

"I know this is the right place."

How do you know?

Susan Miller is my favorite astrologer and she says so.

Hmm.

Also, my mom lives here.

Okay, we'll stay.

From the dark nether regions of Proxima Centauri b came 5 humans, 2 dogs and a cat. They drove their spaceship 4.2 light years and landed in a rural American town, close to the northern border of NJ. In this town, there were many farms and houses with oversized yards. There were cows, horses, incredibly friendly Lyme disease ticks and hapless kittens with eyeballs that occasionally rolled out of their eye sockets and fell gently onto the ground. There was a garden variety of mediocre restaurants with employees who generally swore in no less than 3 languages. And most importantly there was an astrological golden triangle that told Evangeline that she had come to the right place. The golden triangle looked like a hologram, made up of the faces of the people who she loved the most, and perhaps, understood the least. The golden triangle gave her confidence and somehow her family, awed by her certainty, agreed to settle in this strange land. They used all their saved resources to rent a house.



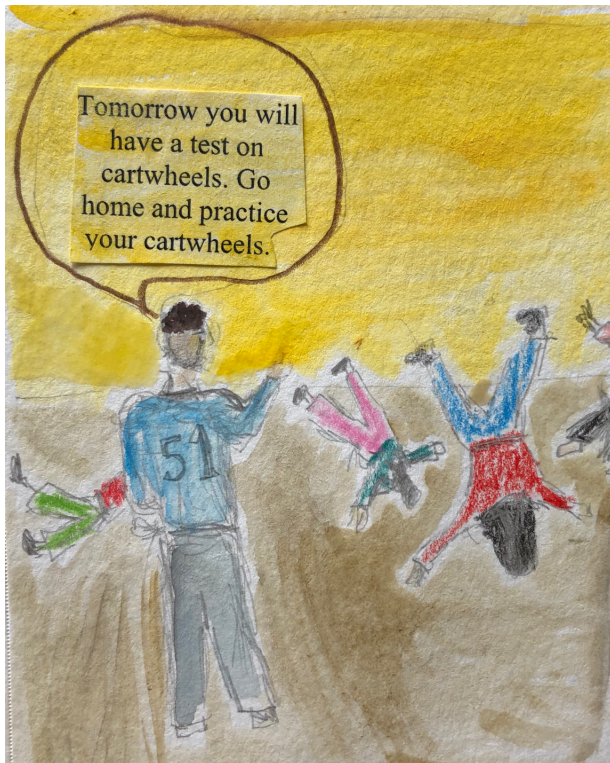
Evangeline, the mother of the children ranging in ages from 8 to 18, had been a high school teacher in a city with many poor and working-class families on Proxima Centauri b, so when she arrived in Warwick, NY, she decided to seek employment as a teacher.



After a few months of searching, applying and interviewing, she was offered a leave- replacement position at a local high school. The teacher she replaced was even considering retiring at the end of her leave, so it seemed hopeful that there could be a position the following year. The pay was better at this teaching job than at any she had ever had at Proxima Centauri b.

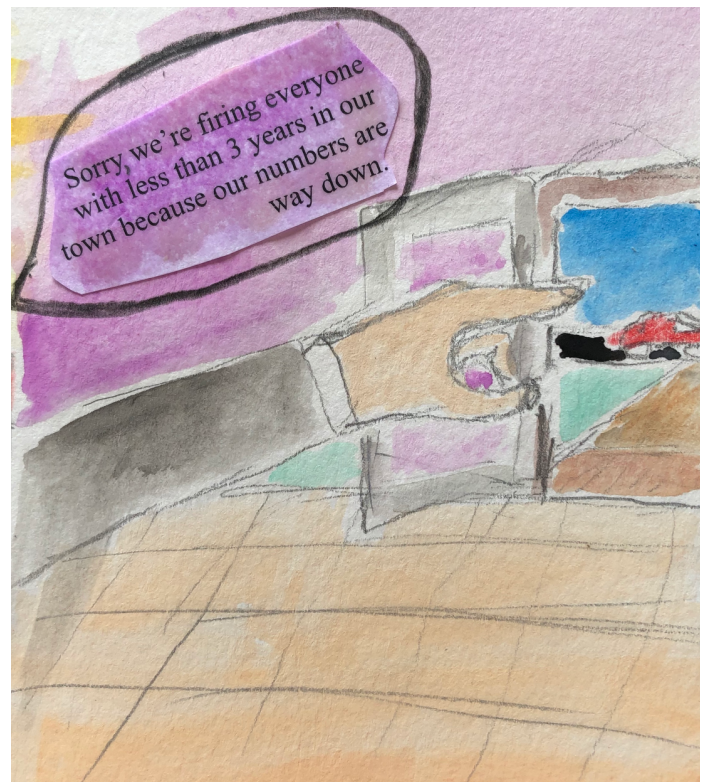


The school was only 4 miles away so she could even bike to work.



Arnold, Evangeline's husband, found a job counseling veterans an hour south in East Orange, NJ.

Jeanne and Bear attended the local middle and elementary schools. The schools administered a great number of high-stakes assessments.



However, as their first school year in New York State came to a close, it became apparent that Evangeline's position would not exist the following year. Apparently, there had been a major exodus from NYC to this upstate town after 9/11 in 2001 and so the town experienced a mini-population explosion. But once those children graduated, the school aged-population shrank back to normal size.



One week after this news arrived, Arnold was fired from his job at the VA for telling the truth about something in an email. He was constantly doing that.



“A state of microgravity is when the pull of gravity is not very strong. In microgravity, it is easy to move heavy objects. Astronauts can even move things that weigh hundreds of pounds with just the tips of their fingers.”
-NASA

While contemplating the situation as she gardened one morning, Evangeline observed a phenomenon in their sphere of existence that occasionally occurred back in Centauri b.

In her mind, Evangeline heard this song that they used to sing together on Proxima Centauri b:

Microgravity

What do you say when gravity up and walks away? Sucked in the air, the house and the car, the dog's up there.

How do you play when gravity takes a holiday? Garden, yard and paint, float away up to outer space. And what binds you takes flight; what penetrates us crashes from great heights. You stay up all night. Dig in at the warehouse, wait for the fight.

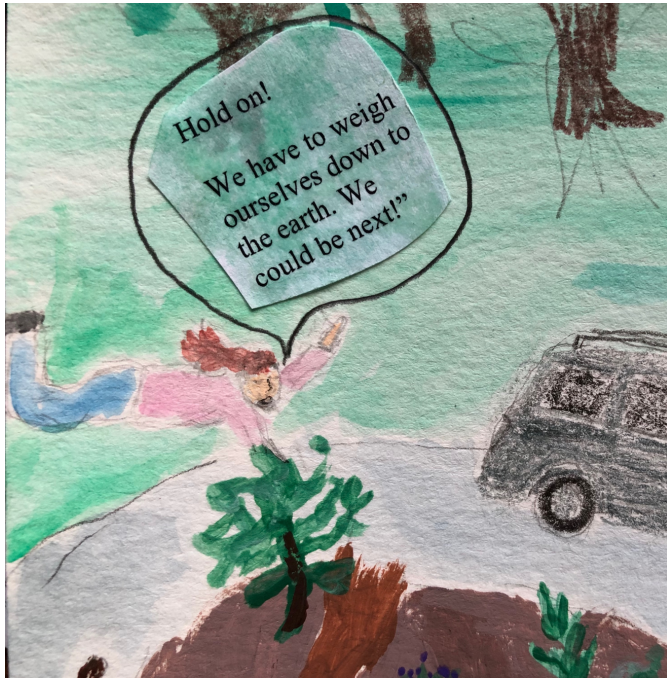
What do you say when fundamental forces dissipate? Windshield wiper's broke- the snow and rain weave a deadly cloak.

How do you play when a monstrous mass drags you towards its face? Buy some goats for milk, hide them in the woods and visit them. And what binds you takes flight. What penetrates us crashes from great heights. You stay up all night; dig in at the warehouse and wait for the fight.

Because you wanna stay and microgravity is the reaction between two masses.

Take a nap in the ice-cold car. At 3am dirty, frozen, flapping plastic looks just like art. Beneath the bright fluorescent lighting in the microwave line, jokes and guzzling crappy coffee help you pretend that you're fine With your people in the break room who know your speed really sucks. Dominoes in the break room, then you get back up. And what binds you takes flight. What penetrates us crashes from great heights. You stay up all night, dig in at the warehouse and wait for the fight.

Because you wanna stay and microgravity is the reaction between two masses.



After about 20 minutes, the state microgravity began to subside but reality began to shift in other ways.



Arnold sold their reliable car in an attempt to stay put in their rental that they had once hoped to buy.

Evangeline sang this song that night.

Washing Machine

I live inside a washing machine, watch me come around,
go around, come around, go around, go around now.
Direction is a puzzle to me, watch me living my inside out
American dream. Ahead of me online, I see his magic
plastic, wondering if I could maybe cast a spell, so I could
bring these groceries home, but I don't feel so lucky.
Maybe the next time around. Insufficient funds- go away
go.

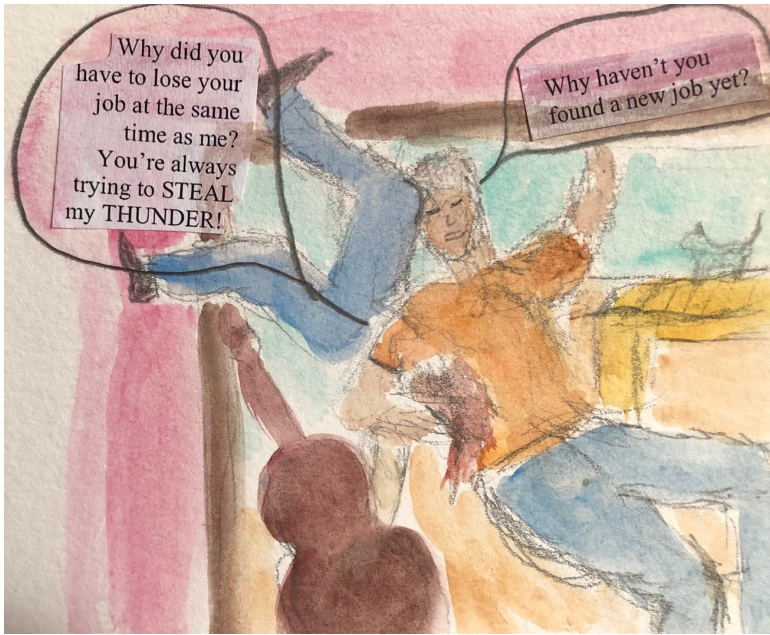
Sleep right behind your door so we won't take your more.
Sleep right behind your door so they won't take your
more.

These numbers all have something they mean, watch me
come around, go around, come around, go around, go
around now. Our landlord's carpet's frighteningly
pristine; watch him come around, go around, come
around, go around, go around now. But inside, he's really
such a sad soul. He's so scared that we'll leave him in the
hole. He took the numbers took the numbers and more.
The middle class sleep right behind the door. Insufficient
funds- go away go.

Sleep right behind your door so we won't take your more.
Sleep right behind your door so they won't take your
more.



They looked desperately for jobs.



They wrestled throughout the house incessantly, often smashing into instruments and animals.



In July, bouts of microgravity began to occur again. Sometimes Evangeline would float all the way to the roof.

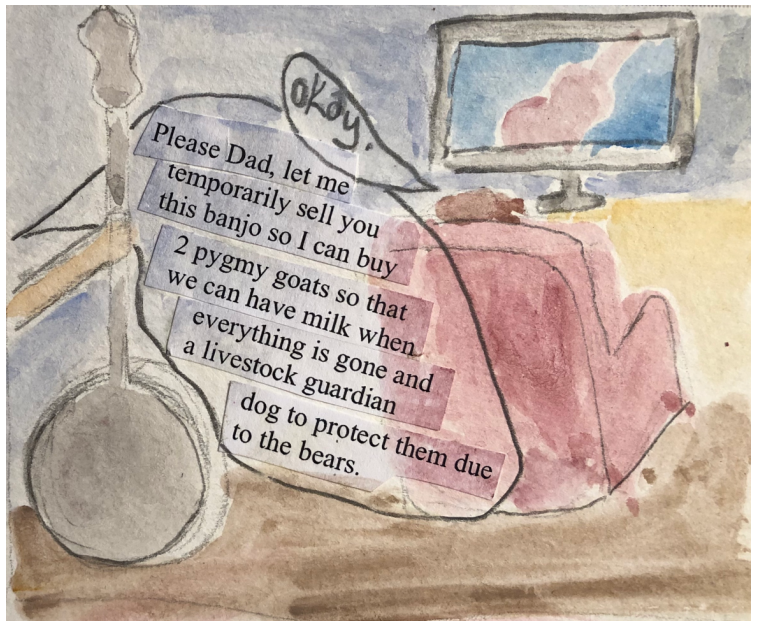
After attending an unsuccessful session with a professional referee, Evangeline took a long walk.

Predator

12 miles home, winding backroads- so you won't find me. Twilight falls slow, lightening bugs code the hopelessness you're hiding. Put one foot in front of the other in the night, put one foot in front of the other inky skies, put one foot in front of, and maybe we won't die, put one foot in front of the other in the night.

The words fell out of my mouth, mirrors and creditors. Cut, floods from inside, nation of predators. Door was locked when I arrived so I climbed into the truck. Slept sound wrapped up inside a tarp and dreamed of giving up. Predators. Exhaust up to the sky mirrors and creditors. Now stars, dead, cast their light, nation of creditors. Wait until the morning comes words achromatize they glint like dewdrops in the sun, giving up their guise. Predator.

Burning- dinner's burning and the table in my mind turning. You reach for you power it's in the high heels- there under your bed, you reach for your power in the makeup, it's broken & red. You reach for your power in the coffee cup there on the stove you reach for your power and its rumbling under the hood. Skin deep and plastic in a jar on the shelf, ghosts walking in the sales rack, coughing up bile and wealth. Burning chicken's burning and the table, in my mind's turning. You reach for your power it's in the restaurant where you eat your fright, you reach for your power in the church where you whisper your plight, you reach for your power it's in the tv it's shining so bright, you reach for your power shopping online late into the night. Skin deep and plastic in a jar on the shelf, ghosts walking in the sales rack, coughing up bile and wealth.



So Evangeline began to plan for the worst.



She hid the goats- Sweet Pea and Henry in a pen they built from scraps on the edge of the yard in the forest.



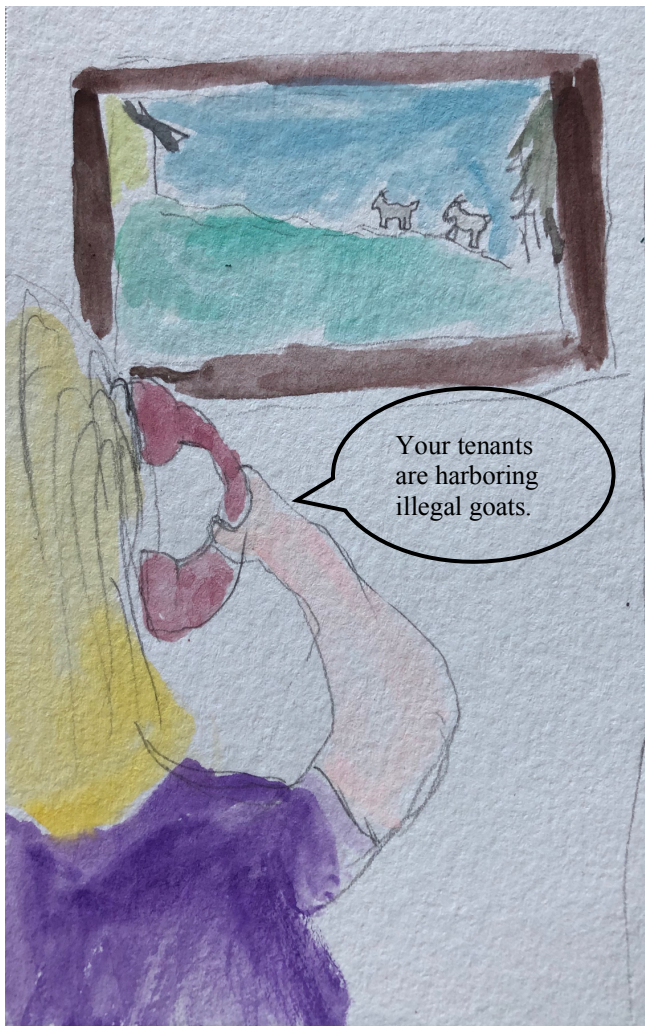
They were hidden there because she knew the landlord (and city ordinances) would probably never allow them to stay. At least there would be milk when the money was gone.



Henry and Sweet-Pea stayed hidden in their pen for about three months. The problem was that they were quite codependent for some reason they and would run to the house making the loudest goat noises whenever they could escape, which they were becoming quite good at.



Evangeline went out to feed and visit with them twice a day and worked with the dog to teach him to protect them. She loved being in the forest but got poison ivy no less than 47 times.



One day they escaped and the neighbors saw them trotting from the forest to the house. They called the landlord and ratted the family out.



Evangeline often fantasized about a final standoff with her landlord.



In the end, she had to beg a friend to keep them in her barn temporarily.



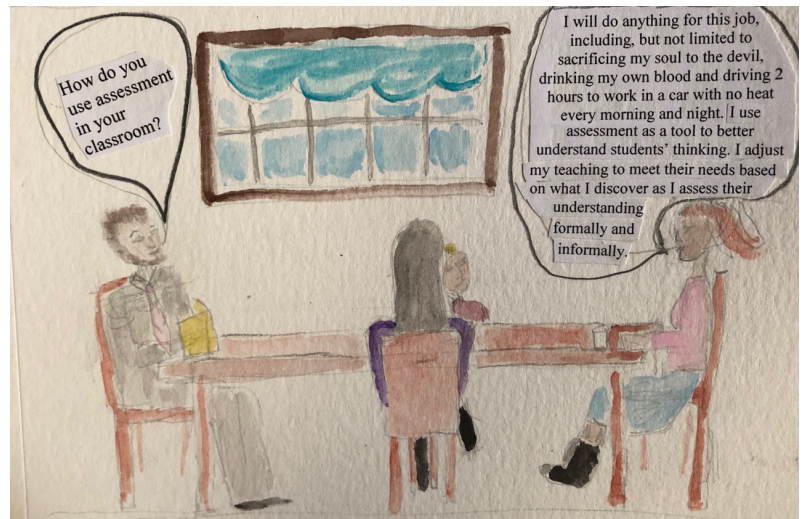
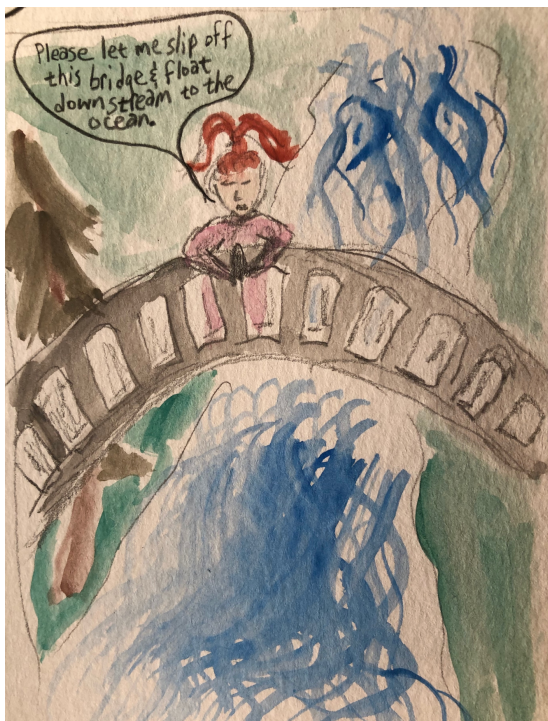
When the rent was due the following month, they were short again. Her kind brother and sister-in-law offered to pay one month of their rent.



At this point, they owed everyone in their family money. They even owed Arnold's brother in prison money. They had no health insurance and although she'd never had the slightest interest in the military on Centauri-b, Evangeline was forced to consider joining a nearby National Guard unit. She'd heard that they could accept a person until their 39th birthday.



While she waited for dates she took 2 crappy-paying jobs with no insurance: one as a substitute teacher and one at a warehouse in Mahwah, NJ. At the warehouse she worked a night shift, packaging clothing for the 1%. On Fridays and Mondays, she worked from 7am to 3pm and then 9pm to 6am. She was slow and after the holiday season, they didn't invite her back.



Occasionally she still got a last-hope interview for a teaching position.



But nothing panned out and in December, they knew they had to leave to find a cheaper place to live. They decided to move north (since the rent was cheaper) into an isolated cabin, against the advice of their wonderful priest.



Leaving was hard; they couldn't really afford to move. A program through the VA helped a bit. Arnold found a low-paying job installing solar panels on roofs in 10-degree weather. It's a challenging job when you have 2 TBIs and narcolepsy.

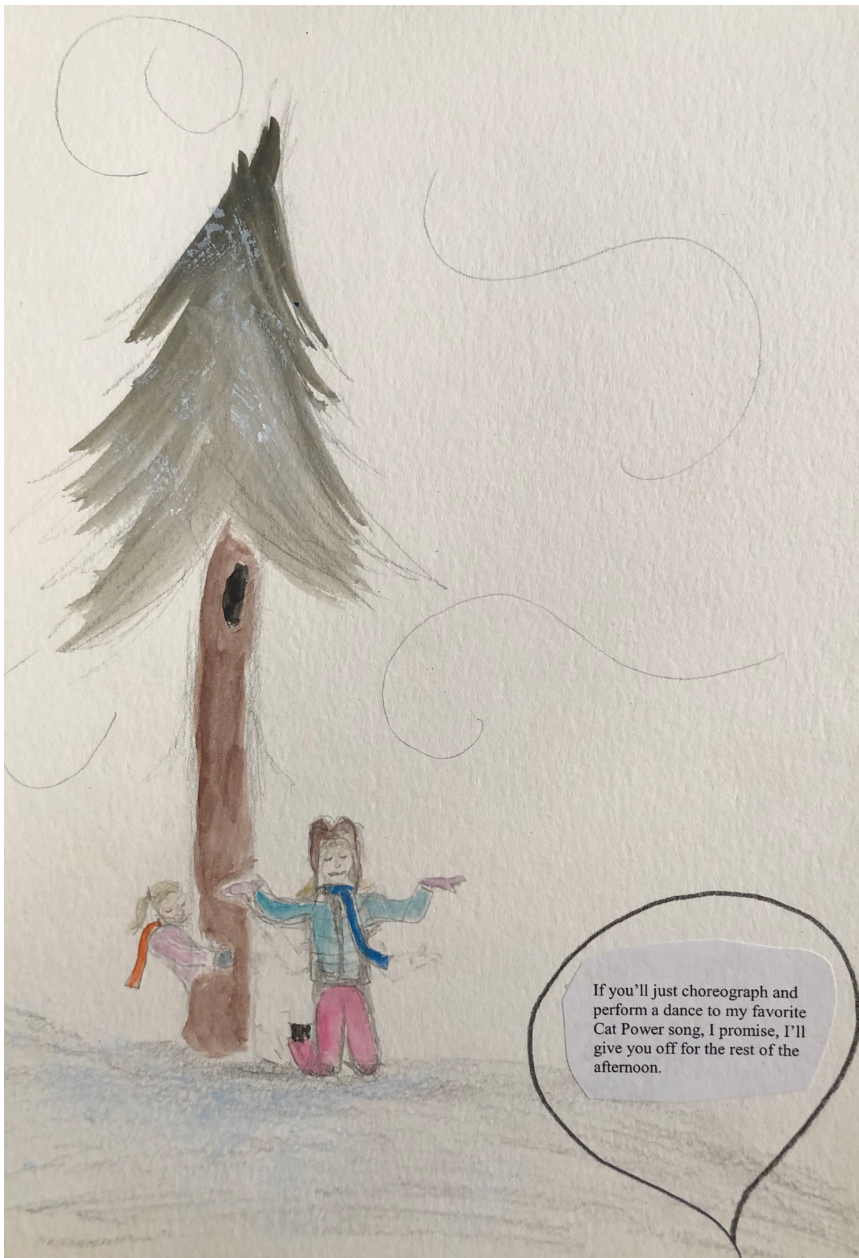


They moved in early January after driving at least 338 carloads of furniture, toys, clothing and animals, 70 miles north into the land of snow-covered trailer homes in the Catskills. Then their fate began to sink in.

Guidon Bear

To no man's land, you brought your goats. The snow will fall, the ice will grow. Your fear says yes, your priest say no. 500 drives on icy roads. One short shipwreck and I'm lost, where's the guidon bear? One tall train wreck and I'm lost, where's the guidon bear? Silent woods, poison starlight, rabbits dead in haunted gardens. Stolen books, in secret trailers, troubled churches, wandering strangers. Feudal, mercantile, industrialism, this company town it's a flawed organism and I'll be fading, in this ghost town. Feudal, mercantile, industrialism, this vacation town it's a flawed organism and I'll be fading, in this ghost town.

To no man's land, you brought your hopes. The snow will melt, the ice will float. But summer brings rich city folks, on the cabin door, an eviction note. One short shipwreck and I'm lost, where's the guidon bear? One tall train wreck and I'm lost, where's the guidon bear? Silent woods, poison starlight, rabbits dead in haunted gardens. Stolen books, in secret trailers, troubled churches, wandering strangers. Feudal, mercantile, industrialism, this company town it's a flawed organism and I'll be fading, in this ghost town. Feudal, mercantile, industrialism, this vacation town it's a flawed organism and I'll be fading, in this ghost town.



Soon after the move, the transmission died on the Datsun, so while Arnold was at work the rest of the family was stuck at the cabin, “homeschooling”.



After a long, lonely, heartless winter with 3+ feet of snow, signs of spring finally began spiraling toward them. Evangeline was finally given a date to go to basic military training: May 12th.



Around the same time, the family came home and noticed a little note on their cabin door. The landlord had initially told them that their rental could be long term, but when the ice thawed, he suddenly remembered he could make a lot more than \$1500 a month on the cabin in the nice weather.



They had nowhere to go while Evangeline was in training. Then a kind, generous family back in Centauri b invited the family to stay with them until Evangeline could get back from training and they could get on their feet. There were more jobs in Centauri, so it seemed like the only possible solution.



E. flew to training and everyone else drove south to the space station.

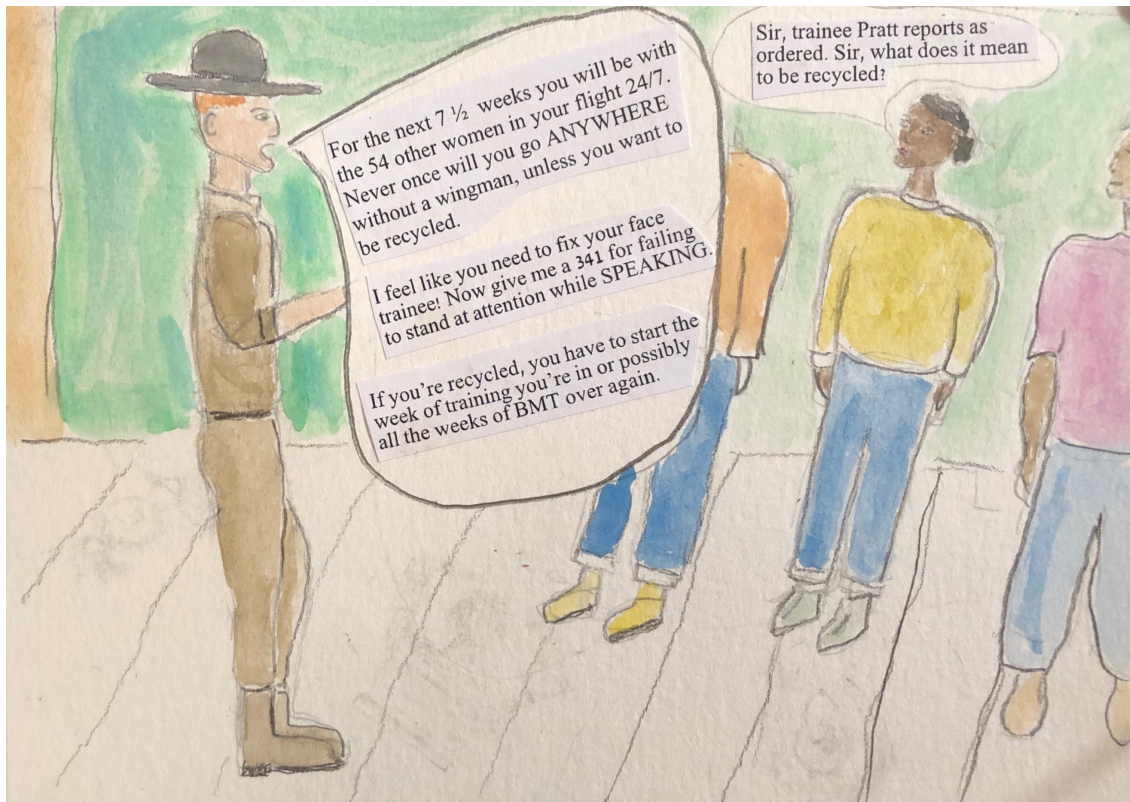
Go away, go away! You don't belong in my flight. Your hair's a mess, your speed sucks, you need to rectify your life. You move at the speed of smell- in no universe is that right. Fix your face. It's okay- you can cry after lights out.

Holy crap, holy crap! This yard-sale represents your life! Get in step. Church it up.

Someone's gonna get a "U" tonight. Stop being weird. I feel like, I probably said this more than twice. You've got no integrity, but you can cry after lights out.

The irony is, that where we are from, we can only feel love from mean-ness.

So dystopia feels a lot like our home where the angriest people they need us.



Basic Military Training (BMT) was not hard in the way Evangeline imagined it would be. The absurdities were really too many to count but here are a few special things that could drive anyone toward the edge of their road map of sanity.



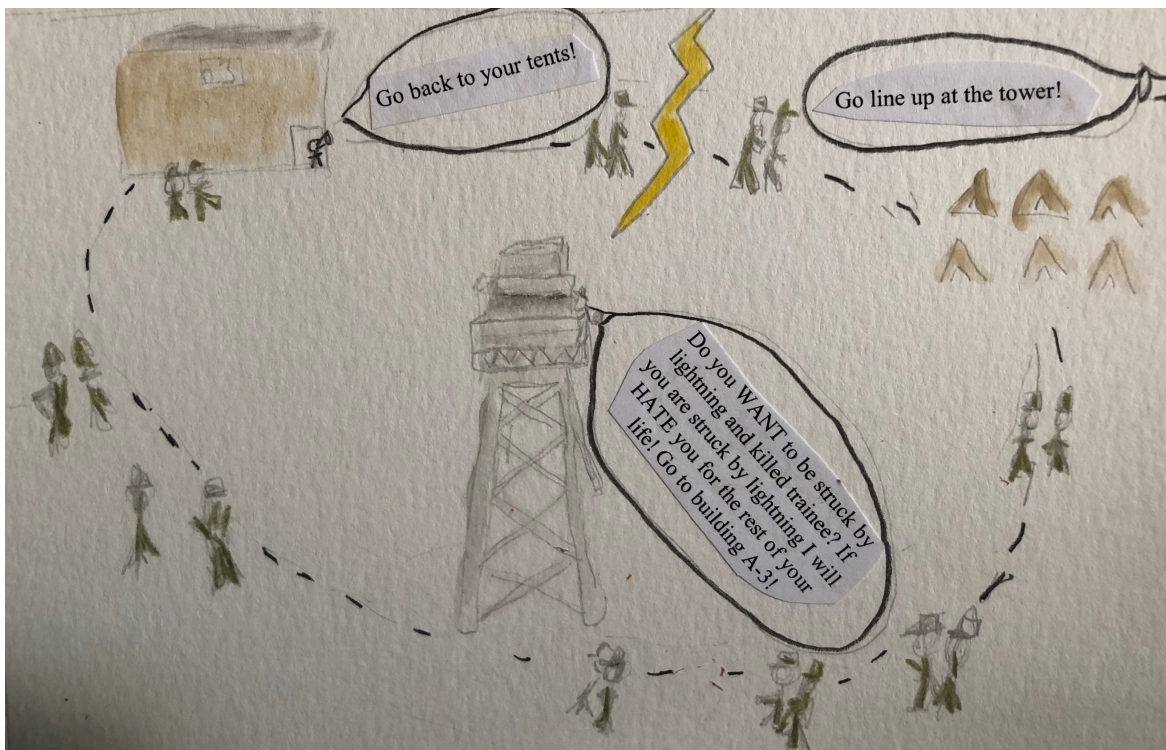
#1 It was an introvert's nightmare



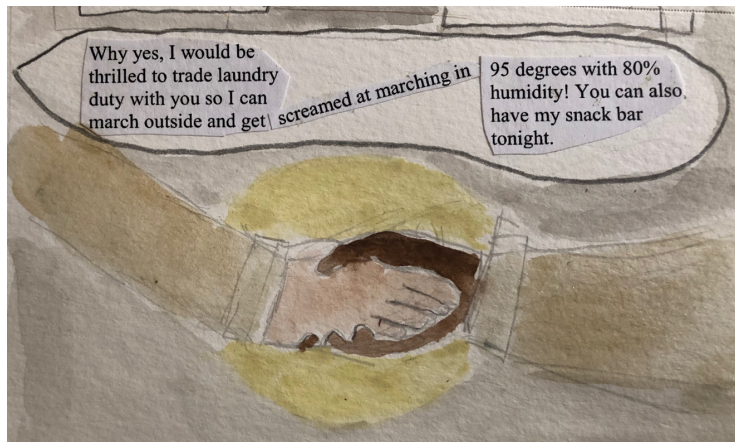
#2 There were no phone calls for the first 4 weeks. No letters in or out for the first 2 weeks. Evangeline had never gone that long without being able to communicate with family. Eventually, the women gained occasional access to 2 payphones.



After the first 4 weeks, when she *could* finally make a 2-minute phone call, Evangeline couldn't make words come out of her mouth very well.



#3 There is no way for you to have an inkling of control over, or even rudimentary knowledge of what you will be doing 30 seconds from now.



#4 You spend most of your day breathing recycled air under fluorescent lights with no clear windows.



And when you're 5'4, you're always marching in the middle of your flight. You cannot look around, so you only see the back of your wingman's head. Evangeline experienced a mild sort of sensory deprivation, feeling constant, desperate longing to touch grass or dirt or feel wind.



In the evenings between 8pm and 8:30, the trainees were usually permitted to walk to the nearest mailbox with a wingman. This was the most wonderful time; the air felt soft, warm and loving. They passed a water treatment area that smelled of a chlorinated pool, painting a whole world of memories in Evangeline's mind.

They passed several trees where birds sang and took dust baths. When an MTI or dorm chief denied the trainees their letter mailing time due to lightening or failure to complete their details on time, Evangeline would become particularly morose.

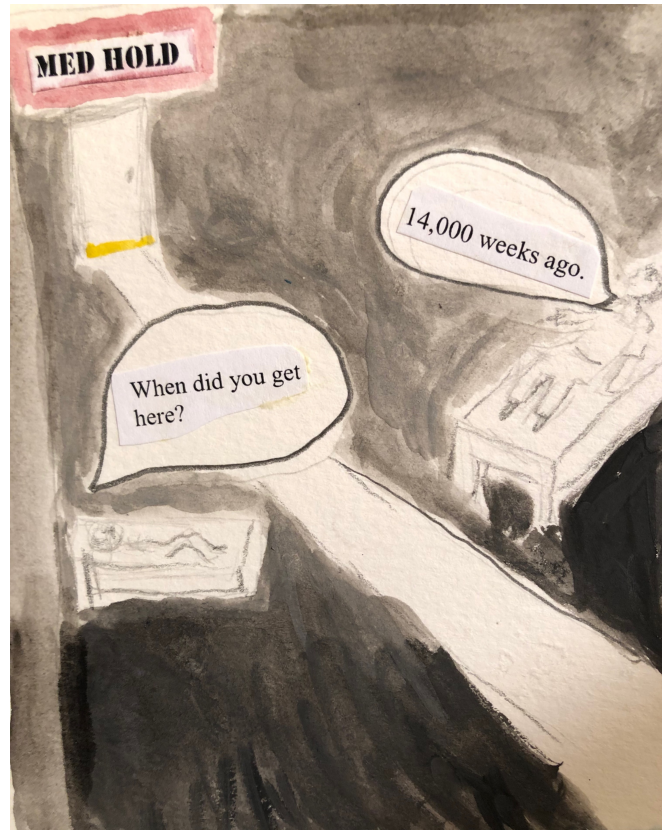
Mailbox All of my mistakes, right here in my mouth. White-winged dove fly down and tell me what, the sky looks like beyond the squadron wall. White- winged dove fly down and tell me what, the air breathes like beyond the squadron wall.

The doors are all locked and no windows can open. Linoleum block floor & metal bar beds. In giant black lockers sleep our authorized items. Oxygen still and windows you can't see through. But the lightening flash, through the clouded glass speaks to you. Sealed tight, sounds tight, finds you locked in there. The lightening flash, through the clouded glass speaks to you. Sealed tight, sounds tight, finds you locked in there.

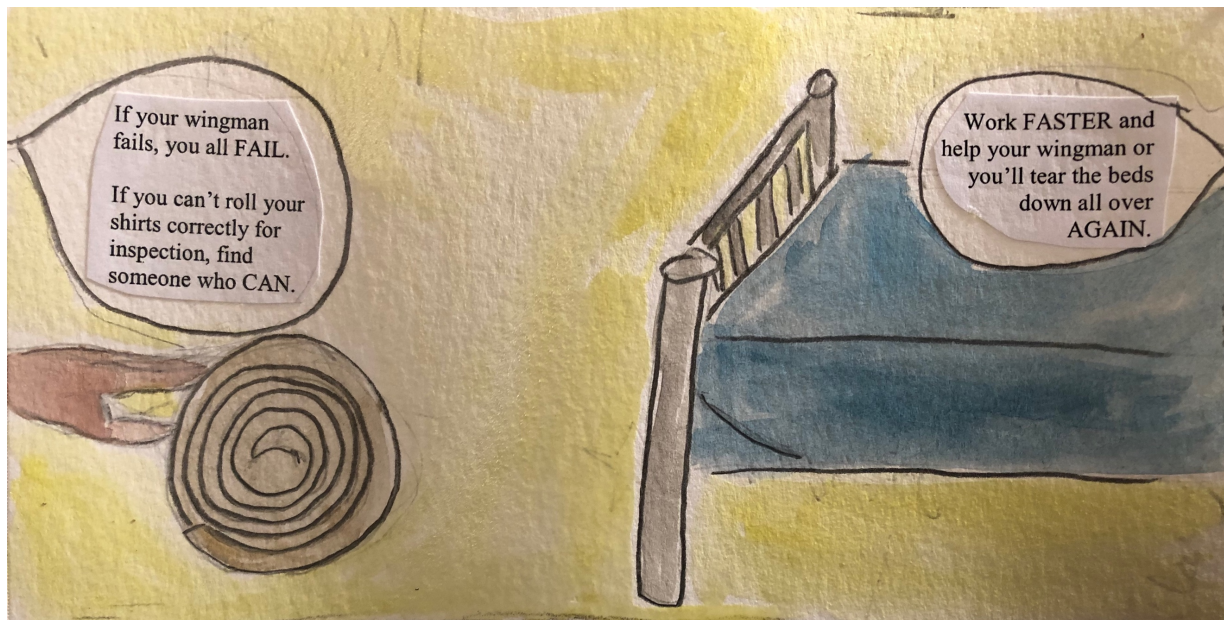
And I smell gasoline walking to the mailbox with you. I smell candy canes walking to the mailbox with you. I smell chemicals, walking to the mailbox with you. But there's no gas station, there's no Santa Claus, there's no swimming pool here.

All of my mistakes, right here in my mouth. White-winged dove fly down and tell me what, the sky looks like beyond the squadron wall. White- winged dove fly down and tell me what, the air breathes like beyond the squadron wall.

We're safe from fire ants, snakes and scorpions, we're safe from the water that seeps into our tent, dark trains, coyotes, boars, careless drivers, poisonous gases and powerful men. But the lightening flash, through the clouded glass speaks to you. Sealed tight, sounds tight, finds you locked in there. The lightening flash, through the clouded glass speaks to you. Sealed tight, sounds tight, finds you locked in there.



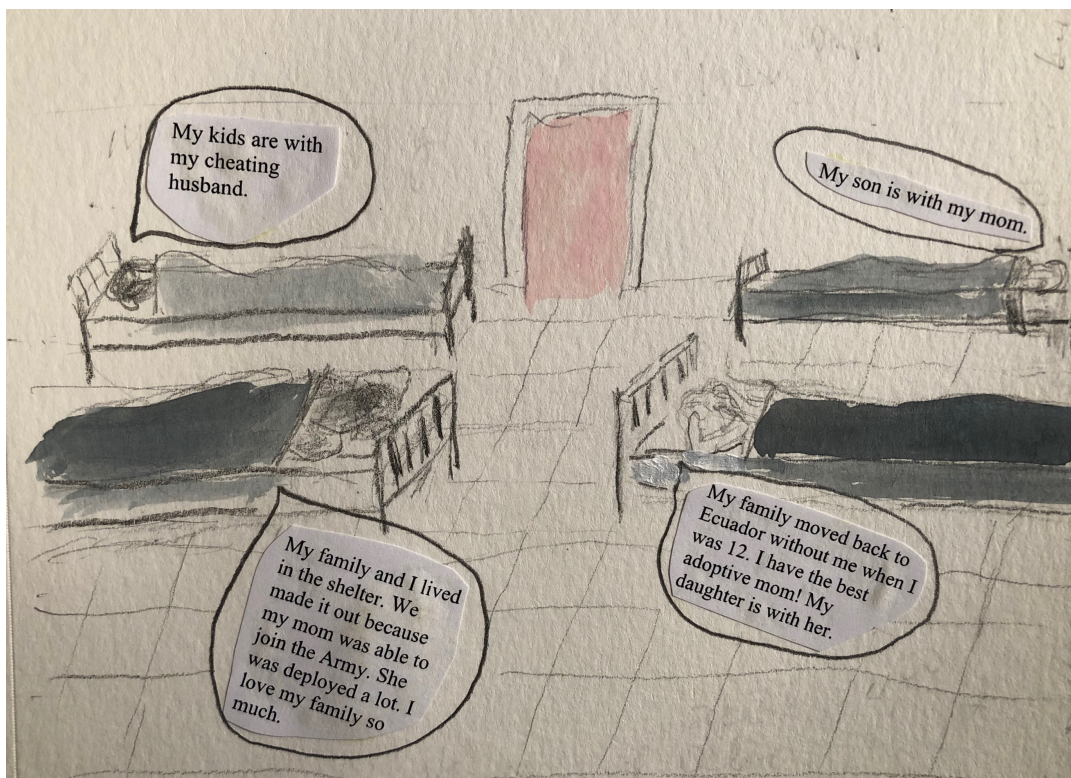
#5 If you are sick or injured (and you will get sick sleeping in a hall with 54 other strangers from all over the country for 7 ½ weeks), you will have to feverishly drag yourself through PT each morning at 5am. If cough drops and Tylenol can't fix it, you are probably doomed. About 50% of the time a trainee goes to the "hospital," the doctor takes a closer look at you and notices some other problem: shin splints, an unreported allergy, a sprain, a demon possession or insanity. Then you are sent to one of the 7 levels of med-hold hell indefinitely.



There were a few positive points. For example, Evangeline had never lived under such stringent principles of communalism before.



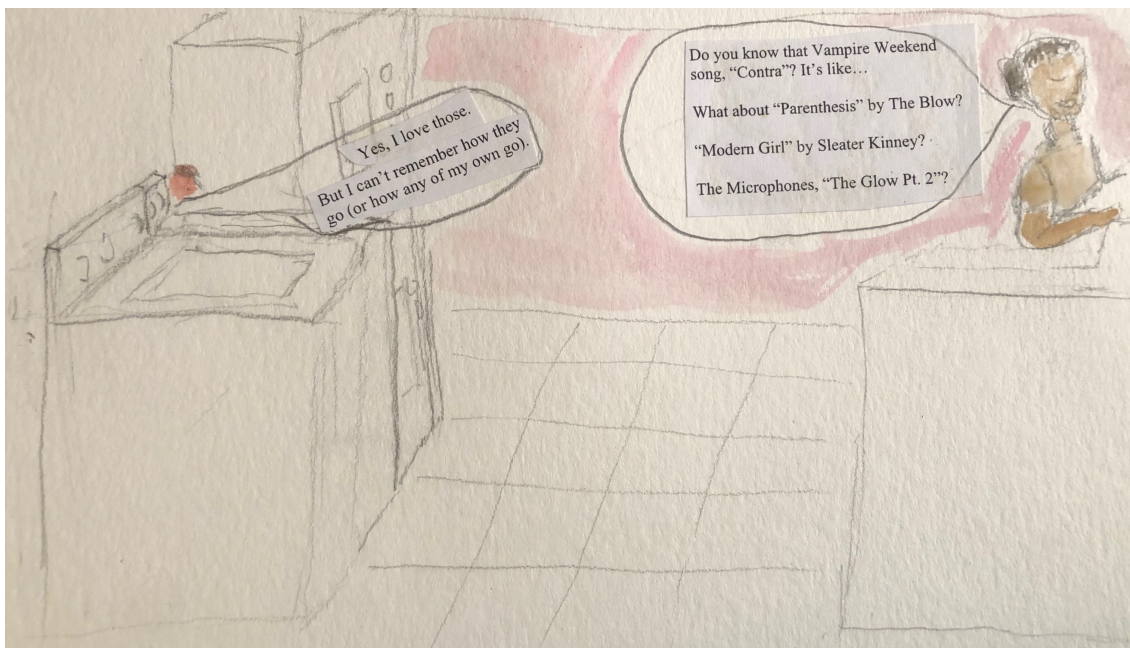
She also enjoyed being exclusively called by her last name and wearing clothing that was de-gendered. Evangeline felt a subtle, ever-present stress fall off of her that she had never noticed was there before.



Most of the women in Evangeline's flight were very young, but about $\frac{1}{4}$ of them had children they had left behind. E. didn't talk to anyone because she was too sad but she listened to their stories whispered in the dark and she listened to them while they rolled socks on Sundays. Listening to them reminded her how lucky she was and how for many, the military is the only pathway to the middle class.



When it came to details, Evangeline was lucky. She was assigned to laundry crew. Laundry crew was mostly composed of nerds and she was able to avoid a lot of drama squished behind the dryers, endlessly dusting with a sticky sheet, preparing for inspection. The more weight she lost in the Texas heat, the further she could wedge herself behind the dryers. She dreamed of one day completely disappearing back there.



At one point, while discussing some of their favorite bands, Evangeline realized that she couldn't remember a single melody in her head- not even a song she'd written herself, not even a church song. Singing had gotten her through a lot of hard times, but her brain was scrambled. Only marching cadences lived there now.

I Forgot

When you forget every song that you ever know, they no longer play in your head like the radio. It was early spring when I climbed aboard the plastic plane. Didn't feel a thing as the melody drained away. I forgot every song that I ever knew the morning I woke up and said goodbye to you. Didn't have a melody, didn't have a clue, what it would be like where I was going to. I forgot every song that I ever wrote when I stepped out of the car and said goodbye to you. Didn't have a photograph, didn't have a pill, just the fantasy that we could pay these bills.

Dream of lights out all day long. Dream of lights out because then we're home. Dark ceiling lights reflect my shape, in glass rectangles I see your face. And everyone's at the kitchen table now, laughing about something you said. Fighting over figurines and the butter on your bread. Yeah, everyone's at the kitchen table now, laughing about something you said. Fighting over television, and the dog's torn up bed.

When you forget every song that you ever know, lips move minus sound, minus river flow. In early summer I glimpsed my reflection inside my watch. Fluorescent light through dirty mesh, filching mismatched socks. I forgot every song that I ever knew the morning I woke up and said goodbye to you. Didn't have a melody, didn't have a clue, what it would be like where I was going to. I forgot every song that I ever wrote when I stepped out of the car and said goodbye to you. Didn't have a photograph, didn't have a pill, just the fantasy that we could pay these bills.

So many innocent people are killed by the police with weapons similar to this one. So many innocent people are killed in school shootings with weapons similar to this one. So many innocent people are killed by the Congressmen and women who have created the deadly American gun laws.

In week 5 they learned to fire their weapons.



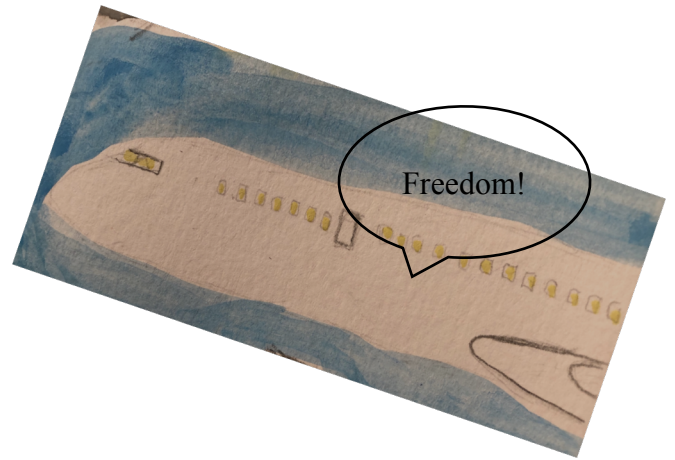
My Banality

Good guys, bad guys, get your guns. We'll shoot it out & have some fun. Hiding behind steel and aluminum: Americans, pussies with our guns. Democracy with my mp5, it's my call of duty, I need to stay alive, because sacrifice is just for fairy tales and cash is cold behind the freedom veil.

Please send me back to my banality, laundry piled high on the couch, dirty dishes in the sink. Send me back to my banality, dog hair clumped up on the floor, toothpaste smeared in the bathroom sink. Send me back to my banality, hitting every red light, as far as the eye can see. Send me back to my banality, dandelions in the yard, blinding sunlight when I blink.

Sex the violence, you know it pays the bills. We'll drink their blood and eat our fill. We've got Glockes to kill, sig sour to get ahead; we'll murder trouble when we throw lead. Democracy means, "Go and get your gun." And Jesus is as Jesus does. That's how we're free, that's how we run from the egoistic infants we've become.

Please send me back to my banality, laundry piled high on the couch, dirty dishes in the sink. Send me back to my banality, dog hair clumped up on the floor, toothpaste smeared in the bathroom sink. Send me back to my banality, hitting every red light, as far as the eye can see. Send me back to my banality, dandelions in the yard, blinding sunlight when I blink.



Somehow, she made it to the end. Now that the family had relocated back to Centauri b where more jobs were available, she hoped to get out of the military before being required to participate in military action that contradicted everything she believed in. If not, she would be looking at another training which was 5 months long.



After being with 54 "sisters" at all times for 2 months, being alone felt disturbing. She felt awkward using "sirs" and ma'ams" on Centauri b and she felt rude leaving them off of the end of every sentence spoken in public.



When the family finally found a house to rent on Centauri b, it was right in their old NE neighborhood, where they had lived 3 years ago (a lifetime ago). She hoped that her desperation, depression and anxiety would not mess up her job prospects. She hoped that irresponsible banking practices would not crash the economy and making finding a job impossible.



As always, she started painting the bedrooms in her landlord's house. She tried to paint herself into the place. She hoped the colors could slow her down, stick her in, like a gnat caught in the soft fluid, making her a permanent part of the home.

Paint

Paint me, into place. Color slow down this break-neck pace. Paint me into some place. Color correlate me, from chaos extricate.

When the mail comes in, it's over your head even when you're outside. And the envelopes laid end-over-end last as long as your life. Still sticky, broken seals attach to you-true crime. When the mail comes in it's inside your head, even when you're outside.

Thank you Angelo Mozilo, thank you Phil Gramm. Thank you Ian McCarthy, thank you Alan Greenspan. Thank you JP Morgan, Citigroup, thank you Phil Gramm. Thank you Goldman Sachs and Merrill Lynch. Thank you Alan Greenspan.

Paint me, into place. Color slow down this break-neck pace. Paint me into some place. Color correlate me, from chaos extricate.

Glass shattered and crumbling cement on the baseboard in your mind. Frayed wires, subterranean pipes rupture all through the night. And the light and heat they brought to your house, dissolve in moonlight. And the waste they whisked away night and day pile up and ignite.

Thank you, Angelo Mozilo, thank you Phil Gramm, thank you Ian McCarthy, thank you Alan Greenspan. Thank you JP Morgan, Merrill Lynch, thank you Phil Gramm. Thank you Goldman Sachs and Citigroup thank you Alan Greenspan.



Things were going alright for the family on Centauri b for about one year when another bout of microgravity occurred on June 30^h, 2016. As Evangeline's daughter Jeanne prepared for school, the gravity lessened and Jeanne floated upwards toward a painting in the hall. She became caught inside the frame indefinitely and could not escape except for twice a year: Halloween and Fat Tuesday.

Hammer I felt your picture-shape be born. But the colors weren't right- your skin so blue and soft. I heard your quiet in the walls.

It was as if no life had passed to you at all.
And when you hammer hammer hammer hammer
hammer, the picture's gonna fall.

I saw your picture on the wall those far away eyes and a mouth that says it all. I saw your picture-colors strong.

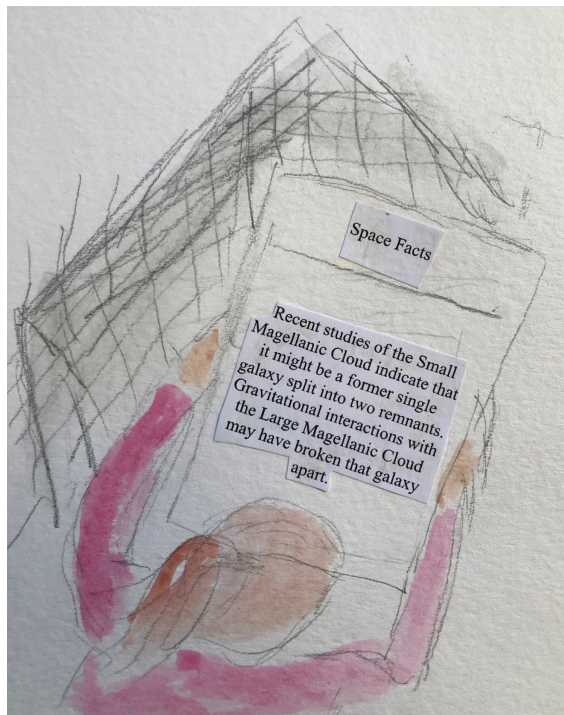
It was as if no time had even passed at all. And when you hammer hammer hammer hammer hammer, the picture's gonna fall.

Girl won't you come out tonight, face to the door I pushed you in tight. Reach for the blinds and let in the night, your colors mix fine; your face it's all light. Girl won't you come out tonight, face to the floor I shoved you in tight. Reach for the blinds and let in the night, your colors mix fine; your face it's all light.

I burned your picture colors hot with a projector so bright, the shapes melt, stuck and caught. I felt your picture-thought break up and all the ways you were mine just crinkled and peeled off. And when you hammer hammer hammer hammer hammer, the picture's gonna fall.



After Jeanne was lost to the picture frame, the family's landlord's chickens were ravaged in a violent attack. Zeus was blamed, but was not in fact guilty.



Evangeline now spent most afternoons reading Space Facts in the chicken coop.

Magellanic Cloud Feathers, bones, a wing ripped out. Beneath your bed a throat is sticking out and there's nowhere you can go where you can be alone. In the chicken coop those old ghost voices lay you low. Hold your breath; you're inside now, the silent, stirred-up, sentient cells around and there's nowhere you can go where you can be alone. In the chicken coop those old ghost voices hinge and blow.

Morning glory- pull me out. Intestinal, you gather spilling out and there's nowhere you can go where you can be alone. In the chicken coop those old ghost voices pitch and row.

Darkness a shroud. Find me underground. All my insides out. Magellanic Cloud.

Inside the tower the air's sucked out. The concrete walls push all the movement out and there's no where you can go where you can be alone. The fortress sickens you, those now ghost voices lay you low.

Morning glory- pull me out. Intestinal, you gather spilling out and there's nowhere you can go where you can be alone. In the chicken coop those old ghost voices hinge and blow.