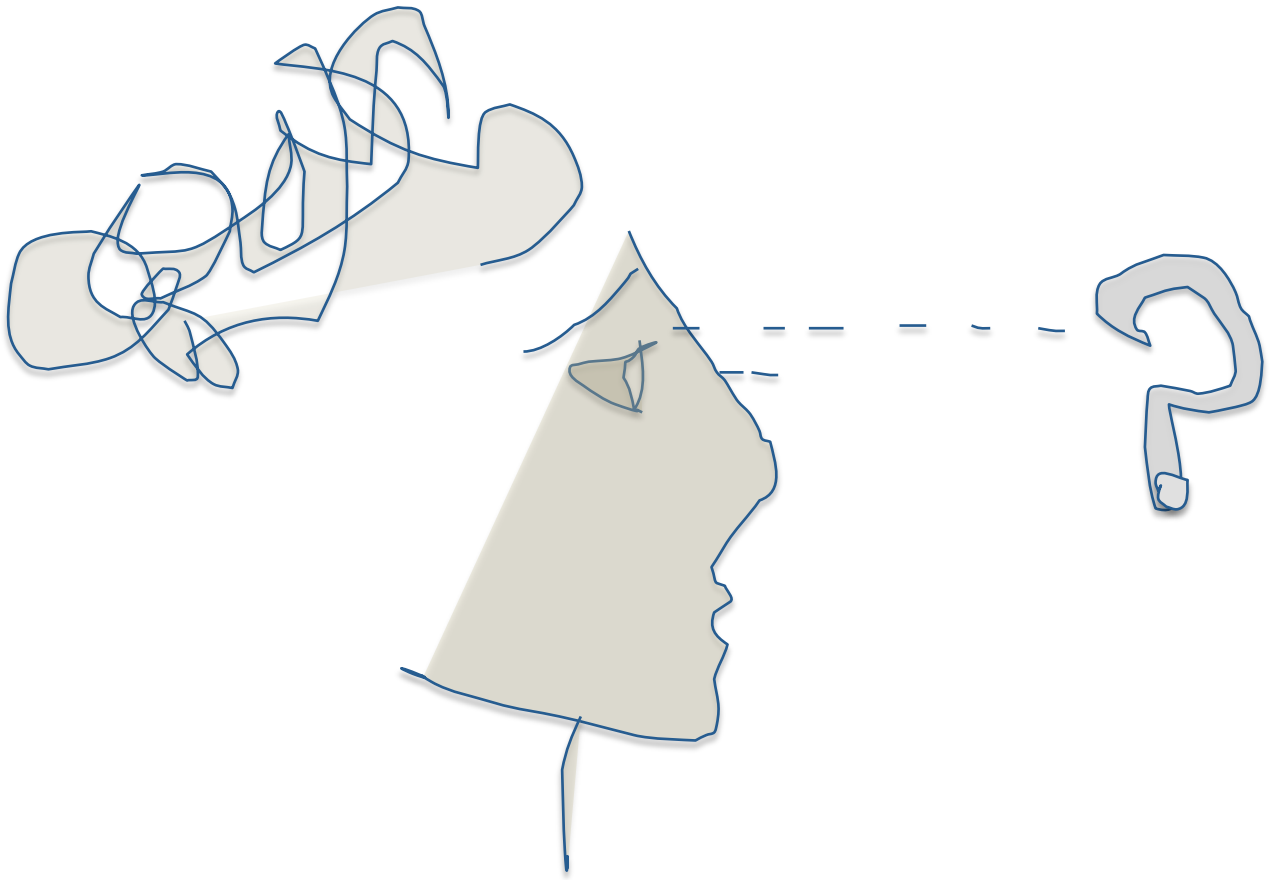
26

novembre
november
novembre
november



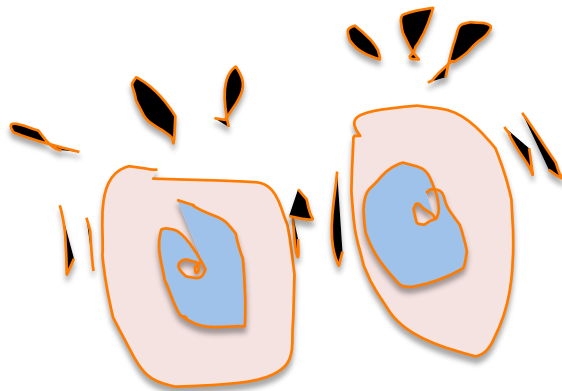
'Life itself!'

Gina had ventured far and wide in the search for the relief of her symptoms. Somehow that had become life itself. She wondered what then if all were cured would be left? Her whole impetus of life circled around trying to get better. It took every ounce of her energy - it was hard to think what lay beyond.



'Mysterious pathways of contrariness'

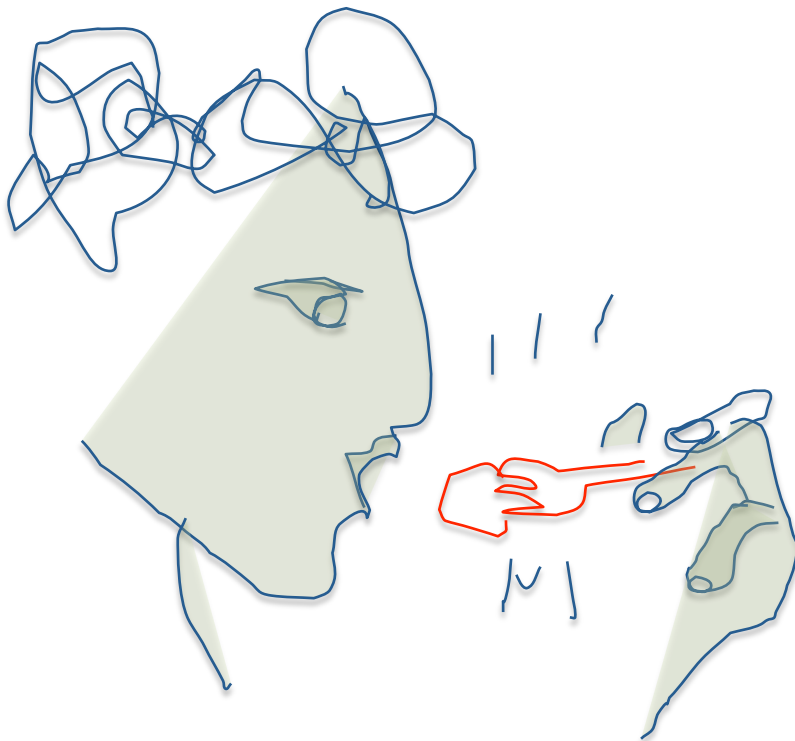
Signing up to the audio library was meant to be a way out, time out, so she could step back into the creative beauty, richness & learning that she garnered from reading. But the signing up process was taking its toll. Her eyes hurt, like little pockets of pain pushing them outward. Blurriness, eye stress & then boundary lines this caused. At other times her eyes worked for her without complaint. The rest, she couldn't fathom - the nausea, sometimes intense - 'who would have thought!' she mused... 'that somewhere in my body, such mysterious pathways of contrariness had formed. The online process was quick in taking her money but not in delivering the goods. Having been locked out of her account three times and... she was interrupted by a call. It was the audio library... things took on a different view - an apology and free subscription to ease her way. So she put it all behind her. She could now down tools, put her eyes back in their sockets, ease the pain and de-nauseate. If only!.



'Tell tale signals'

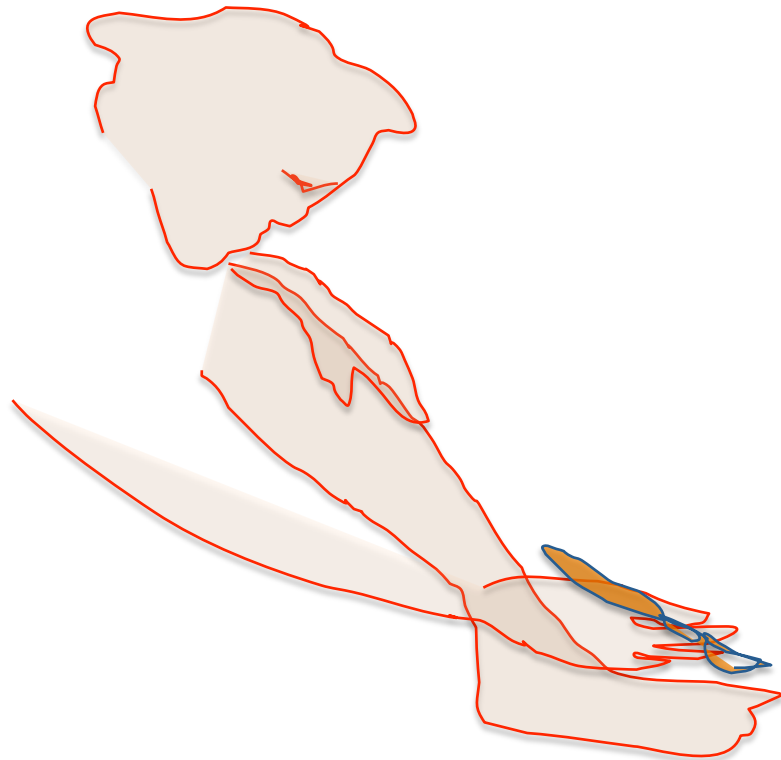
Gina was eating now, but it was complicated. Gina expected a speedier, get-well process than before. She was confused by the ability to eat certain foods one day but not the next - she would eat, pause at a reaction then resume the same meal later. Her hungry stomach ignored telltale signals. By eating more quickly, she thought she could outwit the allergic reaction, to satisfy the hunger. After a few days of this she began to feel as if things had returned to normal - except that they hadn't. The fact was that although she was eating, the food gave her no energy - after a meal her legs weighed her down, heavy, & weak. With her mind dull, sleep entertained her. A siesta had become the norm.

Sleeping at least an hour, she could have slept more but her guilty work ethic forced her up and awake. 'What's the point', thought Gina - 'life is not much fun when your tired all the time'



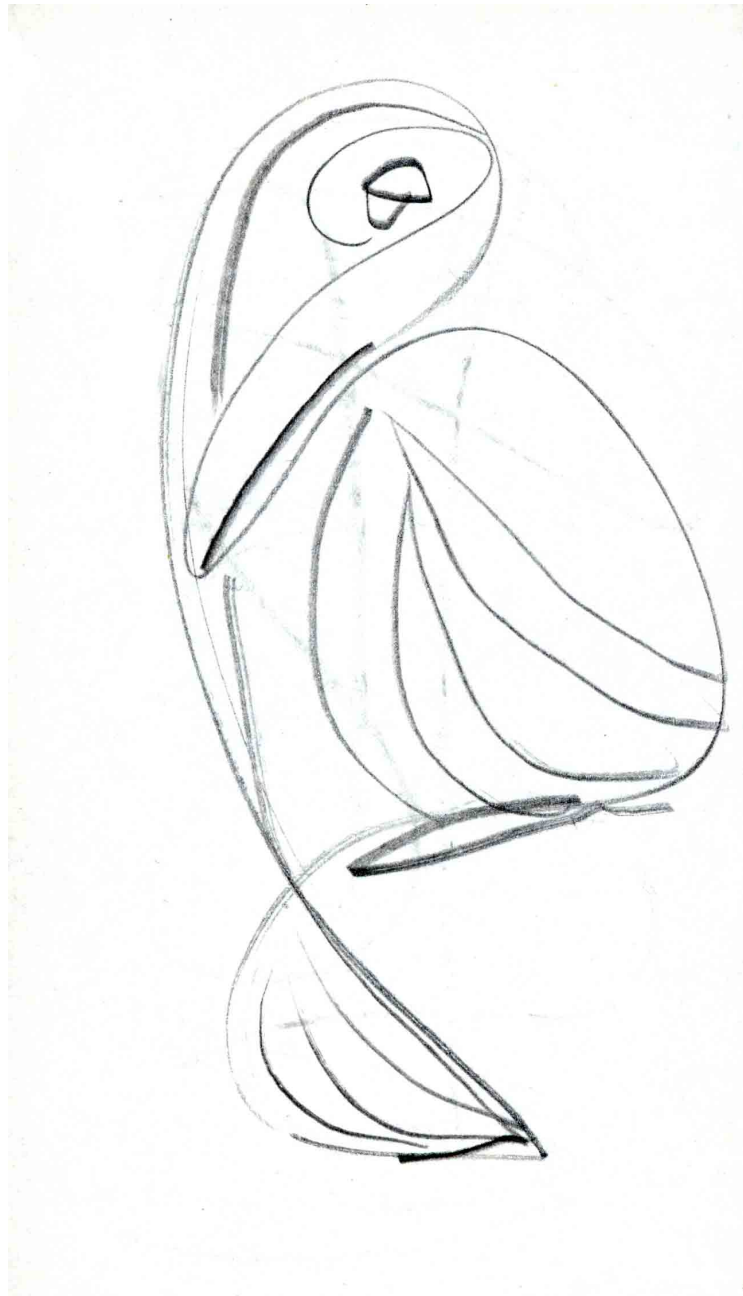
'The after-glow of a winters bath'

In the background she could hear the banter of revelers coming from the street. Inside bathed in the warmth and after glow of a winter bath she proceeded to paint her toenails. The henna clumped and dried then would fall off leaving on her nails a bright orange stain - It was the first New Years Eve spent at home for as long as she could remember. This procedure almost needed a whole night in - three layers to get the right shade of orange but not too much as to be brown. Gina was determined to enjoy made up feet without the toxic polish.



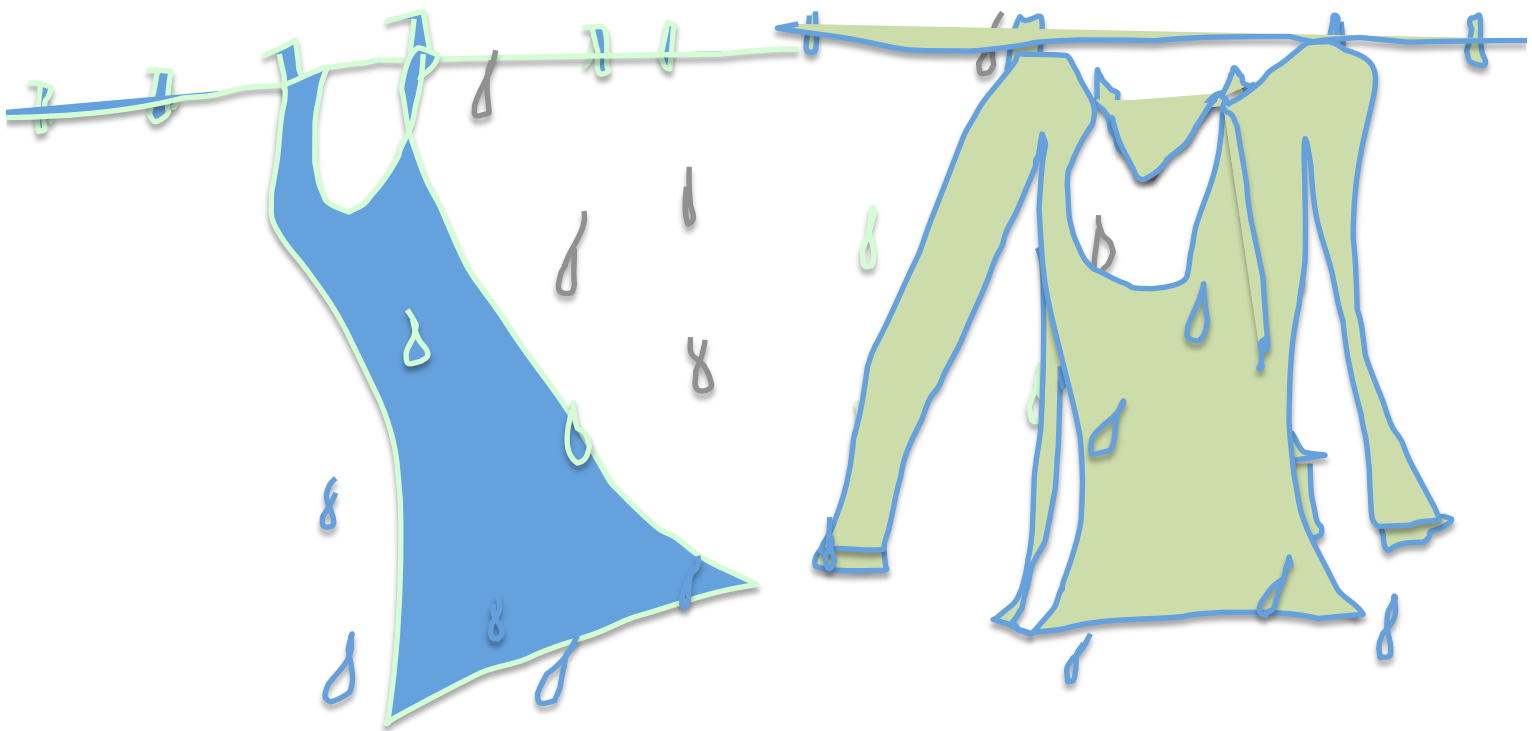
'The doctor within'

Gina felt that her homeopath was leading the way to health - she was never sure if the remedies were working. There were so many symptoms and then there was the healing crisis - well there appeared to be a constant healing crisis! But somewhere along that line of thought was a sense that she was being guided 'to the Doctor within!'



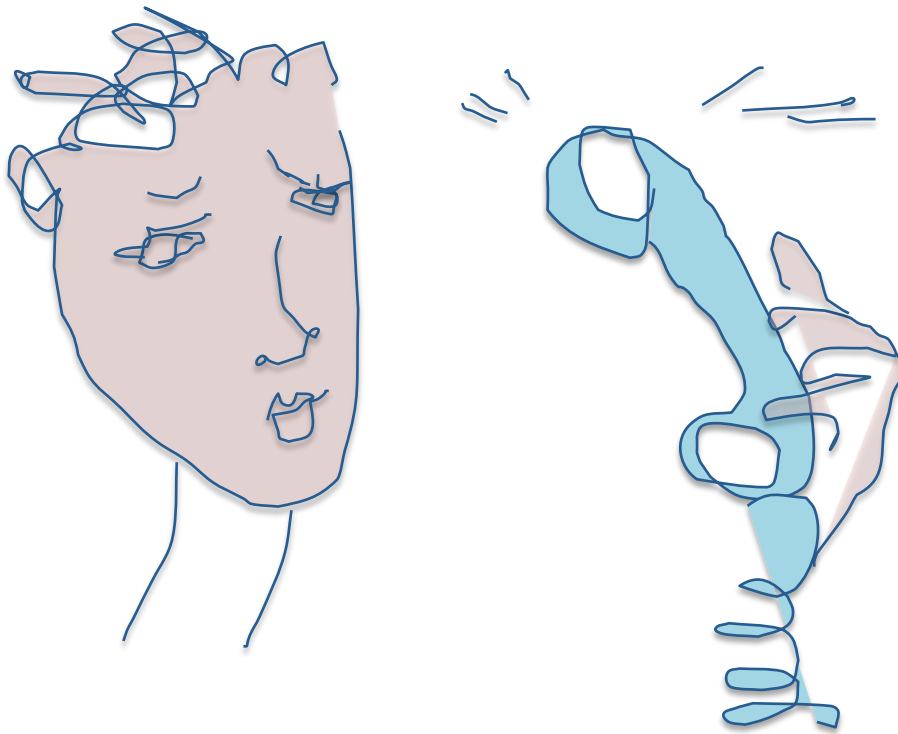
'The rain check'

Standing at the gate she felt the humidity of the air and a light touch of rain. She was wearing her waterproof jacket and wellies and was looking forward to walking in the rain. However the ground felt shaky. The view across to the park appeared to shift and fog over slightly. She tried to focus and at once noted a weakness in her legs. Something was amiss. She decided to go back in doors and take an internal rain check. Gina carefully ascended the steps to her front door, having to acknowledge she was too weak to go out. So much disappointment at having to resign herself to another day indoors. She did not want to go through this again, but what to do?



'The telephone conversation'

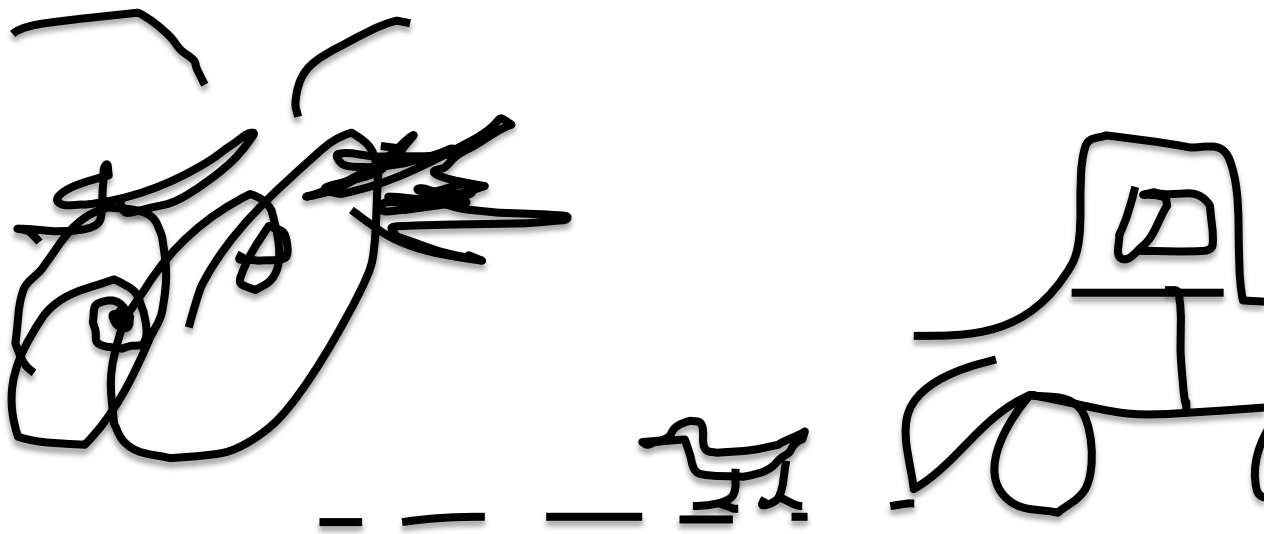
After a telephone conversation with the doctor, Gina is exhausted - 'why should this be so?' She felt under interrogation - the doc is asking questions at a speed at which she is finding it difficult to answer. Trying to articulate all her symptoms felt like a cognitive test.



The doctor was in a rush and under pressure. Now Gina was both sick and under pressure.

'There were advantages!'

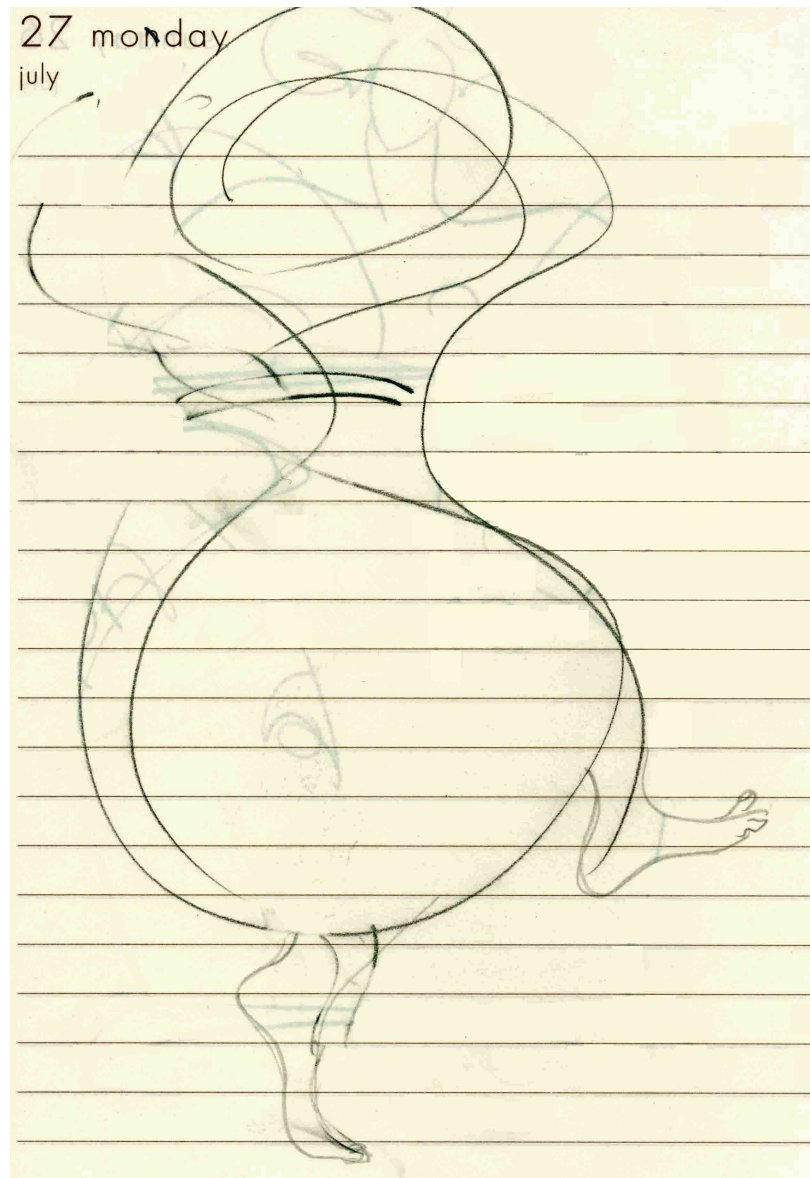
The advantage of being so sensitive was that she could see signals way ahead.... It gave her the vantage to act in time....



'Tip toeing somewhat!

A space for victory - food intake is on the up - yippee!

Today Gina had a small amount of potato that had been cooked in the juice of a casserole containing some grapes/beetroot/broccoli/garlic & lamb. Previously the juice alone would initial and reaction - so still tip toeing somewhat, but feeling like a mountain was moved. The threat was there still lurking in the back ground like an enemy hiding in the bushes waiting to jump out at any moment. However this moment was there to enjoy - feeling like a first proper meal. Gina struggled past the minor symptoms, followed her hunger and just ate. A challenging operation that it was, had succeeded today.



2009

October

289-76

Friday **16**

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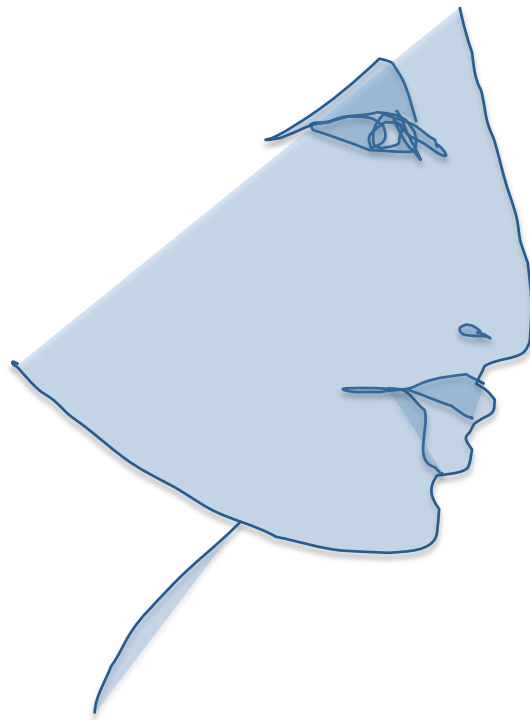
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Evening

Notes

October

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
			1	2	3	4
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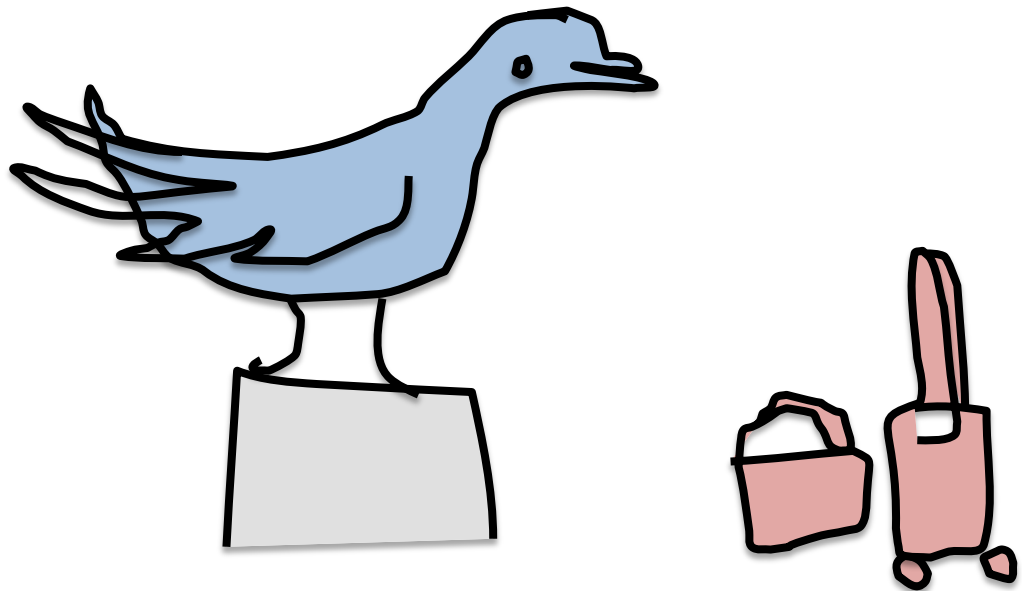
Drawing in the dark

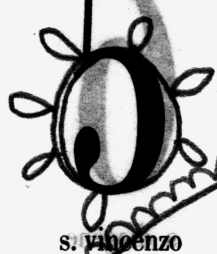
Dreaming at the airport

Gina was at the airport, or an entity of herself that was manifest in dream form. She had left her baggage on the train. Her friend shrugged it off and decided to relax and enjoy the airport facilities. Gina worried and sort out help. She was introduced to a manager who guided her to the lost baggage section. On their way he had to pause to attend to some managerial matters. By this time Gina was tired and leaned her head on his shoulder to rest.

The airport was a world full of people in transit, either waiting for their next flight or on hold because of some fault or error that occurred on their journey.

They were occupied as if in another country, as if having arrived at their destination (*without concern for their in-transit status*). They were enjoying and very present in their space, as if they were meant to be there and something they needed to be there for. At least for a short while.





S. Vincenzo

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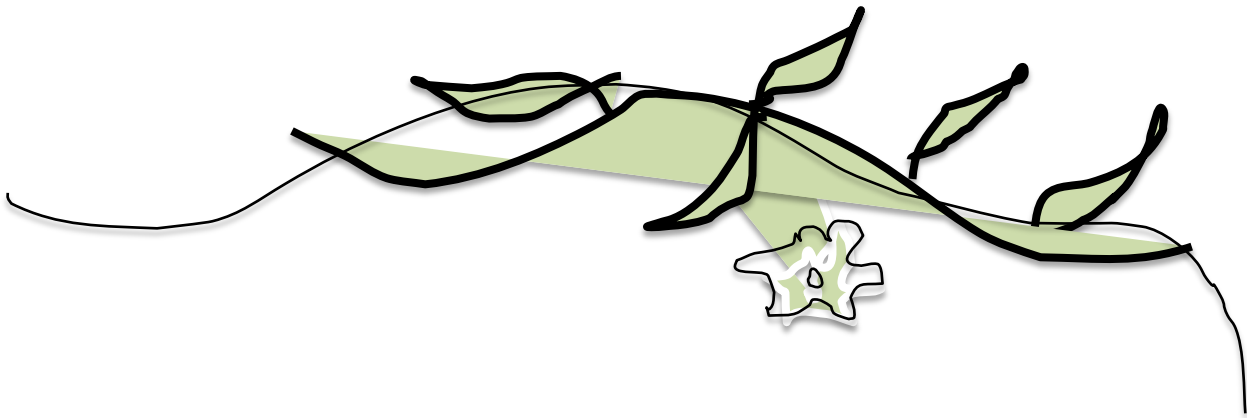
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ma/tu/ma/di	-	6	13	20	27
me/we/me/mi	-	7	14	21	28
gi/th/je/do	1	8	15	22	29
ve/fr/ve/fr	2	9	16	23	30
sa/sa/sa/sa	3	10	17	24	
do/su/di/so	4	11	18	25	

Flowering Jasmine plant....

The jasmine plant never flowered after that 'ill' fated pruning. Gina had cut it, in a daze of exhaustion and ill health. It was an attempt at trying to get back to normal by doing some 'normal' things, a desire to 'touch the earth'. Unfortunately it looked like the jasmine got sick too. It grew leaves in abundance but never flowered. Gina felt guilty, like she must have damaged the plant through her illness, somehow contaminating it. Today however as she sat gazing into the distance, enjoying the warmth of the sun, her eyes rested on a little white flower - a jasmine flower! She then spotted another, just two that was all, not much, but a sign to Gina that something had changed for the flower and in her world too.



'Soldiering on for breakfast!'

Today didn't bring any satisfying results. Gina tasted her first mouthful of brown rice flavored with coconut oil. Her throat gave that old familiar signal - it tightened - leaving little room to swallow. She again attempted another spoonful. Hunger being the leading factor. This time it was accompanied by a prickling sensation she associated with asthma, a further tightening of her throat, her chest and head. Reluctantly she placed her bowl of food down and just focused on breathing, as this was enough to consume all the energy she could muster.

So, she decided to review her options. It seemed very difficult to get an appointment with a doctor. There was a current shortage of doctors in general at her local practice. Gina had managed to get an app for three weeks ahead - emergency appointments meant being on hold on phone to the surgery for an eternity - to then find all app are booked! enough to make you sick! The solution she had been offered so far was anti allergic medication. Although grateful, that there was an option, taking this every day just to eat and without understanding the cause, did not appeal. The solution she thought must be at home - something was a trigger?

Gina rolled through the most recent items and today she would start that old process of eliminating each one. A process she had gone through, time after time.

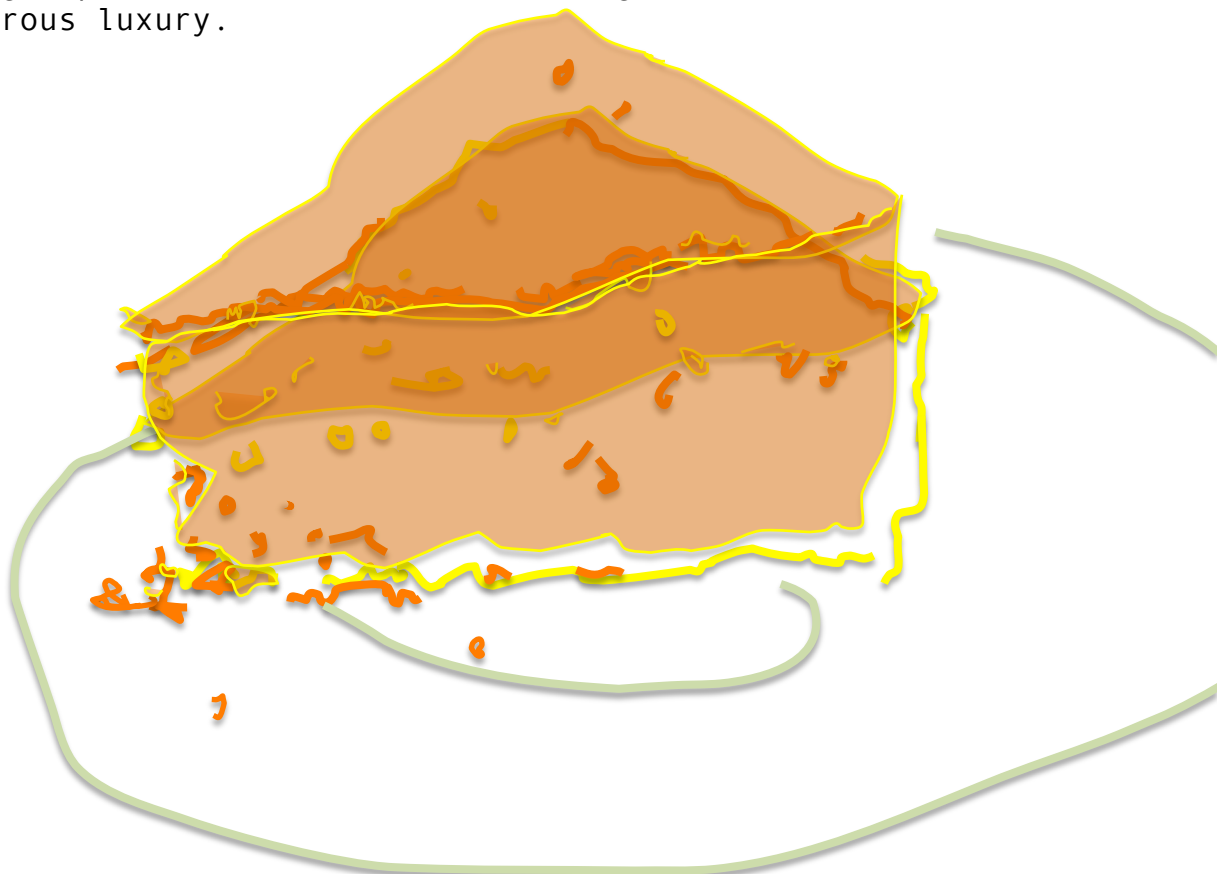


Found in garden.

Heather
Pholder
found object
10/7/2014

Main ingredients!

Standing in the queue, she waited patiently. Gina wanted to ask the man at the stall in the market about the ingredients. The tag said '*Ground almonds, Orange, Lemon, Sugar & Eggs*'. 'I can eat that' she mused to herself 'well some of it', there were little ingredients that she might just get away with on occasional whims. 'But was that it?', as in all! the ingredients. Eventually he was free for her to ask her essential question. At first he said 'yep' that was it, everything. 'Everything? Gina positioned? He paused and said 'well.. there is some bicarbonate, to make it rise a little' . . pausing again, he said .. ' and possibly, something else' then hesitating 'I can't be certain' he said. 'That's Okay' replied Gina, smiling as she turned away. The uncertainty posed a little too much risk. Gina had now worked up an appetite. The cake had teased her with its possibilities. It had sat seductively, arresting her gaze. Her mouth watered, the almonds, lemon, orange & sugar had all invited a culinary engagement, but not to be fulfilled. Having a pre-cooked treat was becoming a rare and dangerous luxury.



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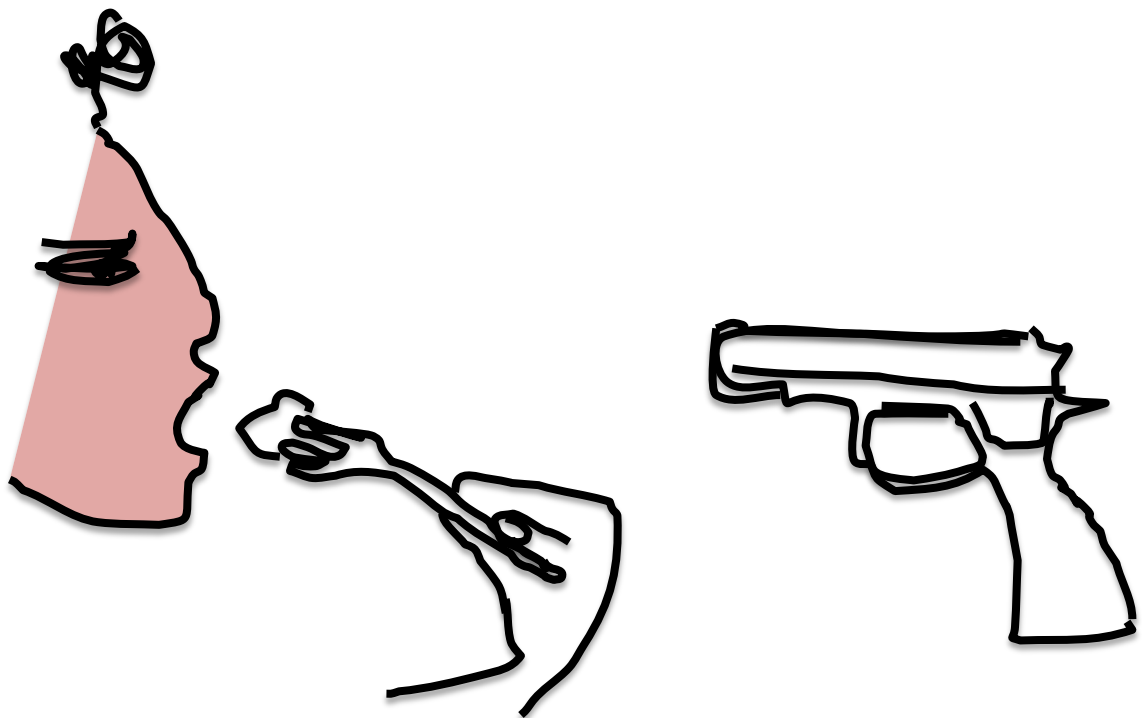
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me/we/me/mi	-	7	14	21	28
gi/th/je/do	1	8	15	22	29
ve/fr/ve/fr	2	9	16	23	30
sa/sa/sa/sa	3	10	17	24	-
do/su/di/so	4	11	18	25	-

Russian Roulette

Gina had now stopped using her lipstick, just in case it was a possible cause of her reactions! Additionally she was looking into her dental fillings for the same reason.

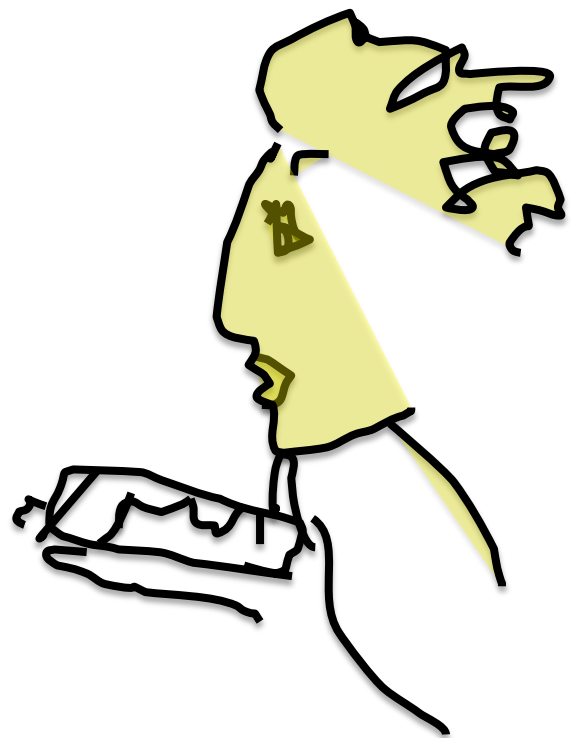
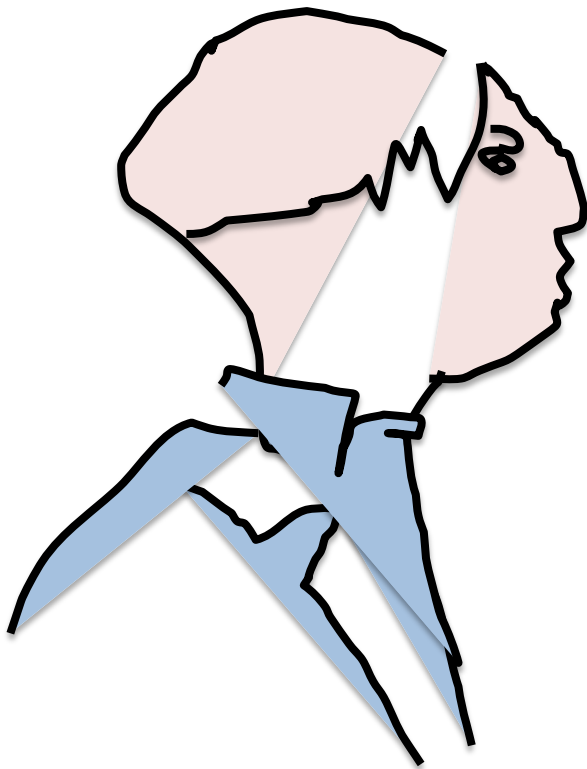
'Have been using clay twice a day, to offset allergic reaction - I'm eating, but each bite feels like a game of Russian roulette' Gina logged in her health diary.



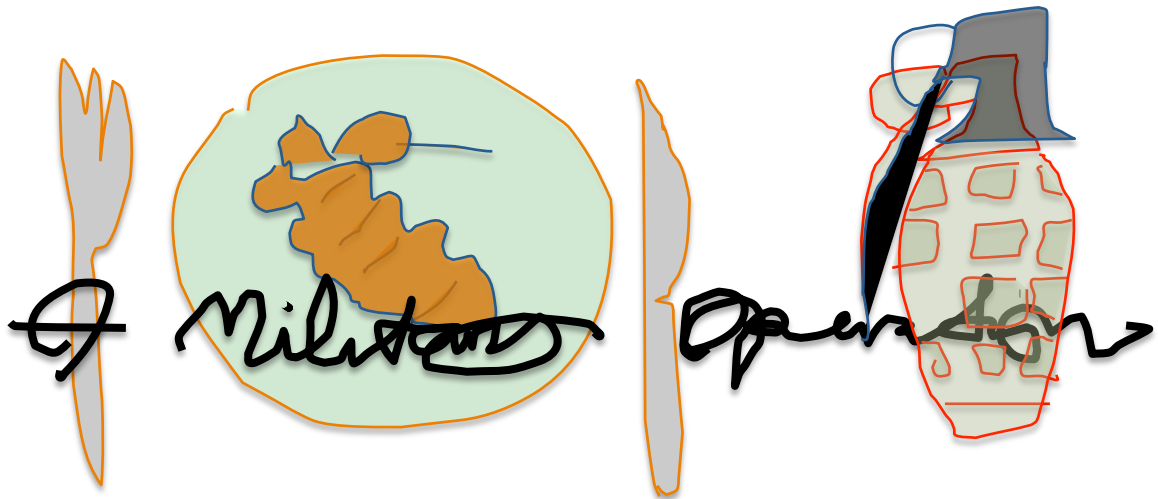
My old phone is just fine!

Phone

Upgrade



Gina hung on to old technology. Like in the case of an old relationship that she knew was well over, she hung on to its comfort & familiarity for dear life. Upgrading to the latest in new developments, even though she often enjoyed the benefits, her cognitive brain felt way too overloaded, to keep up with learning new instructions. It hurt her head. In fact, she was keen on down grading.



She described it as ‘a military operation!’ -

...like walking through a field of hand grenades, aware that one may go off at any moment. So even though Gina swallowed food, there was always something unresolved.. a swelling at the back of her tongue, a weakness in her limbs, a tightness in her chest...a shortness of breath. At the back of her throat a pulse would appear at first so quiet, to then increase in volume to a pounding threat .. and then that cotton wool like fog would begin to engulf her. It remained a mystery, sitting dormant, waiting, threatening to return, ready to go off at any moment. Swallowing was labored. Eating failed.

One thing for sure was that there was always a new opportunity for success, as hunger was always there waiting for the next meal.

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s. albino



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me/we/me/mi	3	10	17	24	31
gi/th/je/do	4	11	18	25	-
ve/fr/ve/fr	5	12	19	26	-
sa/sa/sa/sa	6	13	20	27	-
do/su/di/so	7	14	21	28	-

Signals

The signal came again - it was subtle - not too loud but forceful enough to make itself noticed. It has been a familiar territory, that no-go area in food. Gina couldn't even remember what she had eaten this time that triggered the allergic fault. Maybe it was a gradual build up - 'I guess that was it' she thought to herself. So back to old school again, of clay, grapes, coconut oil and carrot juice, trying out other foods a little here and there, but the signals weren't clear. It was yessing and noing. Sometimes it was okay and then just one more mouthful and her throat was closing in, breathing shallow, her head tightening before the fog. So she decided not to eat at all. It was the best thing yet - in four days it had all cleared and she was back to her maintenance diet - not great, but workable.

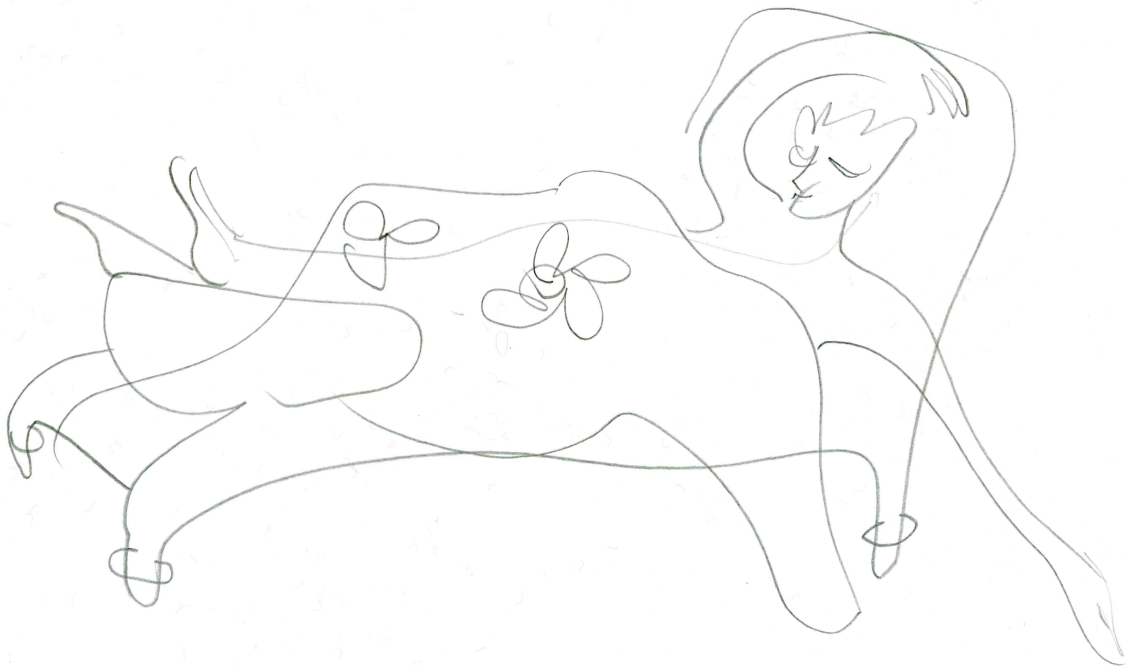
Her body had been saying 'no' - her desire for food was a hungry 'yes' - and her head was trying to work it all out, the logistics of her food reactions so far, the could's and the could not's. Which one to listen to - She sussed out that at least in this case, when the body said 'no' then that was the leading voice of authority.



'A fully engaged life!'

Gina was so tired all the time. So tired that sometimes she wished she could die. Not for the purpose of ending it all... no, not at all, as she very much wanted to live. She just wanted to have a rest. Long enough to rid herself of all this fatigue. To awaken refreshed and embark on a fully engaged life. Not this half-life she felt she was living.

One hundred & one definitions
of tiredness 'to sub fatigue'



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12/1993	48	49	50	51	52
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me/we/me/mi	1	8	15	22	29
gi/th/je/do	2	9	16	23	30
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sa/sa/sa/sa	4	11	18	25	-
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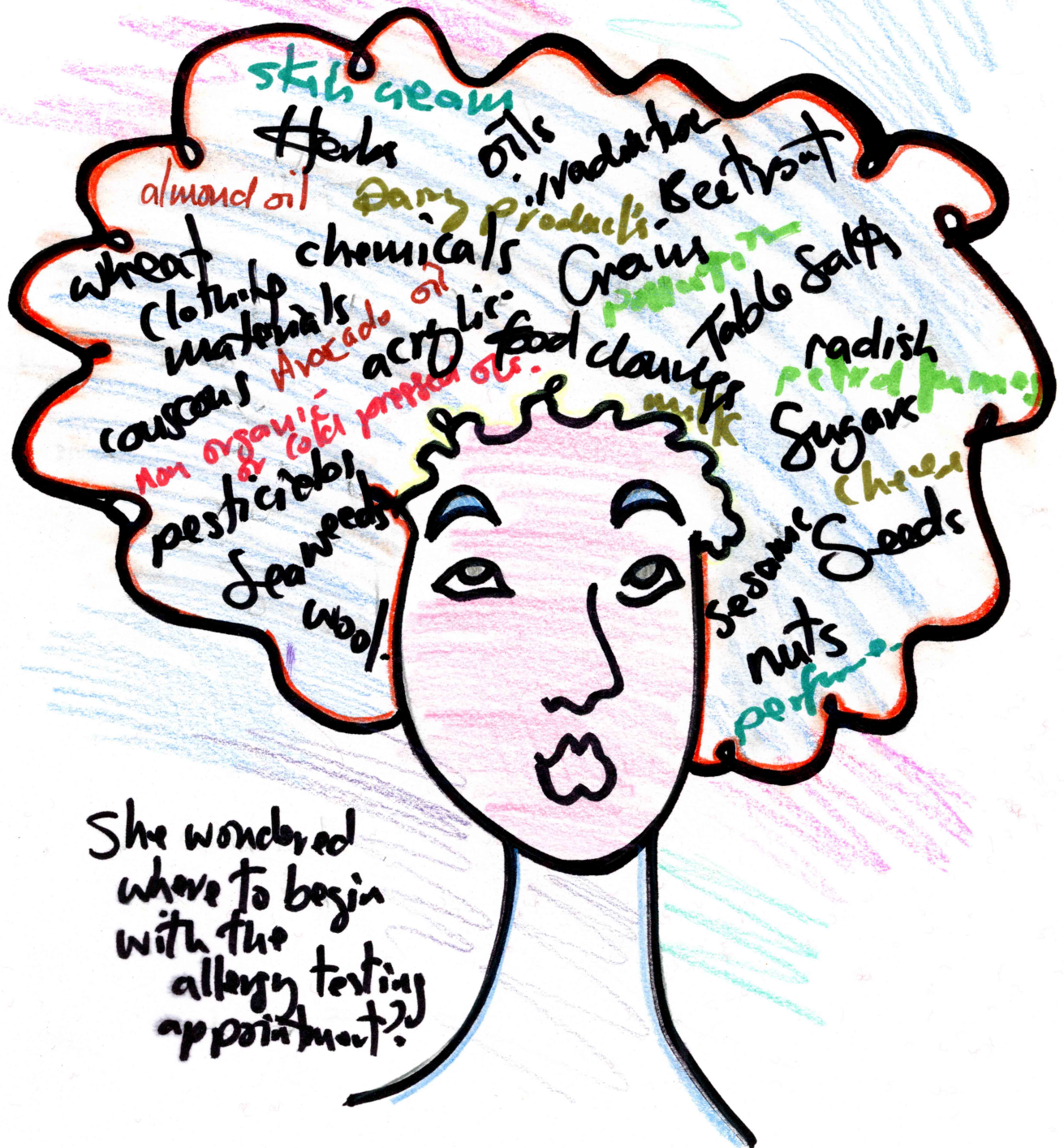
'The extremely unusual case!'

The division between allopathic and alternatives created two worlds for Gina. In one she perceived herself as the norm and the other as an extremely unusual case. As a result she felt nervous going to the Doctor, she felt she had a complicated medical history. Gina would condense everything down into the 10 min slot or a double appointment at 20mins if she could get one and to then leave enough time for a response. A allergy specialist once said to her 'it's the odd way you explain things'.

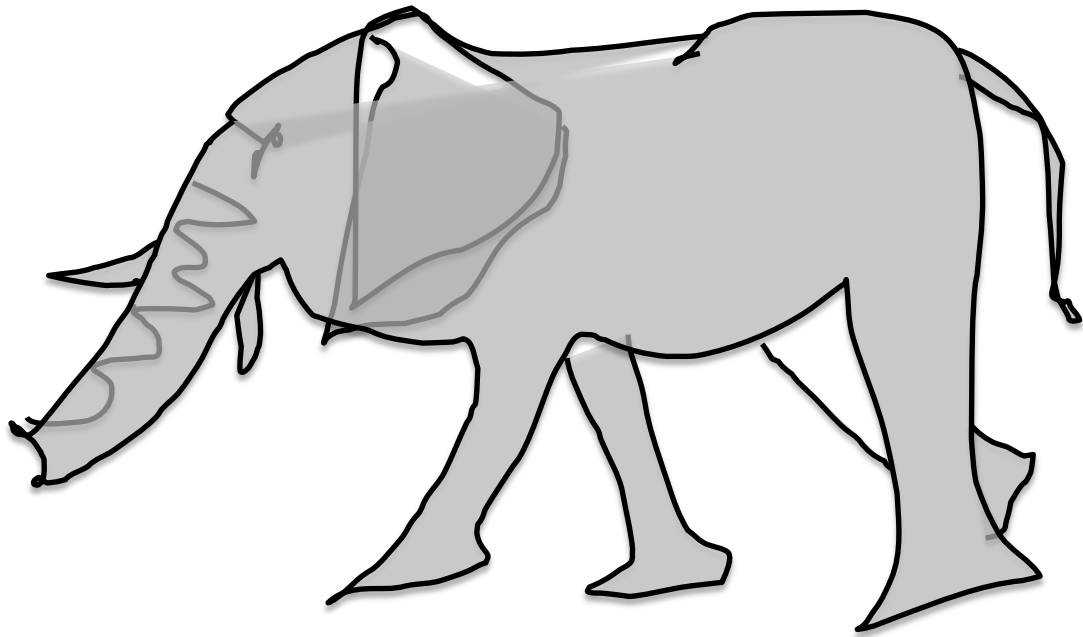
This was now becoming more like a workload, revising & prepping before an appointment, getting her words right. As a result she would avoid going to the doc unless totally pushed... and yes she was pushed.



" ! "



The Object & the elephant

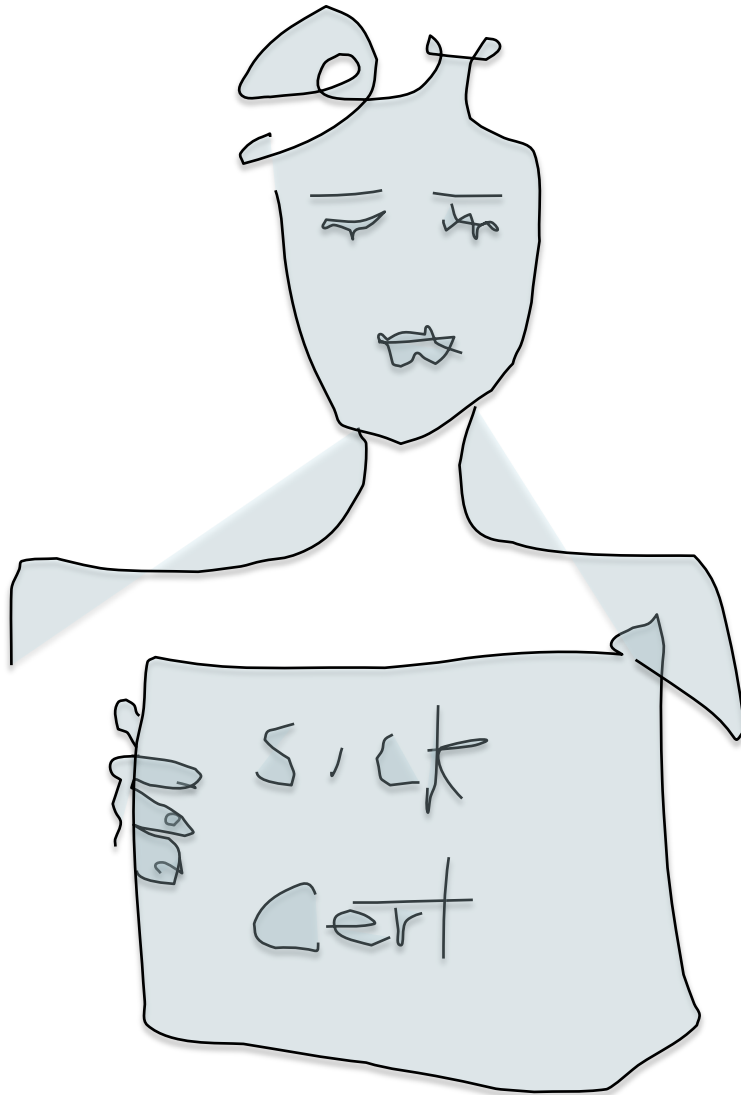


Gina left the hospital, her arms all tattooed with black pen markings that specified the foods tested and a few red bumps indicating where there was an allergic response. The doc went to great length to explain how allergies worked. He explained the differences between allergies and intolerances and that somehow her symptoms didn't fit the picture of allergies as she had so many. He suggested that 'maybe they are created in your mind,' - he paused, 'They are of course real symptoms, but..' Gina saw him searching for words, Gina finished off his sentence with 'you mean its all in my head, but real?' she questioned. 'But I could be wrong' he continued, 'you may just be intolerant.. and in the case of the other red spots .. well, maybe you are sensitized but not really allergic, meaning the test is positive but you can maybe still eat the foods!' He finished by saying that they knew very little about allergies!.

Gina's brain was getting tired now and after a while had stopped listening, she was beginning to feel a great sense of hopelessness. Were there no other potential causes to be explored? Gina's unexplained illness sat like an elephant taking up a great amount of space in her life.

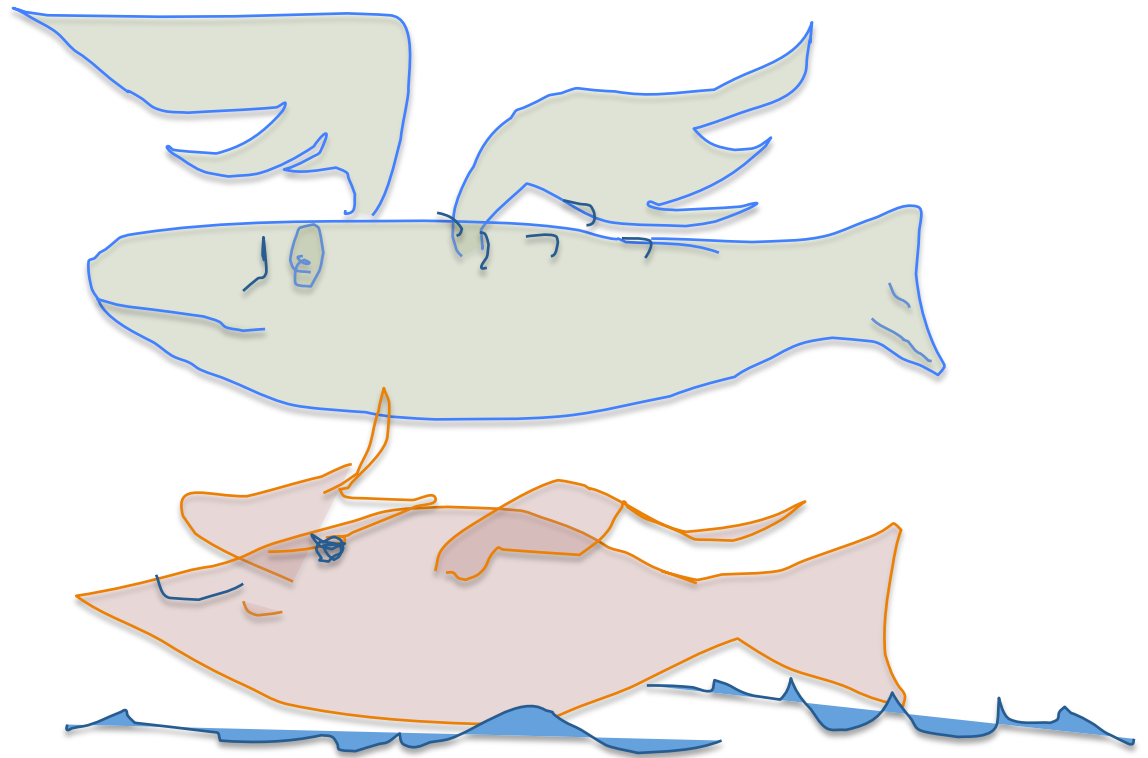
He offered her help from the dietitian. Gina was not enthusiastic but had no strength of will left to say no.

'The certainty of the medical certificate?'

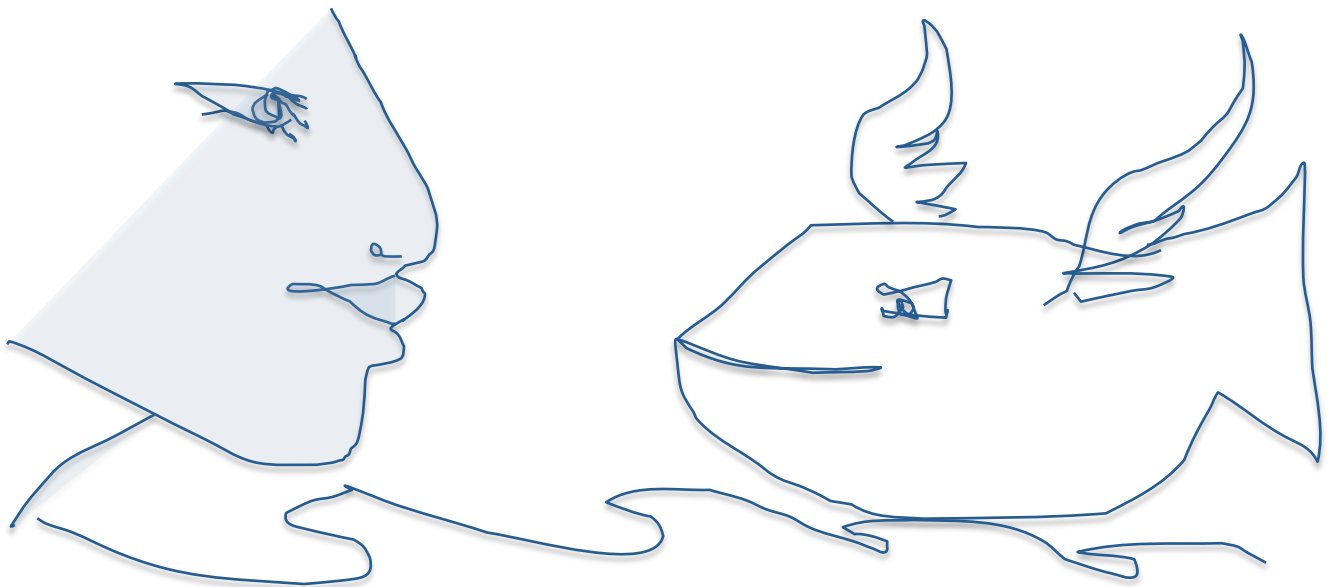


Chapter 6

'The fish - was not for eating'



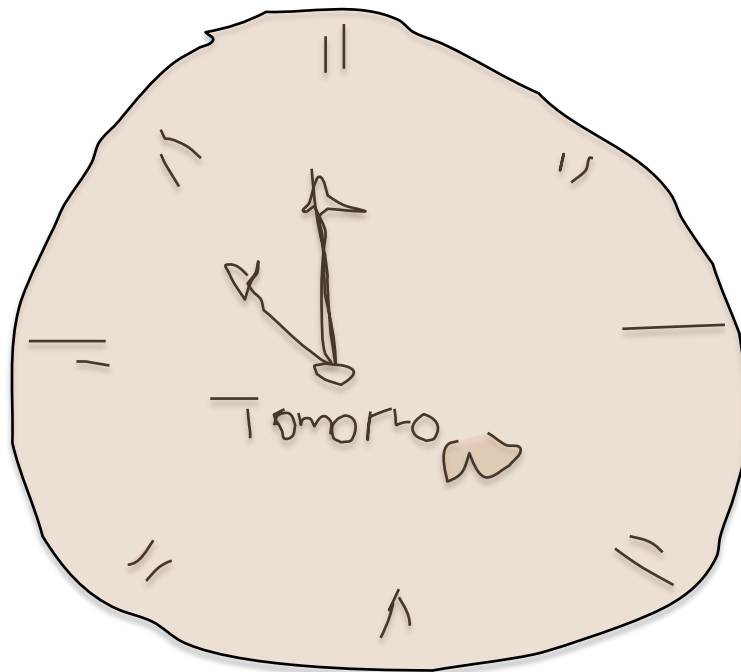
Gina craved Mackerel - she had done so the last time this had happened and was able to eat micro amounts, mixed with rice and built up from that. Amongst other foods, she was finally able to get back to a reasonable diet. This time however the fish was not for consumption. Instead that old familiar feeling returned and eating had to remain on hold, other than her routine, rice and grapes mantra.



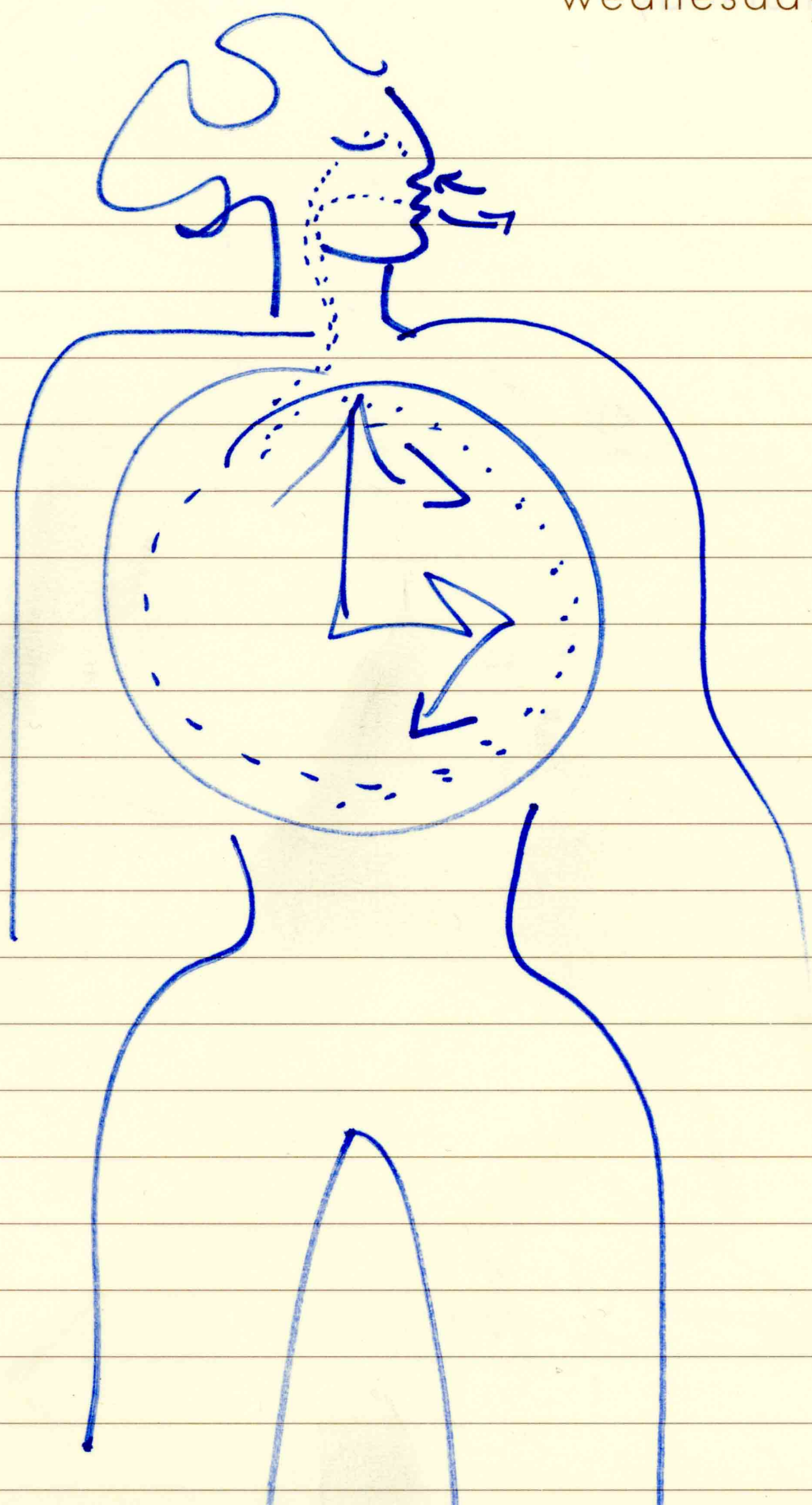
That night, Gina dreamt she had wished upon herself a special fish, all the way from some very pure clean ocean.

Day Nine

It was now day nine - the last time this had happened things were resolved after ten days - day ten was just around the corner with no signs of relief.



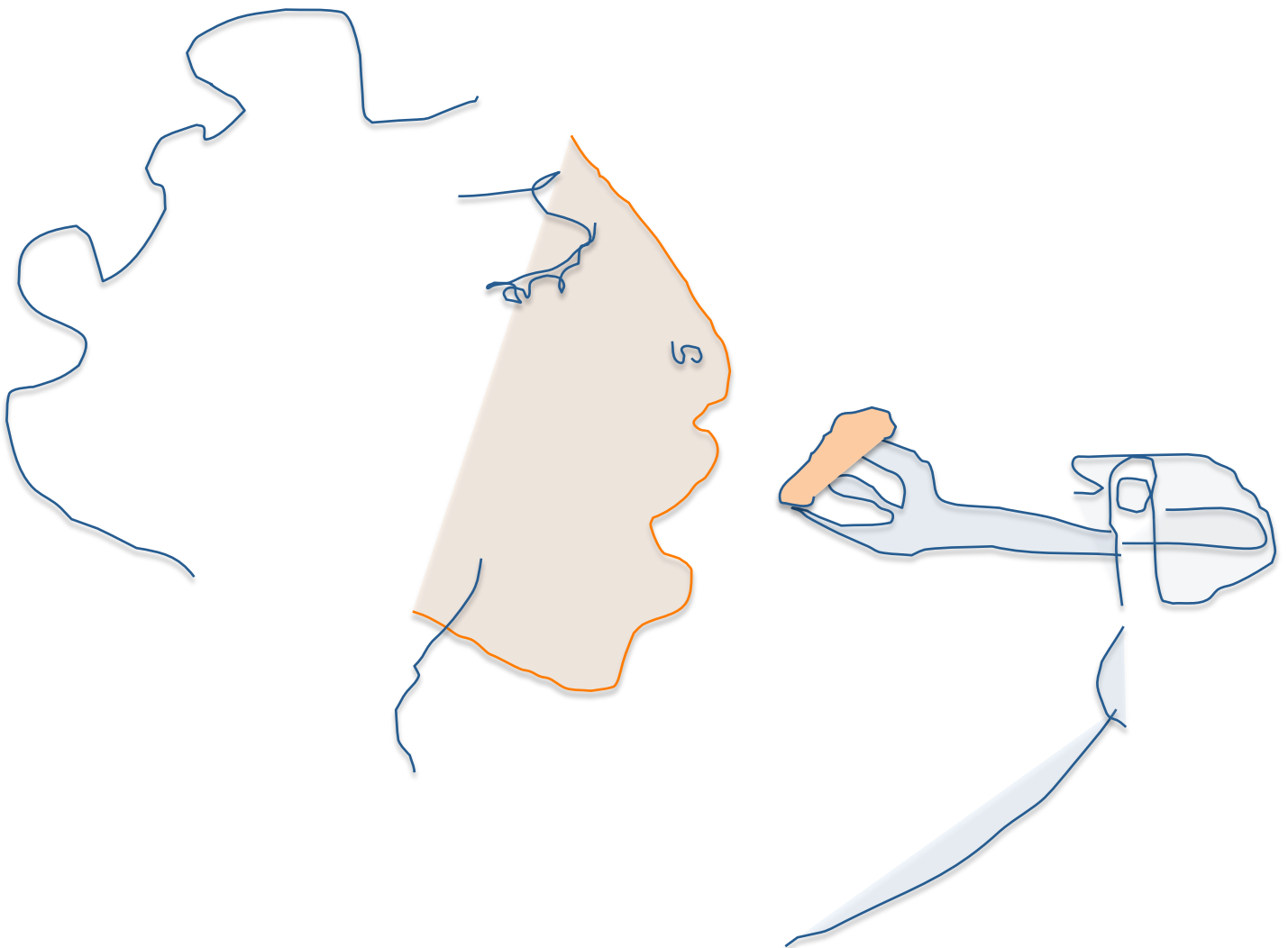
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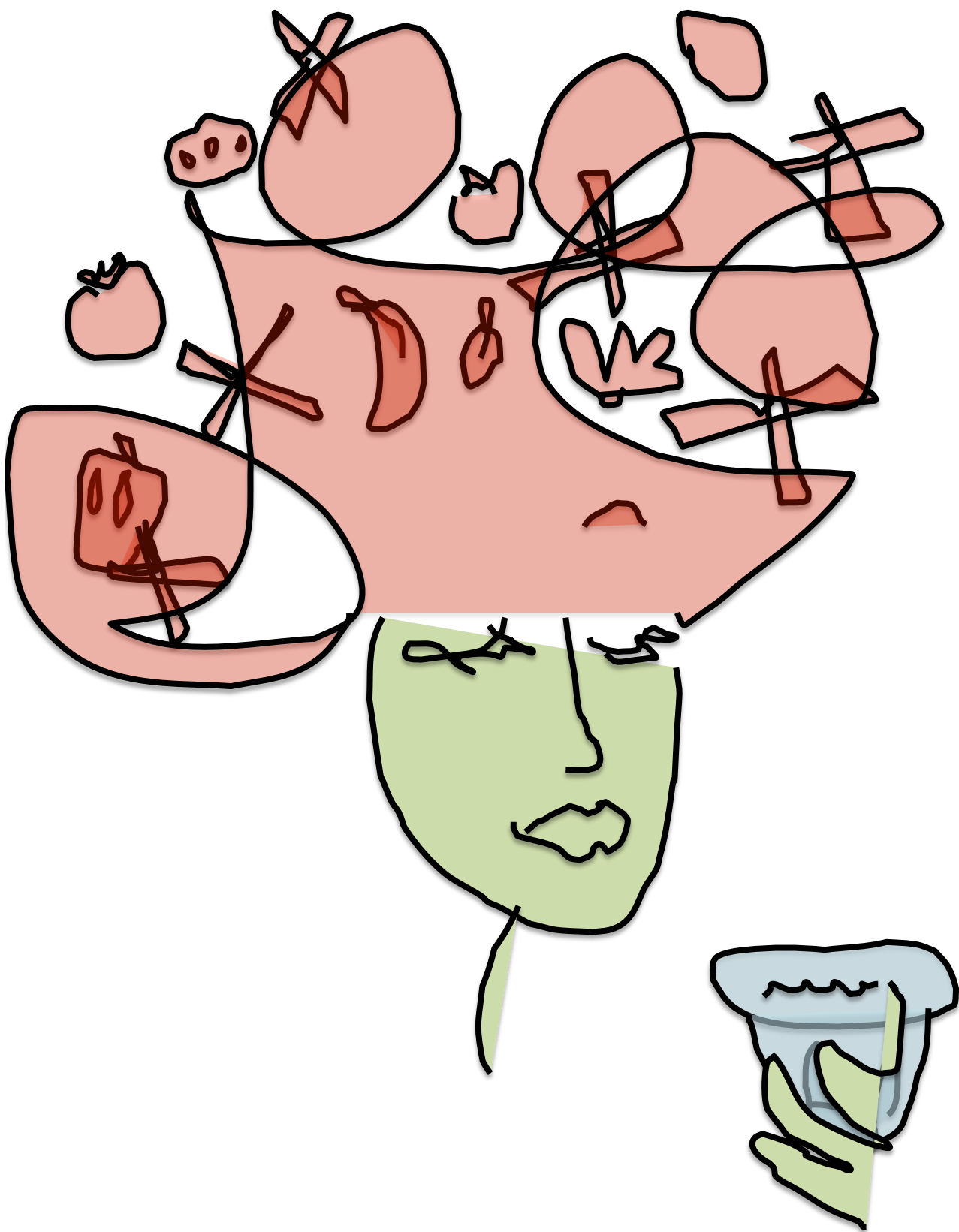


'A miracle of the day!'

One mouthful at breakfast and she knew immediately that things were not right, that old familiar swelling at the back of her throat..weakness..legs like jelly - she waited a while - did a few other things - got her bag ready and dressed and sat back down again to eat. The same again, no progress. Gina felt light headed now, was she able to go to the doctor, was there any point when feeling too weak to go, was it going to be any use. 'But what else should I do' thought Gina, accompanied by despair.

Later that day Gina mixed some of the left over ingredients from cooking her mother's meal and mixed it into the rice, she willed herself to be able to eat the food. With the exception of a mild reaction she fulfilled the task - a miracle of the day!





Maybe Less is more!

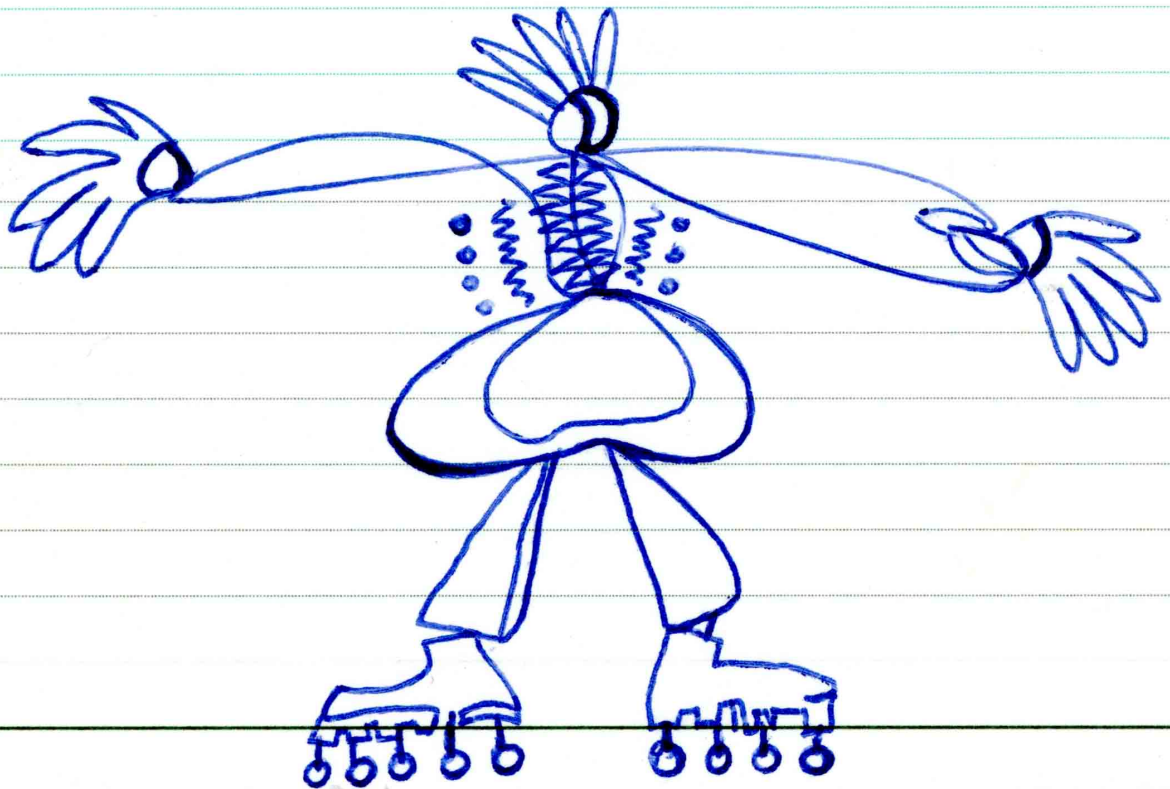
Even though Gina felt totally stuck at what to do, she continued her day, having adjusted to being at home as energy permitted. Gina took periodic mouthfuls of food in the hope that 'maybe this time it might be okay.. but her mind questioned with, 'Am I being silly? ... & What should I be doing that I'm not doing already?' or maybe less is more?. Her body didn't want to eat, so was not eating the answer to eating?. She pondered if she should just go on a water fast rather than forcing food down?. 'Who knows' she thought, 'I have no energy to think!'



'Leopard in dream'

How are you today?

How are you today?
I'm fine thank you
& yourself?



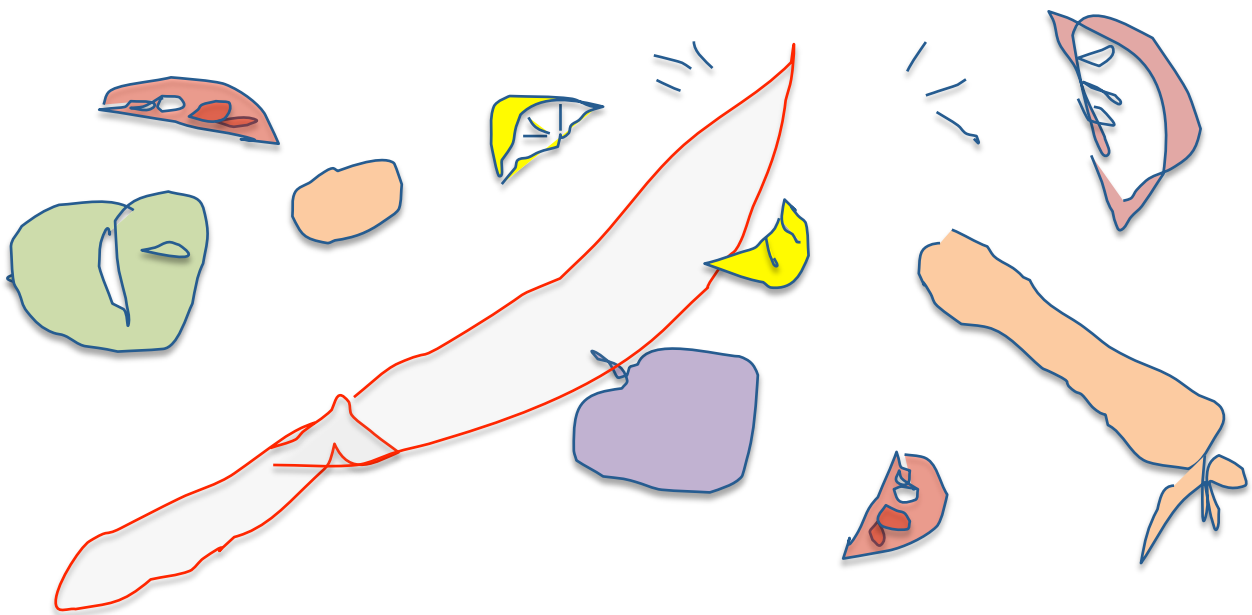
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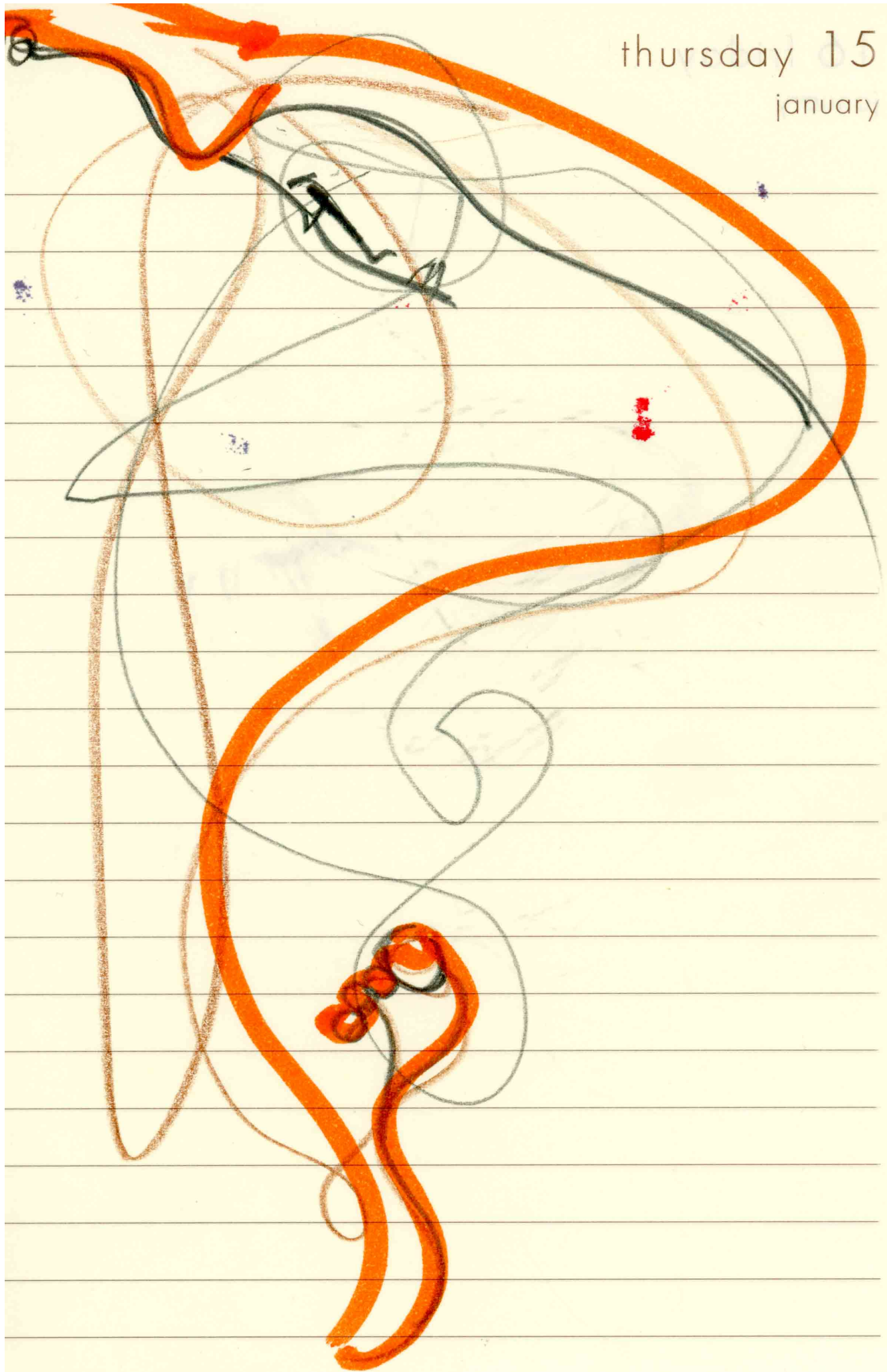
'The ephemeral battle field'

Having survived the blood test, Gina wondered if she could make it there and back without passing out from hunger. As the nurse drew blood Gina saw the walls fog over - she focused hard and thought of the grapes in her bag she could soon eat to replenish herself. She had managed to mumble a 'hello' as she walked into the blood sample room, too weak to smile, she sat like a wet blanket aware of her body sink & be swallowed into the chair. Once over, she glanced a good bye, to the nurse.

Once home, she drank the clay water before her meal of rice and experimented with a spoon of veg. The clay seemed to work she had told herself many times, but it was hard to identify solutions and be sure when they all appeared ephemeral, on the battle field.



thursday 15
january



The food carrier

.. Gina was now in the habit of carrying around with her whatever food she was currently able to eat.

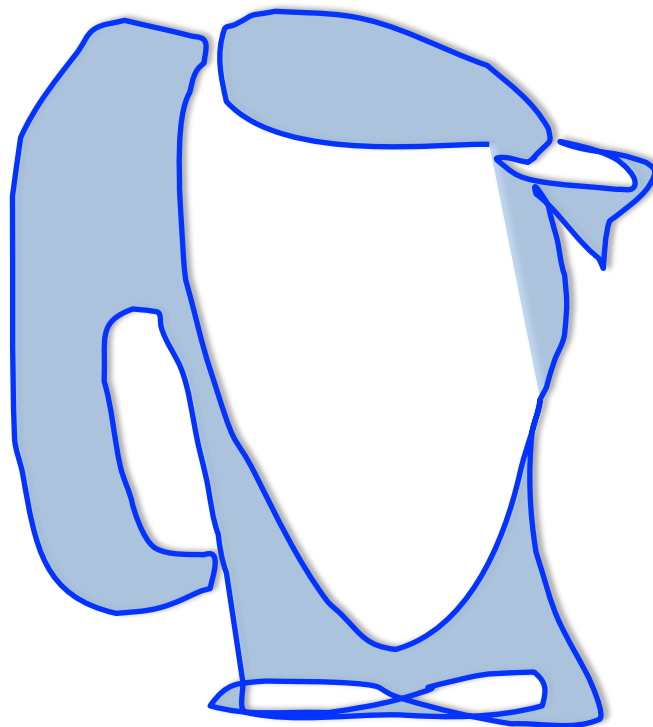


'The glass Kettle, didn't fit'

After the third stainless steel kettle failed the magnet test - she felt defeated. Questioning herself 'Have I not done the research? She in fact felt over researched and wanted to call it a day. Gina was now making tea in a saucepan (non nickeled, magnetic friendly) - was this the way forward?

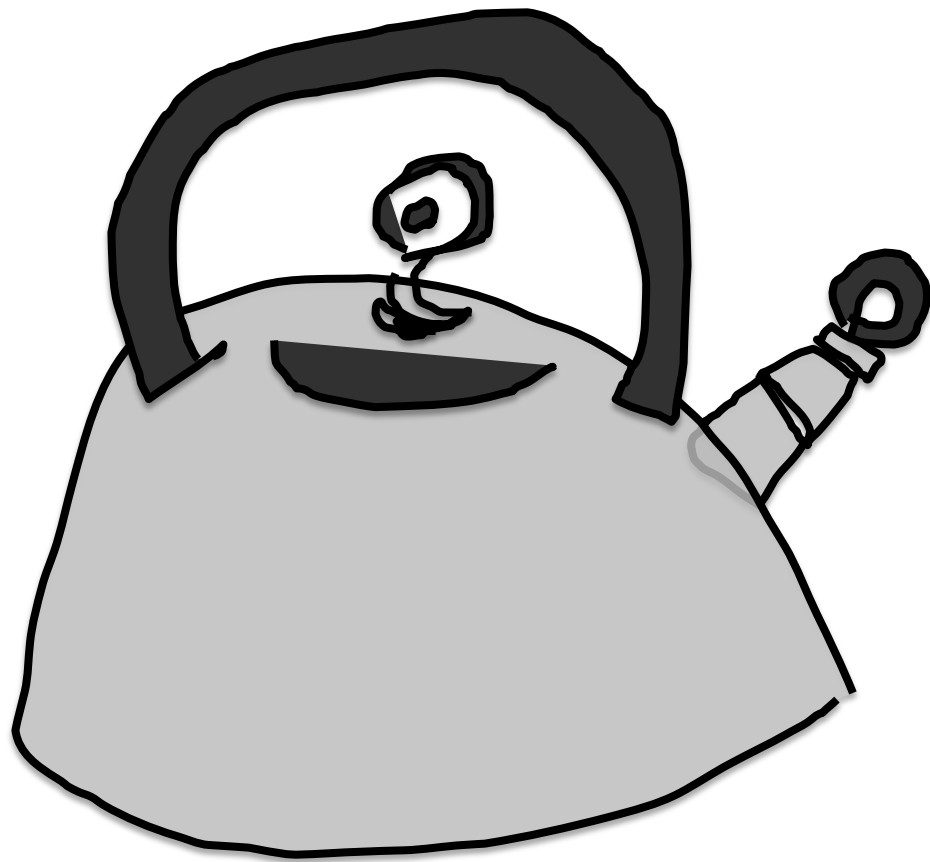
Gina tried to think of all possibilities when it came to causes. The nickel in stainless steel had never crossed her mind before - neither the estrogens from plastic. Glass was the remaining option. So a glass kettle, maybe, was going to have to be. The two companies she tried, had not got back to her about the make up composition of their stainless steel. A glass kettle hadn't appealed, simply for cost and fragility of glass.

When she did finally get it, the glass kettle that is, when boiling water, a strong chemical smell of rubber from its internal seal, fragranced the tea!.





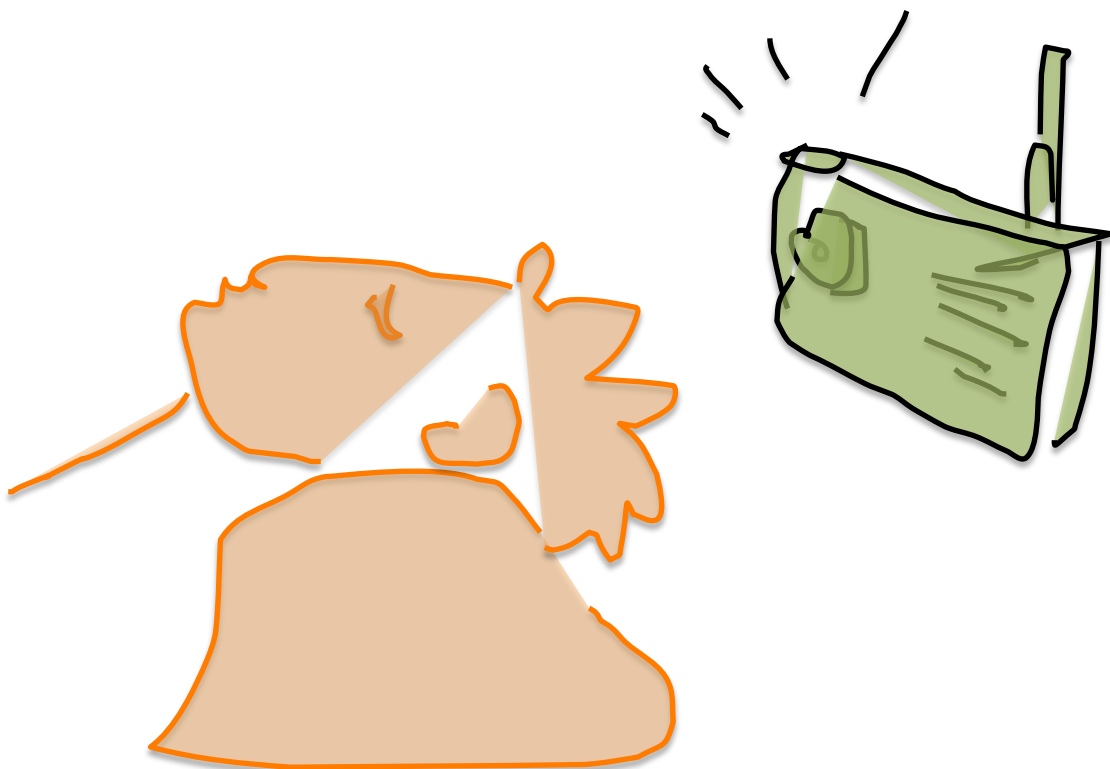
Gina's cheap and cheerful,
'free from' Nickel kettle?



'...and so it happened again'

...& so it happened again, four months later she was back on grapes, virgin coconut oil and whole grain rice, oh..., and carrot juice. It never satisfied. Eating this left her empty & still feeling hungry. Again the clay & water saved her from the allergic response when testing out new foods. Although she could never prove its worth in weight and never really knew how close she may be to tittering on the borderlines of risky. It was something she had simply discovered herself.

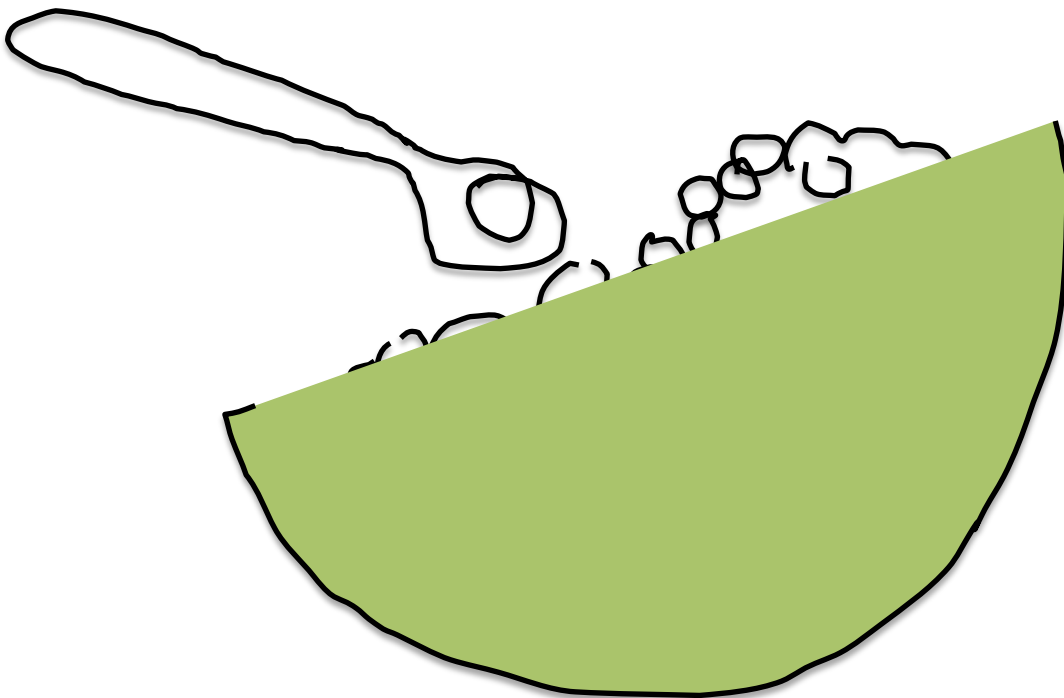
This time Gina felt very low. It was the third recurrence in nine months. The last one lasting close to a month. At first she was buoyant ... cavalier about it, 'Oh,' she twittered to herself, 'I caught it early this time ... hopefully nipped it in the Bud' & 'I'm sure I'll be over it soon'. But as the bank holiday weekend swung into action she felt left behind in a world that appeared to her in full swing. She however remained at home as weakness gradually took over and she retreated into a world of audio books.



'A dish of peas'

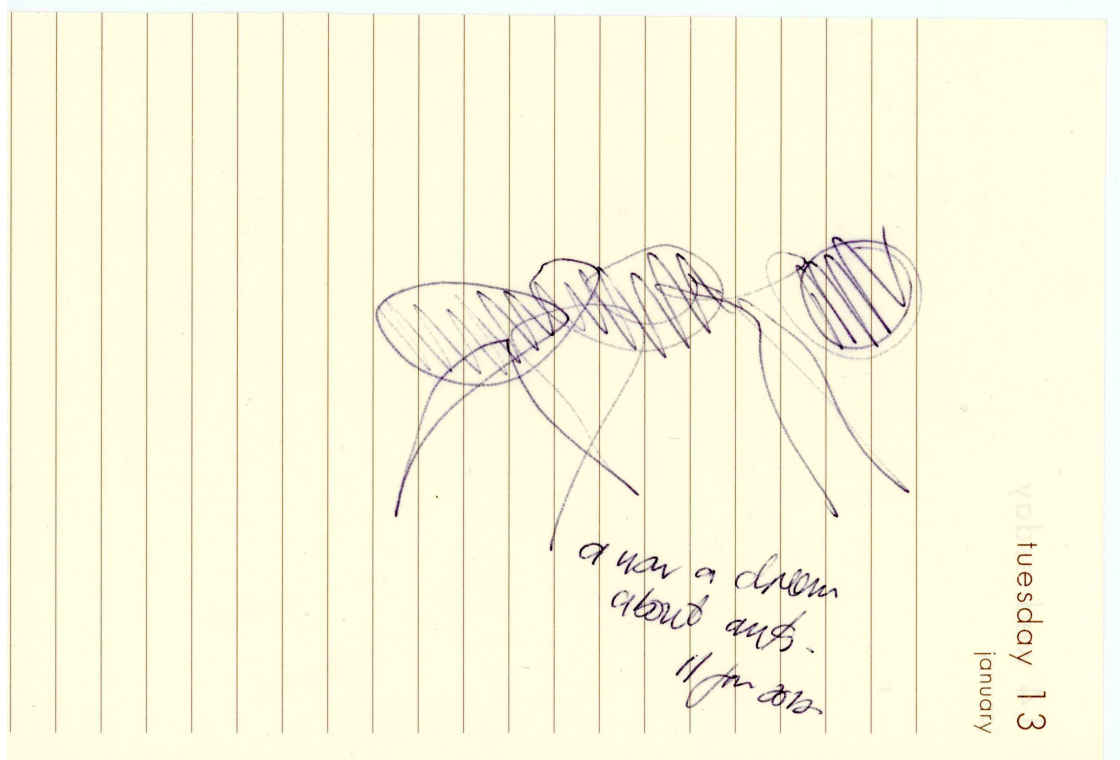
Another appointment today. Gina had done with appointments! & 'I've already been told the allergy test results...' she thought to herself. Not knowing how to approach things anymore, she, in a moment of weakness, not wanting to be seen as being difficult, had agreed to see another dietitian. Will Gina learn something new this time? and if not, what was the alternative.

Peas, coconut oil and sea salt. This was lunch most days. Gina hadn't realized that peas have a significant amount protein or at least enough to come close to satisfying Gina's daily dosage according to the dietitian. This was a good job as it was Gina's, let's say, only fast food in that it was easy to shake out a portion of frozen peas into a saucepan and bring to the boil.



'Shaking off the cloud!'

At home, in her own world, Gina was fine, things were fine. Looking in the mirror she appeared to look the same, same face, same weight - managing to ignore the inevitable weight loss. Now sat in front of the bowl of peas, a spoonful of coconut oil and whole grain rice, Gina had every intention of eating her fill & so hungry too. Everything normal so far, but given a few spoonful's, one too many and her lips tingled, like a small swarm of bees dancing about her lips, the back of her throat felt full, closing in-fact. Light-headedness began to creep around her, occupying her senses. Gina stood up slowly, wanting to shake off the cloud - one she could not ignore. Her attention was now focused on not having another spoonful before too late. 'I am so fed up with this' she thought. Another cul-de-sac of sorts.



Dreamt about ants!

saturday 3

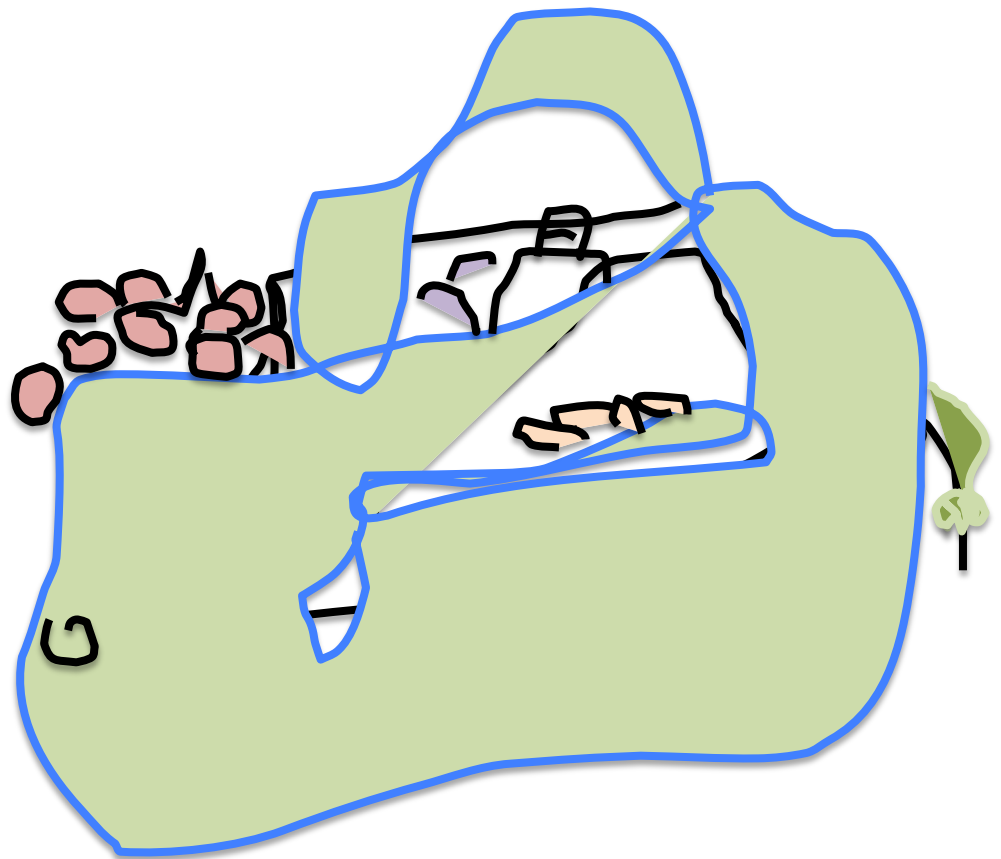
january

RUS



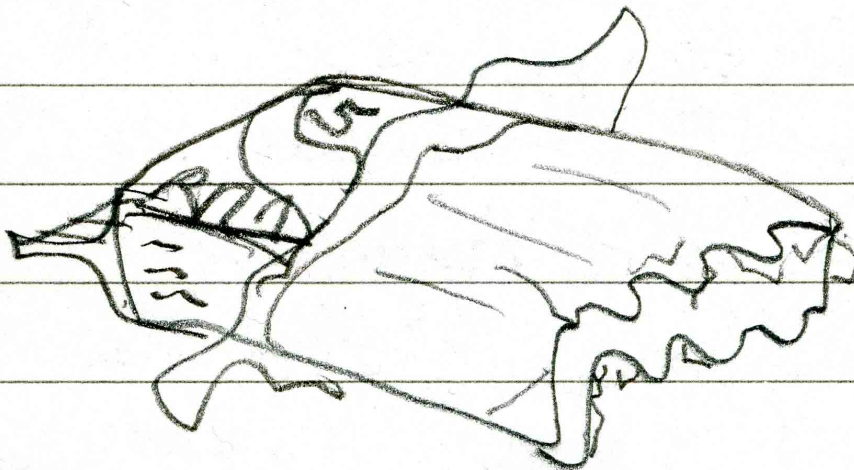
'Food to carry today'

In Gina's bag today, maybe Grapes, figs or almonds, medicinal clay and some water.



'Food Vice'

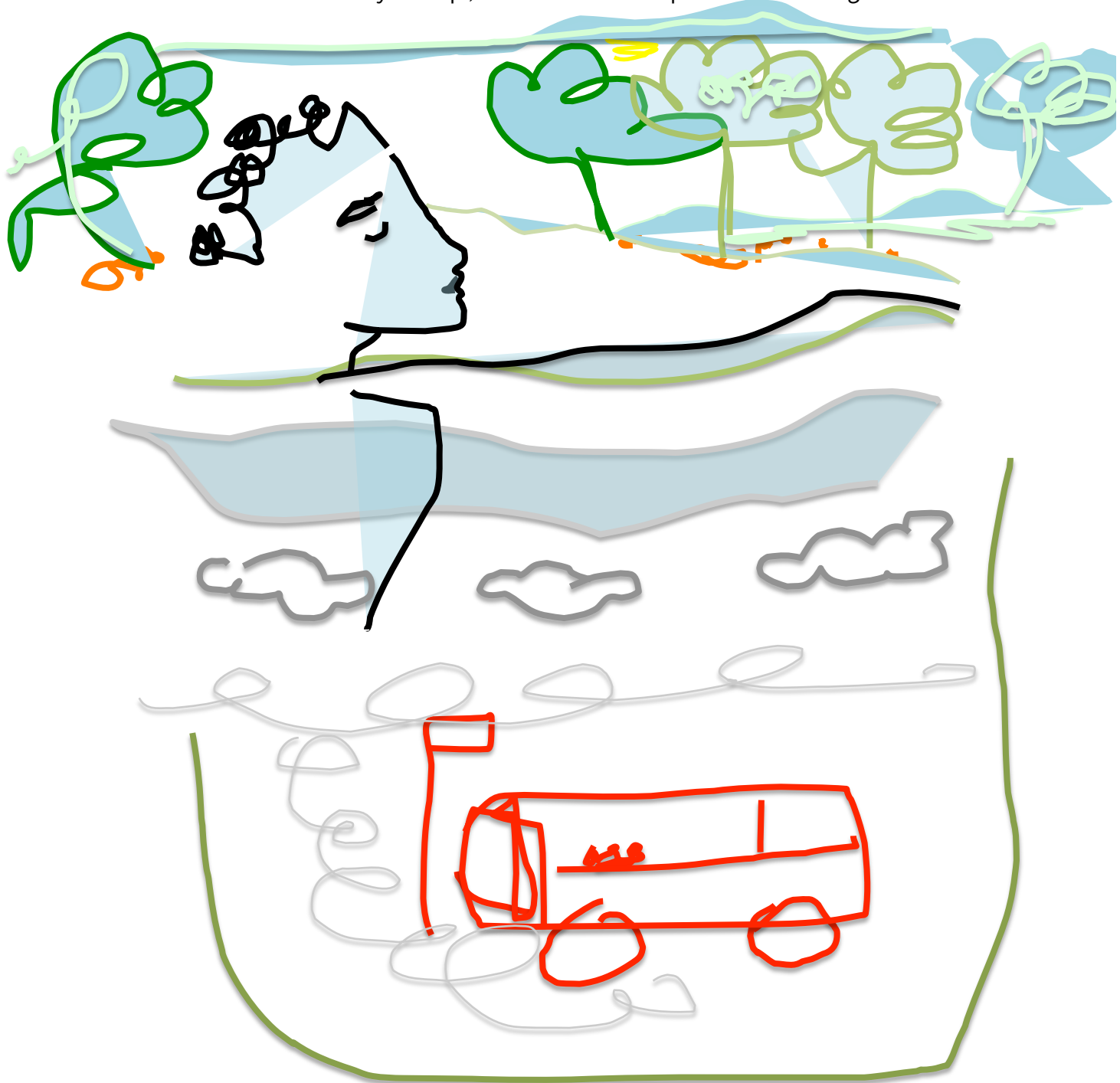
If there was a food vice that Gina had - it was Chocolate, of the dark and organic kind. She would have a mild reaction - more like 'hyper. . from too much caffeine and my head is a chattering thing' she exclaims! Gina wouldn't notice until it was too late. The pleasure of consuming the taste.. the sugar rush, that cloying chocolaty cloud, that clung heavily to the inner hemispheres that permeated her mouth the clung onto her teeth. It wouldn't take too long though - before a reaction kicked in. It was meant to be a pleasurable encounter, an occasional treat. However the overload seemed far to keen to mirror the excess & express the imbalances in her body.





'City Soup'

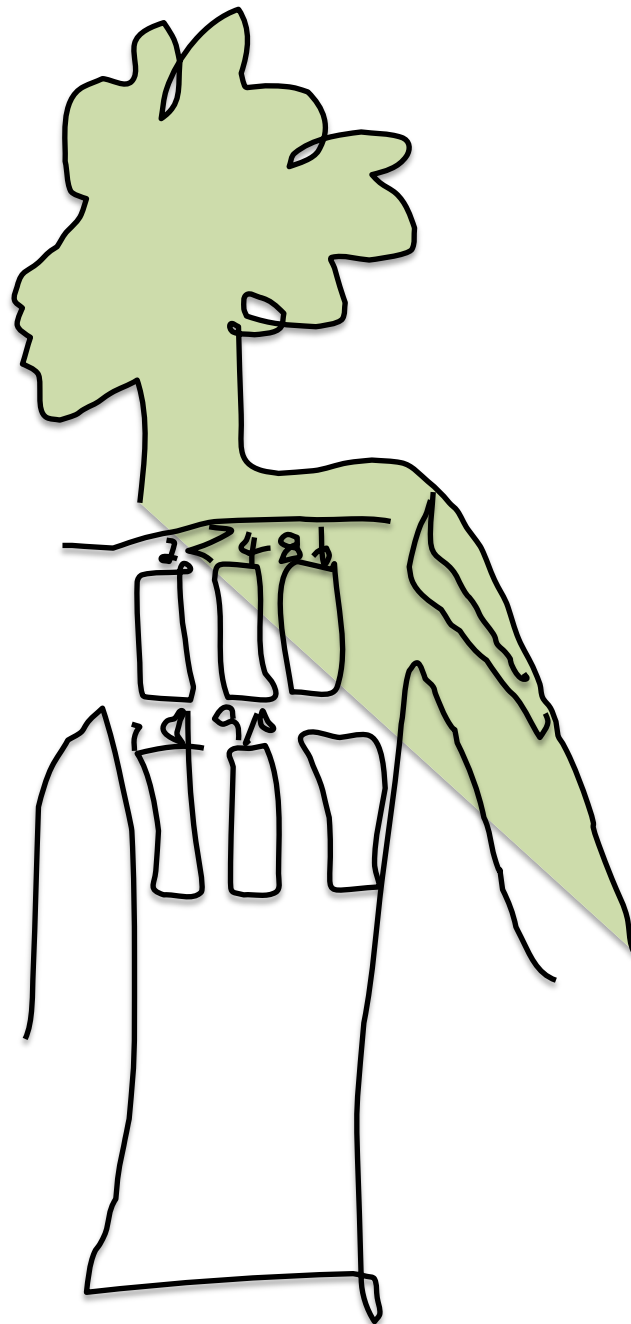
With her head straining to see if the bus was ever going to come around the corner, she could hear her mothers voice at the back of her head, 'the air was beautiful'. Apparently the park was the highest point in London and had the freshest air. Gina had been taken there when she was a baby, to breathe in the unpolluted air. She hardly remembered. Today she noted that the air was indeed, of memorable quality. She felt that somehow she had been transported somewhere else outside of the city soup, that so occupied her lungs.



Chapter 7

'24 of 72 hours!'

Today is the start of three patch test appointments. Gina's back now looks like an advent calendar. With the unusually cold weather, the tape felt like a new layer of insulation against the cold. However the following day she was itching so bad it was a burn. Yet another 24 hours had to pass before she could take the patch tests off. The rest, (the number labels), had to stay on for the next appointment for the doctor to see if any results had occurred in the test areas, yet another 24 hours later. Still she was hopeful for some enlightening conclusions.



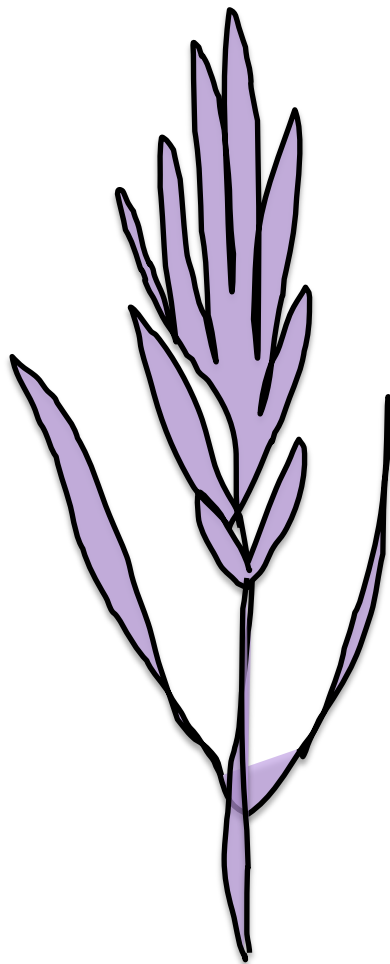
'Wrapped Snugly'

It was a very large scarf - more like a shawl. It wrapped snugly inside her coat. It was difficult to find things to keep her warm with so many allergies to all sorts of materials - she never quite knew what she could wear. None-the-less very soon that prickly feeling around her neck, watering eyes, shortness of breath, took hold. Gina ignored it, the weather was so cold - but eventually despite the cold she took off the scarf - her neck itched - she allowed the cold air to soothe her lungs and skin - and a great sense of relief.



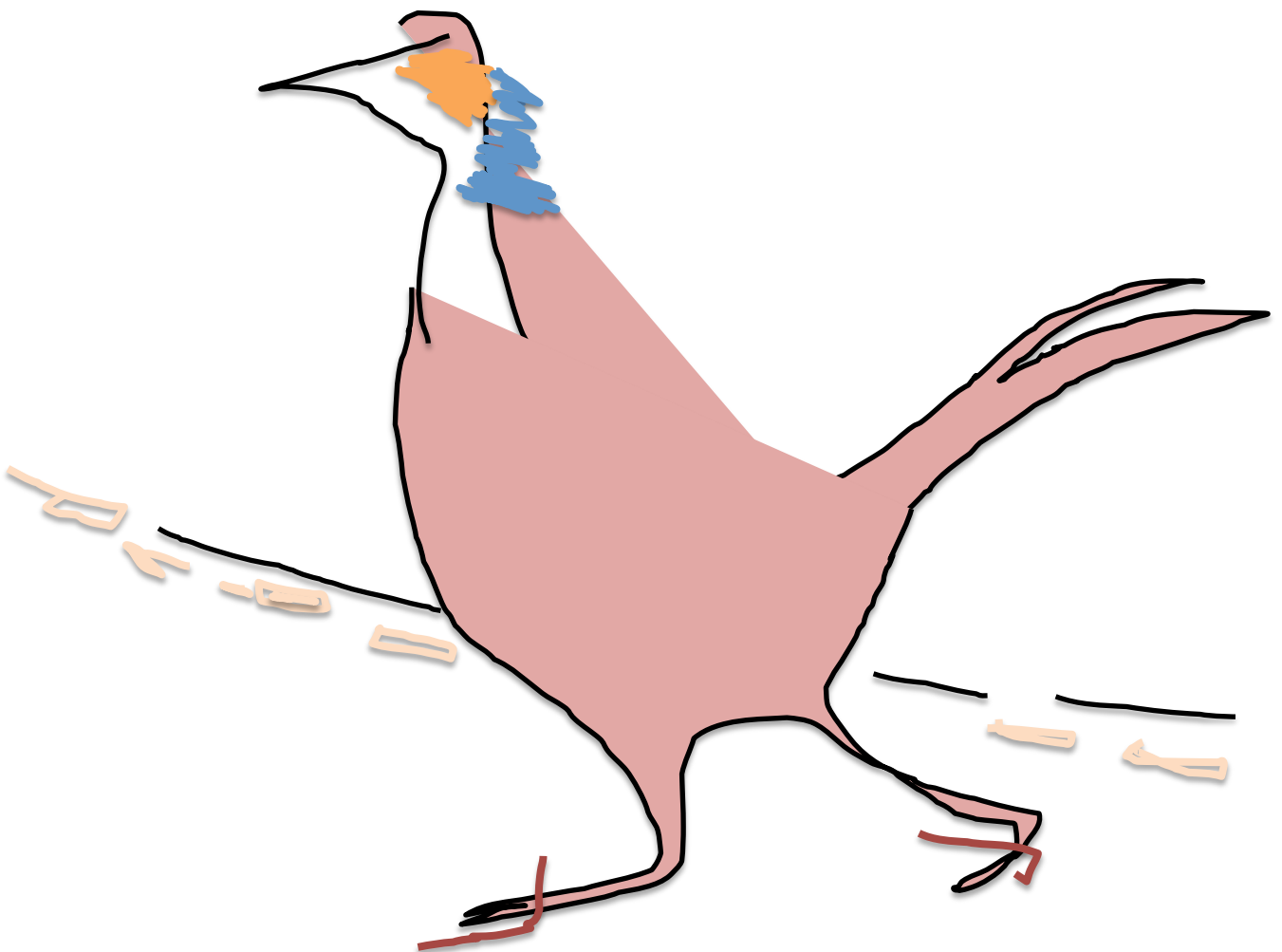
'How innocuous a substance'

'Linalool' he said lolling the 'lool', its found in Lavender' he said. Gina thought '*how innocuous a substance to be allergic too*'. Lavender was said to be relaxing and encouraged concentration of the mind, gentle in its application. Gina could see a little lavender flower rising up before her minds eye. Then imagined rolling the flower heads between her fingers, with their papery forms that would break away and release that milky, powdery light scent. Gina discovered too, that Linalool, amongst other things, was in her laundry wash and additional to other oils, was in the lavender essential oil that she frequently used around the house as an air freshener, by rubbing it into wooden furniture.



The arrival of the pheasant & the ambulance

Gina's mother had another turn - she had not wanted Gina to call the ambulance, but Gina felt that this time she should. As the ambulance arrived, Gina ascended the few steps outside her mother's door - she could see the back of the ambulance parking up, but she was distracted, as her eyes met that of a very large bird. It was a pheasant she discovered later. An unusual sighting for a city abode. It just, gracefully & unselfconsciously, strutted across the road towards Gina, then diverted, into a neighbor's front garden, to avoid the pathway of the paramedics.



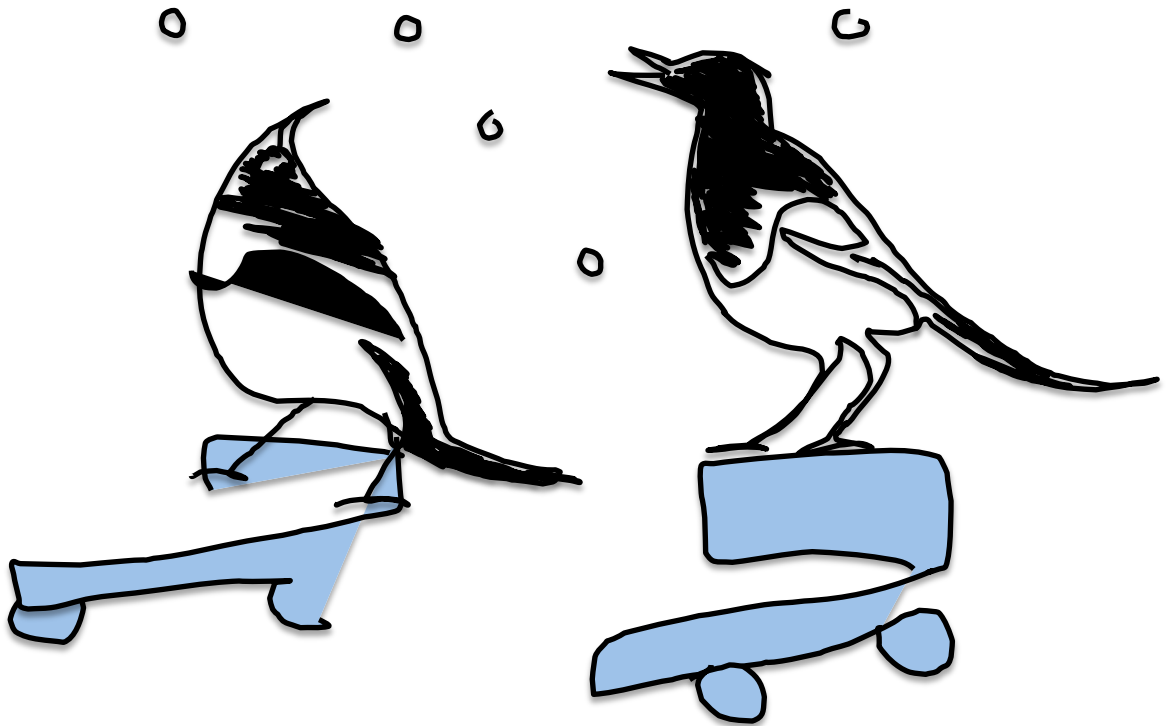
In search of sleep & waking other worlds

After being discharged from casualty Gina took her mother home. However it gradually began to dawn on her that her mother was not yet ok. She was exhibiting delusional behavior triggered off by an infection - there were invisible people in her head that she was communicating with. In order to keep a watchful eye over her she put her up in the spare room. there mother would go to bed and get up minutes later to report to Gina a new episode in her story - Having to keep permanent watch Gina realized that there was going to be no sleep - sleep she badly, no, desperately needed - after a few hours of this and her mother attempting to head outside into the cold night air - in order to 'greet her imaginary friends', Gina reluctantly, apologetically called the ambulance



Fluff of Life

As Gina entered the hospital ward, her eyes fell upon the lady in the bed next to her mothers, 'is that you Lola?' Gina said, as their eyes searched each other's gaze. Lola and Gina's mum were old friends and had been trying to arrange to meet up for a while, but hospital appointments and illness kept getting in the way. Their beds now sat side by side as destiny had arranged their diaries for them. Gina's mum, still in another world, didn't recognize her friend - she spent most of the visit picking imaginary fluff from Gina's face. Gina accommodated herself to the illusion; there was no point in arguing that there was nothing there. In fact Gina entertained her by blowing the imaginary fluff away from her mothers fingertips - and her mother responded by following with her eyes the fluff floating away and returned in search for more.



Chapter 8

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mercredi
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ottobre
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octobre
oktober

s. artemio

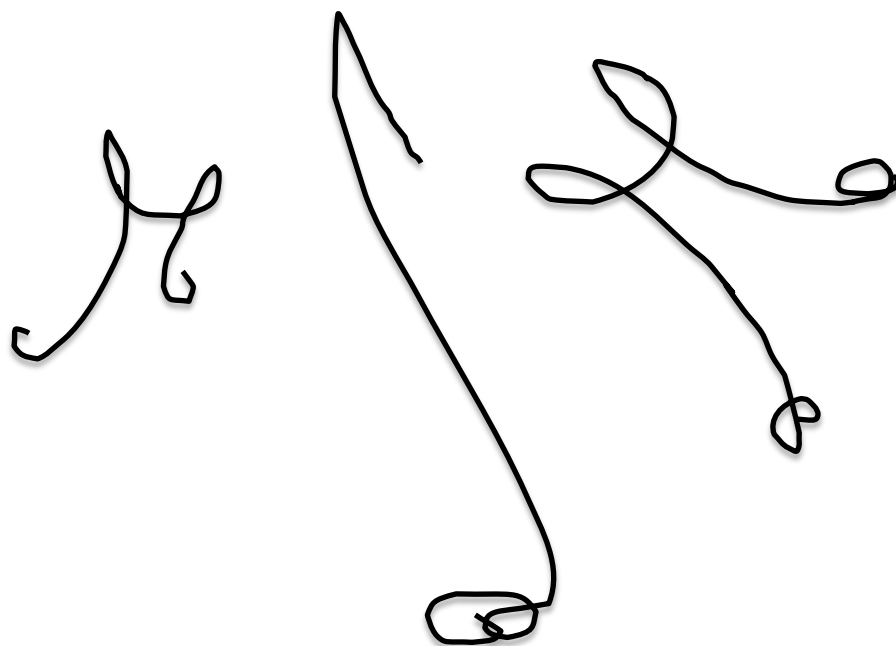
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10/1993	39	40	41	42	43
lu/mé/lu/mo	-	4	11	18	25
ma/rí/má/di	-	5	12	19	26
me/we/mé/dí	-	6	13	20	27
gi/th/jé/dó	-	7	14	21	28
ve/fr/ve/fr	1	8	15	22	29
sa/sa/sa/sa	2	9	16	23	30
do/su/di/so	3	10	17	24	31

'A New Song'

Sometimes a deep sense of inertia set in. It infiltrated into every waking hour. Gina manifested this by not wanting to fill her diary up with busyness so much so as to exhaust her senses & drown out an inner voice that was attempting to tell her something about where to go from here. She was clearing up, de-cluttering her surroundings & her soul, so as to hear it speak & make room to see the pathway forward. However this feeling was uncertain, tentative & at the same time overwhelming. What was the voice that would tell her the way forward? How would it manifest itself? External demands came at her left & right. Gina held on tight to listening out to keep the thread, the connection - afraid it might dissolve like a taste from within a dream, its flavor present at the tip of the tongue but rapidly disappearing from memory. Sometimes she questioned, 'what am I doing!' her emotions where strong & confining all at once - like they had all been mixed up together in one pot - leaving flavors undistinguishable. Gina's job now was to unravel the cords & listen to the tune each played to put together a new song to sing.



Two words of note from her ten min appointment

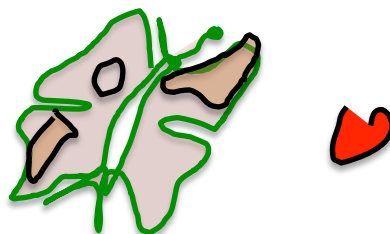
From the diagnostic allopathic point of view, Gina's inconclusive diagnosis's to date were Chronic fatigue, Stress, Oral allergy syndrome and a few other alternative practitioner perspectives along the way that included Lyme's disease. Today she had a new hat to wear, that of a non-specific immune disorder.

This time it was a second appointment, with a different doctor. It was all about finishing off what she hadn't at the previous appointment. Gina was nervous going to the doctor, as in her fog of symptoms, she often left the Doctor feeling that she hadn't asked all she wanted too. Unanswered questions, or at least most definitely felt she had not been understood. So she had gone back after making another appointment. You see, the doctor had mentioned something at the previous appointment that sounded close to an actual diagnosis, but it had eluded her - she caught it in passing as she was leaving the surgery. However, in addressing this today, it all became vague again. In response to her query the doctor said 'no, it's not like that..the symptoms don't really match up', 'Oh' thought Gina, dismayed again at losing any grip on what her body had been doing for ten years now. 'So you have no idea what is wrong?' Gina said flatly, trying to grasp at something where nothing appeared. 'Well, we have enough information to know that you have an immunological condition' the Doctor replied.

So, thought Gina 'it', has a name'. 'We don't know which immunological condition it is' he continued and 'health research is developing all the time ... we may not know now but may very well do so in the future'.

So as not to lose the thread, as Gina was getting up to leave, she said 'will you contact me, if you find any thing you may think could be of use, in the way of developments?' 'Of course' he said.

Having a name to refer to, rather than a very long list of confusing symptoms, was so much easier. Now with just one word or two, she could just say, that.,, and nothing else. Of course it was not quite so simple as that! - and a cure appeared to be still out of reach, at least for now anyway.



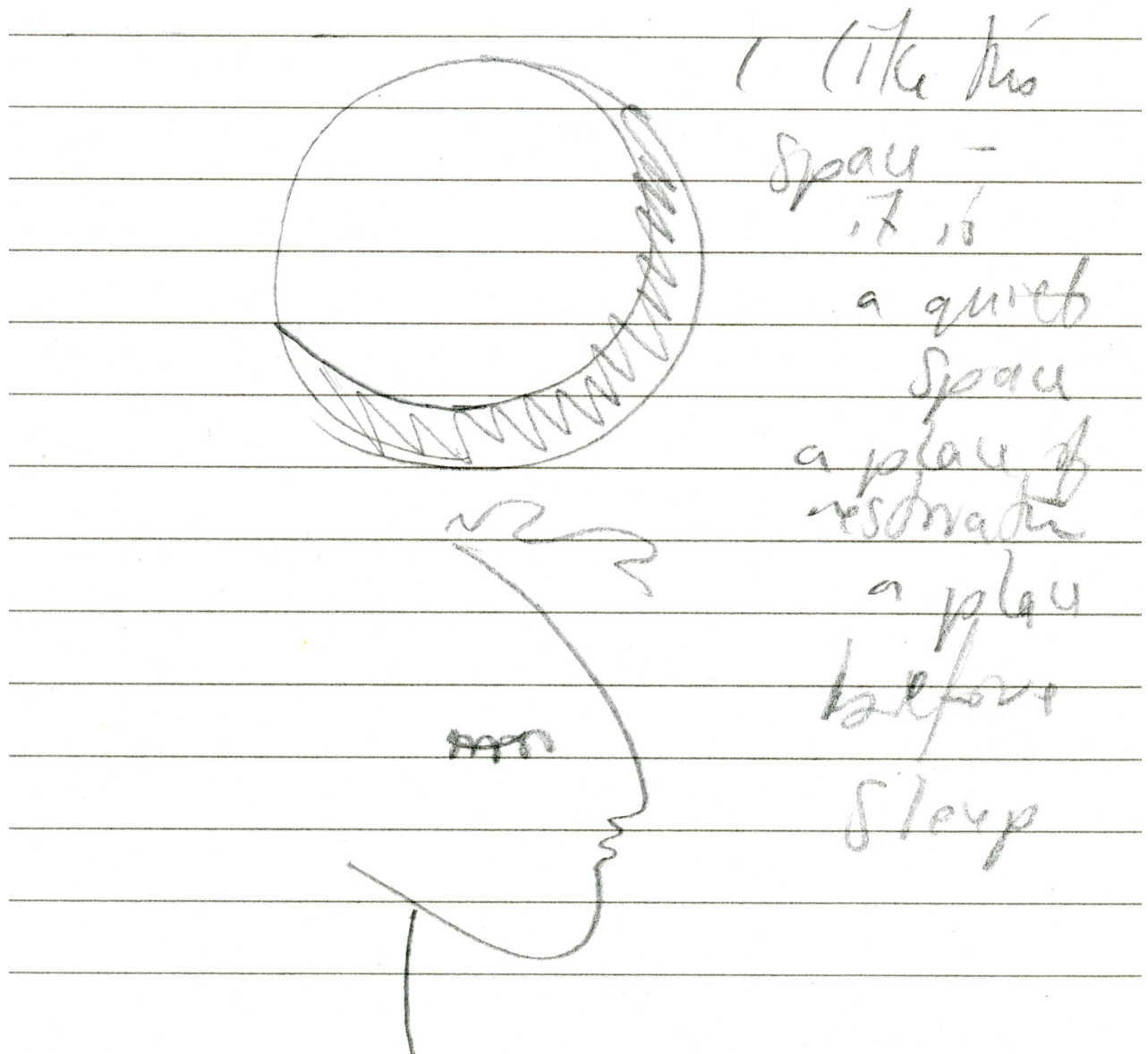
'Something to know'

Somehow she knew there was a cure. Every cell in her body knew - and yet, she did not know what it was. Dreams alluded her, illuminating, but yet not clear. This thought had kept her going & had lead her to the place she was now. Without this motivation she would have given up & dwindled into apathy & a case of no return.



I like this space

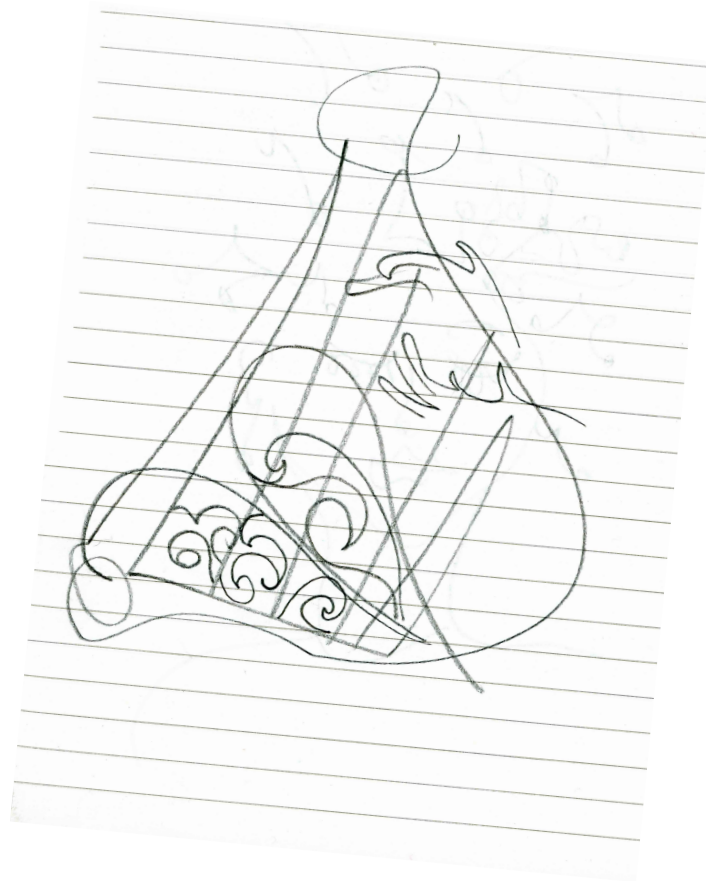
There was a moment sometimes at the end of the day, when Gina could say 'this is it . . . I can rest now . . . the days rush is over .. I can stop - when the world stops turning on its axil .. there is quiet & I breathe' - Although weird to think that Gina may not have been breathing during the rest of the day!

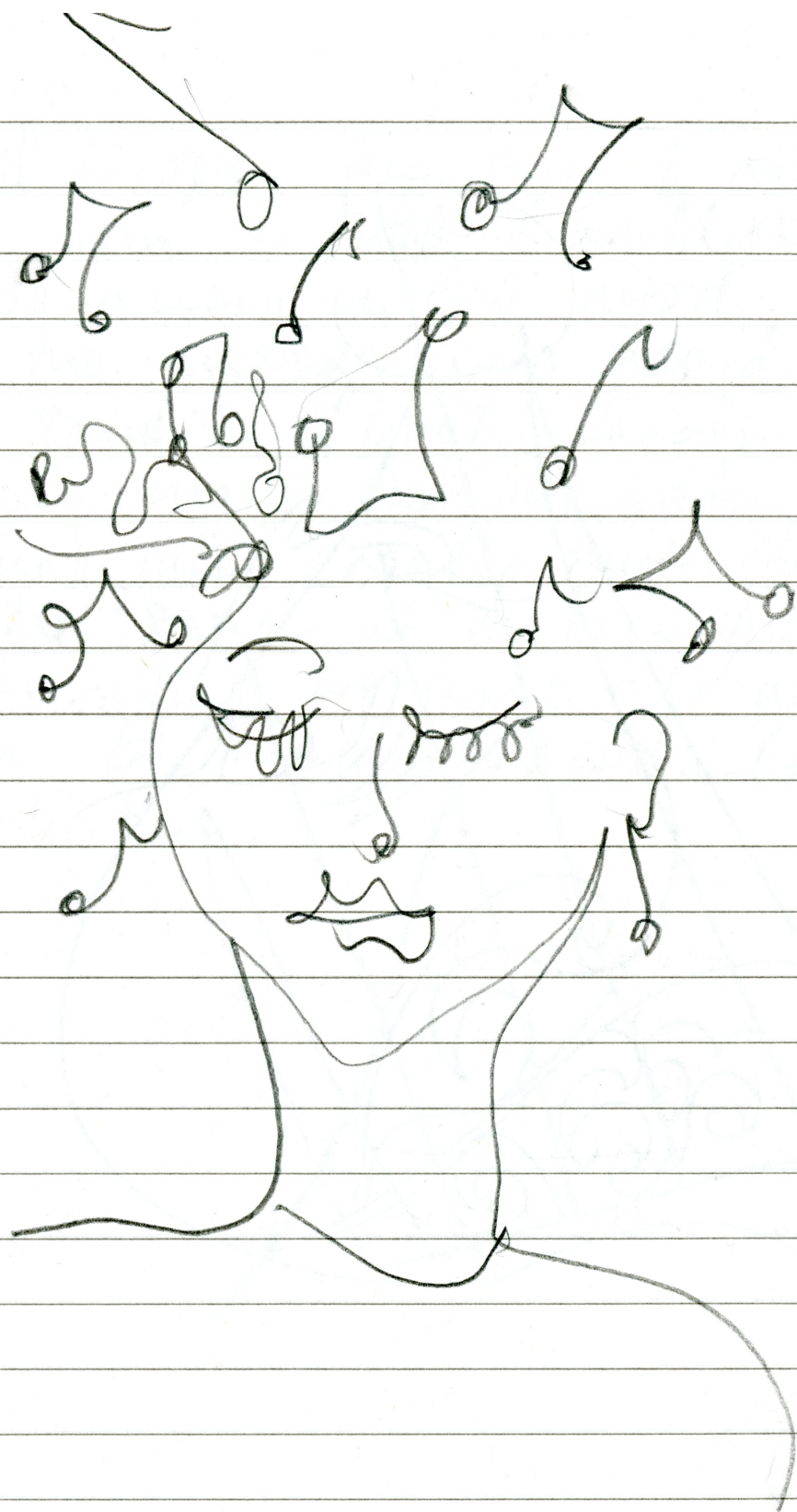


'I like this space - it is a quiet space - a place of restoration - a place just before sleep'

Music to my ears.

Gina sat eyes closed - she could feel the music notes scale her skin, she allowed it to enter her lips, her hair & into her mouth where tongue was a well sprung dancing floor - her throat a wind instrument. Every instrument weaved its way through her cells in search of her organs. It entered into her spine & stayed there playing cords along her vertebrae under her skin & inside her bones. Gina allowed it to send healing messages into the ocular - there music danced around her eyes into her brain & out through her hair. Suddenly her eyes opened..the cords had changed..something more foreboding, the harp, the flute the violin, expressing a darker tune - she sat upright & brought her attention back into the room where she pulled herself into focus - a reminder of a darker place, but there was no discord. The message was heard; it had played medicine with her. The music healed. It left whole acoustic vibrations that held her, leaving her nourished through to the cellular bone.

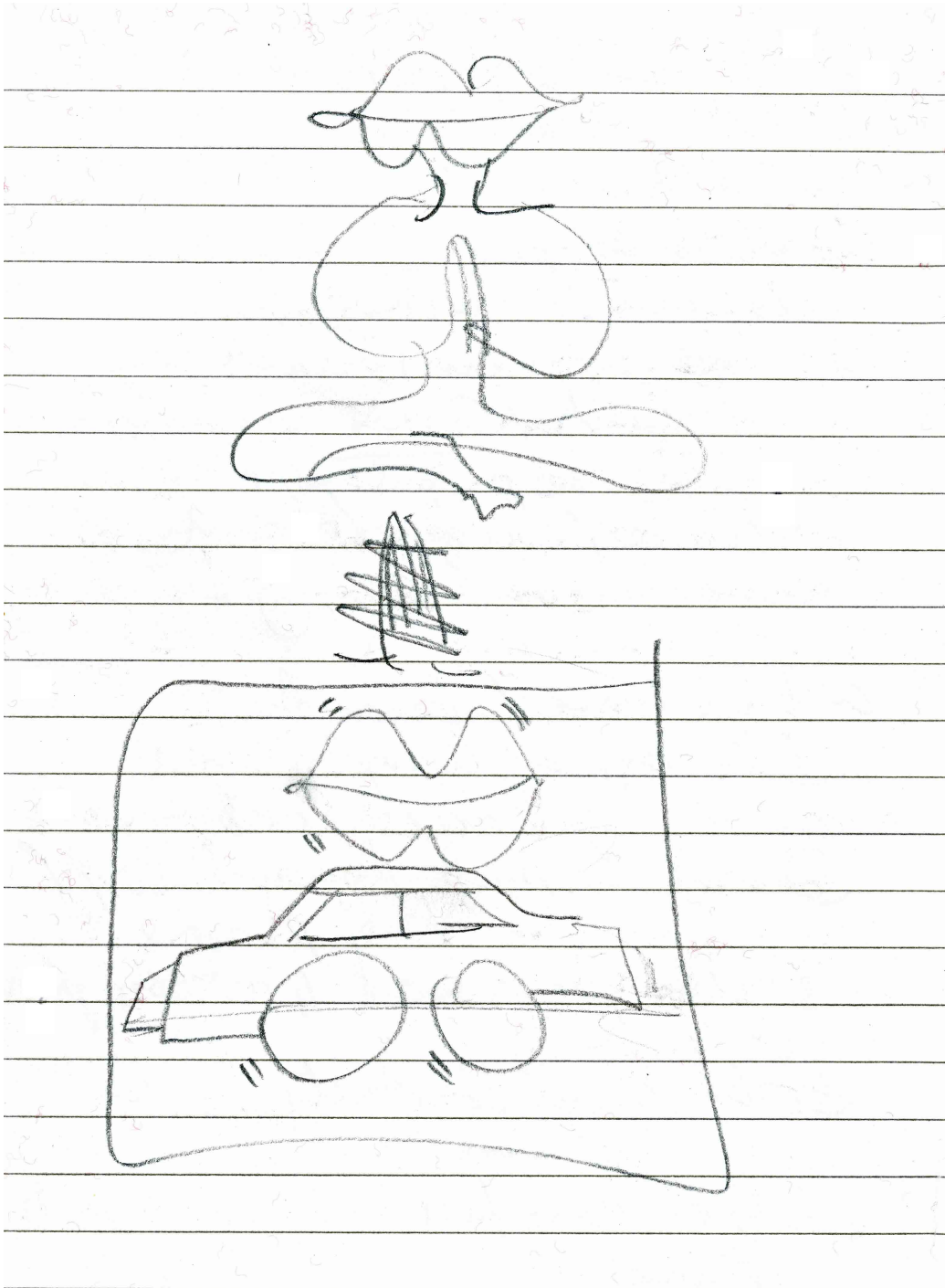




Yoga for the mouth

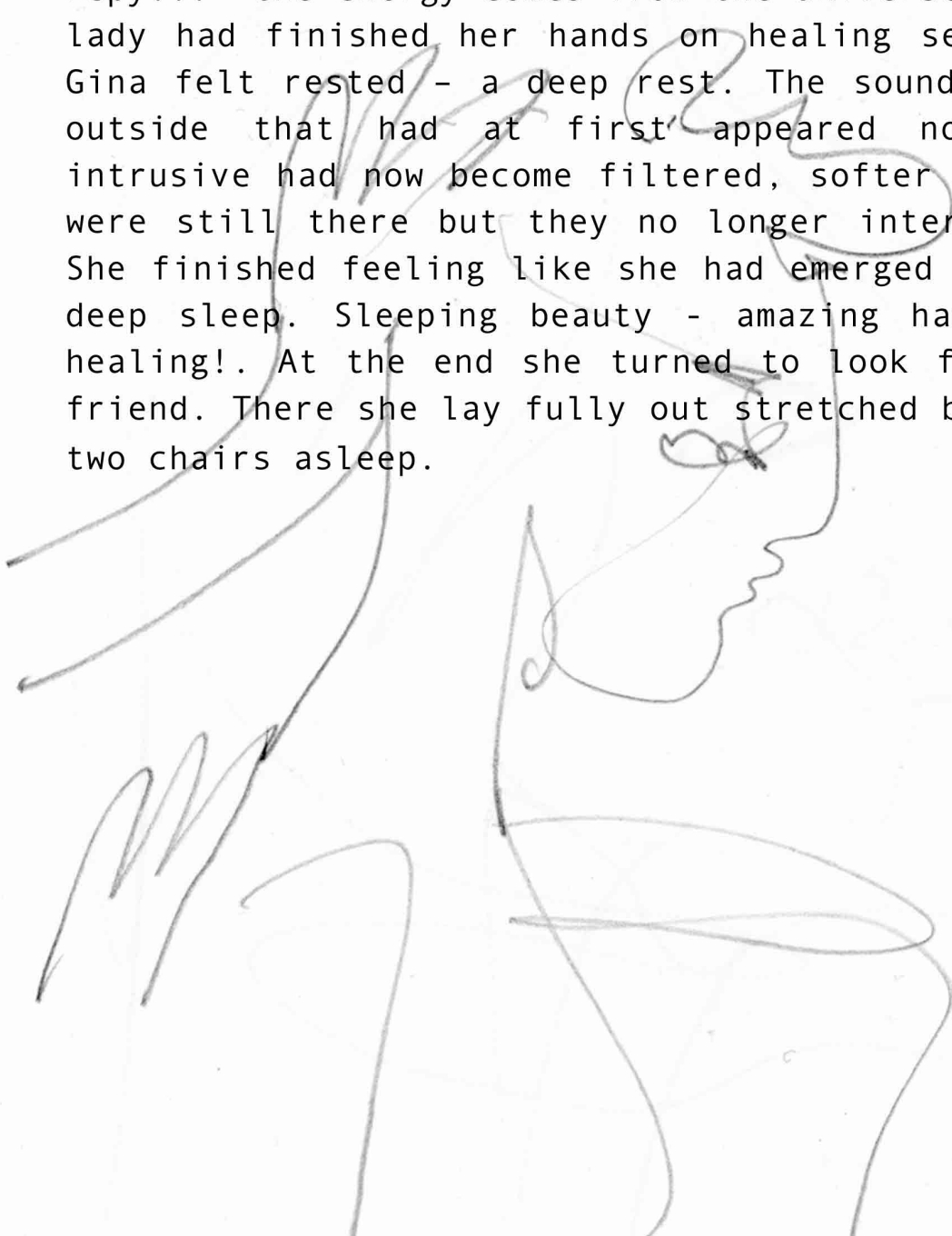
'Just brrr ... your lips with air' - the vocal therapist said '& then add sound'. Gina pursed her lips together & at the same time tried to make them move, vibrate together as instructed. Nothing happened - she tried again, a fuller throttle with sound & the lips purred and vibrated like a small car - or something like that.

This is fun mused Gina - yoga for the mouth!



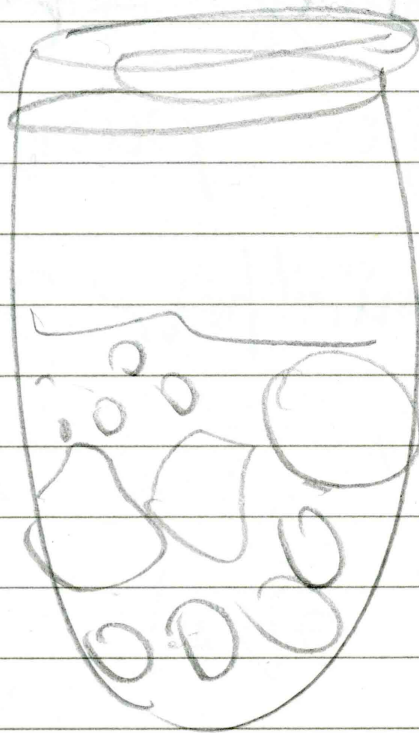
between two chairs - asleep

'Do you get tired?' Gina asked - 'No' came the reply... 'the energy comes from the universe'. The lady had finished her hands on healing session. Gina felt rested - a deep rest. The sounds from outside that had at first appeared noisy & intrusive had now become filtered, softer - they were still there but they no longer interfered. She finished feeling like she had emerged from a deep sleep. Sleeping beauty - amazing hands on healing!. At the end she turned to look for her friend. There she lay fully out stretched between two chairs asleep.



The wrong type of smoothie

Difficulty in swallowing
increases after a few months



Banana
(slightly
unripe)

Plums

Red & Green
Grapes

Dates

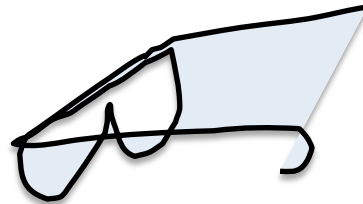
The only new
ingredient was
the plums -

She did worry
that the banana
was maybe too
under ripe for
consumption

'The wrong type of smoothie' Plums, banana,
red & green grapes, dates.

'The interview on Gina's health'

He was Grey
And tall
His legs stretched far
Underneath the table
His eyes lost behind his glasses
His focus, on the computer screen
So austere he seemed

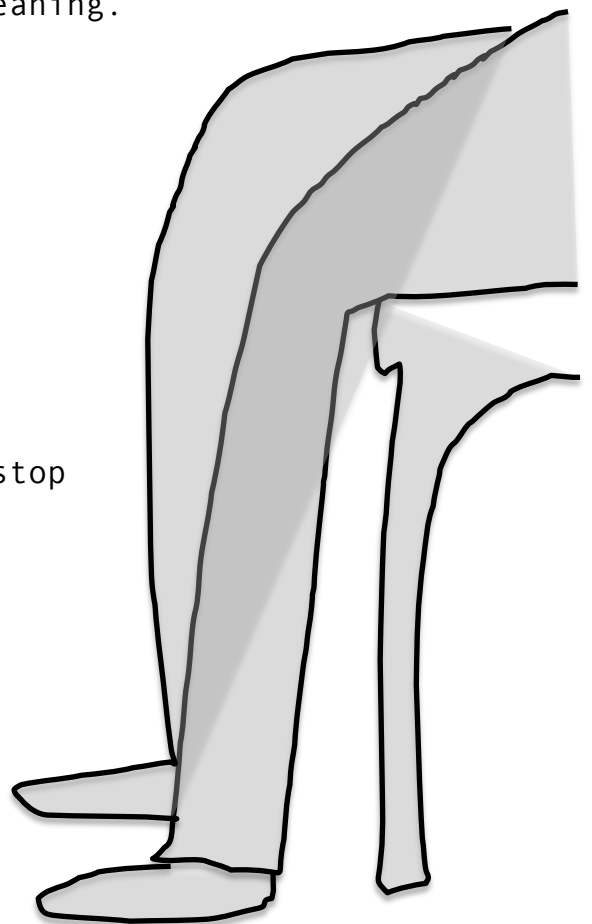


She struggled to find words
To explain what she meant
He didn't seem to be listening
She struggled to connect and with meaning.

What should she say?
What does he want to know?
Gina was losing concentration... fast
Her memory seemed to go
The words stumbled
Seeming wrong

... Disconnected

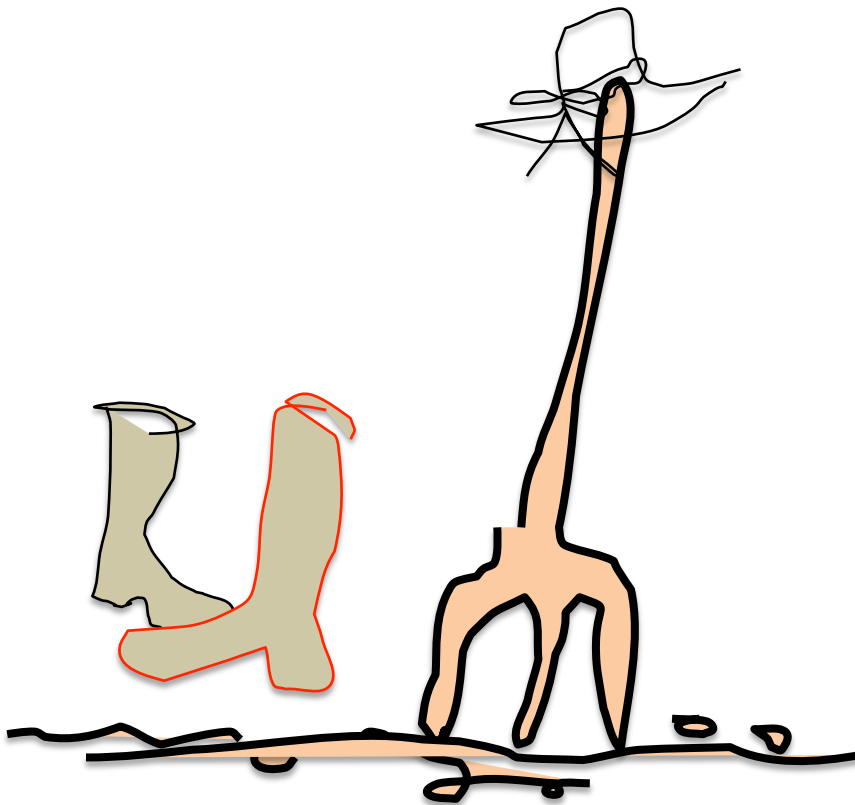
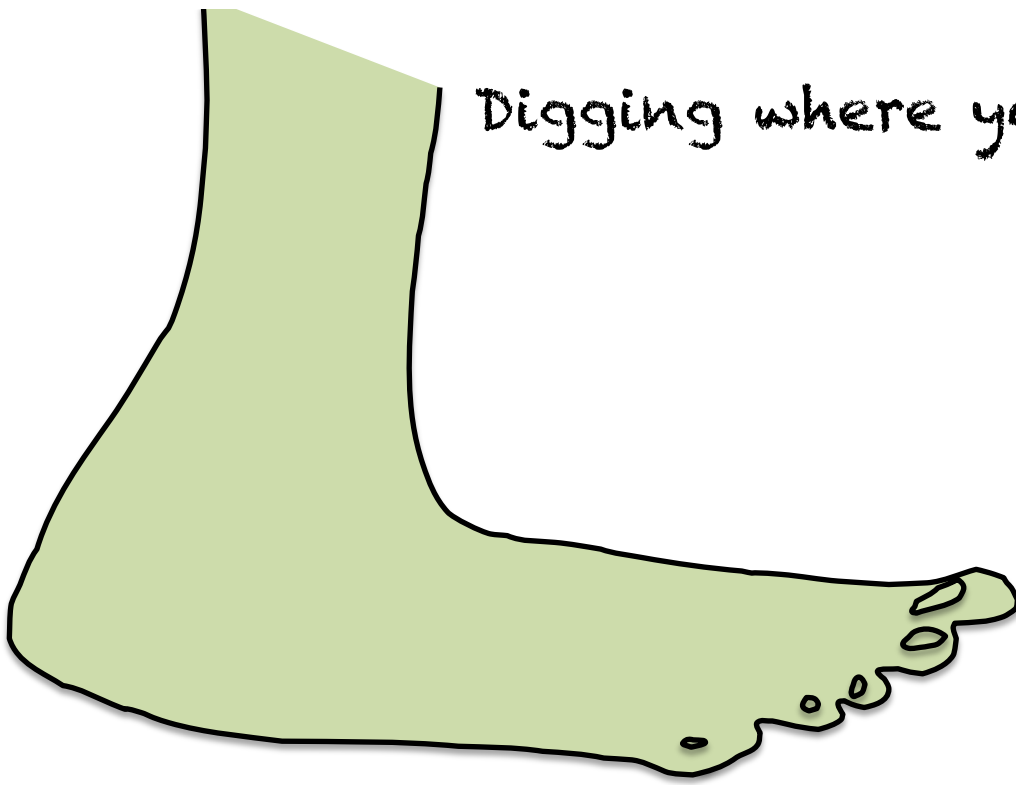
Gina aimed to breath deeply
To stretch herself high
So she could remove all that would stop
Any words that might come by
That would prevent her
From aiming high
To stay raised with her spirits
She tried
And not long before -
She connected with his eyes
For a moment she saw the man behind
The formal guise.



sunday 25
january



Digging where you stand



Somehow, digging in the earth, took the stress away.

The proximity of death & the Six ophthalmologists

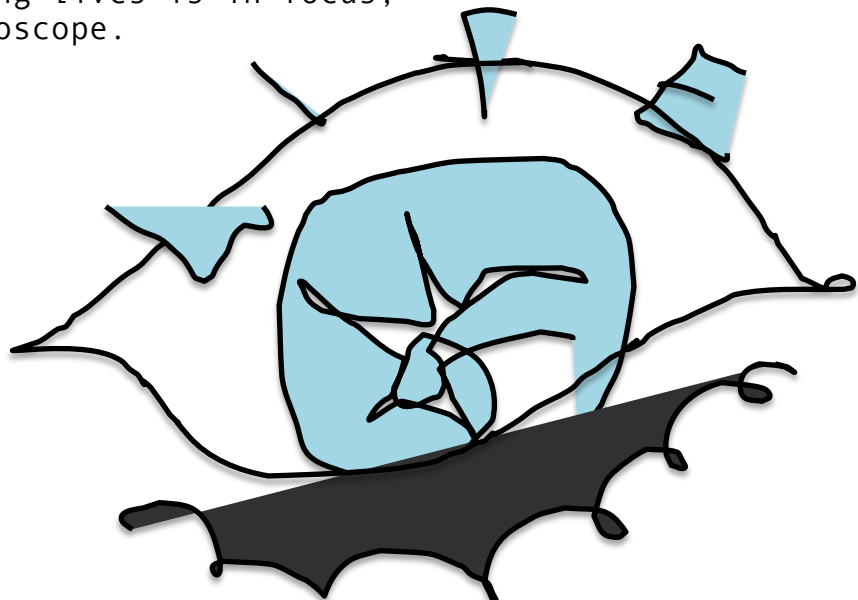
Maybe things weren't going so well. . .

Her mother was slumped in the chair with her head fallen back - face pale & mouth sunk down to one side. With her eyes rolled upwards she was absent of consciousness to the world around her..

In Gina's world, the momentum of time hit pause.. 'You can't go now' Gina thought, 'not yet.. We have not finished.. there is more to do.. more to say.. although I don't know what?.. it's just a feeling'.

After the test on both eyes, Gina exited the room to follow 'Frederick' to get her results - she glanced back to catch her mothers eye whom she had left sitting in the corridor waiting area - her mother looked otherwise ephemerally occupied. Gina was expecting her to look her way. As Gina got close she realized something was wrong, she immediately called for help. Two, then three, then four, five, then, six members of staff from ophthalmology appeared. There was a rush to work out which doctor had seen her last - but of course she wasn't a patient. Eventually the paramedics arrived. Gina found a doctor standing beside her, everything was now in hand. Her mother was now lifted onto a trolley and gradually slowly she came round. It was only a moment ago when Gina had thought she was looking, like she had passed over to the other side, that being it, right there, in the corridor of the eye hospital. With the corridor long and so very narrow - people tended to focus ahead, you would have had to have turned and stood directly in front of her, to know something was amiss. But for now, she was alive, alert - but not yet speaking.

In the hospital casualty, everything is brighter, more electric. Saving lives is in focus, under the microscope.



Clapp
Hinds



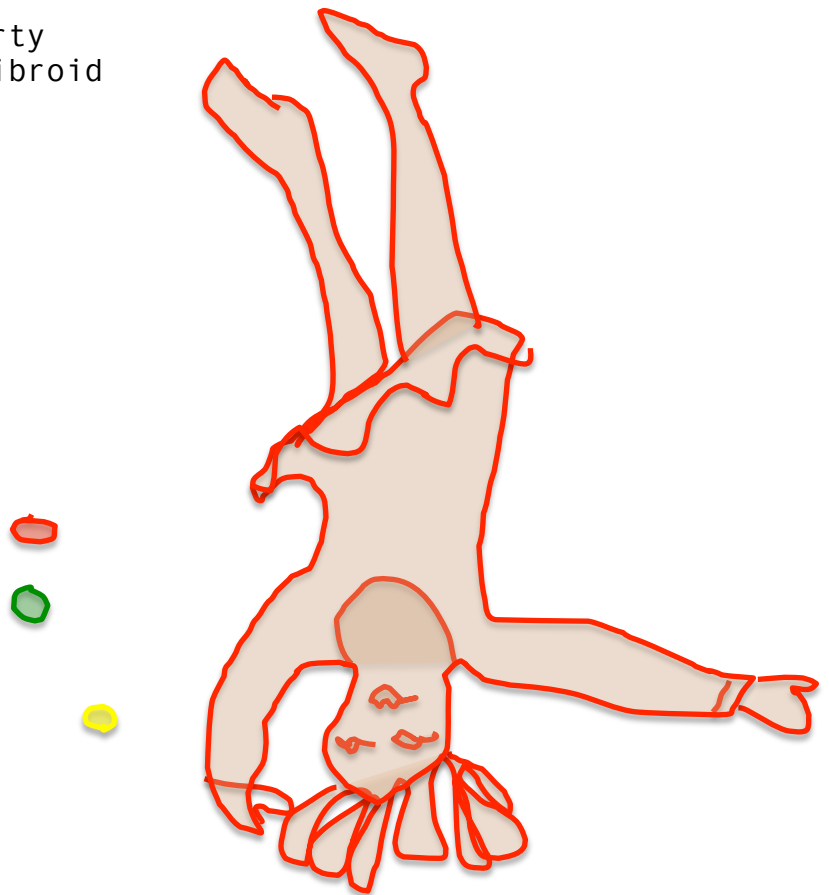
'Scanning for Smarties'

Gina did wonder...
While lying there in the
'CAT' machine
If they would find
Those Smarties
Lost inside of her.

The ones she fed her doll...
A very long time ago
When she was five years old

She fed, (lets call her Polly')
A hand full of the little sweets
she shook her to retrieve them
Hanging her upside down
No smarty materialized
Not a single one could be found

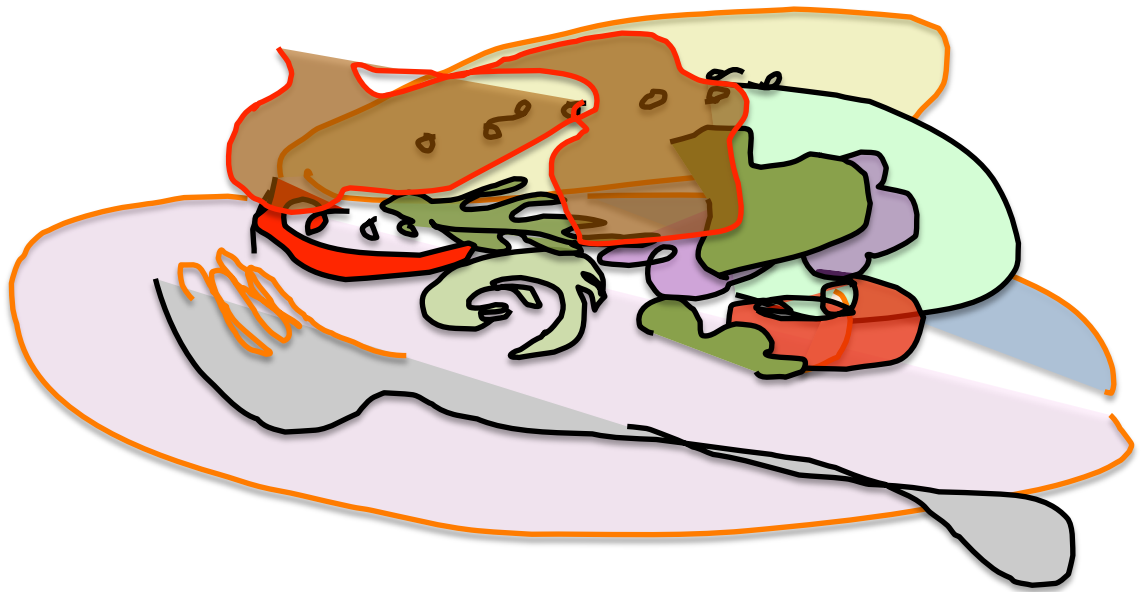
It remains a mystery,
Not solved
And instead of a smarty
A pelvic calcified fibroid
Is found
Nothing else at all!



'Demolition at one bite!'

As Gina walked away, her friend shouts - 'I like your trousers... the colour'. 'Toffee' Gina said, 'no, more like fudge' her friend shouted back, as she got on her bus waving herself away.

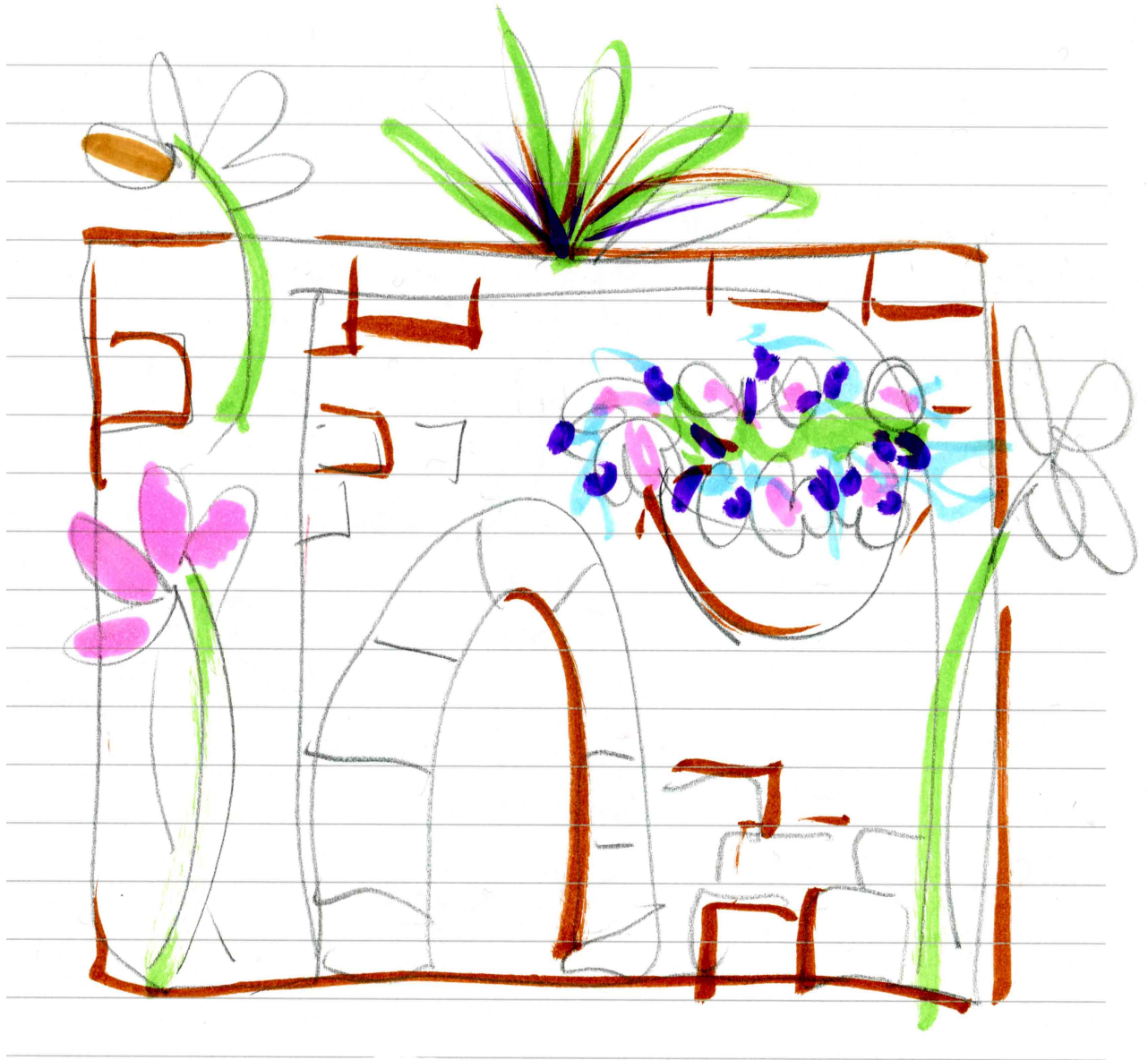
Later the taste of fudge mingled with Gina's thoughts, and a memory of sticky toffee pudding sat on her tongue. The fudge she mused might be a cardiac arrest or lets say a coma for Gina - as her body would wrestle with the ingredients. Still her mouth watered. Having aroused the desire that wanted to be fulfilled, she opted instead for a high fat lamb burger & headed home to make it. The minced lamb lightly sautéed in coconut oil, to sandwich between two rice cakes with avocado, tomato & red onion - architecturally wrong & prone to fast tract demolition at one bite. Needless to say, extremely messy, but so high on the satisfactory scale. Most importantly for Gina, no allergic reaction.



Chapter 9

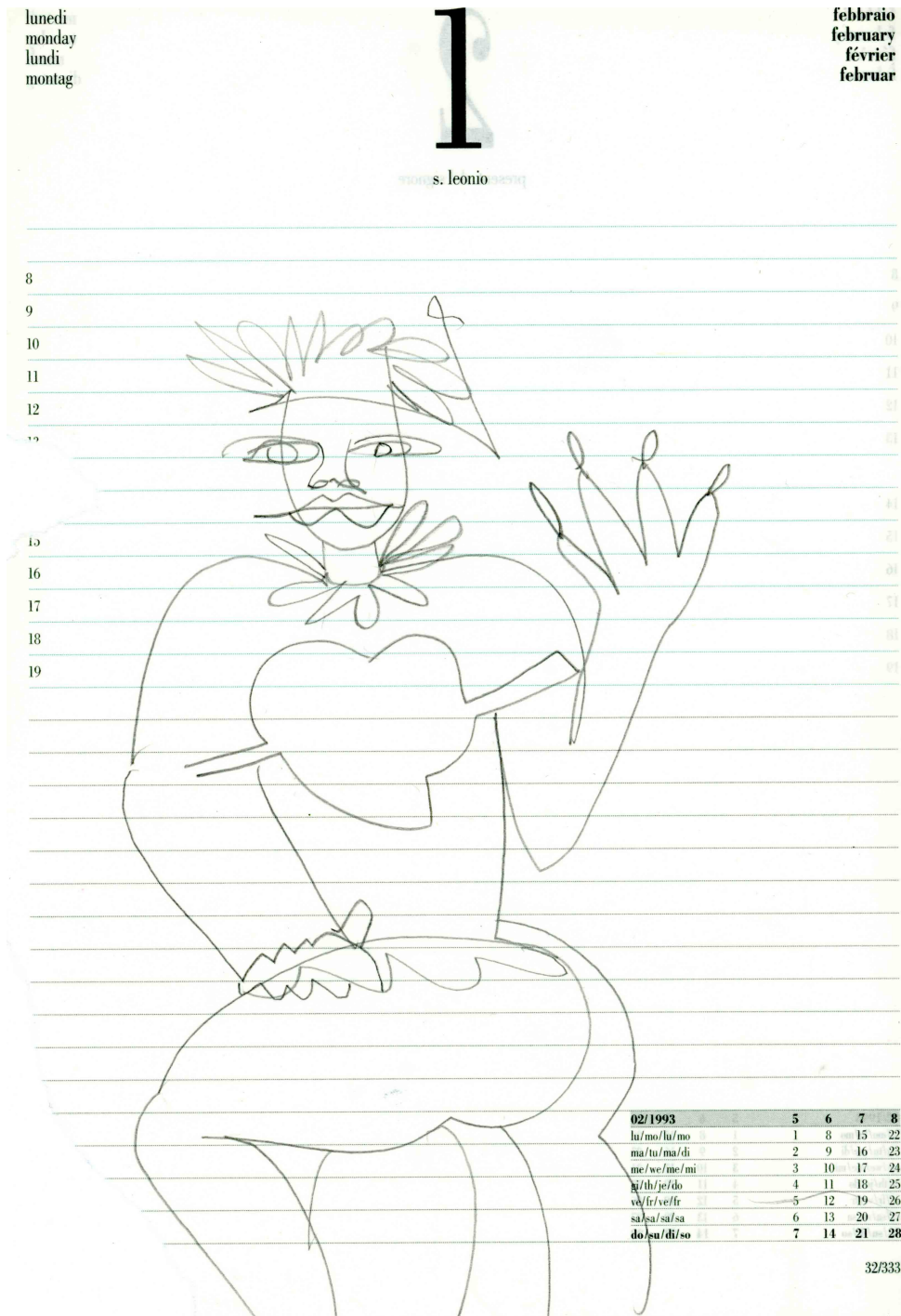
'The dreaming wall'

Gina dreamt that her friend purchased a wall -
She had it placed in her garden & planted things into it.
It was a very beautiful antique wall, with an arched
feature.



'An un-dissolvable belief'

The desire to know and cure what was behind it all, never wavered. This however left her thrown in an emotional Ping-Pong between ignoring and coping - hopelessness and an intuitive sense that 'I will most definitely recover' she would breeze. The engine behind an un-dissolvable belief.



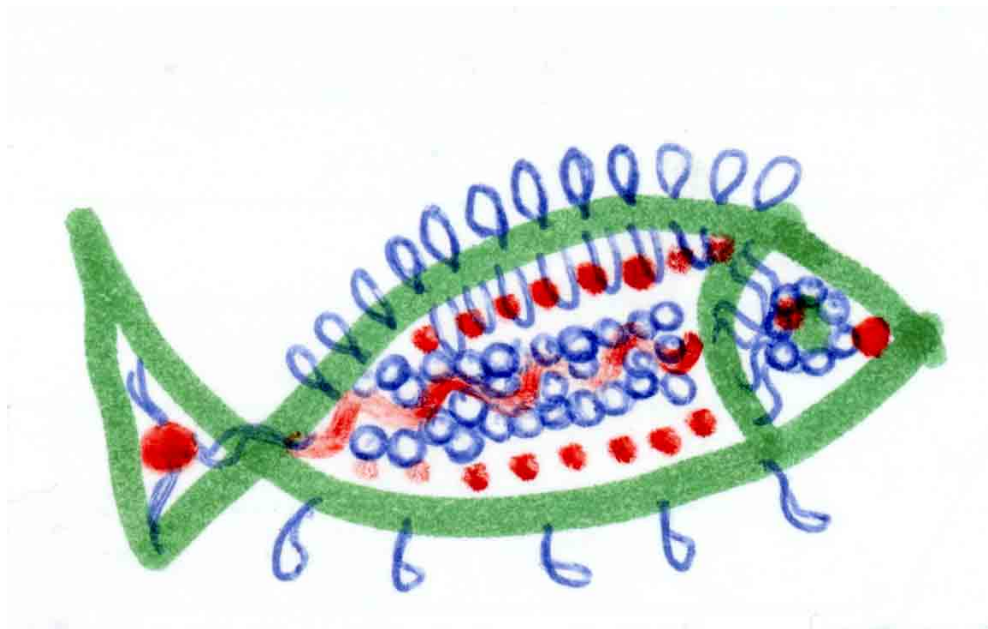
'The one fits all, dress in dream'

In Gina's dream she thought she saw a belt and as she touched it, it unfolded into a sort of shirt come beach costume. Then unraveled further into a dress.



'A place to hang your hat, the oxymoron & a fish out of water'

Once a friend of Gina's spoke to her about returning from the doctor with a sense of great relief after finding that there was nothing wrong with him after all. For Gina, the experience of 'nothing could be found' had been a tricky place to occupy. It had felt like nothing other than an oxymoron, as in her case, she had still felt just as unwell on leaving the doctors surgery, as when she had arrived. In the end it was just a matter of being undiagnosed. On presenting an enquiry of this nature to the Doctor, he had said 'Sometimes we just don't know what's wrong!' 'That's ok' thought Gina. It had been a clear answer. Despite this, even the intermittent transient diagnoses were ok too, as for a while they had been a place to hang her hat.



'Awaking the future, green tea & the sleeping lion'

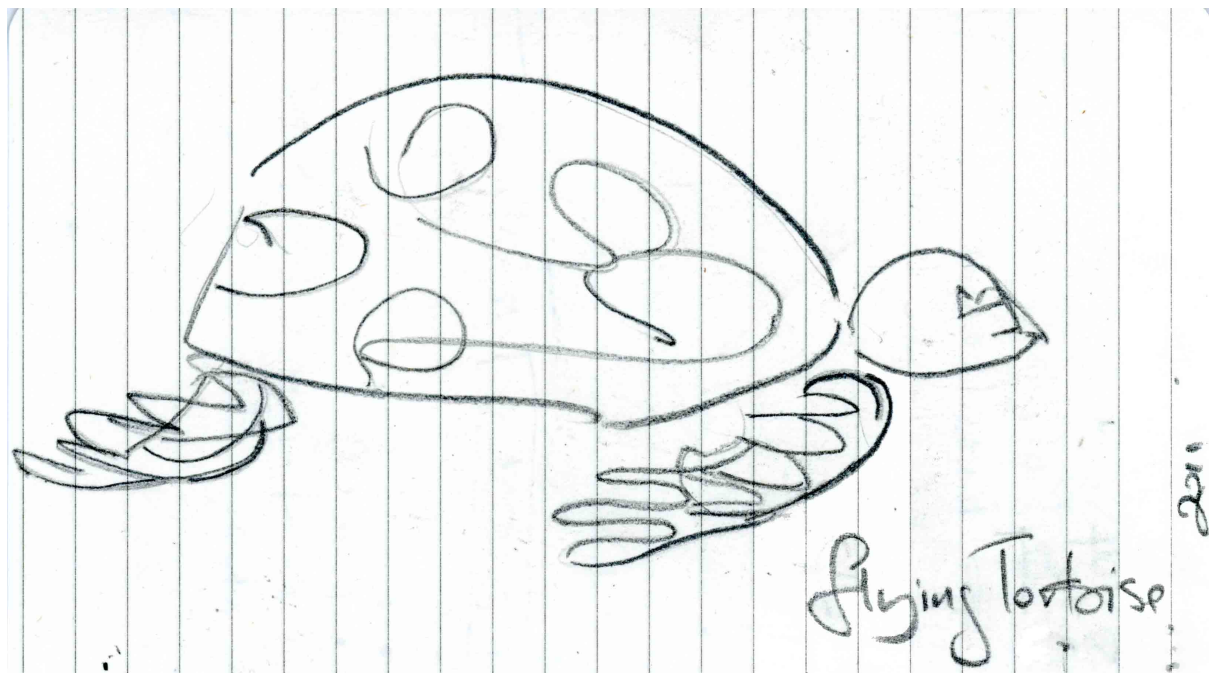
A possibility entered Gina's mind, not knowing if or when she would get a reaction from the green tea, she went ahead regardless and took a sip. It was on advice of the kinesiologist. After having had some tests done Gina embarked on the brave step of trying out a new food. After the first trepid few sips, Gina was away with satiating her palate and celebrating what looked like a victory. However it was somewhat premature, she had to hold back, press pause, then begin again at a slower pace. A little more patience perhaps, not to wake the sleeping lion.



'In search for a view above the parapet'

The fear of catching a cold had previously haunted her. The colds would sit dormant, lurking in the shadows waiting to make an appearance, make their debut then sit back for their next show. Now however, Gina hardly ever caught one. They were rare - so rare in fact, she felt a little guilty - somehow underserving of this viral escape. The insomnia that had so mystified her for years was now replaced by nights of restful sleep. The pain & swelling in her limbs, the fatigue, lessened. The nausea and fainting, almost gone. However the anaphylaxis & the rest seemed impenetrable. So.. still a way to go, all very high maintenance, but some progress gained.

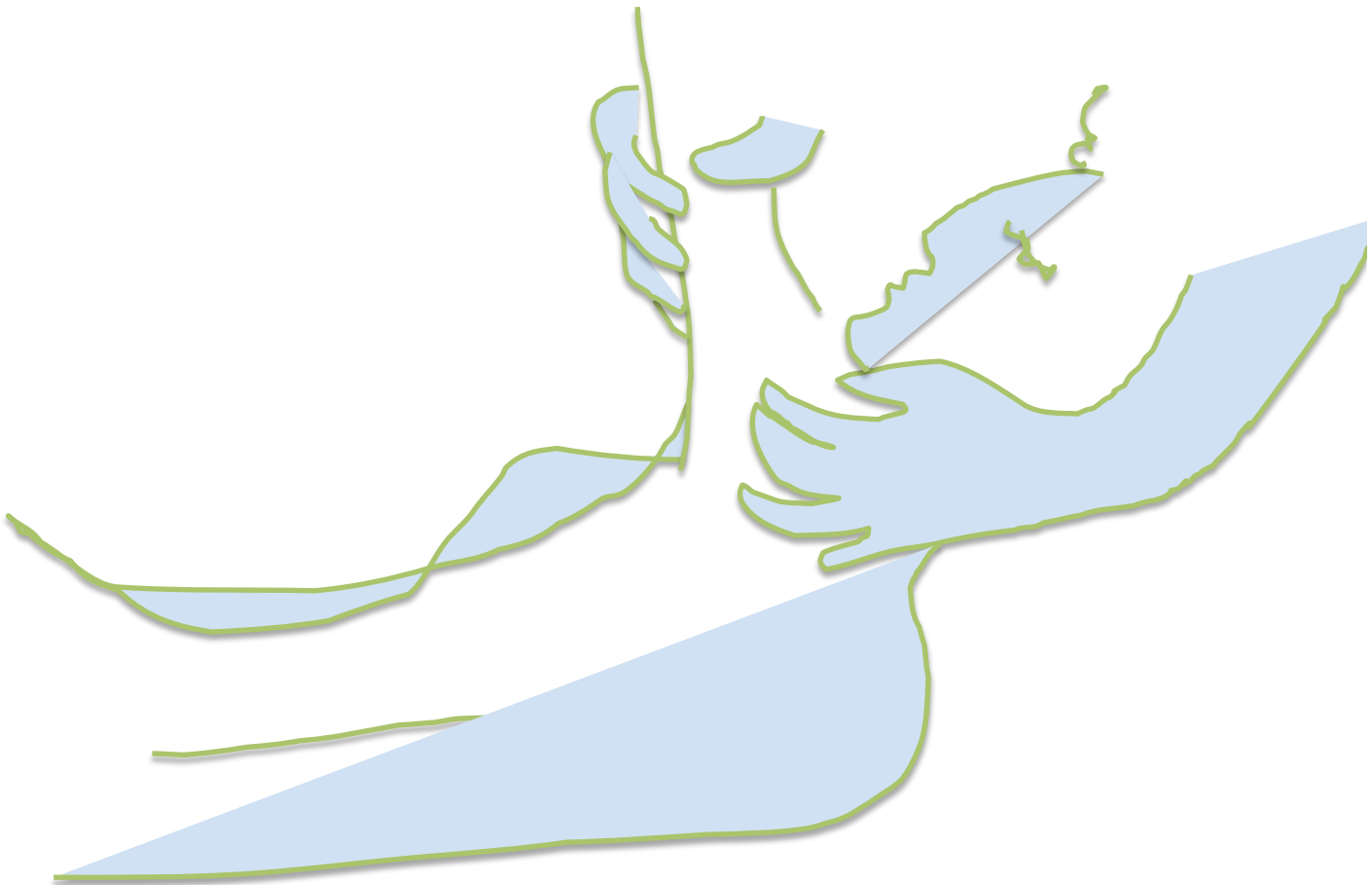
Cutting back her life's activities to less than half of what it used to be, was part of the deal. This enabled more, lets say, quality over quantity - but still reaching, searching for what appeared to be the unobtainable cure, not without a hint of desperation! Despite this, Gina determined to see a complete breakthrough in this New Year.



Lazy yoga

The osteopath presented Gina with some Vitamin c - this might be useful he said - for your condition - to help build up your system. Gina had mentioned before that she had been unable to consume any type of Vitamins since she got ill. None-the-less there was always somebody who in their eagerness to help, would suggest something, saying 'you won't have a reaction to this.. no one ever has.. be really weird if you did' Gina's condition no doubt was weird. Having said that, there was always the possibility that a different result might occur, that today, a new day, this could be it - 'ok ' said Gina 'I'll give it a try, you never know.

The osteopathic treatment was always good, she would find herself being twisted this way and that, pummeled and pulled. 'This is lazy yoga' Gina said to herself.





'It was 3.30am'

It was 3.30am and in a night of interrupted sleep, Gina was woken, again, by her mother, this time heading for the front door. 'Where are you going', Gina asked, 'they've told me that there are two bombs in a sink outside in the street' she replied, still grappling with the lock. 'Who said' Gina questioned but she already knew the answer. It was the voices in side her mothers head, she'd had another bout of delirium from an infection and Gina had accommodated her over night to keep an eye on her. Gina not knowing what to do and wishing she had learnt from the previous experience and called an ambulance sooner. Gina decided to let go and just leave her mother investigate this bomb. 'Where is it?' said Gina - 'its just outside.. two bombs. .one for you and one for me' her mother said with fear and deep concern in her eyes... 'Really' said Gina, trying to sound convinced, 'where?'...Her mother fully dressed, ventured out into the cold night air. Gina in her night clothes stood at the door, ready to intervene if necessary. At some point her mother slipped out of sight heading towards the dark black hole that was the park. Gina grabbed her door keys ready to pursue, but by then, her mother about turned. 'Go to bed' Gina said for the umpteenth time, 'Go to bed and go to sleep'.



friday 23
january

A Play
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7pm

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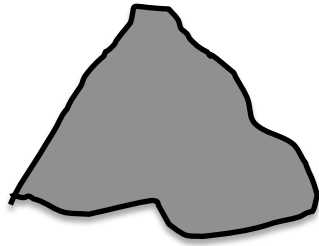
'What goes into your mouth'

Scanning websites for new information was ongoing. Gina's latest thread was researching that possibility, of a small microscopic toxic substance, which may have disappeared throughout and into her system, while it was being removed. A tiny, maybe one, or two, micro molecular, escapees. That may have vaporized and been soaked up into the mucus membranes of the mouth, while dental features were being removed and replaced with other substances. This was a question that would periodically re-emerge.

Gina was reflecting on the early stages of her illness, a few years before, when her mouth had hurt when she ate after extensive dental treatment. An intense sensation had radiated from her teeth through her jaw into her throat and down into her lungs - permeating her whole body. A small invisible ball seemed to permanently occupy the far reaches of her tongue at the back of her throat, making it difficult to swallow. The tiny camera put into her throat to investigate if there was anything amiss, proved nothing to see.



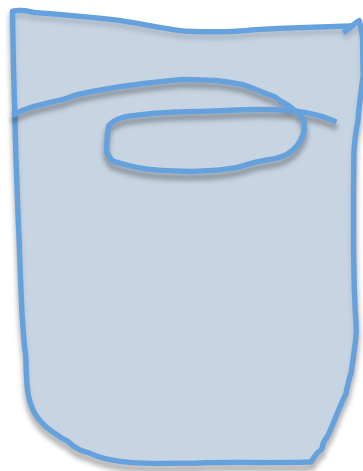
Charcoal



Clay



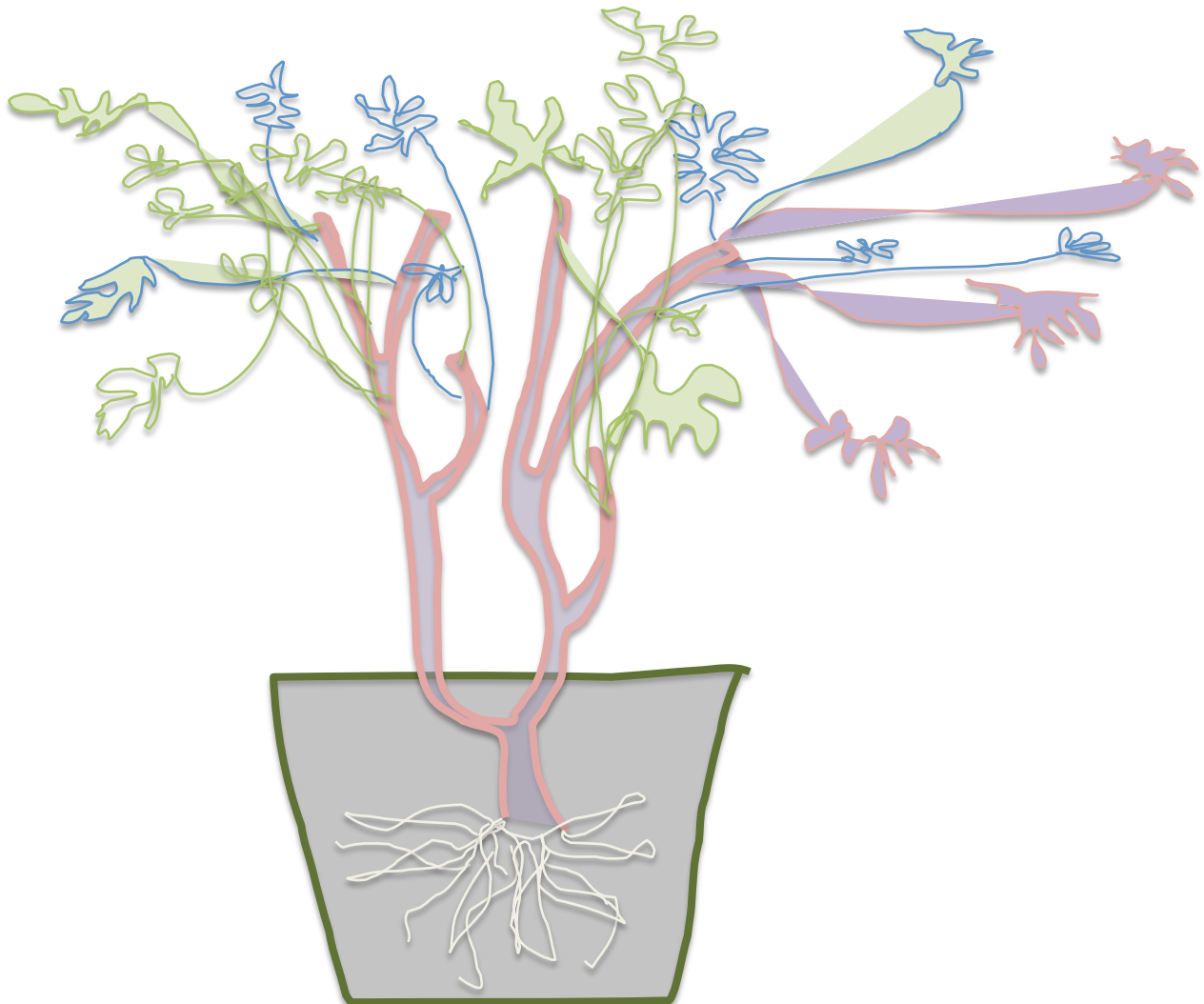
Water



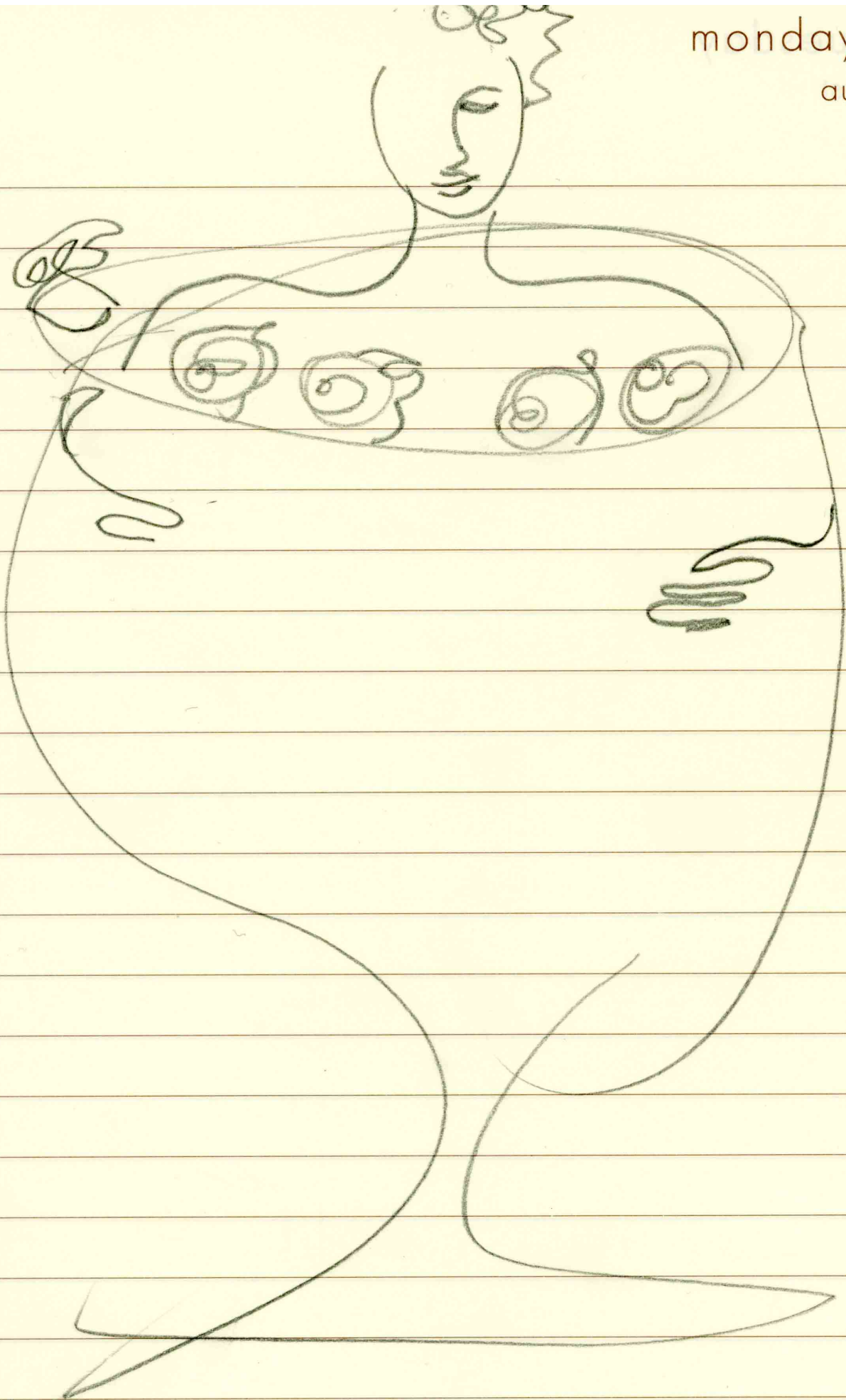
The ongoing detox

The Pelargonium wedding!

Pruning what she now discovered was a Pelargonium and not a Geranium, was a long awaited task. It had sat teasing her for attention after she had transplanted it from the garden to indoors and in the process, it looked a very sad sight. Gina however had high hopes it would recover and blossom well. At one time she had hated these plants & the little pots they sat in on front doorsteps - they hadn't warranted her attention, but after visiting a herb garden that hosted a glasshouse dedicated to scented Pelargoniums, she fell in love. There she noted 50 varieties of the scented gems. Now she understood those pots on front door steps that hadn't attracted her, they were earthly survivors, so easy to grow, as they pretty much looked after themselves - even to a level of neglect!. After pruning she sat and admired her work. A funny feeling of joy possessed her. 'This is happiness' she thought. At that moment, a kind of marriage took place between her and the pelargonium!.



monday 3
august



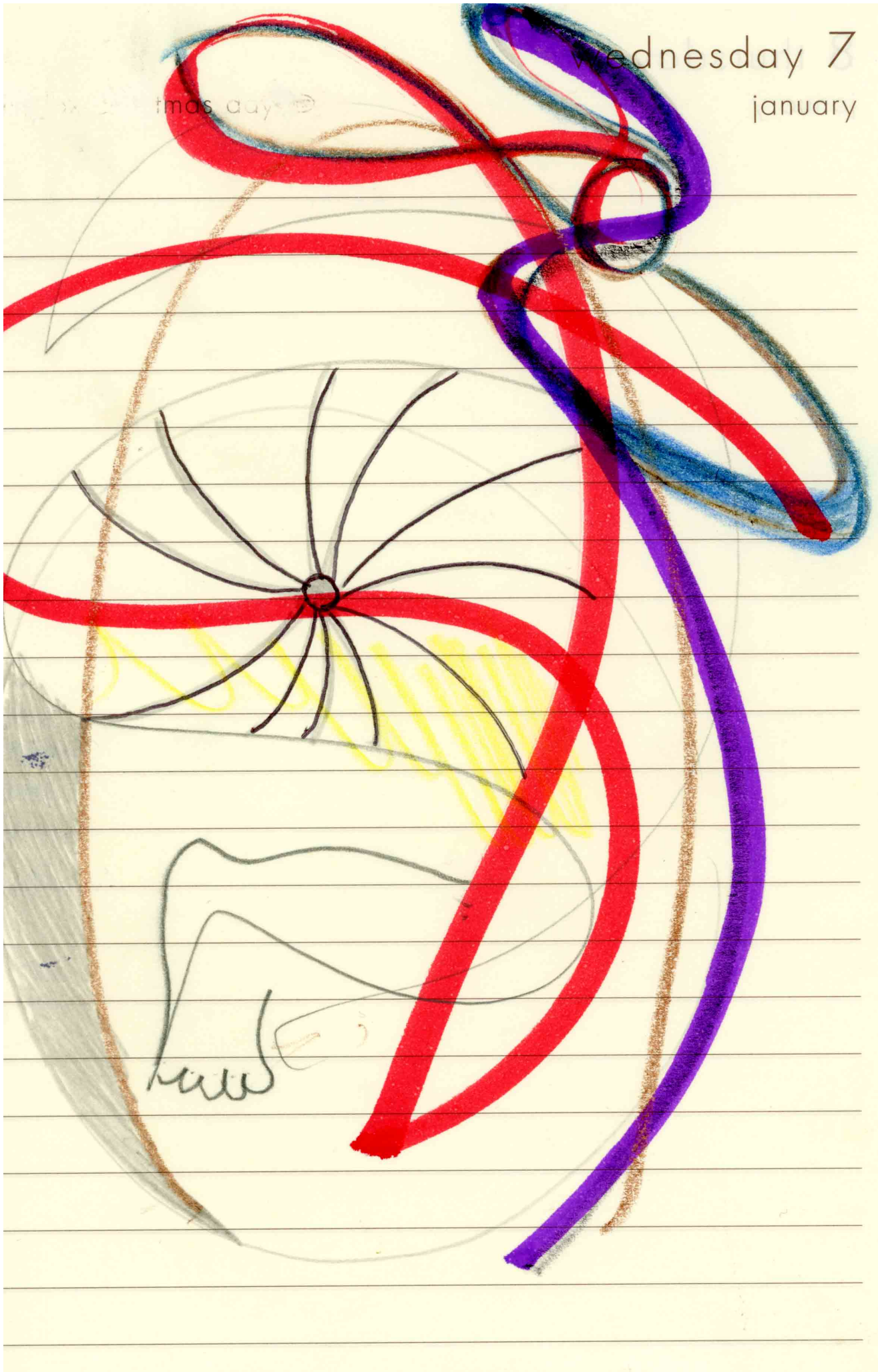
Invisible pathways

Gina awoke from a dream & onto a scrap of paper doodled an image. It was of a bird cushioned on a wing in the sky. With a scribble below the bird, you could just about decipher a very faint hand in which it was held. In its belly the sun peeped out from behind a cloud. It contrasted against a deep blue nighttime sky - the bird in forward motion, flying on an invisible pathway.



Wednesday 7
January

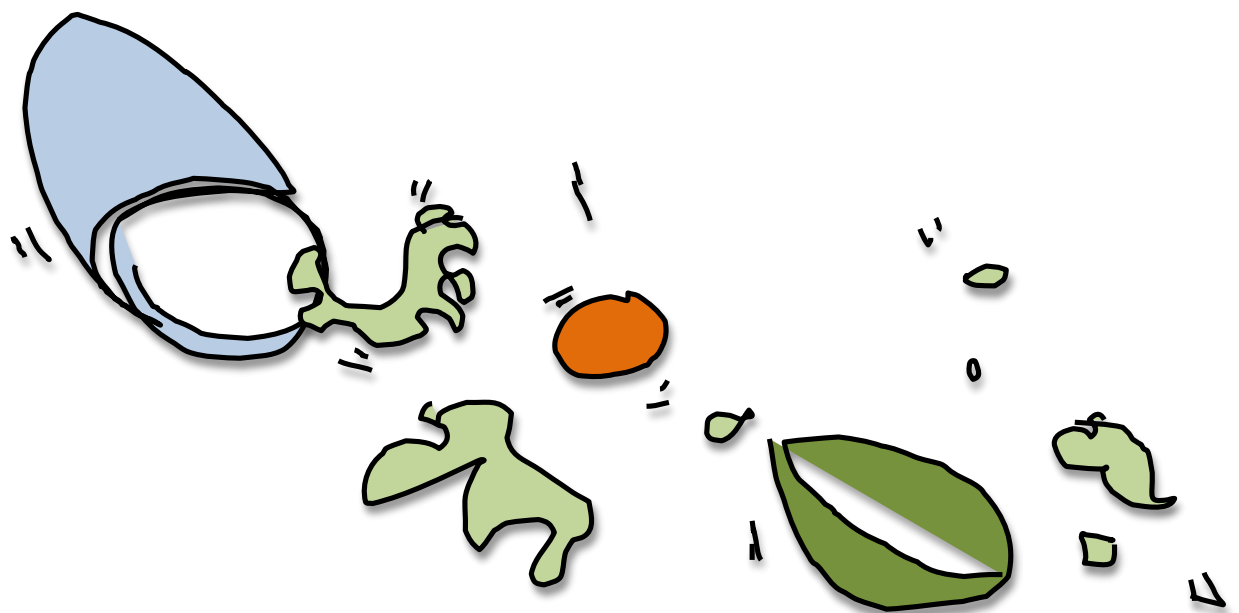
mas day ☺



'The wisdom of the unripe banana & the fall of the avocado'

After eating an unripe banana, Gina had to contend with yet another familiar throat reaction - she was making a banana avocado smoothie, synonymous with breakfast for months now. Today the avocado fell out of the smoothie maker as Gina accidentally tipped it over - 'dam!' she muttered to herself, as she saw the avocado slide down the side of the cooker, onto the floor. Gina stared at the gap between the cooker and the kitchen cabinet - looking at the bright green of the single seeded berry, against the white enameled metal, then the Lino of pale lilac flooring. It was not good, it couldn't be retrieved, as the grit from the floor had embossed the pale green texture of the fruit.

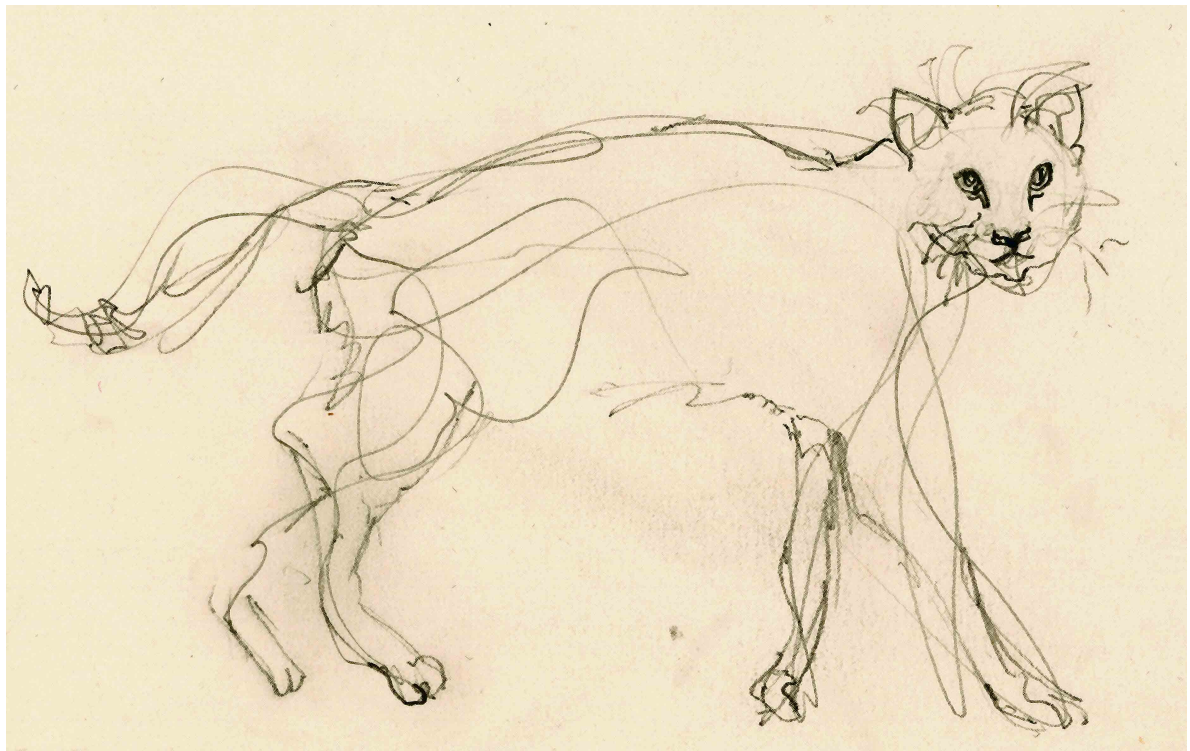
In the mess displayed before her, Gina's mind entertained an image of a jewel in the grit of the avocado, the metaphorical diamond in the sand. 'Maybe there are still endless possibilities that I have yet to explore' she notioned to herself. Gina cleaned up and started all over again from the very beginning. This time taking a little more care - paying a little more attention.



The art of the cure & making friends with the beast

Had Gina found a cure? - in some way by illuminating irritants and danger foods her symptoms were lessened - each part of the journey she was finding new clues - little openings, sometimes brick walls - adjusting to and making creative use of her depleted battery life.

The stranger that had crept into the night and stole her body leaving her with something she did not know, a stranger - in effect an illness, she nor her doctors new little or nothing about. So now, you have to get to know this new person - new walls new spaces - new dimensions - and befriend - to adjust herself & make friends with the beast. Was it that now she new better the stranger; was this the art of the cure?



Wild Cat in dream

30 friday
january



With thanks to the Wellcome Collections for housing a copy of 'off sick & Gina's sketch book diaries' 2024

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