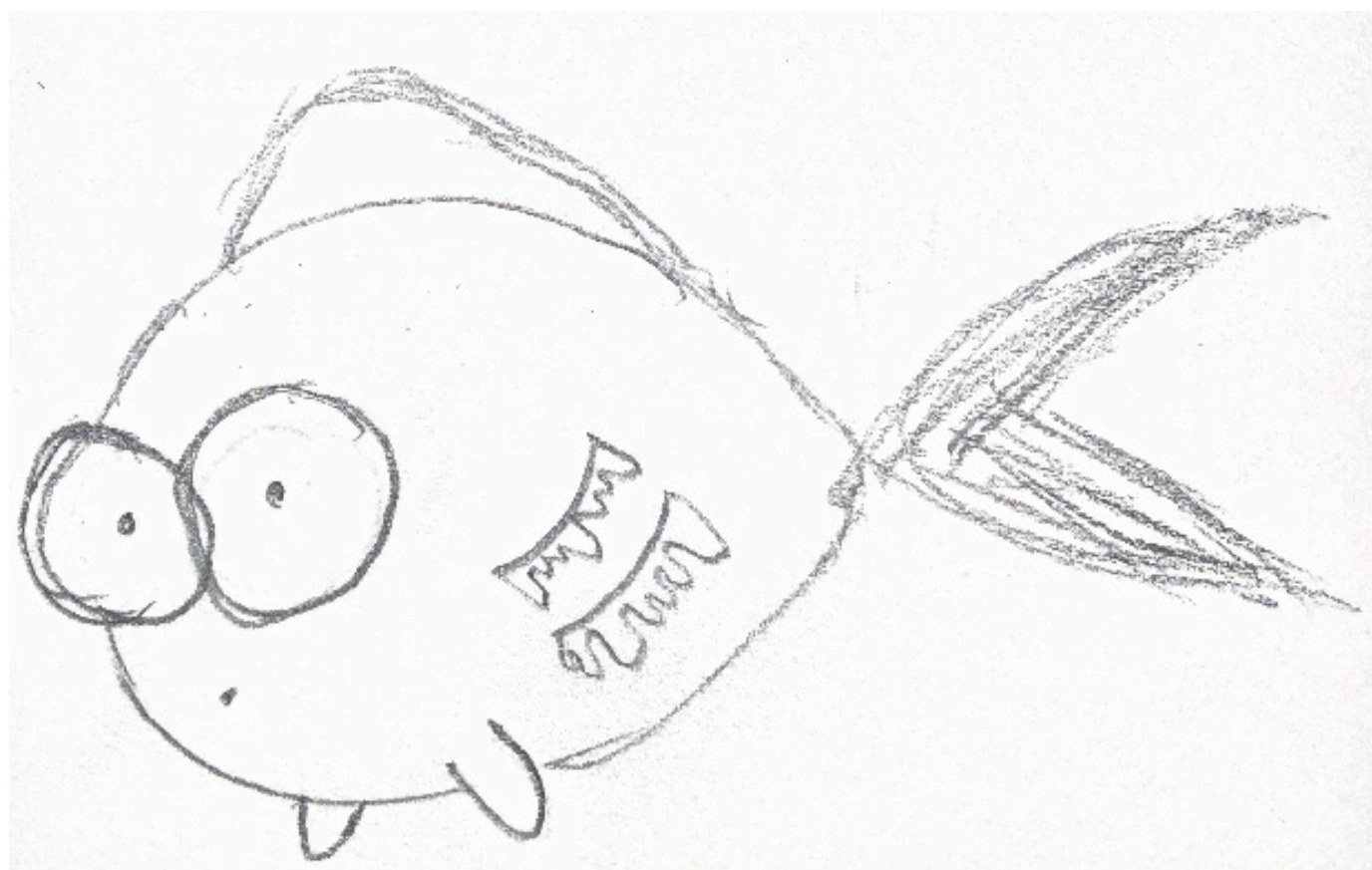


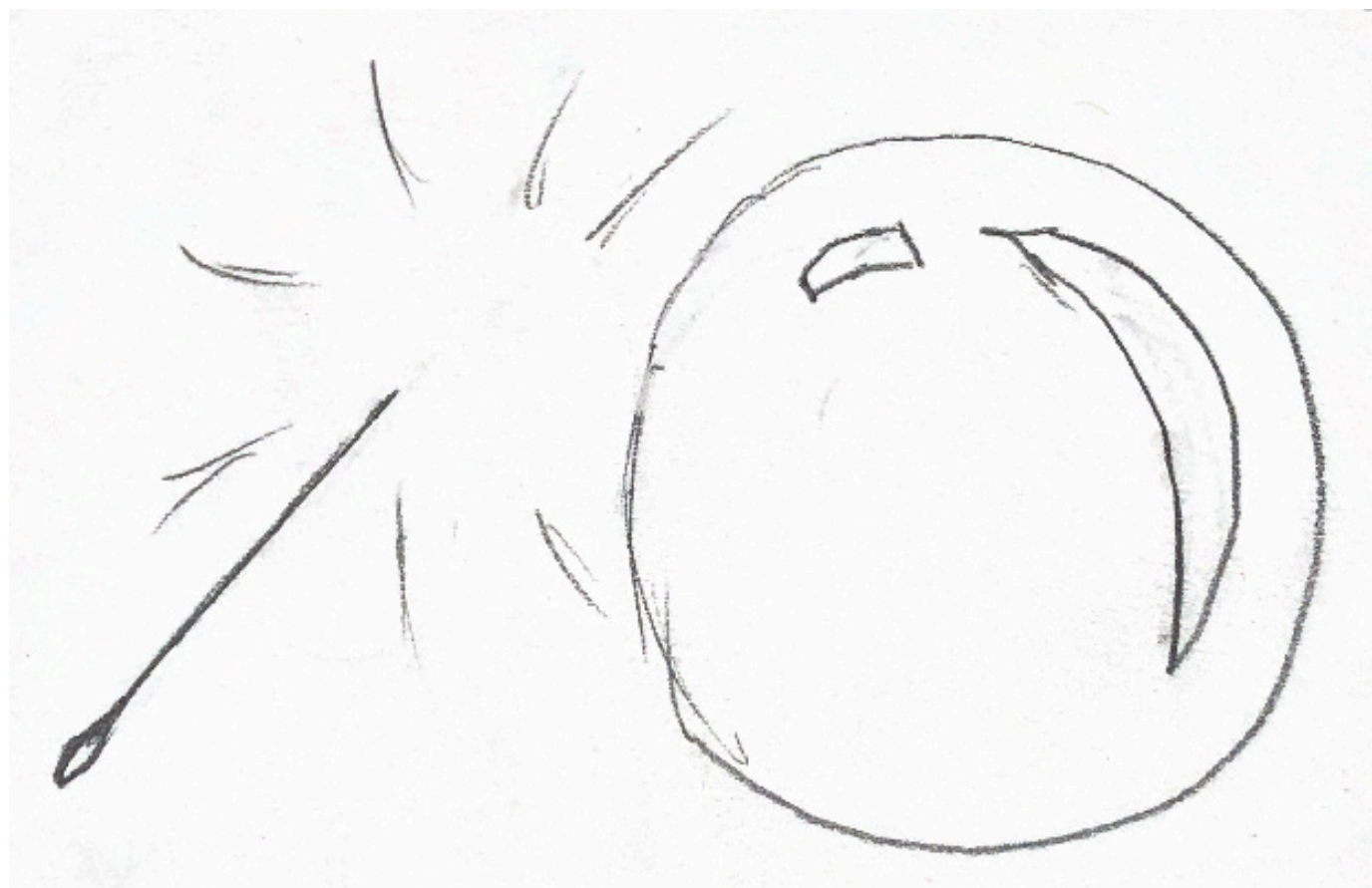
the Itch, the Ache, the Agony



I dedicate this book to Cheryl Land, Nanci Rossi and Laura Frie. The three women who made me feel valid. The three women who assured that my feelings were okay. For that I am forever in debt to them. This one is for you guys.



all of us are fish In troubled waters  
just swimming in the deep sea of malaise  
trying to protect defenseless daughters  
we're surrounded by sharks and stinging rays  
undertows and whirlpools have us spinning  
camouflage and hide behind the coral  
menacing, their eyes as they are grinning  
negative embrace, they are immoral  
to you we are just krill and you're the whale  
seaweed wrapped around our limbs you spite us  
but even in the end, you'll not prevail  
the pearl inside our shell, we'll not discuss  
you're ripping our limbs, though we regrow them  
flying fish resist and leave the mayhem



You held onto my heart sort of  
Like a real best friend would do  
I was taking a shower of love  
But you were my shampoo

You started our journey, nourishing  
Getting my mind out of bed  
Instead of healing me, flourishing  
You burn my eyes and I bled

I'm now covered in my soapy sorrow  
You turn the head at me to just drown  
My water is cold and you claimed to borrow  
And to think this was just a shower of let down

I lie here now, wet and drying  
You getting past a love without even trying





Strapped to a chair next to an open door  
Supposed to sing on stage, but without cue  
Whenever you are safe, you feel unsure  
A creepy alley always nearing you  
Heart beating rapidly endlessly  
Your breath leaving your lungs, with no return  
The mind is racing but with no real trend  
In a tight space and unable to turn  
Try to break free, but you are so brittle  
Any failed attempt seems to leave a scar  
Your thoughts are so big but you're so little  
Like looking at the moon next to a star  
A drowning man holding onto your arm  
Want to get him out but do you no harm

Handwritten numbers and words in various orientations:

- 1 (top)
- TWO (top left)
- 2 (top middle)
- 1 (middle left)
- 2 (middle)
- 3 (middle right)
- 2 (lower middle)
- 3 (lower middle)
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- 1 (lower middle)
- 2 (lower middle)
- 3 (lower middle)
- THREE (lower middle)
- 3 (bottom left)
- 3 (bottom left)
- 3 (bottom left)
- ONE (bottom middle)
- 2 (bottom right)
- 3 (bottom right)

the more you deny me, the stronger I get  
your head will rotate with every thought that I  
make  
an anxiety that you'll never forget

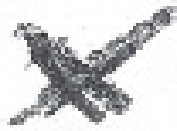
me and your intellect, a messy duet  
the mindset I create is all but opaque  
the more you deny me, the stronger I get

I continue to play the same cassette  
every idea i will force to uptake  
an anxiety that you'll never forget

I will always creep in to cause a threat  
sorry hun, you don't get a break  
the more you deny me, the stronger I get

giving obsession a helpful abet  
holding me in makes compulsion awake  
an anxiety that you'll never forget

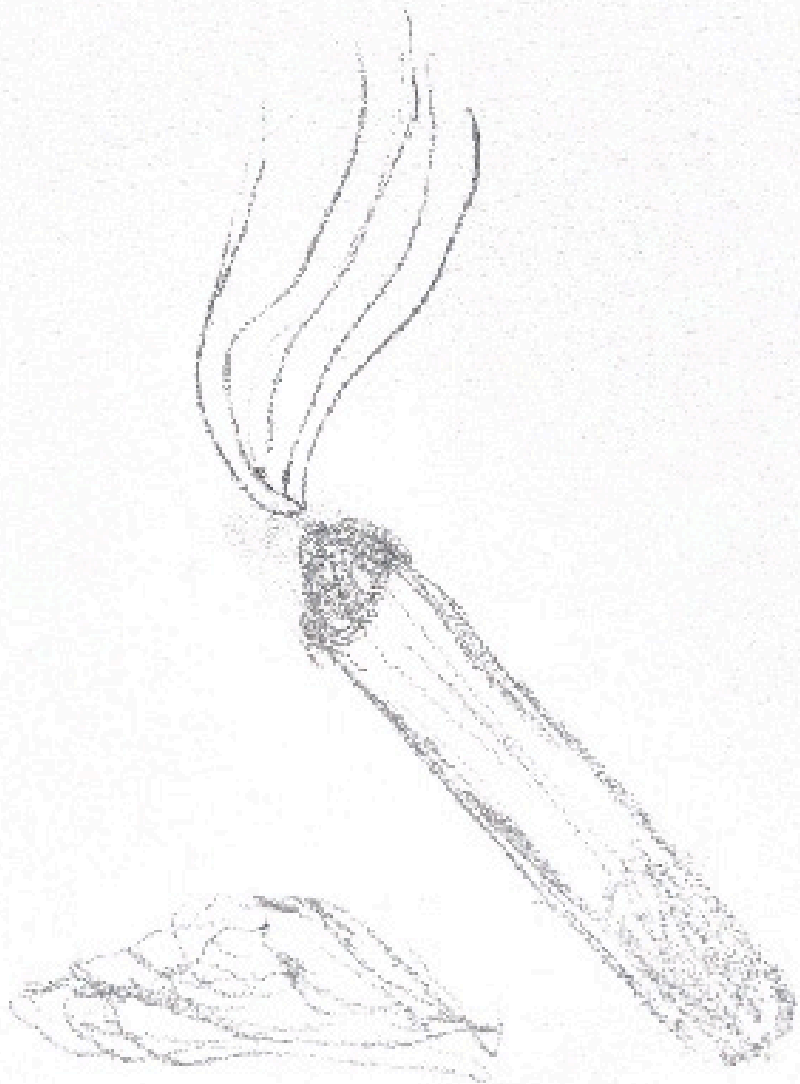
I'm forever here to bring a fret  
pulling and picking can easily slake  
the more you deny me, the stronger I get  
an anxiety that you'll never forget



whale

exhale

So you said you're feeling anxiety  
At a constant state of stress and worry  
Always feeling judged by society  
You start shaking and your vision gets blurry  
Your head releasing the mess of hormones  
The running of cortisol and norepinephrine  
It seems like your skin just flushes its tones  
Your body's fight or flight response sets in  
Inside your head sits the amygdala  
It tells you how to react to danger  
Your mind starts racing like an impala  
And now, you ask for help from a stranger  
My best advice is only to relax  
You got this, no panic has big impacts

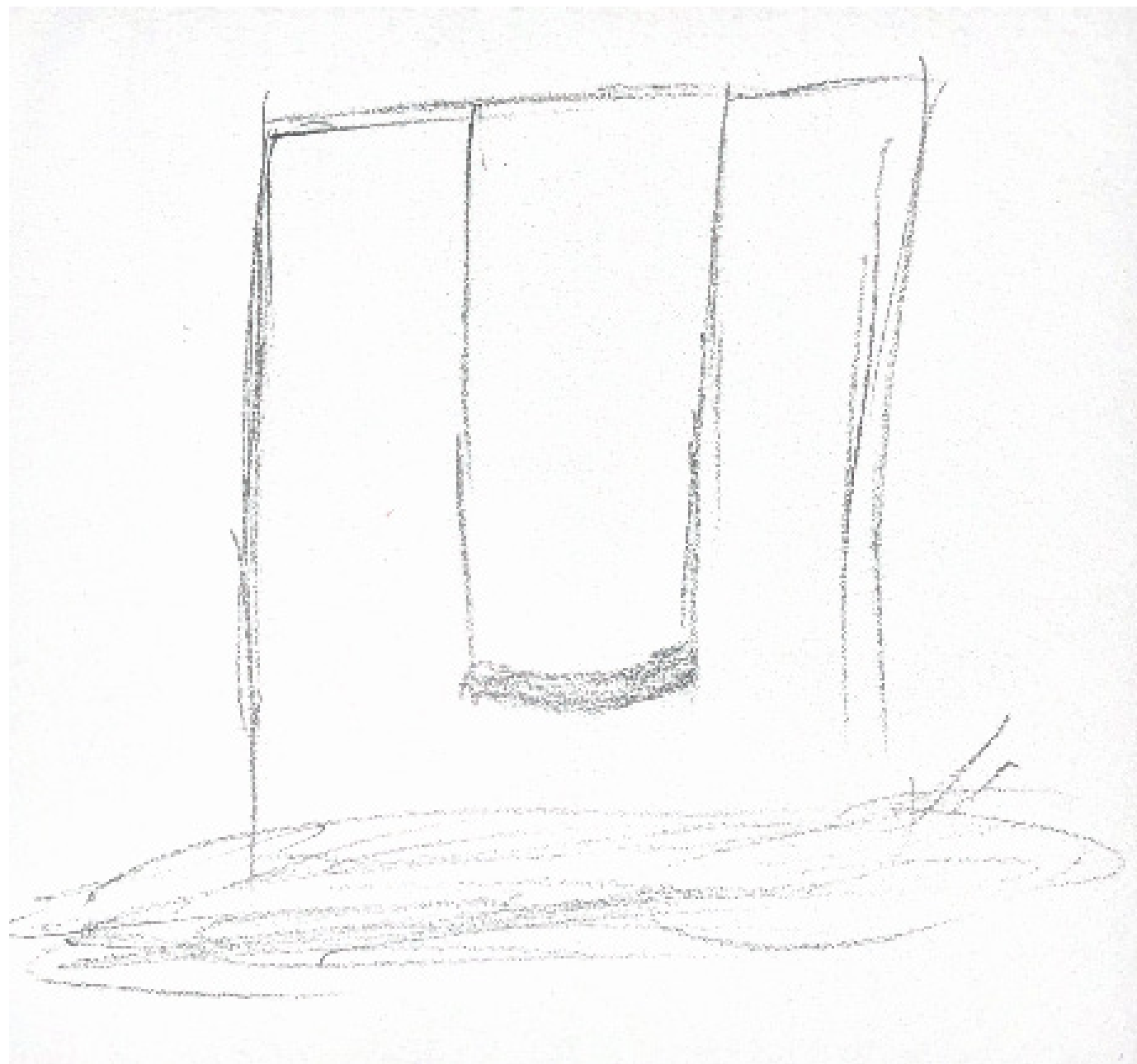


A door slams into his skull as she sings  
Joe, you forgot to light my cigarette  
A drunk lady playing with his heart strings  
She unraveled his delicate cassette

Lie there as he cries into his pillow  
There was no escape from her violent grasp  
Defining down to a weeping willow.  
Choking him out to a near final gasp

Welcoming smile and soft, gentle eyes  
She was a damsel for a mere second  
The way she glistened gave him butterflies  
Incredible woman, they all reckoned

He fell down as she was undefeated  
A conception of love that was cheated

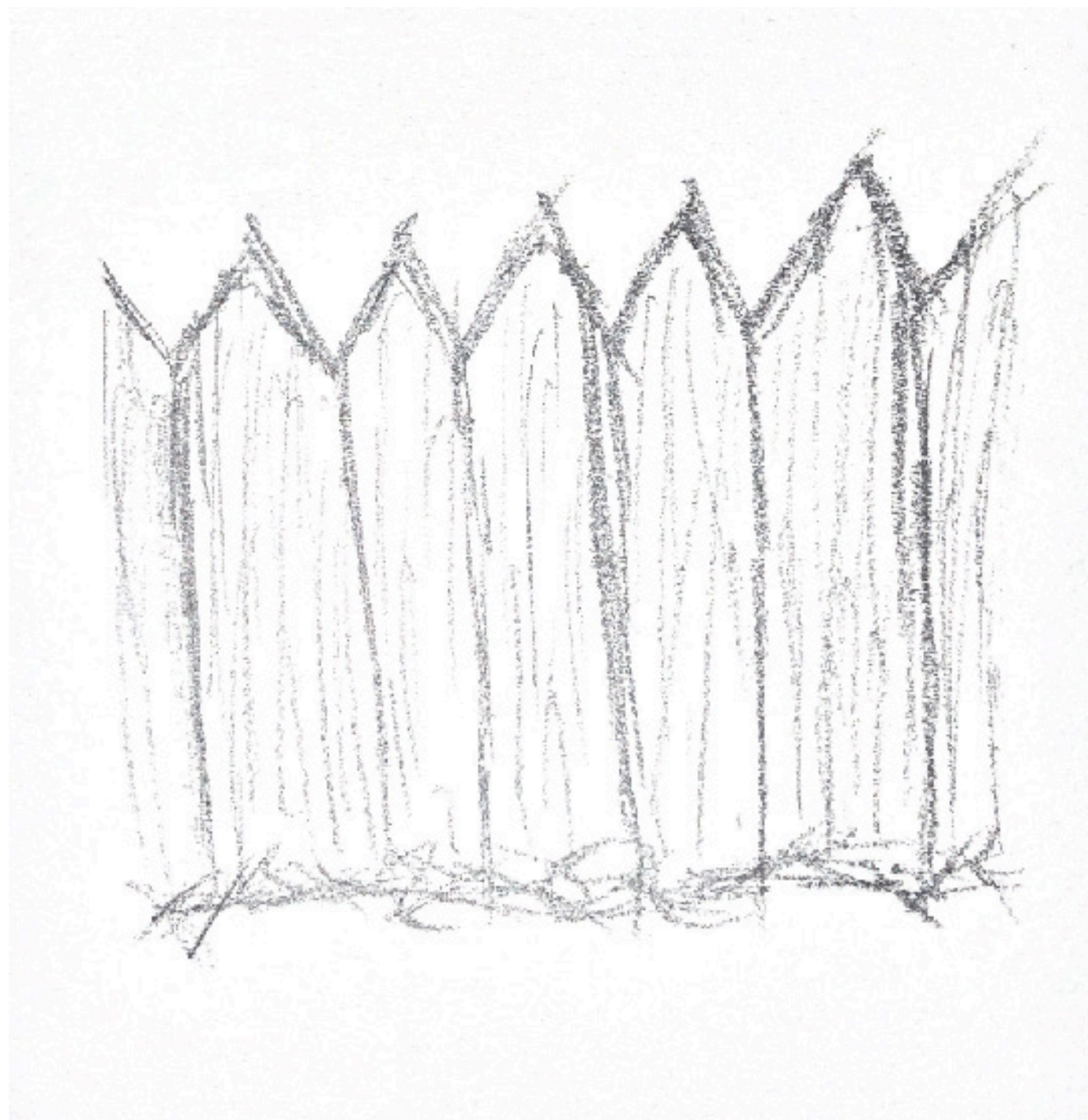




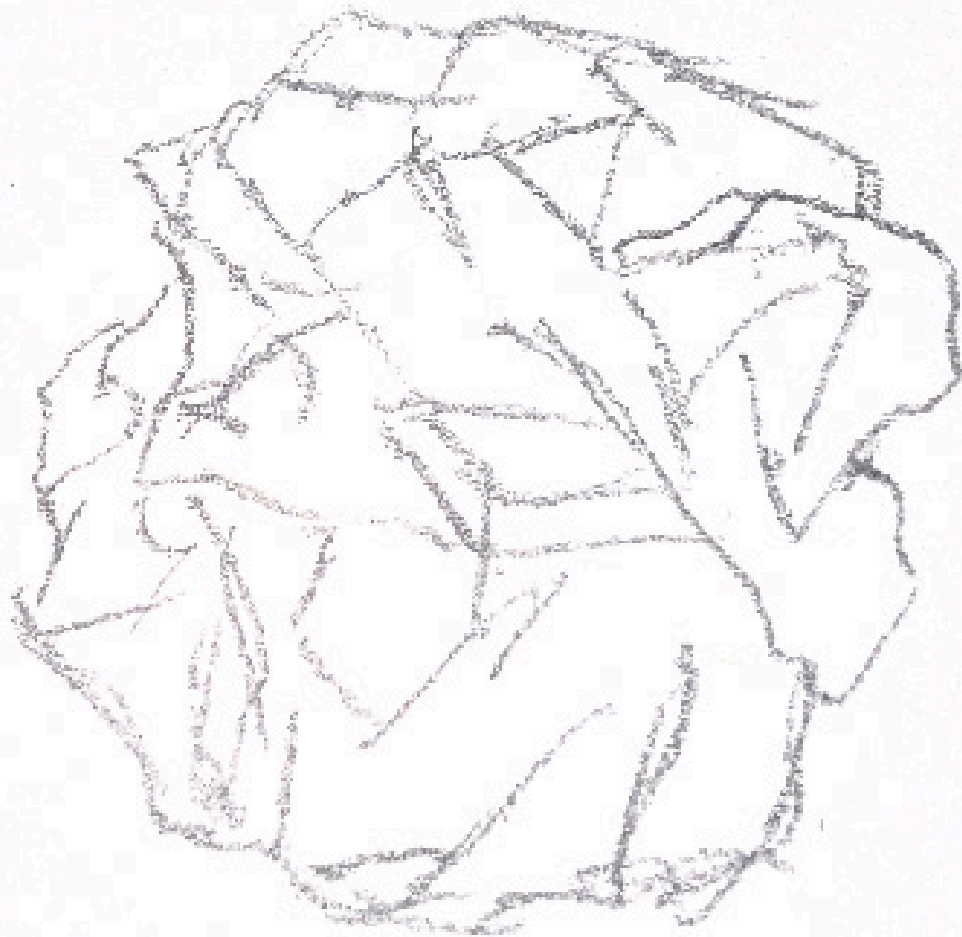
Nineteen seventy-six, kindergarten  
He was ever trying to truly impress  
His triumph always caused people to hearten  
Joe's self-discipline brought him immense success  
Every turn he made was with extreme precision  
Constantly racing on his bicycle path  
Very rare mistakes helped him make revision  
Then she came along and brought along her wrath  
Pulling everyone close to him away  
Joe had to keep his feelings in a chokehold  
She resculpted his head like he was clay  
A nefarious vibe to all, her heart was cold  
He was stuck playing her drinking game  
None of his friends think he is to blame



Introduced at school when we were seven  
Questioned anyone who looked mysterious  
Everyone's saddened that he's in heaven  
Was lighthearted, but could be serious  
Larger than life figure that he personified  
Driven, ambitious, disciplined directly  
But in all things, there's always a downside  
A woman dragged him down abjectly  
She was the muffler on his selflessness  
Always had to feel that she was above  
Her actions alone were his true nemesis  
Unhealthy, abusive, that was not love  
We were waiting for him to leave her  
it was soon approaching, we infer.



Started on different sides of the fence  
Fifteen years old, in opposite cliques  
But then we became friends, it made no sense  
Always together, inseparable like two bricks  
He and I were like unrelated brothers  
We went together like a pair of gloves  
But Joe felt a need to please others  
His constant desire to bestow love  
That's the bad part about her coming along  
She stole the remote and changed his life channels  
Pulled everyone away, our friendship remained  
strong  
Just about as aggressive as a manul  
Every thought in Joe's head was a brawl  
All of our friends left. Didn't even call



You make me smile even through berates  
never a time where I felt that you hate me  
our love was one some may call overweight  
jumping into the ocean, sadly the dead sea

Separated after the 18th-floor balcony  
making it even harder to let it go  
what if we could's leaving me with agony  
it was a love foiled, never to know

the sound of heaven pulling down to your stations  
Your death drilled a wire through my cheek  
whaling through their cheers of congratulations  
writing x-amount of words to avoid my week

She's my ride home in any dead-end  
I'm glad to call you my everlasting friend





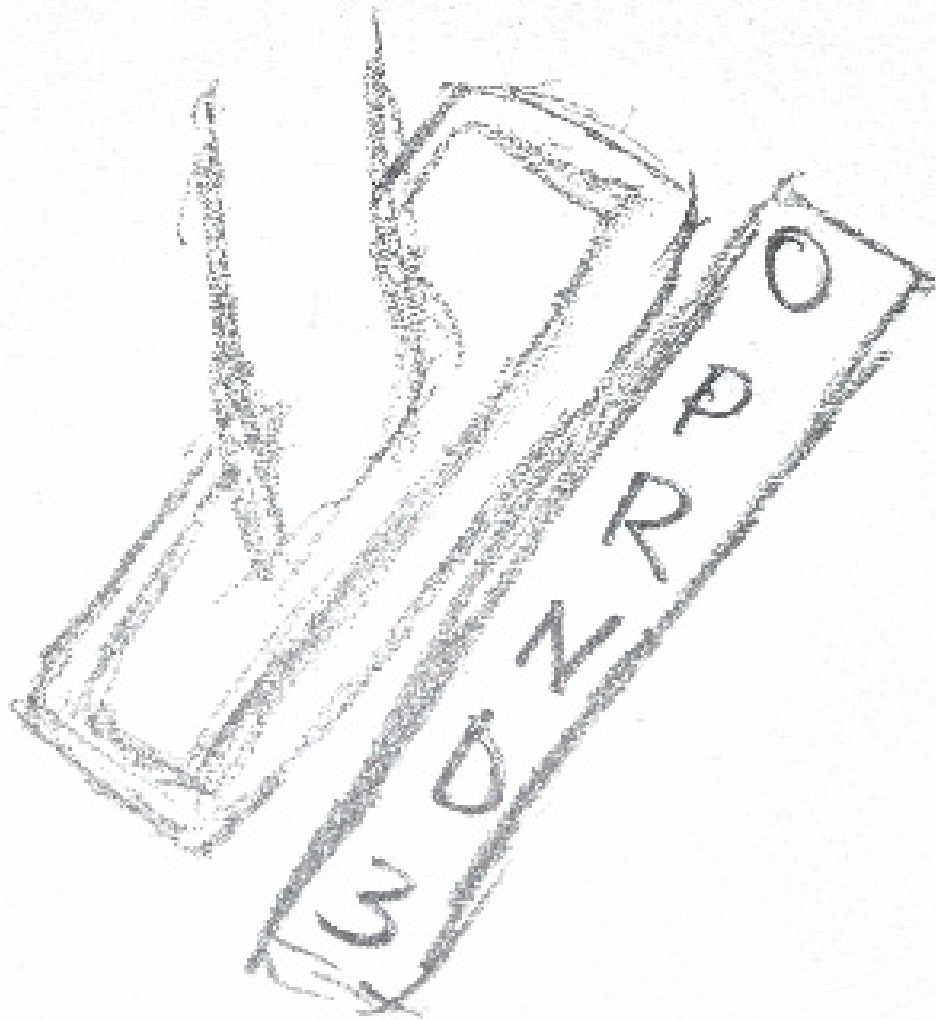


Can't hear, can't breath, seeing nobody  
The dreaded, awaited, internal death  
A large soul escapes its lifeless body  
A crash to the chest, losing its breath

The body starting to feel the mind stinging  
The chemicals fill the surrounding air  
The world turns black, a deafening ringing  
Thoughts running for miles, getting nowhere

The brain requesting a search-and-rescue  
Laying there, becoming invisible  
Becoming hard to see a single hue  
The body, floor, indistinguishable

A skeleton sinking through the tile  
That's what happens when you're in denial



Key in the ignition, starting the refrain  
The tango of the foot and the pedals  
The brakes lock up with no time, no gain  
A reversing car crashing through metals

Going backward down a hill filled with grass  
No sway of the car or what it will grab  
The wheel tramples on a box of firm brass  
Almost ramming into more than one cab

Heavy symphony hitting a bumper  
Impact breaking silence heard all around  
Smashing a car, 'twas more than a thumper  
A beloved friend had become junkyard bound

A vehicle causing one's injury  
Putting another in midst of fury



You kissed me and I fell empty  
Love, no longer our assembly  
One month turned twenty, I went numb  
Your hand in mine felt cold as ice  
Our moods were at hands of a dice  
hate hard as gneiss was our outcome  
gneiss kisses were all that were left

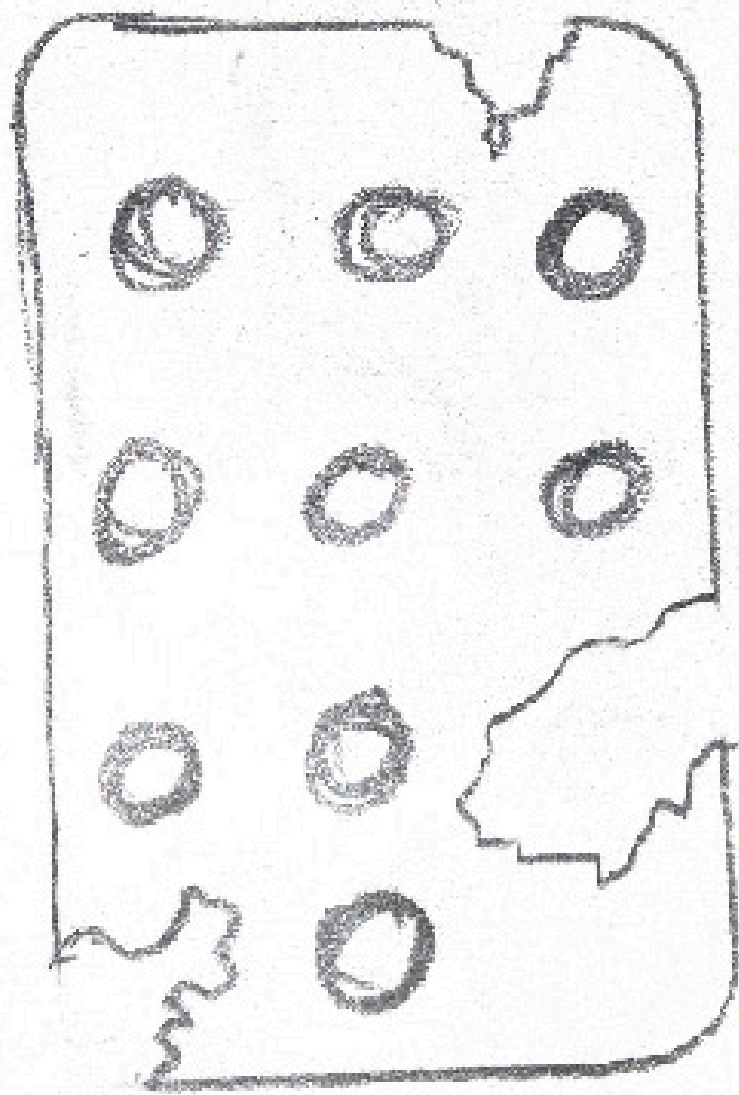


contemplating my suicide plans  
Getting too near my closest call  
I stare at the blade in my hands  
Just one second of escape is all

My mind and body, an eternal brawl  
A pool of blood gathers at my feet  
My torn, neon arm goes through the wall  
Every bone shatters on the concrete

They say self injury must stay discrete  
Hiding behind the fabric of my sleeve  
Falling to the ground, I have met defeat  
Never even given a chance to breathe

A note of despair lacing my brain  
I wanted to bring an end to my pain





Small moments of peace thrown away  
In the small, broken elevator of my brain  
Sitting vacant for years to decay  
No way to help me with my pain

A black fog runs through my veins  
I begin screening my new way to escape  
Cutting haze, leaving the director's bloodstains  
Thoughts out of control on videotape

A time of medications giving me highs  
Pills and potions blocking my goodbye  
My heart living off of blissful lies  
When the starless night ends, then I die

While my death is currently long-deferred  
I'll still plan to leave you without a word



**The End.**

So you've reached the end of the book, so you may be wondering... what now? Well, 50% of the proceeds from the Itch, the Ache, the Agony are going to an organization called Autism York which I'm very passionate about. In my life, I have had a lot of obstacles that I touched on in my poetry. The death of my dad and my stepmom, their hectic relationship, being in a relationship that I don't have emotion in, having Trichotillomania and OCD, anxiety issues and a lot more. However, this stuff did not define me then and it absolutely does not now. Having ways to destress and let go of the negative has always been prevalent in my day to day life. Especially this year when I started interning in my high school's Autism Support classroom. I've even decided that I want it to be my career. Feeling the love that I get from these kids is a whole different feeling that I've never had before. Giving back to that community has become my life goal.

Giving is something almost everyone does, but what exactly gives that drive to give? When

someone gives to an organization or person in need, there is a sense of confidence and happiness felt after getting appreciated for their kindness. When this happens, the brain releases what Psychology Today calls the “happiness trifecta” which are dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin. The act of giving and helping others also causes empathy to be felt. Even just telling someone that they look nice gives that same feeling, but donating to a good cause helps people in a tremendous way. Giving back is something that I like to do whenever I have the chance and that’s why I’m using my book to do so.

I’m choosing Autism York to be my organization of choice for my book’s proceeds because my experience working with children on the Autism Spectrum has changed my perspective on the world. I have really changed my outlook on life and I’m forever grateful for the opportunities these kids have given me. Without even knowing it, these kids have helped me through just about every obstacle my mental health has thrown onto my plate. The pure optimism I feel

around those kids has forever changed my life. The happiness that they bestow upon me is uncanny and I have never had better supporters than my students I work with. Having extra support in the places where I can't provide is essential for these kids and Autism York can provide that for them. That's why donating to them is your best option.

Autism York is a nonprofit organization that runs entirely off of tax-deductible donations from the community. This organization helps the Autism community find resources to have a healthy relationship with Autism. This program helps those who reach out find a heartwarming amount of support as well as resources to help them grow with Autism. A person living with an Autism Spectrum Disorder may be struggling to find their place in this hectic thing called life, and Autism York helps to change that. They provide monthly support groups in order to give a social environment for these people and their families because things like that can be hard for a person with Autism. Knowing that they are not

alone is key, not only for people living with Autism, but that can stand true with any difference in a person. The strength of this community depends on YOU, the donors, to keep this organization going. No donation is too small, as every penny counts. If you would like to do more for Autism York, you can donate on their website ([autismyork.org](http://autismyork.org)).

