

NIGHT DRIVE



© 1984 RICHARD SALA

NIGHT DRIVE

BY RICHARD SALA

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SPECIAL THANKS TO:

TERRY DOYLE AND THE ESTATE OF RICHARD SALA FOR PROVIDING THE ORIGINAL ART FOR VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRETY OF *NIGHT DRIVE*. THANKS ALSO TO DRIES DEWULF, LARS TEGLBJAERG, AND STEVE KRIOZERE FOR PROVIDING SCANS OF THE *NIGHT DRIVE* OUTTAKES.





"At the Hour of Unmasking," published in *Phantoms in the Attic* (Fantagraphics, 2019).

RICHARD SALA

A REMEMBRANCE

BY DANA MARIE ANDRA



Photo courtesy of Randall Ann.

The last book by Richard Sala to be published before he passed away was *Phantoms in the Attic*, a collection of paintings and illustrations. Included is a watercolor and ink illustration titled “At the Hour of Unmasking.” The original hangs over my desk, beside another piece by Richard, from an issue of *Evil Eye*, his solo series, advertising

back issues and other Sala books to purchase. Beside those is a framed lithograph Richard did for the Fantagraphics anthology series, *Zero Zero*. And in a frame on top of a chest of drawers in my library/office is a hand-drawn Christmas card he sent to me in the 1990s.

Richard Sala was one of my dearest friends, and I loved him like a brother. The last time I saw him was July 2016, before leaving the U.S. to join my wife in the UK. When I said goodbye to Richard, I knew it would be a while before I’d see him again. I never imagined that it would be the last time I’d ever see him face to face. Our friendship continued at a distance via Messenger and occasional phone calls. Richard would forward books and comics to me that I could only find on eBay and Amazon in the U.S. He also sold and gifted me various things from his collection — things like monster magazines, *MAD* paperbacks, and the

series of vinyl “High Camp Adventure” albums from Bell Records with the covers by Wally Wood.

I was planning a trip to California in March 2020. I’d been planning it for months, and Richard and I were both looking forward to doing what we always did when we got together. Even as the date grew near and the coronavirus was making itself known, it still looked like I’d be able to go. There were only a handful of cases at the time. I spoke with Richard days before I was set to leave, and it still made sense to take a transatlantic flight to the states. Then suddenly, it just didn’t. I was gutted, but the only intelligent thing to do was to postpone the trip. We continued to chat on Messenger, and we had a lovely phone conversation that will forever be one of my most cherished conversations with him, in which he said things I rarely heard him say but which touched me deeply.

Then, on May 8th, I got a message from Eric Reynolds (VP/Associate Publisher at Fantagraphics), telling me that Richard had passed away. It wasn’t from Covid, but no one yet knew the cause. (It was eventually determined to be a heart attack.) It seemed impossible. His new book, *Poison Flowers & Pandemonium*, was soon to be published, and he was just starting his next one, *Carlotta Havoc Versus Everybody*. And there was my trip, our plans... plans that would now never happen.

His last Facebook activity was on April 29th — posting about Green Hornet Colorforms from the ’60s, customizing old model kits, and the new book. He posted



Ad for *Night Drive*, 1984.

the first few pages of *Carlotta Havoc* on both Tumblr and Instagram on the same day. And that was it.

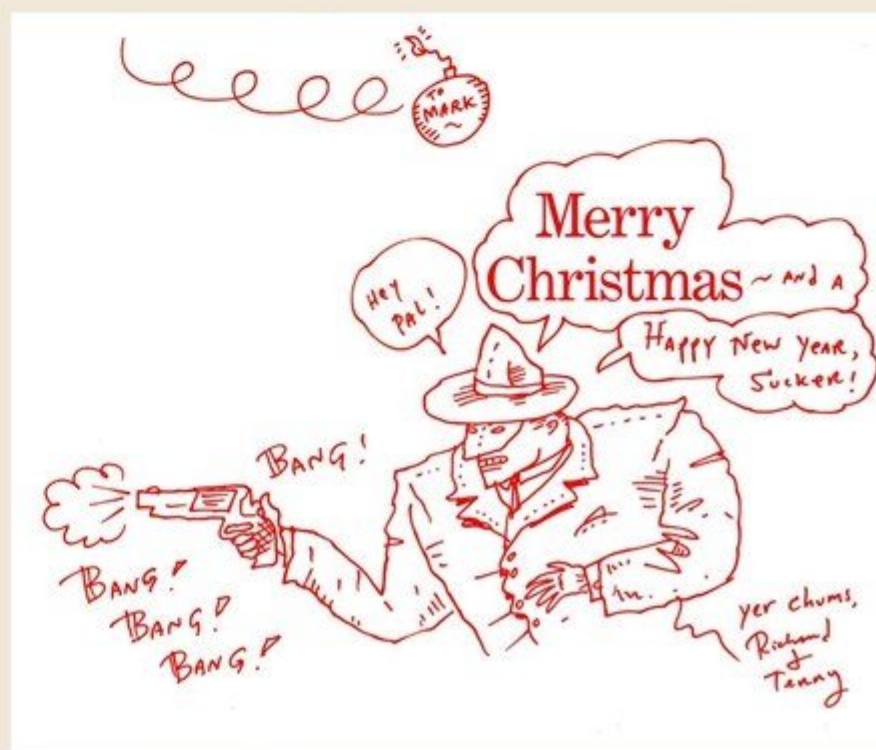
He was just 65 years young.

We met in 1985 because of his ad for the self-published *Night Drive*. It looked cool and original, so I ordered it, and it lived up to its advertising as “a quirky merger between art and popular culture” with “full-page drawings and comic strip inspired depictions of the shadow-side of the human condition... in Sala’s darkly humorous fashion.” In my article about Richard in *Comic Art* magazine #2 (2003), I wrote, “That Sala described the contents as ‘comic strip inspired’ as opposed to actual comics, reflects the fine art mindset in which the book was created, a mindset that he continued to embrace after exiting art school. His departure from art school had the good fortune of coinciding with the emergence of Art Spiegelman’s *Raw* and the advent of comics as Art.” Richard said, “I saw *Raw* and I knew that was the kind of work I wanted to do.” *Night Drive* did, in fact, remind me of Gary Panter’s idiosyncratic work, and David Lynch’s comic strip, *The World’s Angriest Dog* so the connection with *Raw* was a natural one, and it was only right that Richard’s work would eventually appear in its pages (*Raw* #8, 1986, and *Raw* Vol. 2, #3, 1991).

Since he lived in Berkeley, only a few miles from me, I wrote him a letter saying how much I liked the book and asked if he’d like to get together for coffee. I think we might have had that first meeting in downtown San Francisco at a coffee shop near the corner of Post and Montgomery Streets, and in chatting we discovered

that we had much in common. We were both monster kids, growing up with *Famous Monsters of Filmland* and *Castle of Frankenstein*, and loving Universal monsters and Hammer horror. He grew up in Phoenix and Chicago, and I was born and raised in Miami, Florida with summers spent in Illinois, at a time when our childhoods collided perfectly with an explosion of pop culture. Our mirror universe youth was one of newsstands and comics and magazines and paperbacks and bubble gum cards and record shops and classic TV (*The Outer Limits*, *Batman*, *The Prisoner*, et al.). Our shelves were lined with Aurora monster models, and *MAD* paperbacks, and science fiction and horror novels, and paperbacks bought for the cover art alone, by artists like Frank Frazetta and Jeff Jones. We had front row seats for the peak of the Silver Age of comics, and were big fans of Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. We were already haunting the newsstands when *Creepy* and *Eerie* appeared, and we discovered EC comics somewhere along the way. Richard was an even more voracious reader than I was, devouring pulp novel reprints and the work of H.P. Lovecraft, William Hope Hodgson, and Franz Kafka, as well as Salinger, Hesse, Huxley and others. The common thread that ran through all of it, though, was our mutual love of the macabre and all things dark and creepy.

“I liked the spooky stuff,” Richard said when I interviewed him for the article in *Comic Art* #2. “The mystery stuff, the stuff that was creepy. I always did. The monster mania that was ‘in’ when I was little — it must

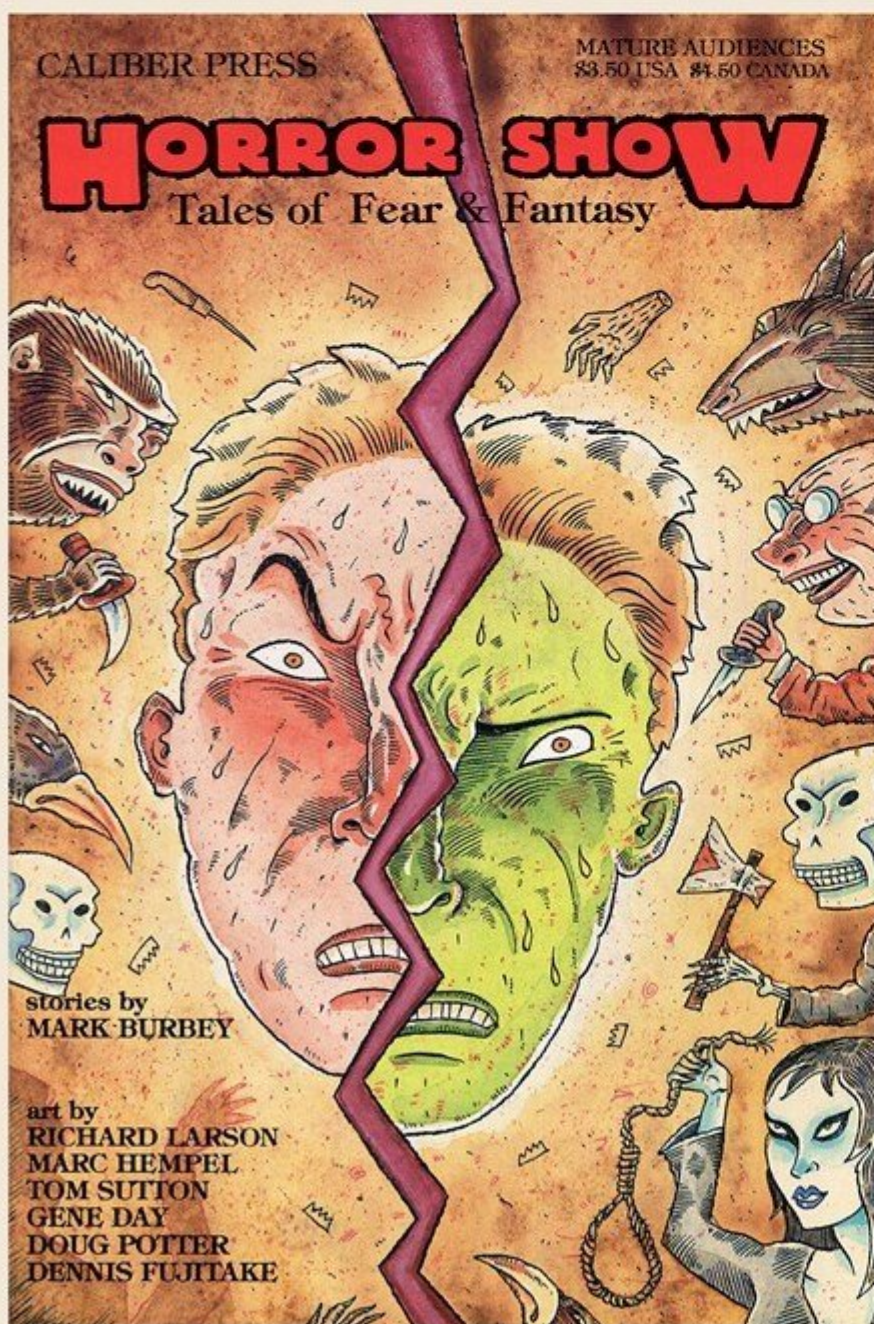


Christmas card, 1991.

have struck a nerve because I never really got it out of my system.”

As a person and as an artist, Richard was the sum of his passions. Other artists and writers who influenced his work include Chester Gould, George Grosz, Jose Luis Cuevas, Otto Dix, Jim Nutt, Jorge Luis Borges, and Daniil Kharms, all of whom served to shape his imagination and manner of storytelling. “Eventually I gravitated in the direction of artists who did eccentric, creepy work — guys like Harry Clarke, Sidney Sime, and Heinrich Kley. Arthur Rackham was the one who kind of bridged that gap. I wanted to draw like him and I still think he’s the greatest. I learned how to paint with watercolors by studying his old children’s book illustrations.”

Fantômas, by French writers Marcel Allain and Pierre Souvestre, was an influence, as well. *Fantômas* was



Cover for *Horror Show* (Caliber, 1991).

an elusive criminal genius — a shadowy, masked figure lurking in a mysterious European underworld. Here’s what I wrote in an article about Richard in the October 1992 issue of *Reflex Magazine*: “Readers of Sala’s paranoia-enriched comics submit themselves to environs once solely associated with films like *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and Fritz Lang’s *M*. Long streets with even longer shadows. Dark figures peering into the windows of decrepit buildings, heightening the already inherent aura of cryptic gloom. Mad scientists. Bomb-hurling master criminals. Secret societies. Wax museums. Murder.” All this and more were elements that inspired Richard’s work from the very beginning and throughout his career.

It’s no surprise, then, that his early working life was spent in libraries, where his creative desires and his love of books and the arcane were easily fed. When interviewed by Darcy Sullivan for *The Comics Journal* #208 (Nov. 1998), Richard said, “After art school, I got a job as this library assistant at a small private college. The school’s real claim to infamy is that it had a parapsychology department. So we would get all these people who were interested in poltergeists, shamanism, and UFOs. They had ghostbusters teaching there, guys who would go on the *Today Show* or *Nightline* talking about ghosts. We would get these guys trying to bend spoons and stuff like that. There were these incredible collections of old books on hypnotism, vampires, and the occult. So it was fascinating to work there.”

There was a moment, however, when Richard asked himself, “Should I go to library school and have a cozy career? Or should I pursue the dream of living as an artist?”

What started as a side gig for extra money doing illustrations for *New Times* and assorted weeklies soon became a successful run as an illustrator, contributing to *The New York Times*, *Entertainment Weekly*, *Playboy*, *Newsweek*, *Business Week*, *Esquire*, *Seventeen*, and so many others, enabling him to leave what he called the “protective womb of the library” behind. But even more than an illustrator, Richard was a storyteller, and it’s his graphic novels and story collections for which he’ll be best remembered. Of the 18 books that he produced, my favorite might

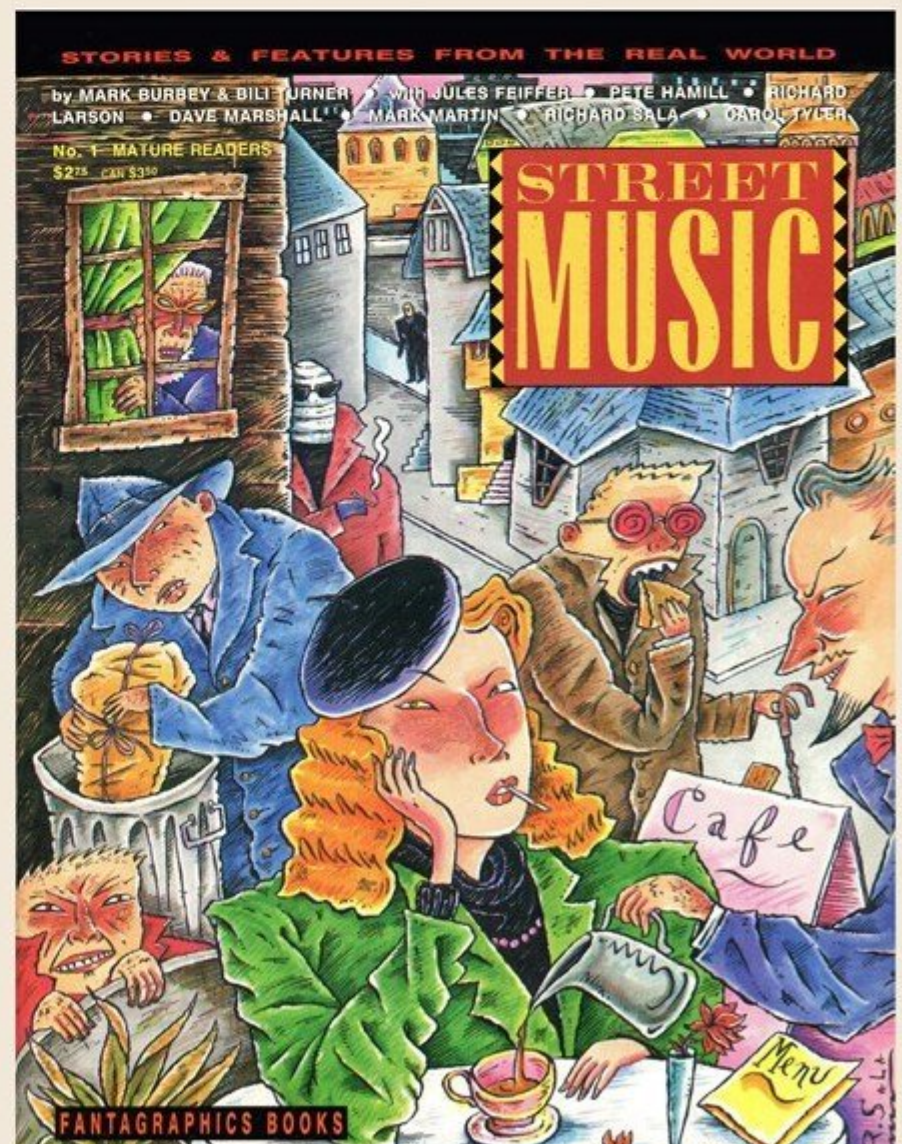
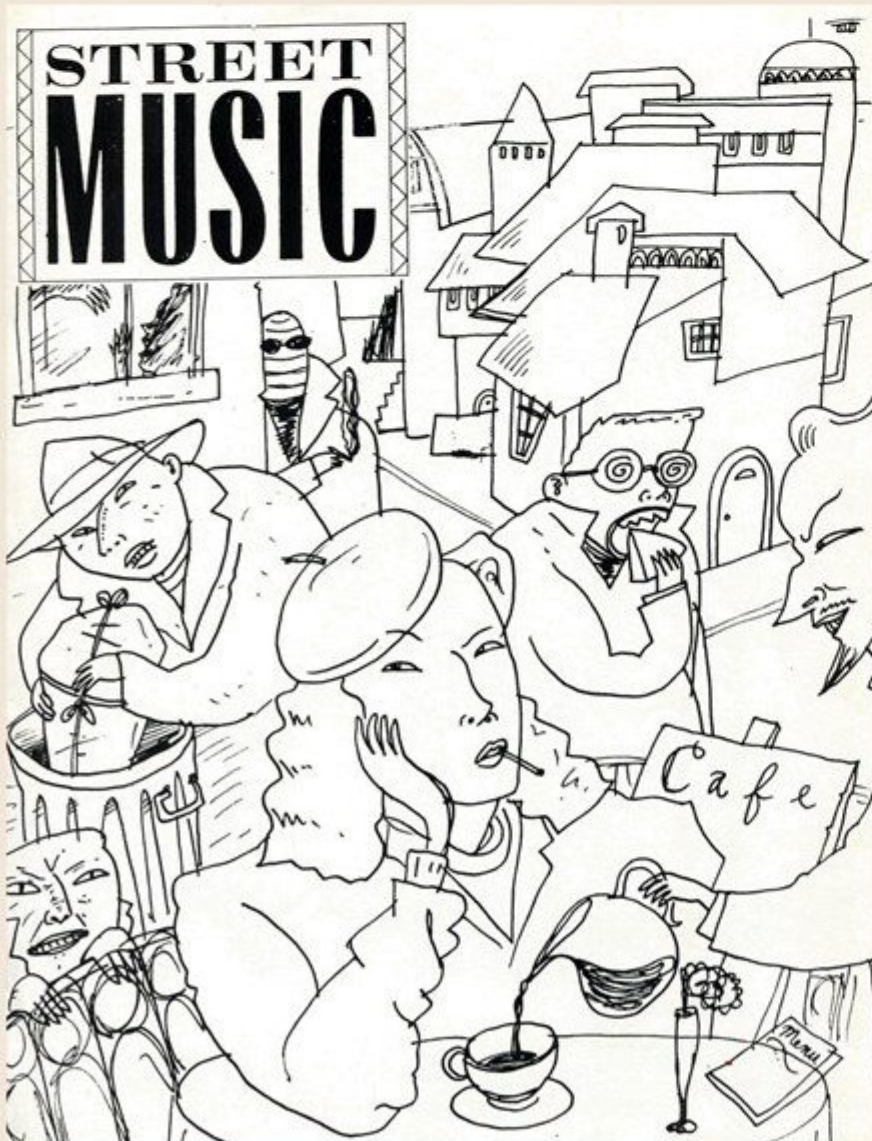
be *Delphine*, a dark fairy tale about a doomed pursuit and unrequited love. Illustrated in black & white with a grey wash, the story features a protagonist who is more like Richard than any other character he created. Upon first reading it, I imagined it being adapted for the screen by David Lynch. What's odd is that with one exception, none of Richard's work has been translated to film. Granted, it would have been a challenge to do his work justice, but it was something he would have welcomed. In the '90s, MTV's *Liquid Television* series did an animated version of Richard's "Invisible Hands," originally published in *Night Drive*. (It can be found on YouTube.) It was wonderfully and faithfully done, but it should have been the first of many. *The Chuckling Whatsit* was optioned several times, but sadly, nothing came of it.

In 1988, when I was writing as Mark Burbey, I created a limited magazine series for Fantagraphics called *Street Music* (subtitled *Stories & Features from the Real World*). Real life and autographical comics were big at the time, and they were perfectly suited to

someone like me who had written some horror comics, straight fiction, and poetry but who didn't really have a mind for plotting superhero stories. Naturally, I wanted Richard to be a part of it. I did a total of six issues, and Richard did the covers for the first and fifth issues. It was hard to get him to agree to illustrate one of my stories, as he preferred to write his own, but a poem I'd written — "Behind a Door" — appealed to him (he said it felt like something he would have written), and he turned it into a three-page strip, which I included in *Street Music* #1. He did a wonderful job, and it was a pleasure and an honor to collaborate with him.

He also did the cover for my collection of horror comics, *Horror Show* (published by Caliber Comics, 1991). He was a great sounding board for ideas, and he encouraged and supported me in these projects. His feedback was always genuine and objective.

In the last few years that I lived in California, Richard and I would get together every couple of weeks. It was sometimes difficult to convince him to go out, not



Preliminary sketch and cover for *Street Music* #1 (Fantagraphics, 1988).

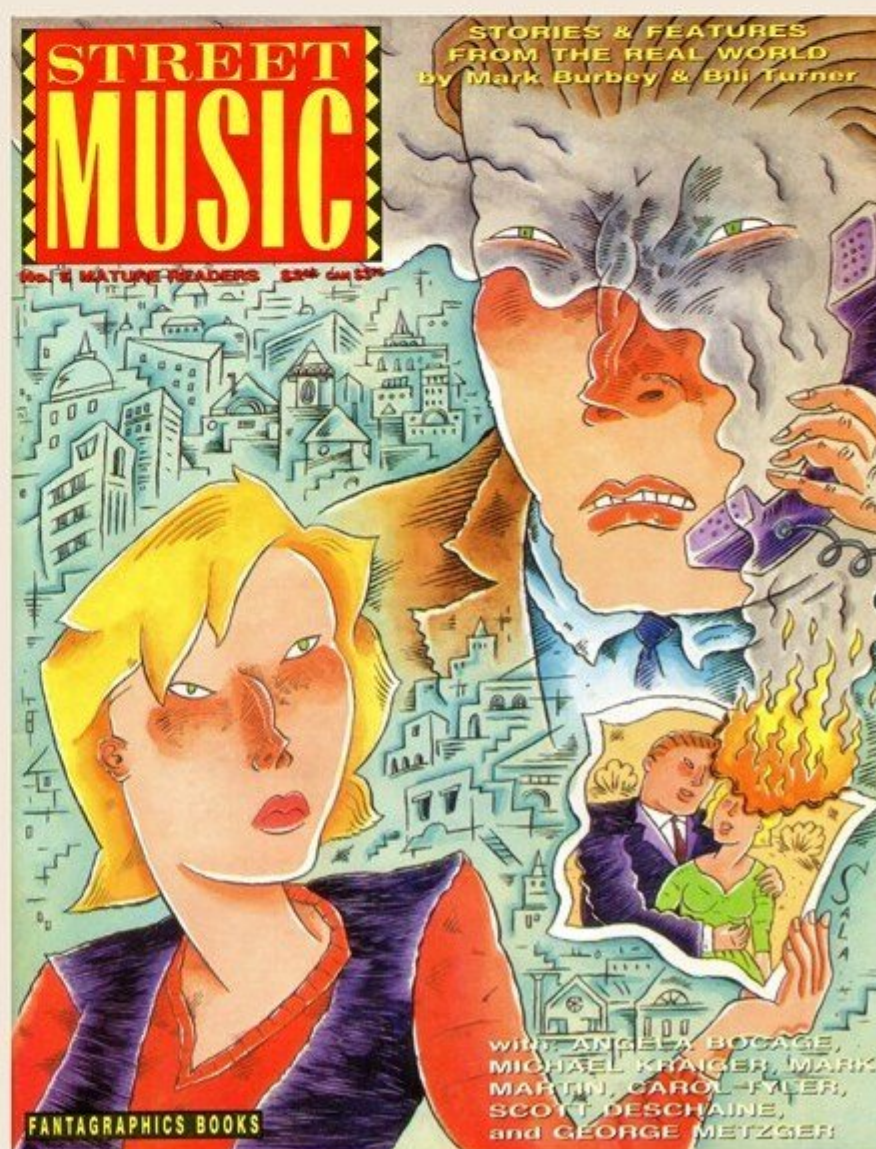
only because he struggled with agoraphobia, but also because he had to continually create new art and new comics to keep afloat. The life of a freelance artist is tough, and for reasons that will forever elude me, he never attained the level of monetary success he deserved. He created an impressive body of work, he had a devoted fan following, and he'd long earned the respect and admiration of his contemporaries, but it was always a struggle financially.

Yet, as busy as he was, he allowed himself breaks often enough that we enjoyed a routine that involved a visit to our favorite comic book shop (Escapist Comics in Berkeley), followed by lunch at Zachary's Pizza in Oakland, or maybe Fentons Creamery, where we'd gab about comics, industry gossip, movies, music, our personal lives — whatever. After lunch, we'd head over to the used CD/DVD shops on Shattuck Avenue to browse and continue chatting.

Richard was a good person and a good friend. He was a kind person, a generous person, an accepting

person, a supportive person. He always preferred to talk about things he loved and was judicious in criticizing whatever he didn't. And the things he loved, he loved to share. He embraced nostalgia but he always looked forward to what was coming next. And there was so much to come next. He left far too soon, with so much left to do, and so much enthusiasm burning inside him for his art and the things he cherished.

The condolences and tributes that poured onto Facebook, Twitter, and elsewhere following news of Richard's death would have likely surprised and gratified him in equal measure. He was humble by nature and never entirely sure where he stood as an artist, but both fans and peers mourned his premature passing with great love and affection. He was a unique figure in art and comics, and he is sorely missed by all who knew him and his work. Most touching were comments like "Every book he wrote made me feel like a kid on Halloween," and "One of the all-time best artists at drawing spooky monsters, his work is like Halloween on a piece of paper." He would have



Original art and cover for *Street Music* #5 (Fantagraphics, 1989).



Richard's final webcomic, just getting started in 2020...

loved that, because it would have meant that people understood his work and loved seeing it as much as he loved making it.

In true macabre Sala style, his blog is titled *Here Lies Richard Sala*. It survives as a record of his activity up to the very end. His final post was an announcement of *Carlotta Havoc Versus Everybody*. It would have run as a webcomic, and later collected as a book. The first 5 pages can be found at richardsala.tumblr.com. It promised to be another fun romp with gals and monsters and mysterious happenings, and reminds us that we lost not only Richard the friend and artist, but an untold number of books filled with his unique brand of dark imagination.

Borges is famously quoted as saying, "I have always imagined that Paradise will be a kind of library." What an apt metaphor and what a lovely thought, and what

Another independent artist from the San Francisco Bay Area has surfaced. Richard Sala's *Night Drive*, 32 pages of hallucinatory images, took me by complete surprise. Sala's no novice by any means, and *Night Drive*, printed in a limited edition of 500 copies, is a fully realized artist's exploration of subjective, interior emotion. Sala is giving shape to his nightmarish visions—you can feel him drawing on his knowledge of old pulp and movie conventions to create a structure in the mystery-adventure strip entitled "Invisible Hands"—and the unusual union of pop form and expressionistic dread is remarkable. (My favorite strip in *Night Drive*, is in fact, "Invisible Hands," precisely because of its ingenious merger of pulp-comics conventions of the past and the idiosyncratic stylization of a new generation of artists like Panter, Burns, and Sala.) Sala's obviously aware of his contemporaries—one can easily discern the influence of Panter and Burns, and there's a suggestion of Rick Geary in "Inside A Room Waiting"—but I take the artist's awareness as a healthy sign. Everything in *Night Drive* has an original, individual touch: it's the premiere work of an artist doing a good job of feeling his way into the medium on his own terms.

Night Drive is an impressive debut. Fans and collectors of the new current in self-published American comix will do well to support Sala's maiden effort. *Night Drive* is a work of imagination and humor. While critics noisily eulogize the death of underground comix in this country, it deserves an appreciative audience.

Night Drive review by Dale Luciano, from *The Comics Journal* #102 (September, 1985).

better place to one day meet again, wandering among the stacks.

Till then, let's return to where it all began, in this self-published love letter to his many eldritch passions, and the first step toward achieving his dream of living as an artist. ■

BEHIND A DOOR

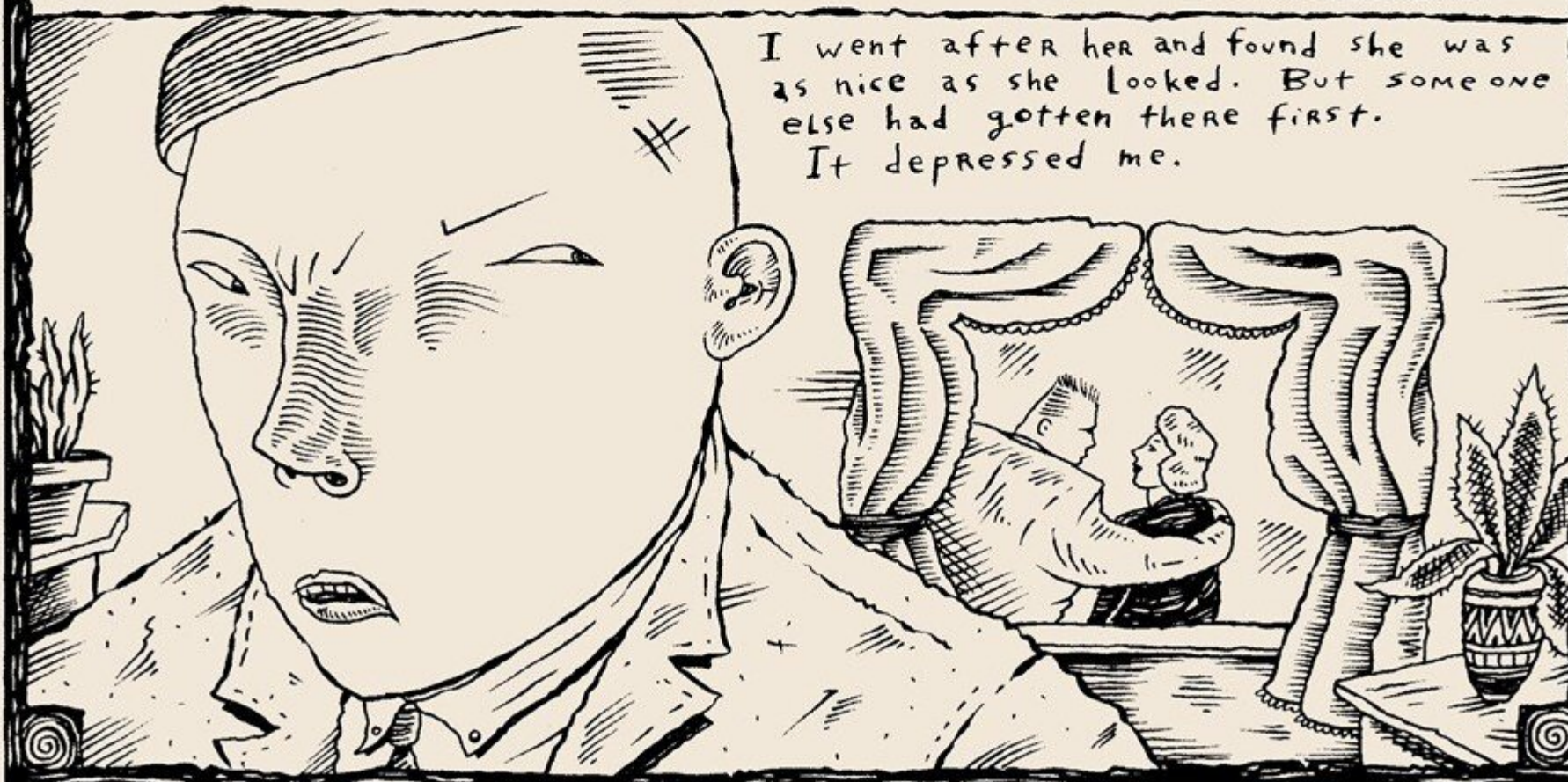
STORY: MARK BURBEY ~ ART: RICHARD SALA

Others have
Relationships.
I have
infatuations.

Pale-skinned blondes with
kind faces attract me.
Joan was one of these.



I went after her and found she was
as nice as she looked. But someone
else had gotten there first.
It depressed me.



I refused to forget about her. I walked past her apartment door hoping she'd come out.



The door had a number 13 on it. I knew she was behind it... doing things. Living. She never came out.



I saw her once in the laundry room.
She was with her boyfriend, but she said "hi" to me.
It depressed me further.



They got married and had two kids.
I hate kids.



the end



Original title card for the *Liquid Television* adaptation of "Invisible Hands" (1991).

RICHARD SALA

IN HIS OWN WORDS: THE CREATION OF NIGHT DRIVE AND THE *LIQUID TV* ADAPTION OF "INVISIBLE HANDS"

Those who knew Richard Sala will tell you that one of the things they miss most are the conversations. Richard was a fount of knowledge and a great conversationalist, and it was a joy to talk with him endlessly about artists and writers and film and comics and projects and life. There are moments when I'll have a question and think I can call him on the phone or send him an email, only to realize, I can't.

Fortunately, Richard was interviewed frequently, and those interviews survive in print and online, and it's there that we find many of the answers to our questions. — Dana

Leroy Douresseaux interviewed Richard for the *Comic Book Bin* website (comicbookbin.com), dated April 17, 2007.



Promotional card for *Liquid Television* (1991).

"Invisible Hands" designed & written by Richard Sala,
directed by Denis Morella & produced by Krist Ann Peterson.

LIQUID
Television

Premiering June 2, 1991 on MTV...

SIX Episodes
Sundays at 7:30 p.m.

Created by Big Pictures and Noyes & Laybourne
A Colossal Pictures Production
in association with MTV

Executive Producers
Japhet Asher Kit Laybourne

Producer
Prudence Fenton

Co-Producer
Nicole Grindle

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101 FIFTEENTH ST. SAN FRANCISCO CA 94103

DOURESSEAUX: What led up to your decision to self-publish *Night Drive* and was that your first attempt at making comics?

SALA: It was, unless you count the issues I drew and stapled together as a kid. Also — when I was first at college I did some strips — I remember they were inspired by *Heavy Metal* magazine and European guys like Druillet and Jean-Claude Forest. But they were kind of forced. It wasn't me. In art classes I was drawing portraits of characters from German Expressionist films, like [*The Cabinet of*] *Dr. Caligari* — but I couldn't imagine that working in comics at that time. This was just before the punk scene exploded and after most undergrounds had died out, so at that time *Heavy Metal* and some of the later undergrounds like the Richard Corben stuff — that was about the only alternative to

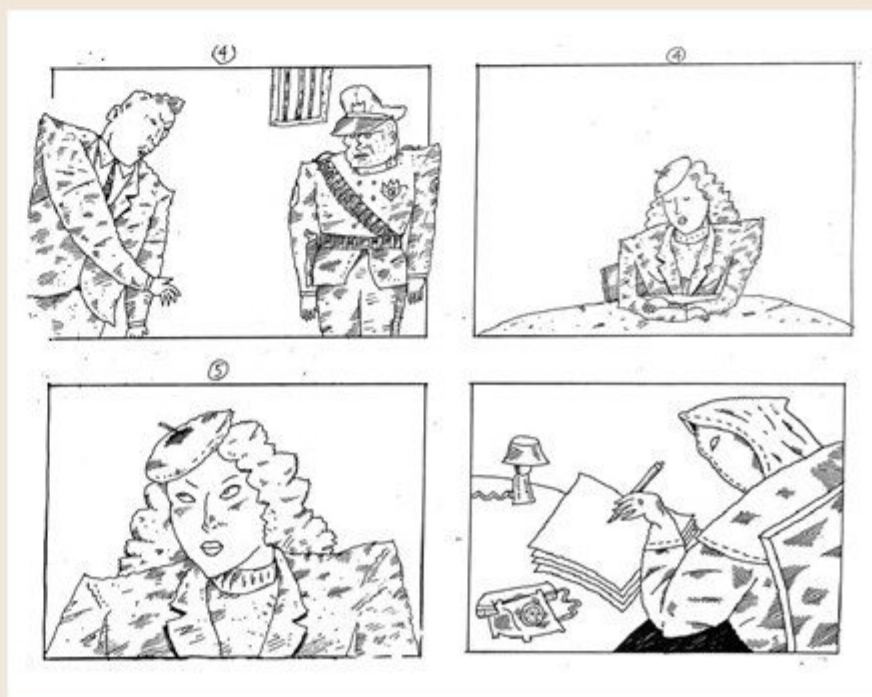
all the superheroes and barbarians and (God help us) funny animal comics that were popular at the time.

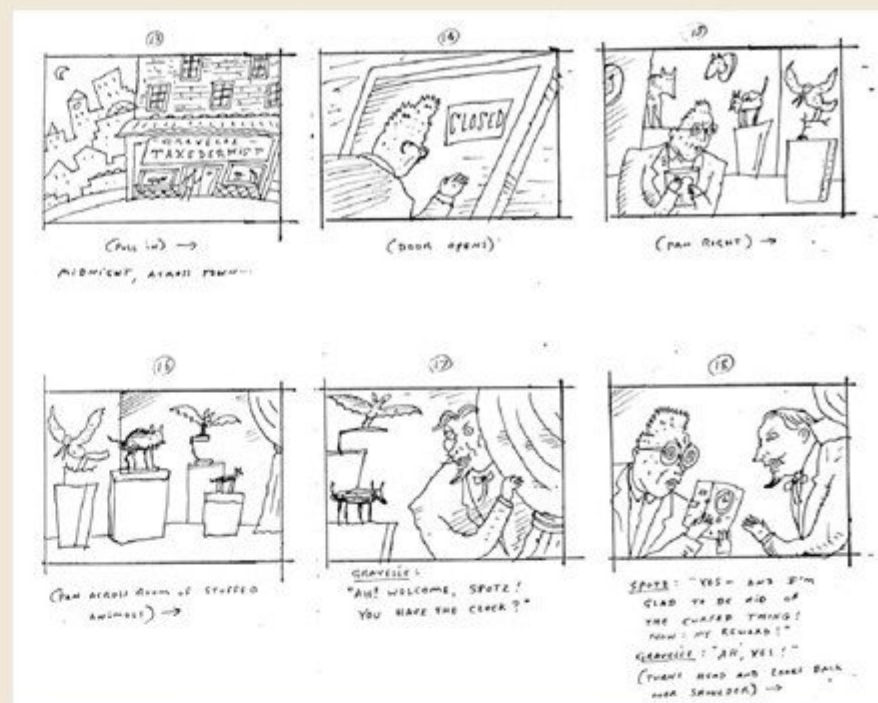
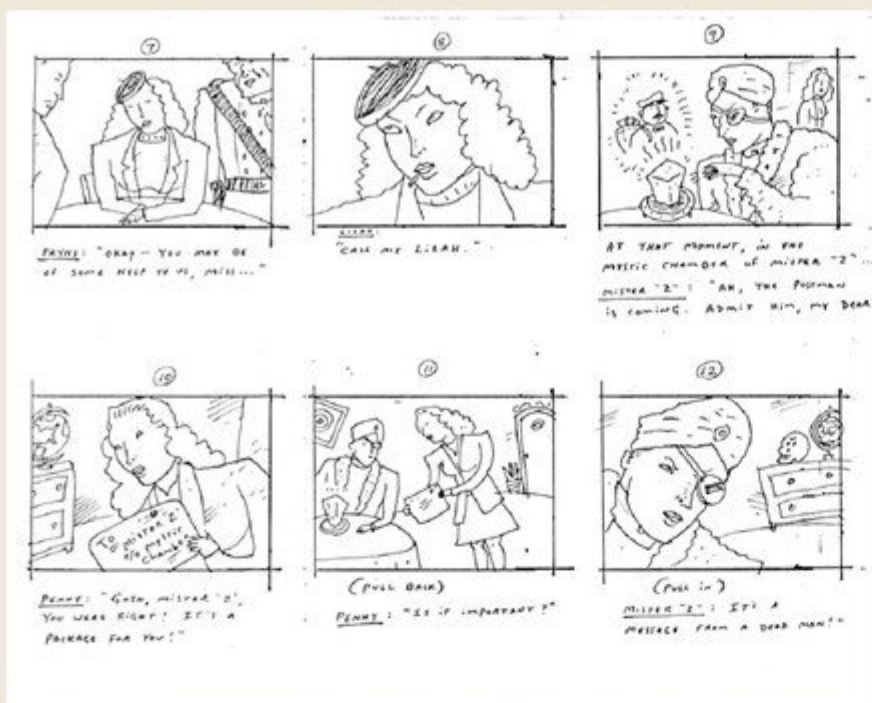
I always liked the old-time Golden Age comics — the cruder the better! — and I always loved Jack Kirby. *The Demon* was the very last mainstream comic book I continued to buy throughout high school — even after I had a girlfriend! It's still my all-time favorite Kirby title. But by the time I was in college in the late 1970s, there just wasn't the kind of work out there that I could see myself being a part of.

I was actually trying to get work as a writer. I was sending manuscripts to the science fiction digests. I got some nice rejection letters — they basically said, this story you sent is okay, but it's not science fiction. I was just sending them the kind of work that I'm still



Under drawings and storyboards for *Liquid Television* (1991).





Under drawings and storyboards for *Liquid Television* (1991).

doing now — you know, sinister and creepy pieces heavy on the noir atmosphere with no spaceships or Martians in sight. I probably knew they wouldn't publish them. But I couldn't figure out where ELSE to send my stories!

Then, after I moved to the Bay Area to go to graduate school, I started to see *Raw* around — and I realized there might be a place for someone like me in comics after all. So I did *Night Drive* and borrowed a thousand dollars to self-publish it. Then, since they had inspired me, I sent a copy to *Raw*. They wrote me back and eventually I ended up being in a couple of their later issues. That was incredibly encouraging!

The Darcy Sullivan interview in *The Comics Journal* #208 (November 1998) went into further detail.

SULLIVAN: When did you do the stories that appeared in *Night Dream*?

SALA: *Night Drive*.

SULLIVAN: *Night Drive*.

SALA: You're not the first person to make that mistake. The guy at Bud Plant who rejected carrying it said, "Four dollars is a little expensive for *Night Dreams*, don't you think?"

SULLIVAN: When did you do those stories?

SALA: I did those stories when I was 29 years old, believe it or not. Right now to me it looks like juvenilia. I was a really late starter. *Night Drive* was the start of a certain period and *The Chuckling Whatsit* is the start of a new period. I look at my work from that first period and all I see is the struggle. If people like the work I've done, I'm glad. But I think the best is yet to come. You know, Chester Gould was in his prime in his forties. That's when he created Flattop and some of his best characters.

But as far as *Night Drive*, I wasn't sure if I was doing art or popular culture. I think I thought I was making art. There is a clue in there as to the direction I would eventually go. At the very end, there's a story that I almost left out, called "Invisible Hands," which was my takeoff on my love of pulps. It was non-linear, it was broken up, and I didn't really bother to end it. I thought it didn't need an ending. It was supposed to be a chapter from a non-existent serial — it's like André Breton and the surrealists. They loved stuff like *Fantômas*. André Breton did this famous thing where he'd walk into the middle of a movie and watch a part of it, and get up and go into another theater and watch part of another movie, and would never see the entire movie.

So I did this thing, "Invisible Hands," which was not meant to be taken seriously. The rest of *Night Drive* has more to do with the world of fine art than the world of comics.

I had never stopped writing. I would take the BART

train to work every day, writing, then at home, I'd draw pictures to go with the stories. The main influence on me was not so much *Raw* or *Weirdo*, but Mark Beyer's *Dead Stories* (1982); when I saw that, it was a revelation. I really related to his feeling of negativity and his primitive art style. I looked through it to see who the publisher was. I couldn't find the name of a publisher, and it dawned on me that this guy did this himself. I followed Mark Beyer's format with the card stock cover, magazine-size, for *Night Drive*.

Dead Stories really hit a chord, that whole feeling of helplessness, hopelessness. It was almost a validation that a person with my attitude, my feelings, could do something like that. Of course, it was the time of punk, everything was sort of do-it-yourself, and I thought, "I'm going to do it myself. I'll do my own book."

I had no knowledge at all of how the market worked. I knew about Bud Plant, because I'd seen his name around. I remember ordering Crumb undergrounds and Rick Griffin undergrounds from him when I was in high school. The only other thing that I knew was I saw *Raw* being sold at City Lights. So I went into City Lights with *Night Drive*, and they took some copies. So there was a time when the only comics being sold at City Lights in San Francisco were about 10 copies of *Night Drive* and a bunch of copies of *Raw*, I was really proud of that.

To this day, people from around the world will tell me that they first got a copy of my book at City Lights.

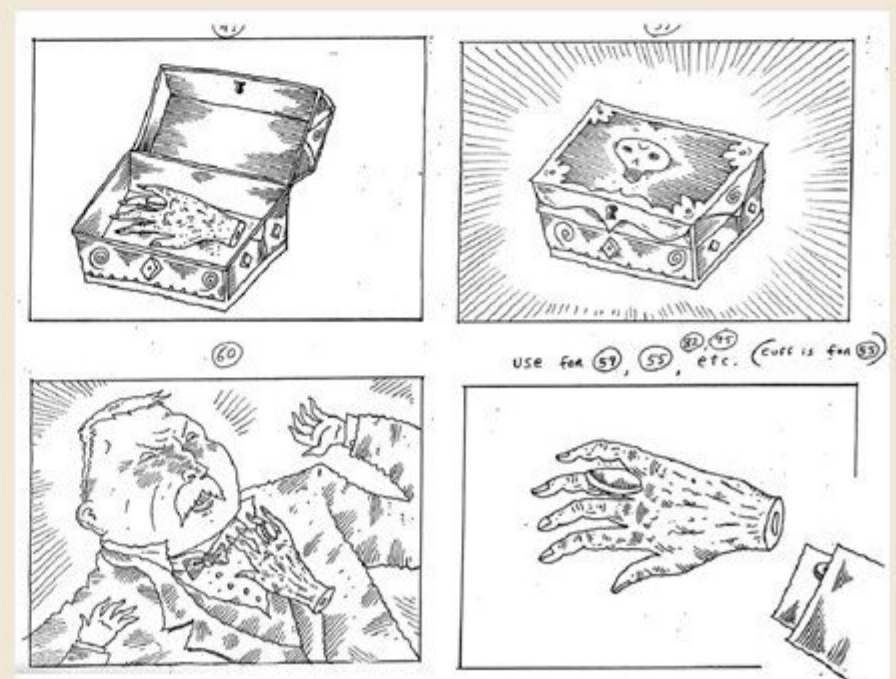
I also was carried in Printed Matter in New York, and also to this day, people tell me that they found copies of *Night Drive* in New York during the mid-'80s. There were also some copies in Portland and Seattle, but I've never heard any people tell me about buying them [laughs] so who knows what happened to all those copies?

SULLIVAN: Did it lead to more work?

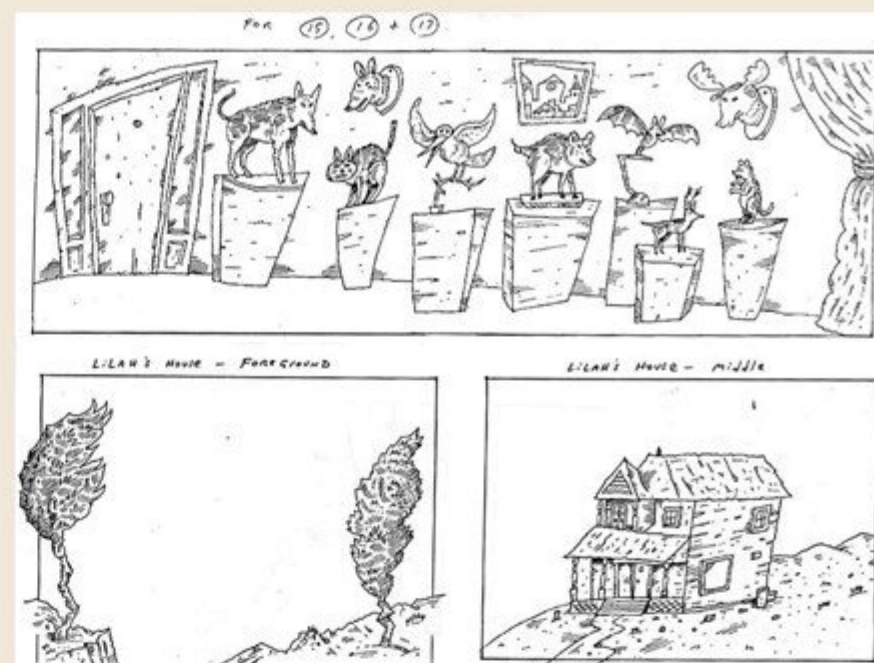
SALA: One of the reasons I did *Night Drive* was to try to get other people to give me illustration work. I sent it to some places in New York that I thought were hip places, that paid no money, of course. There was an alternative weekly out here that I had seen some of Charles Burns' stuff in, called *Another Room*. I sent them some stuff and they ran something.

I had sent a copy of *Night Drive* to *Raw*, too, and I heard back from somebody at *Raw*, I think it was Françoise Mouly, saying that they liked *Night Drive*, and would like to see more stuff. So, suddenly, I was motivated — 'cause I loved *Raw*. I did a couple of strips for them and sent them off.

Then, there was a really long period where I was just waiting. At one point, Mark Newgarden sent me a copy of this magazine called *Bad News*, which was sort of an offshoot of *Raw*. He was working on *Raw* at the time as Spiegelman's assistant, and he told me, "You're not going to be in *Raw* but you're going to be in *Bad News*, which we're doing in a format



Under drawings and storyboards for *Liquid Television* (1991).



Under drawings and storyboards for *Liquid Television* (1991).

like *Raw*.” He sent me a sample copy, and it looked great. I remember there was a *Kaz* cover. So I did a three-page thing for *Bad News* and sent it in, and then waited for another long period of time and never heard anything. Occasionally I would call or write Mark Newgarden, and he’d say, “Oh, don’t worry about it, everything’s fine.” But I was fatalistic, and thought, “It’s never going to happen.”

Then, one day I got a letter from Newgarden saying, “The bad news is that *Bad News* is canceled. The good news is, now you’re going to be in *Raw*!” I was like, “Oh my God!”

That’s when I heard from Art Spiegelman. He told me that I’d have to condense a three-page story into a one-page story. Then I could be in the next issue of *Raw*, which as it turned out was the last large-size issue.

SULLIVAN: How did you hook up with MTV and *Liquid Television*?

SALA: I got a call from Colossal Pictures in San Francisco, who were planning a cartoon show for MTV. They liked this one story I had done in *Night Drive*, “Invisible Hands” — the one I didn’t think anybody else would like or relate to because it was based on love of ’30s genre stuff and I couldn’t believe that that’s what MTV would want. I said, “Are you sure? That’s the one you want?” And they said, “Yeah, but we want you to finish it, and turn it into a real story.” I even wrote them some other treatments, saying, “If you want a cutting-edge thing on MTV, why don’t you

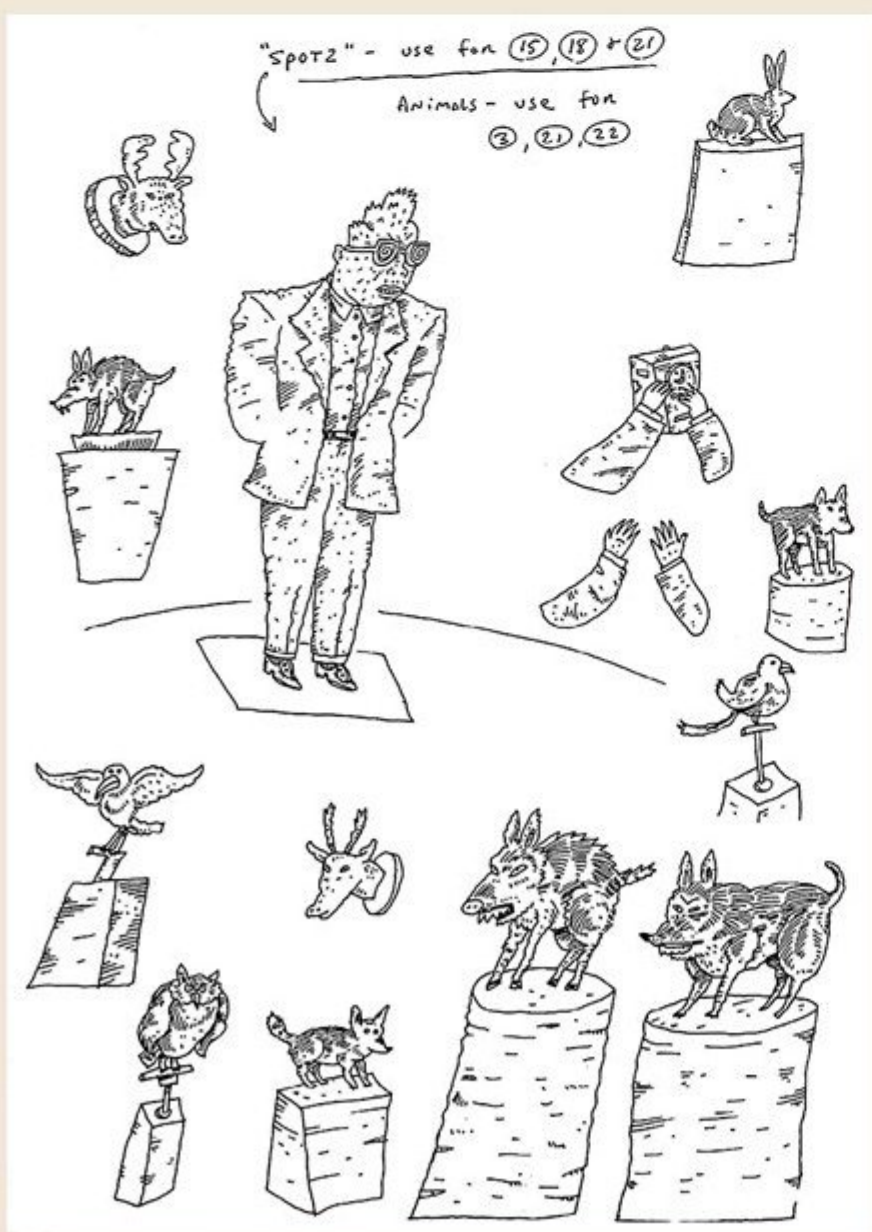
try something like this?” They’re like, “No, no, we like this one.”

That was great because that was what I really wanted to do — write these cool mysteries with horrific overtones. That started me going in that direction.

HERE LIES RICHARD SALA (blog entry) Thursday, September 23, 2010:

“Invisible Hands” was a six-part animated serial which aired on MTV in the early 1990s. MTV had hired Colossal Pictures, an animation studio located in the Bay Area (where I was, too) to produce *Liquid Television*, a show that would feature lots of new animation. After one of the producers saw “Invisible Hands” in *Night Drive*, my first (self-published) comic, which was then selling at City Lights and other independent bookstores in the San Francisco area, I was hired to write and draw an expanded version for their show. The first season of *Liquid TV* was to consist of six episodes, and “Invisible Hands,” which I had written as a tongue-in-cheek version of old-time mystery thrillers, would run in each episode as two-minute chapters of a complete 12-minute serial.

So I went to work expanding the story, drawing the storyboards and lots of new art. Then I’d drive them over to Colossal where the staff would blow up my drawings onto colored paper. Next, the director, Denis Morella, made the art come alive by photographing the cutouts (which were positioned on three layers of



Under drawings and storyboards for *Liquid Television* (1991).

glass to give the illusions of depth) using stop-motion. It was pretty primitive, I guess, but I really liked the jerky effect that resulted.

“Invisible Hands” was shown a lot on MTV during the early 1990s, sometimes even in a complete 12-minute version. MTV and Colossal kept all the original artwork I did, but luckily I made a bunch of photocopies, which, I recently realized, I’ve never shown before. So, here are a few for now. I can post some more soon, as well as some of the storyboards.

Included is my drawing for the opening credits. Next, the original promotional postcard, advertising the debut of *Liquid TV*, with a scene from “IH” (the costume party) on the front, followed by more of my drawings — characters, interiors & exteriors — before they were transferred to colored paper.

I used to get asked about this serial a lot. It’s never been on video in either VHS or DVD (there are reasons) though other *Liquid TV* animations were. However, it has been on YouTube for a long time now, so I don’t get asked about it as much as I once did. I’m just glad that folks can (finally) see it again if they want to. And I hope some people may enjoy a look at the drawings I did for it. ■



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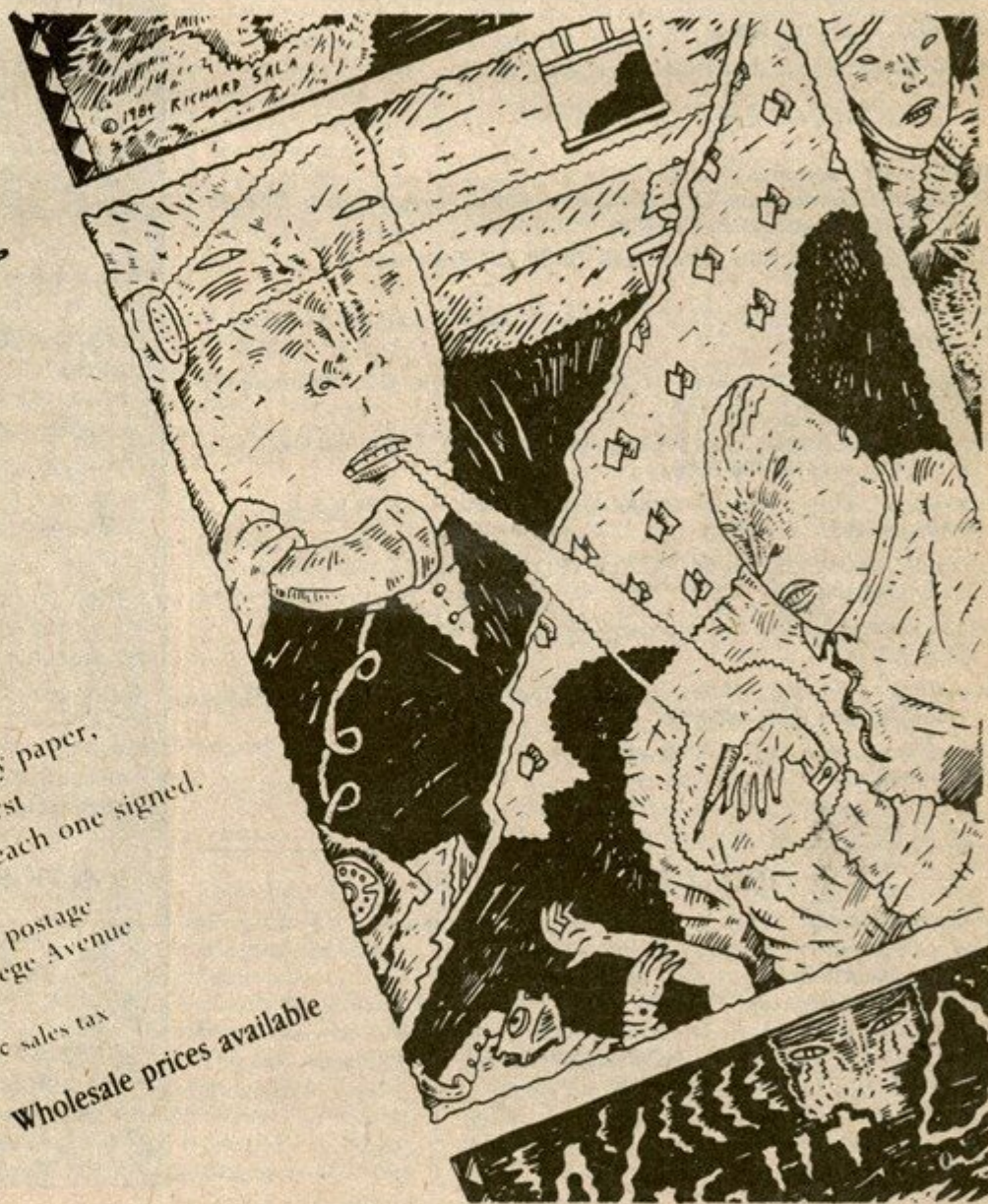
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"The solution to the mystery is always inferior to the mystery itself" - Borges

NIGHT DRIVE

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C-U-R-I-O-U-S-I-T-Y

No Valentines here.

This is A
GHOST
TOWN.

If YOU'RE
CURIOUS
you've got
to be CAREFUL.

YOUR OWN
VOICE
WILL LEAD YOU
ASTRAY.



PUSH THROUGH
BROKEN
GLASS...

Confront
the desire...

RS



Inside a Room Waiting

I AM A SUSPECT...
All the evidence
points to me...



I have
no alibi—
no witnesses



AND THE CLUES ARE
STREWN EVERYWHERE...



the
VENTRILQUIST'S TESTIMONY
WILL
ASSURE
MY
GUILT



AS WILL THE LIES TOLD
AT THE SEANCE...



of course They'll track me down



THEN: the breathless chase
across the Rooftops



the
INEVITABLE
CAPTURE,
TRIAL,
execution



It was bound
to happen -
I have the
mark



I keep trying to
think I'm
some one else
but I'm
always
myself



the end

QUALMS IN THE NIGHT

THERES SOMETHING HORRIBLE
GOING ON HERE



OH well... in this business you
never know...



you shouldn't go in
there - it's suicide



Just
tell her-

THIS TIME IT'S GOING
to be PERMANENT



HYPNOTIC EYES

Closing in on Edwin ~
it's DR. Namahs, uninvited



Hypnotic eyes, mirroring
the night, visualizing
The other self: the shadow



Edwin has a way with
words; he TAKES THE
doctor apart, piece by piece



BUT THE EYES HAVE
WHIRLPOOLED HIS MIND...
and Edwin dreams he's
RE-ENTERING THE VOID.







When Spoken

MORE POTENT THAN A THOUSAND LIES...





VOICE of the Dog

Night after
Night

I find myself...
TRANSFORMING INTO
The INHUMAN STATE.



THE RAYS THAT
HYPNOTIZE
SOME

AFFECT ME
IN AN
odd
WAY...

JUST
ANOTHER
HUNGER

JUST ANOTHER
ANIMAL URGE

FINGERS REACH INTO A deep well
INSIDE MY head ... A NERVE IS TOUCHED



LOST ON A
RAMPAGE...



I CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING...

BUT I
W...

CAN SEE IN THE DARK



WITH MY BEACON

night after night



Of the Twinge



The day of the dark wink...
You're accidentally on the trail.
And periodically feverish (in
the old way). And not in
complete possession of
all faculties unfortunately.
A Twinge... and you
realize your quarry's teeth are
sharper than yours.

LITTLE APOCALYPSE



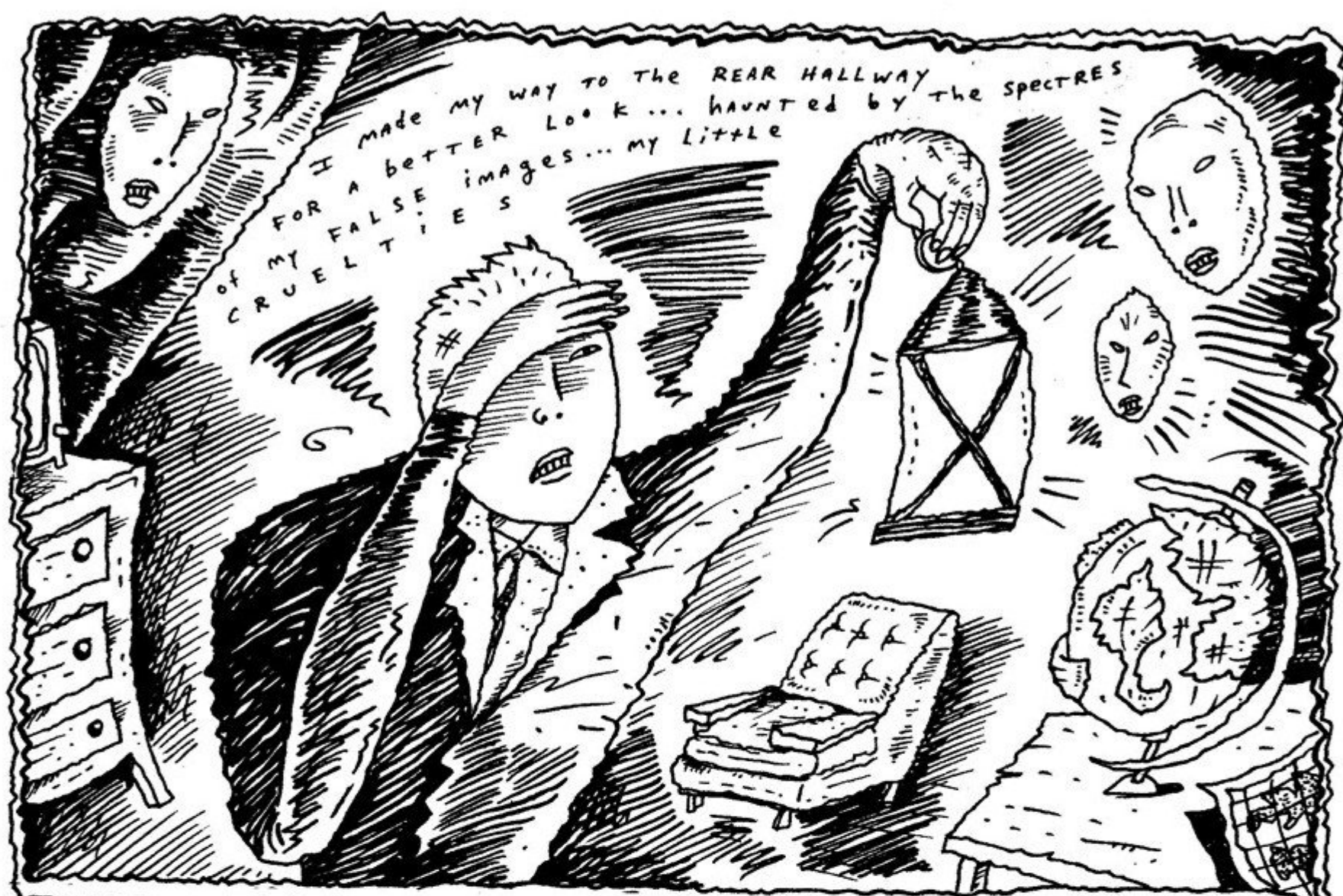
PANIQUE

When I awake
the house was
full of omens...
Hate mail
from beyond
the veil...



Almost dark... the
killer had found me
at last. He was
waiting
at the
back
stairs







INVISIBLE HANDS

AND Then, having finally deciphered the ARAB'S code, DR. CLAVICLE turned to the old clock with renewed interest...

AH-HA... if only the MAHONEY TWINS were alive to see this!



Huh - what's that - ?
A noise like wood being chewed...



Who - ?

Don't you Remember your old friend - WEAZEL ?



BUT YOU'RE DEAD !

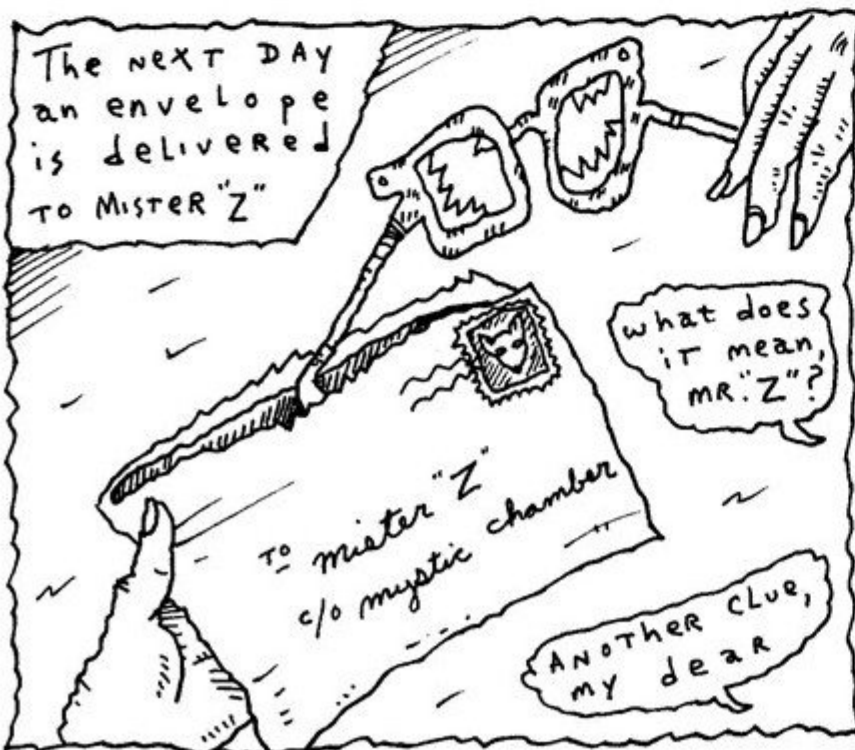
I've come back - And I have a little SOMETHING for you...

No !





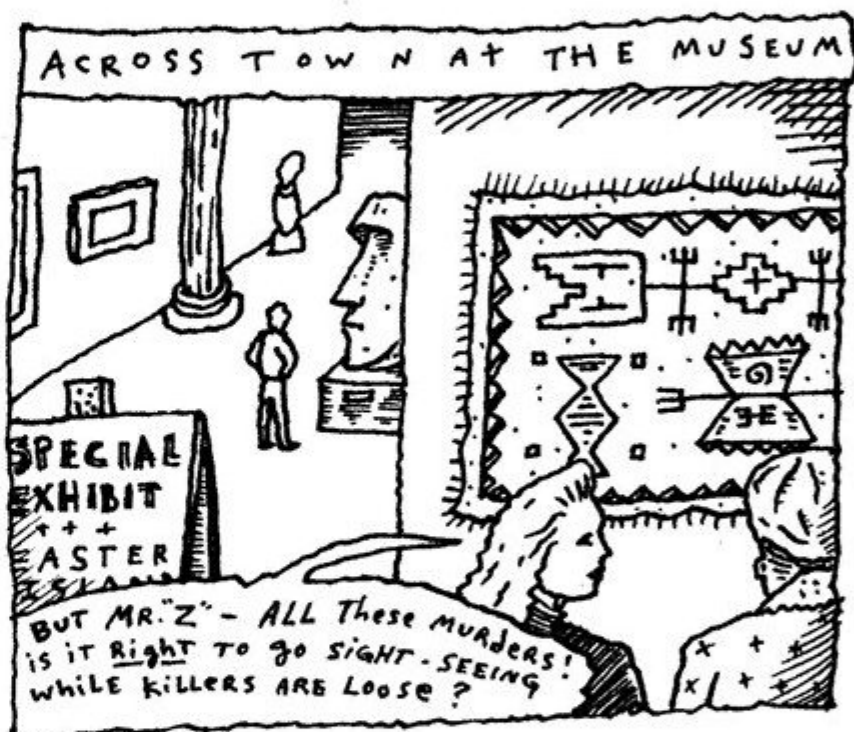


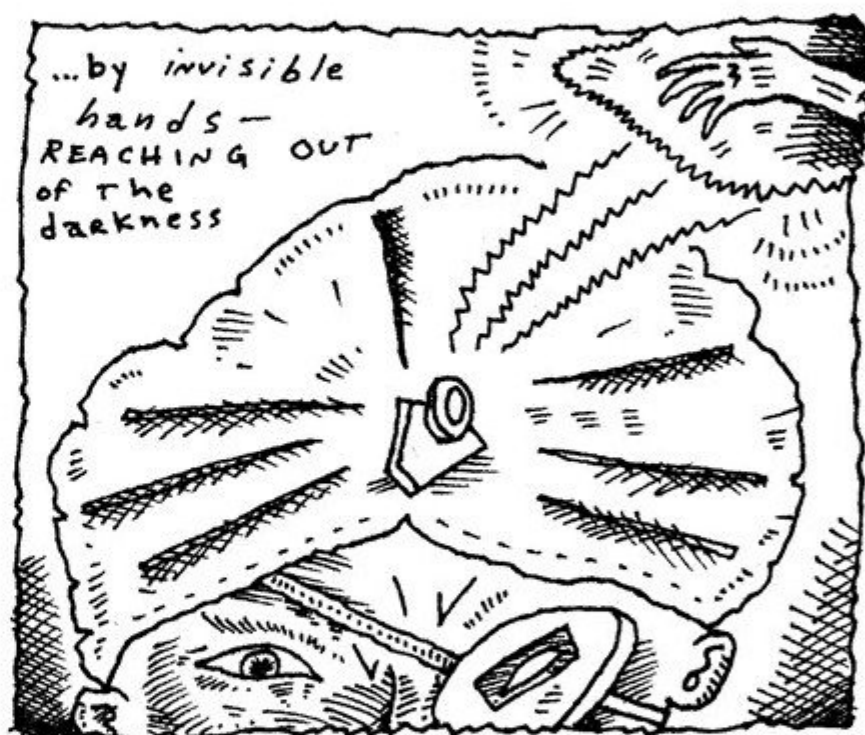
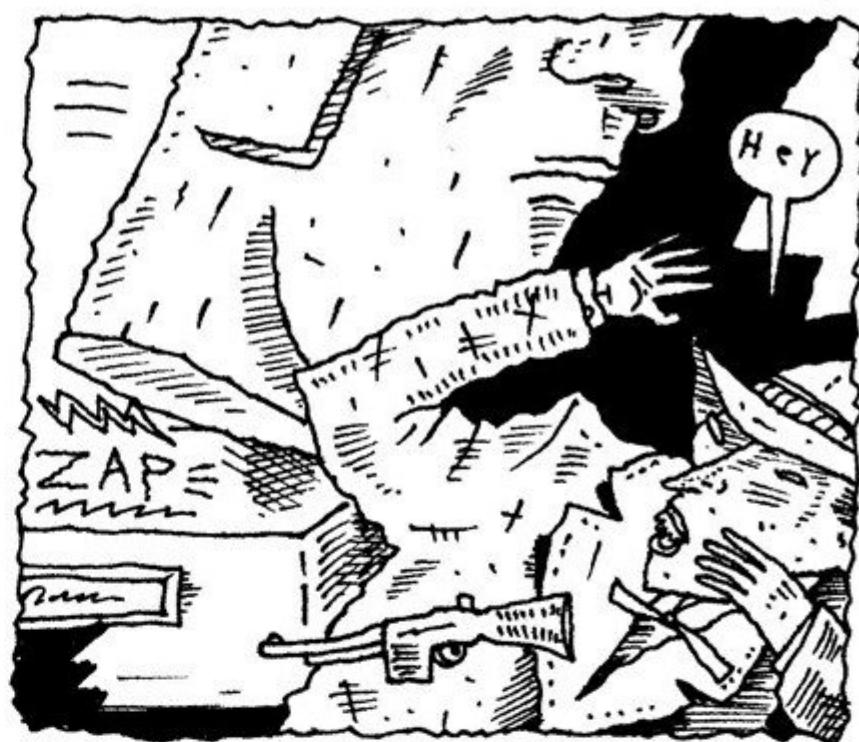


INVISIBLE HANDS

PART II







W I G H + D R I V E

A NARROW ESCAPE ~ DRIVING
down THAT FOGGY STRIP
between THE House of TRAUMA
AND the Vengeance MUSEUM...

Leaving behind all those
UGLY CUSTOMERS



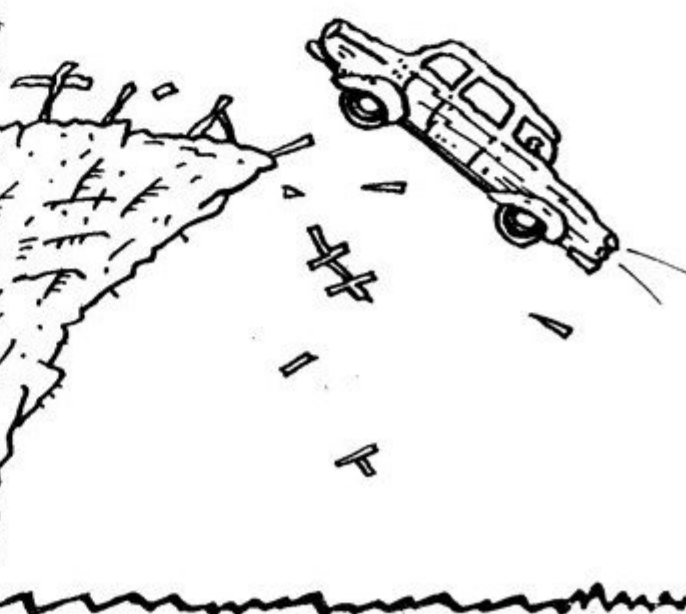
BUT I MADE A WRONG TURN
ON THE BRAINWAY...

I Got Really Reckless,
Got Really Wrecked



AND I PAID THE PRICE

I WOULDN'T BRAKE FOR ANIMALS



Unhealthy Preoccupation

disconnected



YOU'RE A LITTLE IN THE DARK

With
fire ON
The
mind

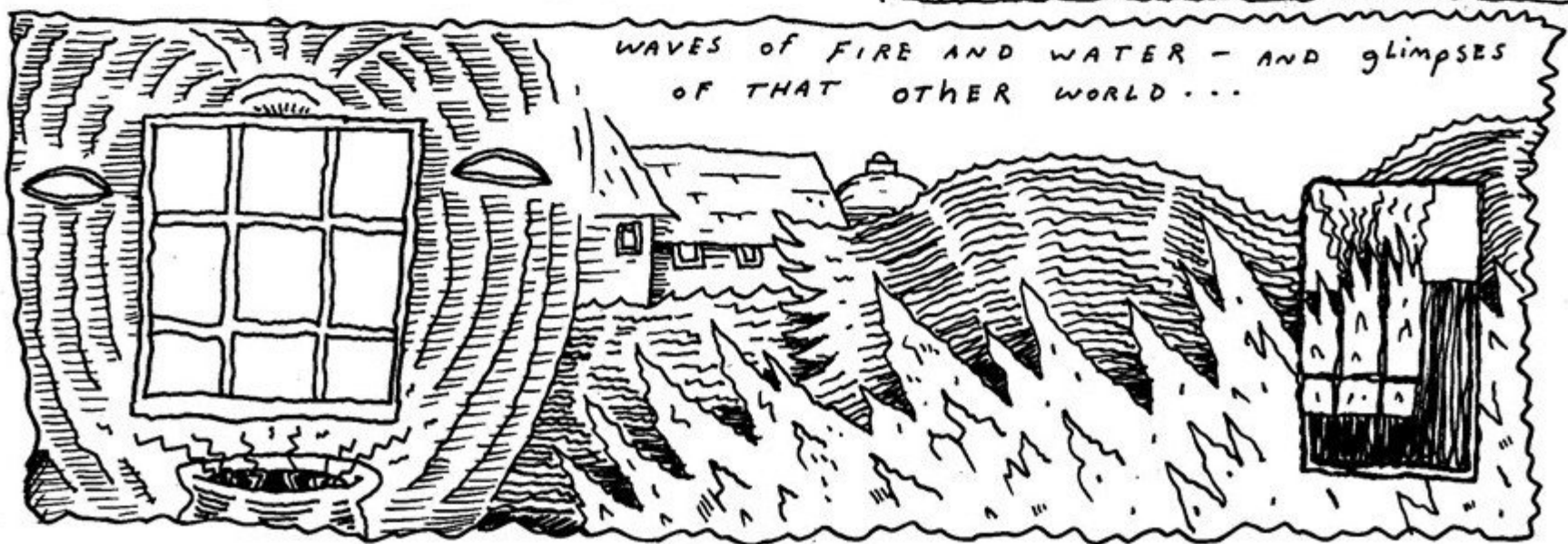
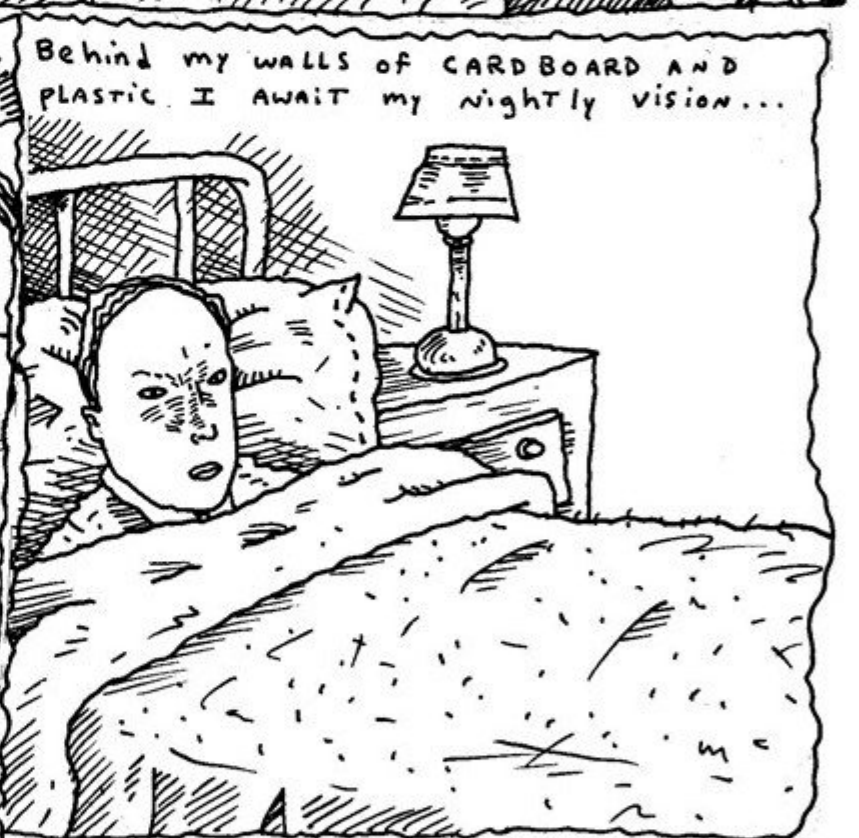
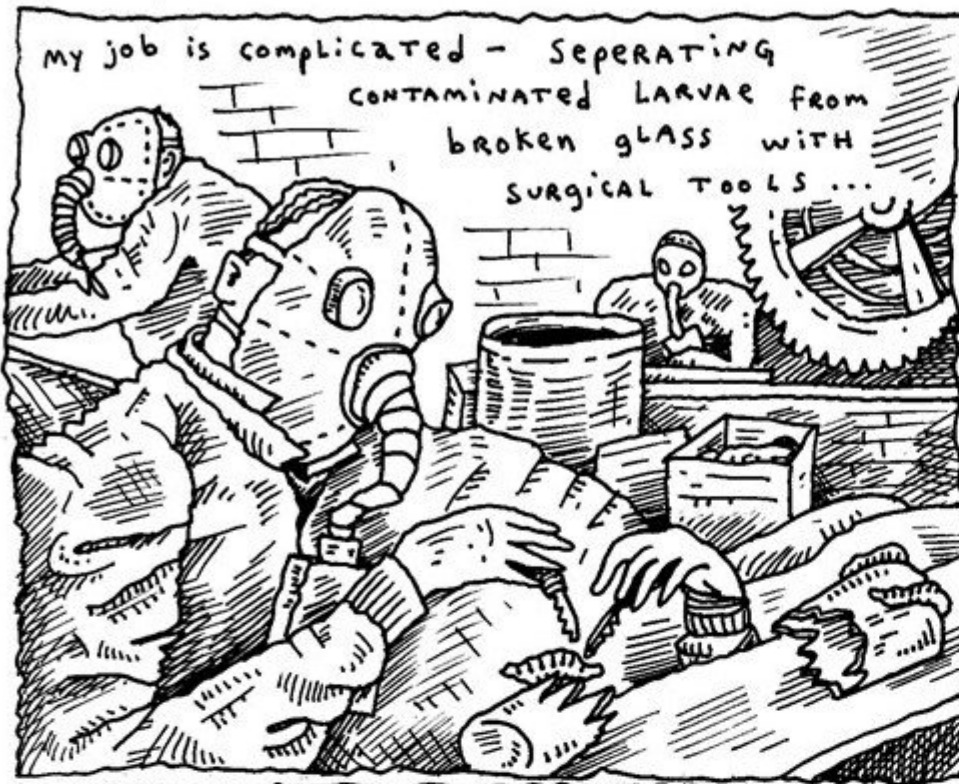


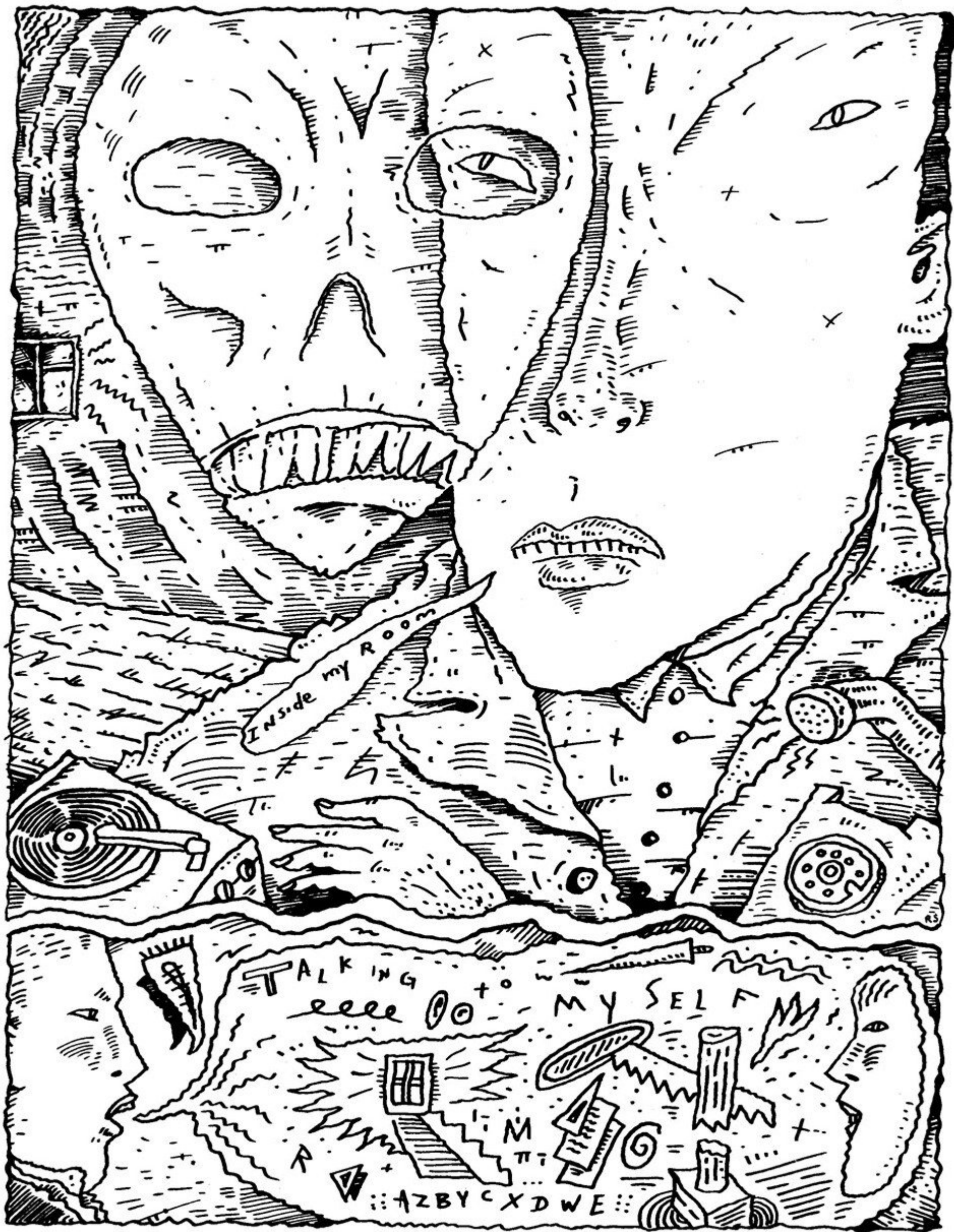
LOOK THROUGH THAT
CURTAIN ---

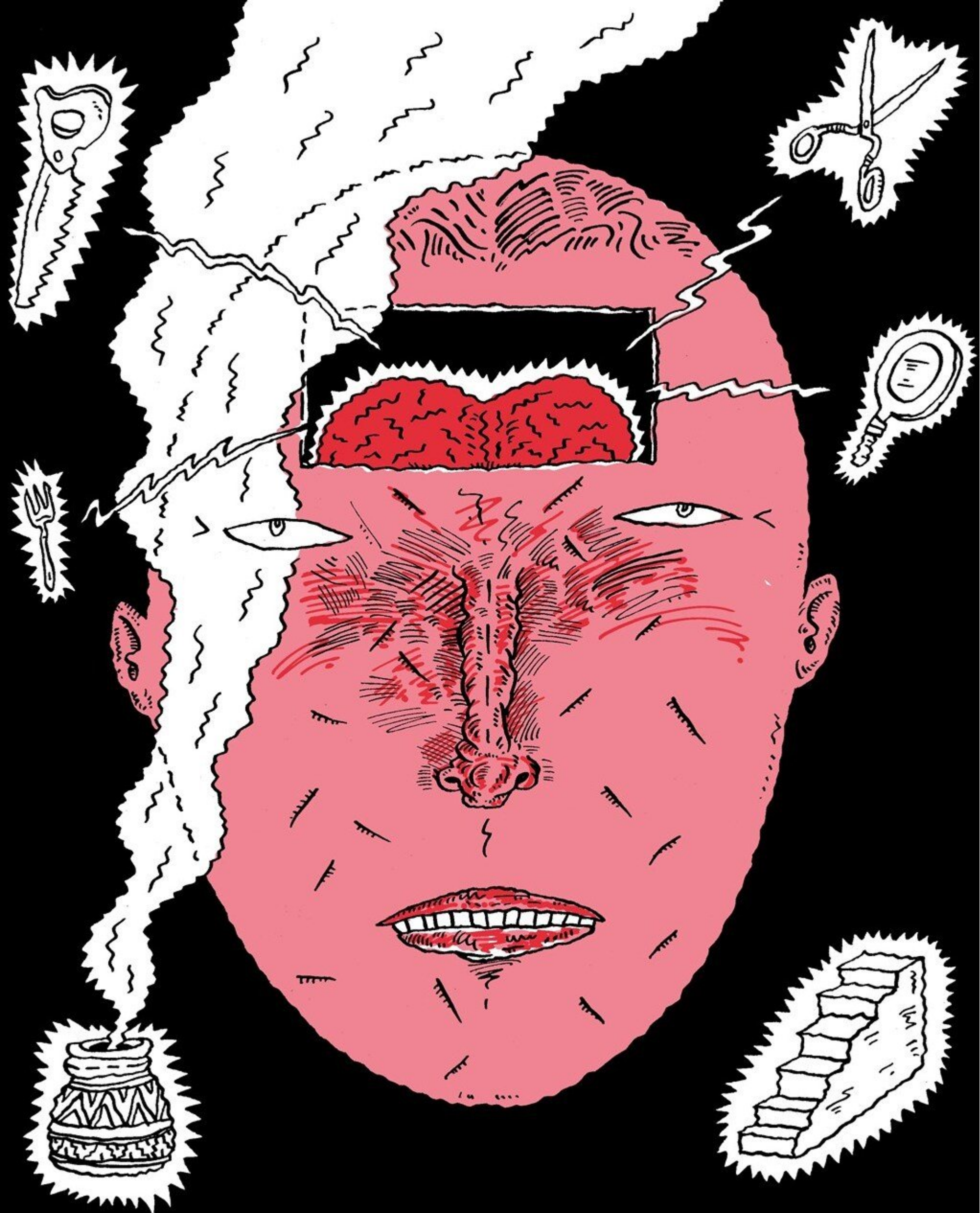
There's TROUBLE AT The house ACROSS THE STREET



V I S I O N







OUTTAKES

Some of these pieces were intended for *Night Drive*, and some were done for a possible follow-up book, as Richard explained when he later listed them for sale:

"I'm putting up a few pieces that were intended for the (never completed) 'art book' follow-up to my 1984 book, Night Drive. These were completed between 1985-1986, while I was waiting to hear if I (1) got into Raw magazine or (2) could get any illustration work. Luckily, both happened and I also got busy with 'Invisible Hands' for MTV, all while still holding down a day job. So the book never got done — but I'm offering a few 'outtakes' from that time, for those interested. Thanks for looking!"



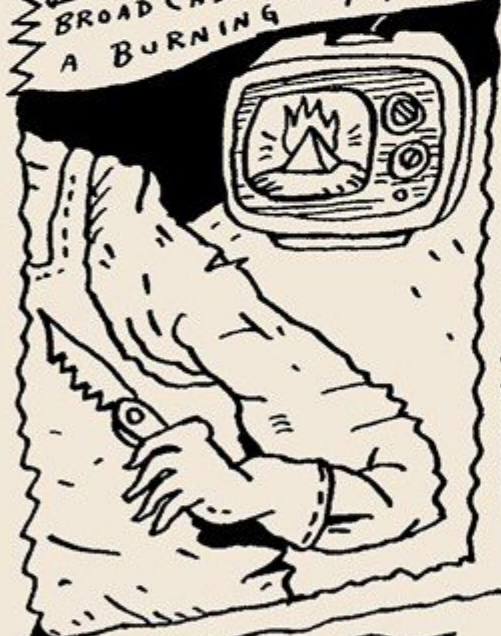
INTERPRET YOUR DREAMS

I DREAMT I WAS HIDING FROM AN ARMY OF SPIDERS...

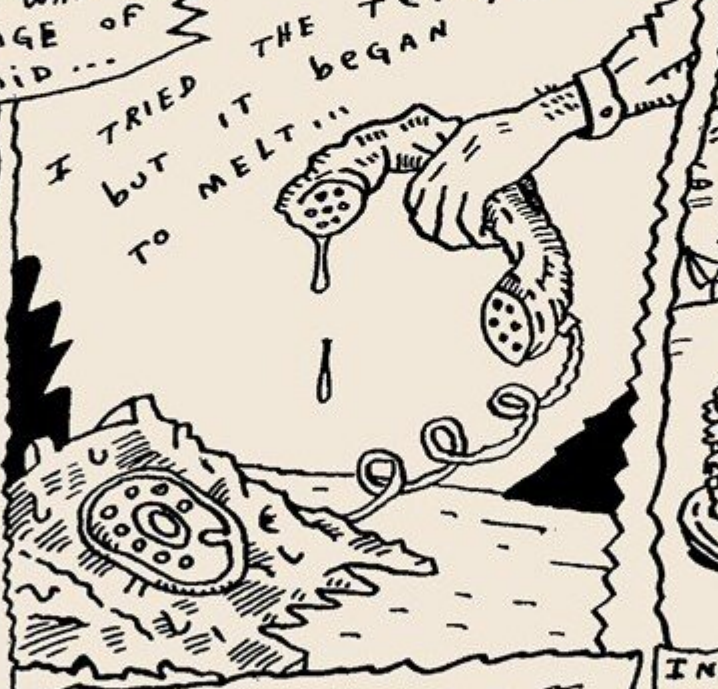


... THERE WAS A SURGEON, CUTTING UP PICTURES WITH A KNIFE...

BEHIND HIM, THE TV WAS BROADCASTING A BURNING PYRAMID...



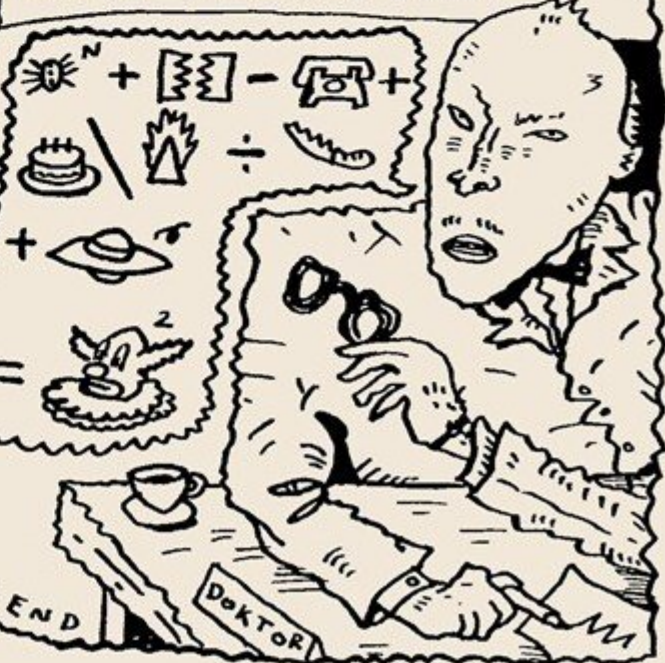
I TRIED THE TELEPHONE BUT IT BEGAN TO MELT...



A FAMOUS PERSON OFFERED TO BUY MY BIRTHDAY CAKE I SENSED HE WAS DOING ME A FAVOR



INTERPRETATION:



THE END

DOCTOR



THEN I WAS CHASED BY A FLYING SAUCER AND I FELL INTO A PIT AND THEN I WOKE UP.

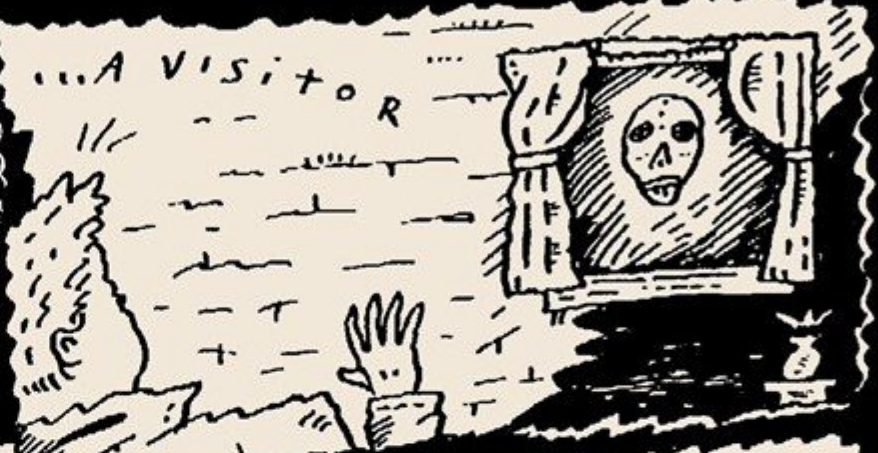
A x d - r " + m x n
7 H A U N T E D

6 HEAD

IN THE MIDDLE of A Night
filled with BAD DREAMS



...A VISITOR



POSSESSION



ACTIVITY THAT
Appears TO HAVE
NO MEANING



A RUSH of
SILENCE

THE INEVITABLE ACT of
VIOLENCE



AMNESIA



END

It's a Dangerous Way to Live

There ARE STRANGERS
IN MY KITCHEN

AND Ghosts flickering in
the hallway



of course my Neighbors ARE
Spying on me

I won't
even
Look
in
my
REFRIGERATOR



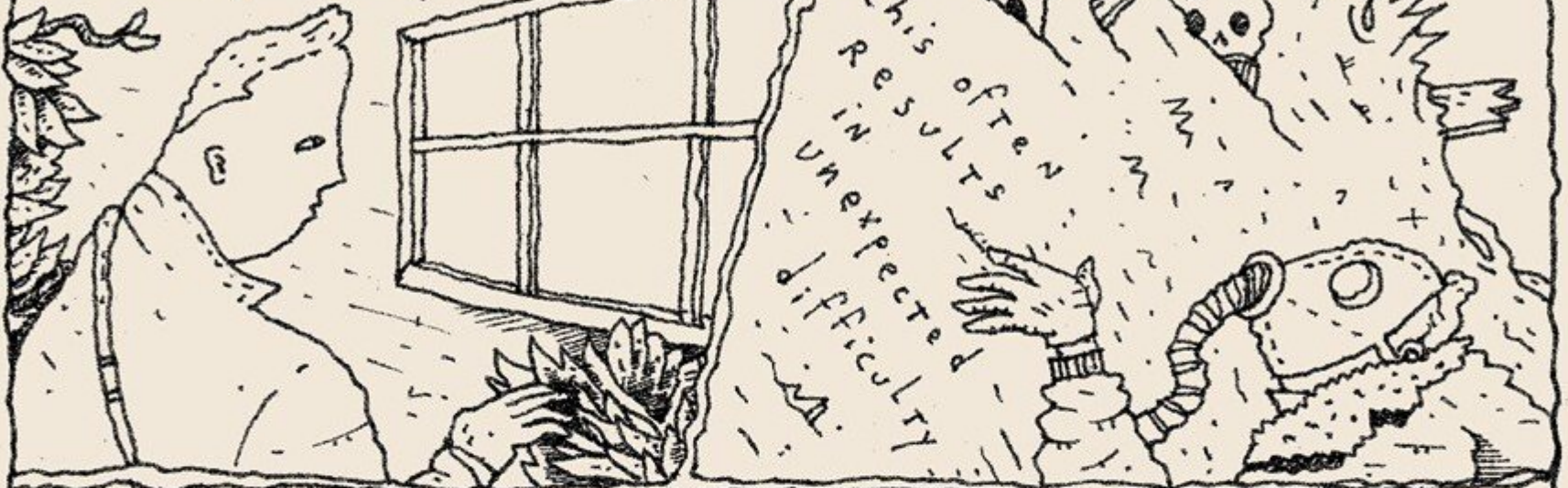
BUT There is NO PANIC in
my head - my inner eyes
ARE OPEN...

I CAN see in the DARK

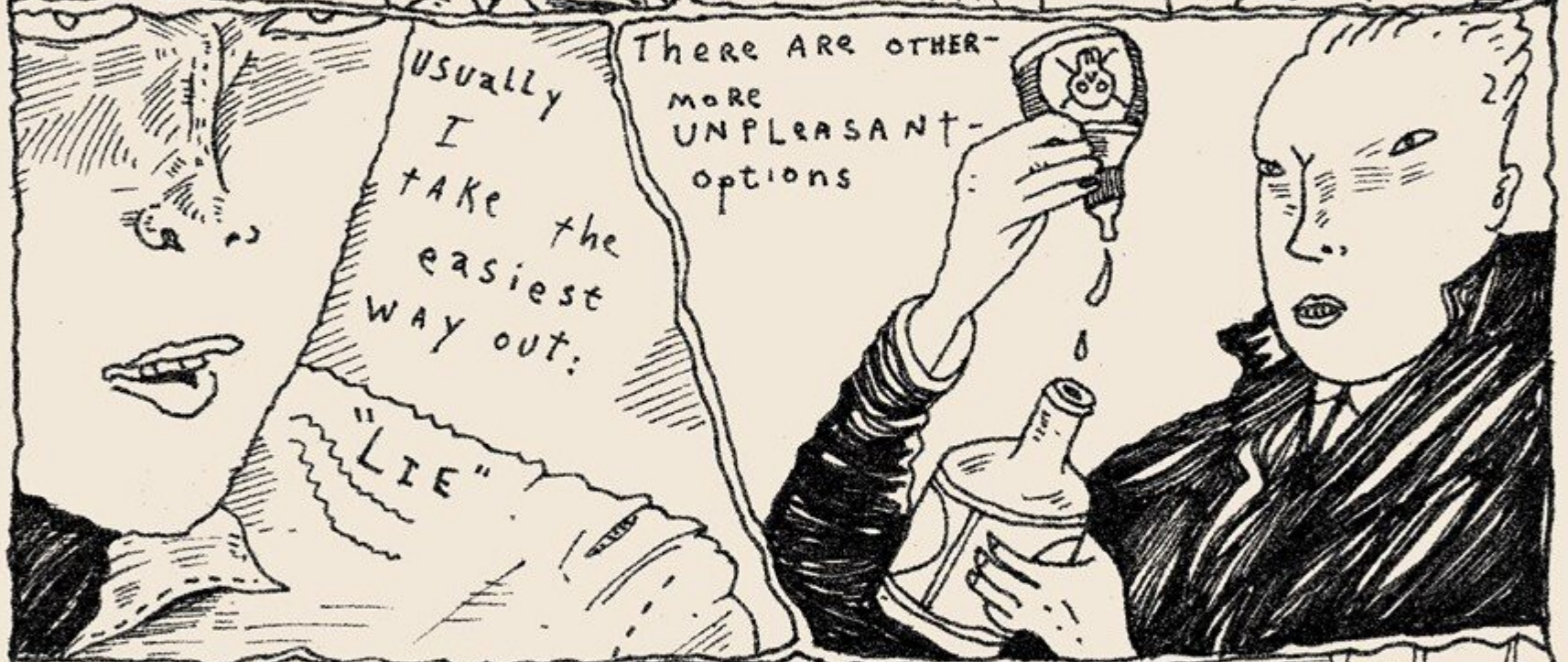


S P Y - L I F E

AS a SPY it is my duty
to satisfy my CURIOSITY



This often
RESULTS
IN UNEXPECTED
difficulty



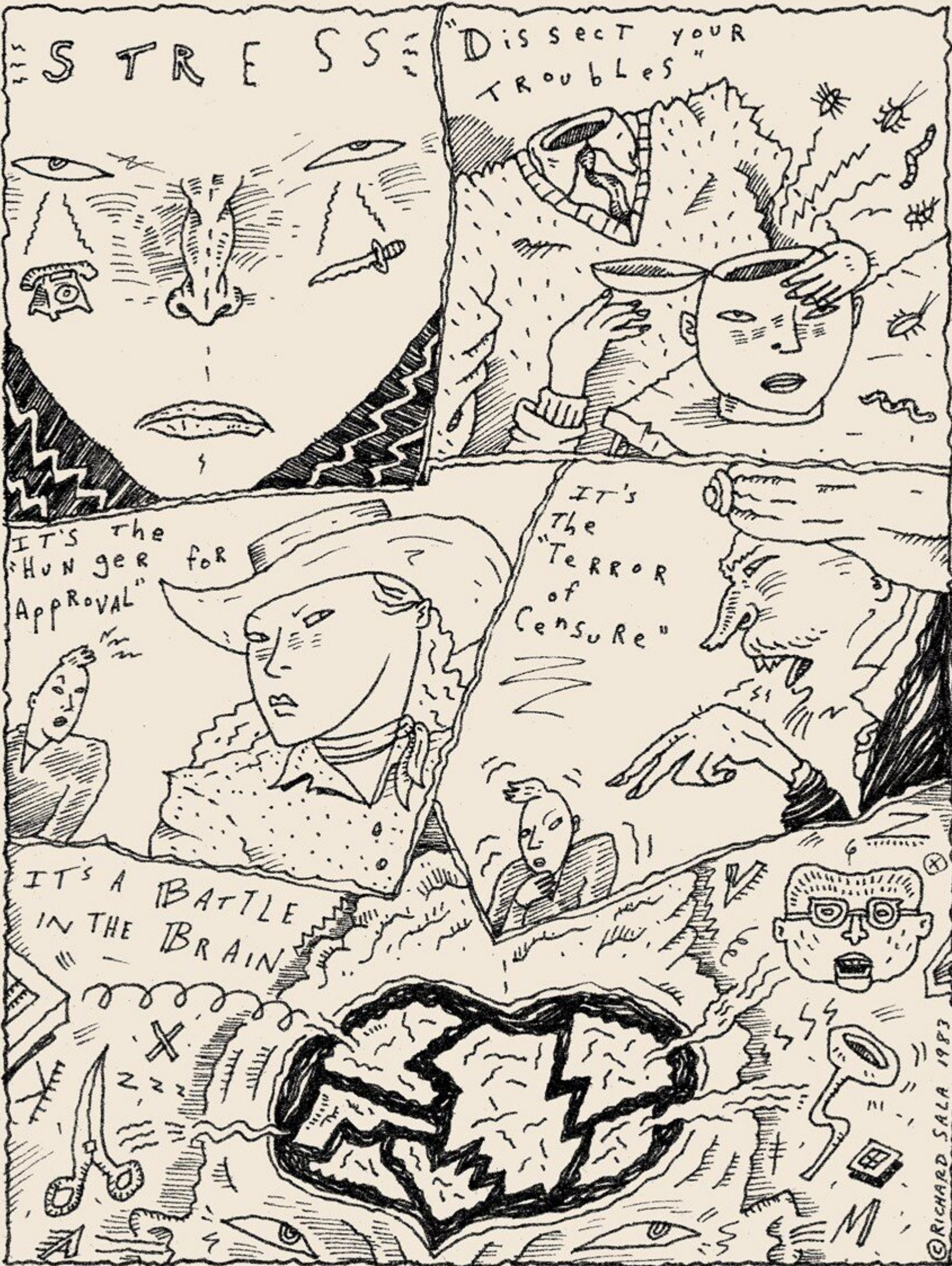
Usually
I take the
easiest
way out:

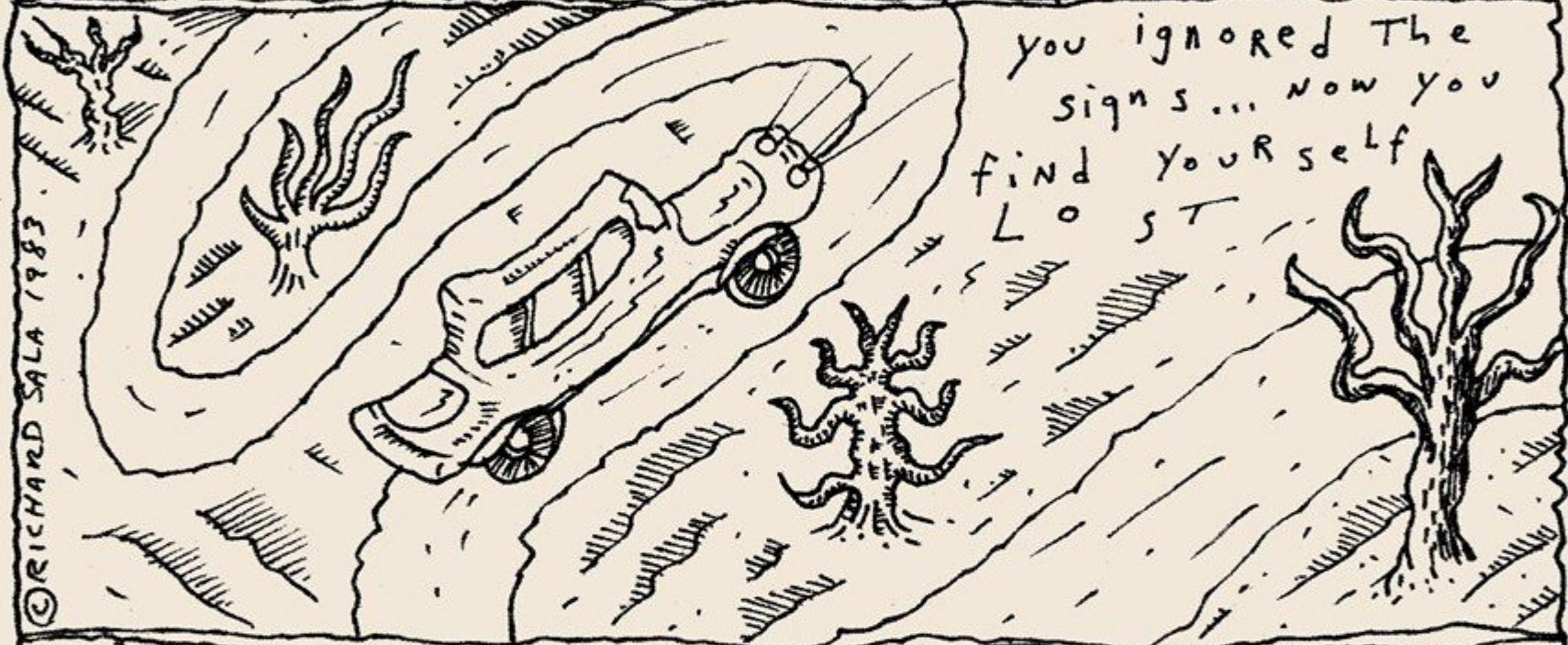
"LIE"

There ARE OTHER-
MORE
UNPLEASANT-
options



EACH MORNING I RISE,
fix coffee, AND DESTROY
LAST NIGHT'S
evidence



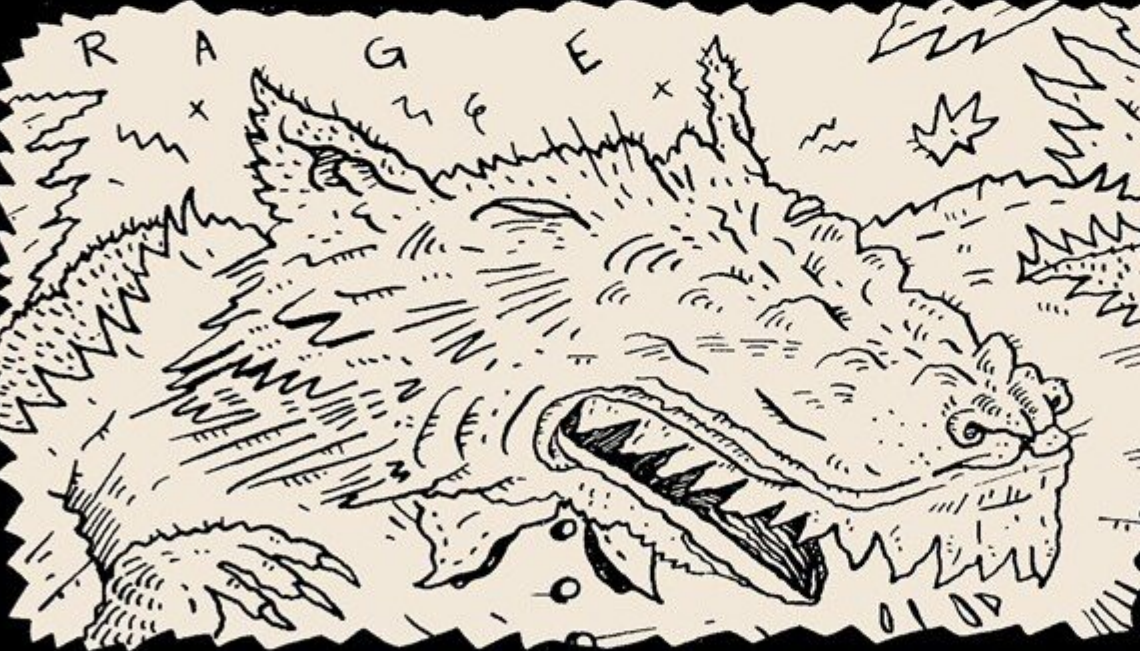




From the same period as *Night Drive*, 1984 or so. A slightly different version of this strip, with the same title, appeared in issue 15 of the comics anthology *Snarf* (Kitchen Sink, 1990) and later in Richard's *Black Cat Crossing* (Kitchen Sink, 1993). This version is published here for the first time.

~ Richard Sala

T E A R S U T



just another dumb story
on the night
after night

 A small television set with a skull on the screen is shown in the bottom right corner of the text block.

END

R. Salazar



There seemed to be some trouble
at the house across the
street

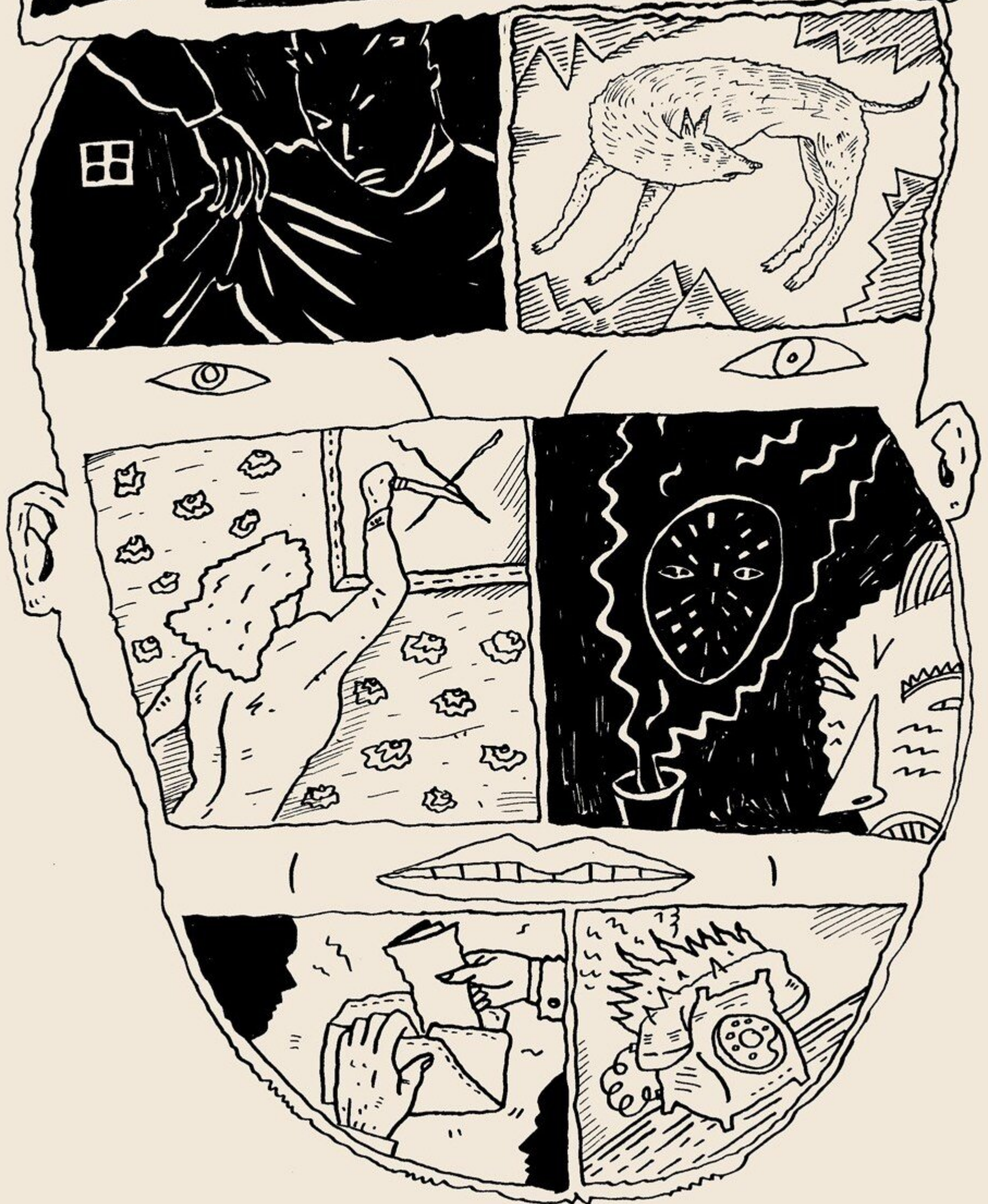






~ R. Sala ~

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