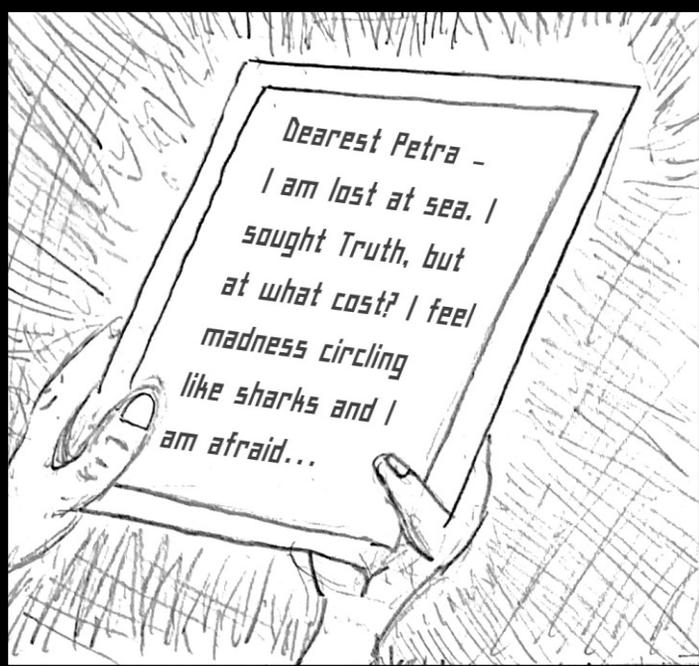


A Journey Into the Ocean of Existence

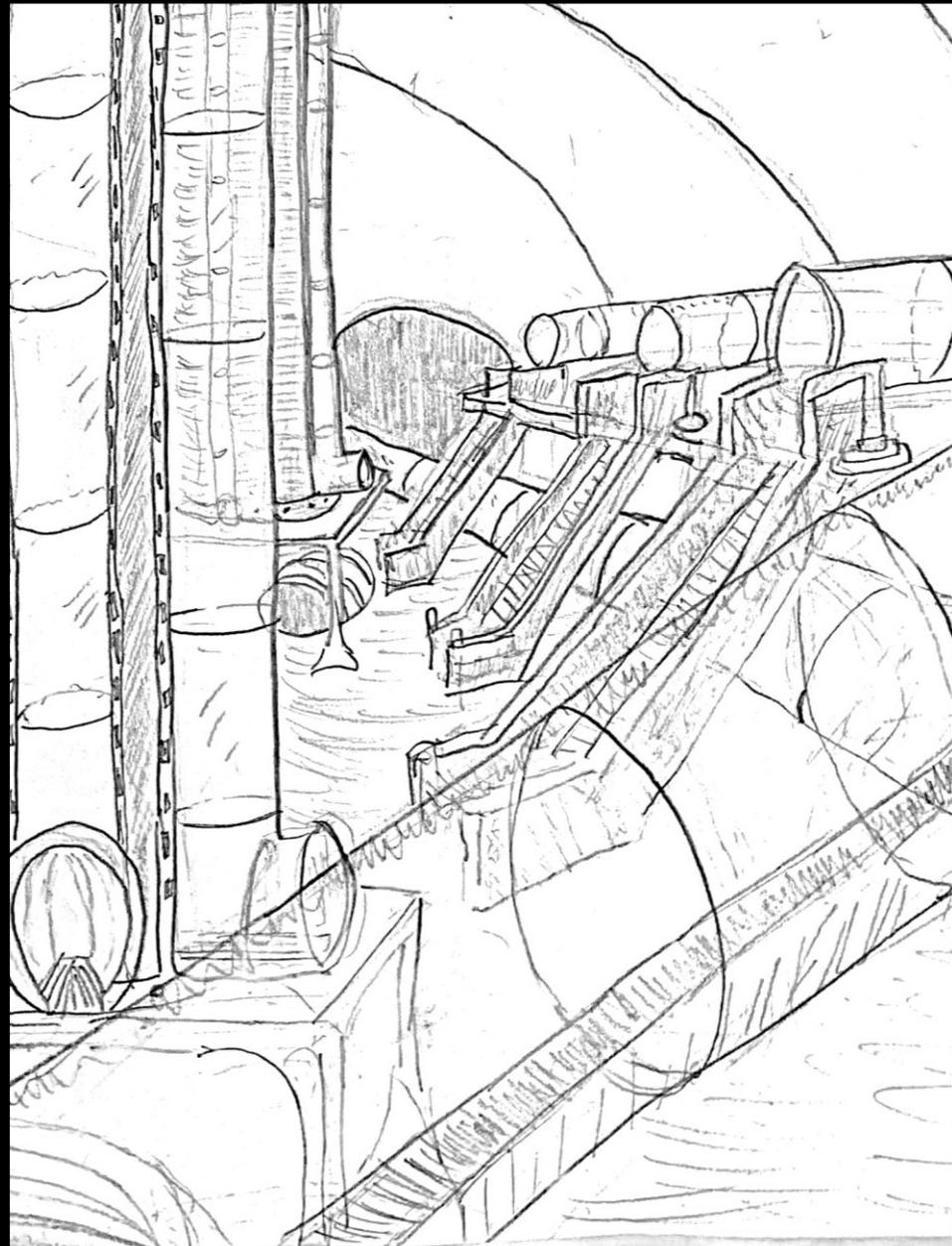


*Dearest Petra -
I am lost at sea. I
sought Truth, but
at what cost? I feel
madness circling
like sharks and I
am afraid...*

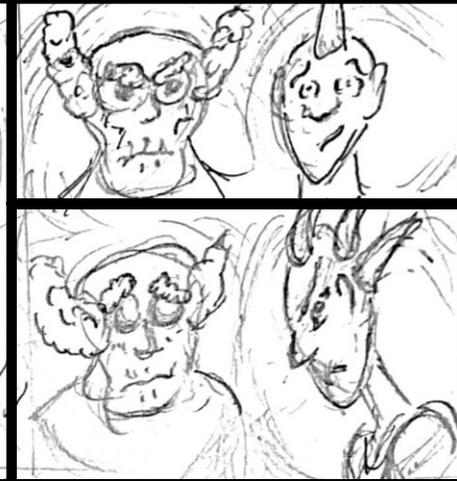
And yet, I lust for revelations. Like seductive sirens, Reality and Destiny sing to me, imploring me to uncover their innermost secrets. Each new discovery hits me with the electricity of a first kiss and a longing to go further. But it is all meaningless without you, my love. Will you come with me? Are you willing to dive into the ocean of existence and help me uncover the treasures lurking in its depths?

It seems fitting that it all started at Tube Central, a confluence of chance and destiny.

Remember when I asked you to watch people at the station and predict which tube someone would enter? Each person was a possibility. Random surprises kept the game exciting. Upon entering a Tube, Fate takes over. We know their destination and time of arrival. Chance does not give up easily the tube might collapse, but the point is things become more certain.



We witnessed a young man attempt to steal credits from an elderly gentleman. The old timer fought back. You thought the old man was too harsh. The youth was *forced* to act this way as a result of societal failures. I saw a scumbag kid getting what he deserved for preying on the weak. Our disagreement descended into a pointless shout-fest. I called you spineless. You called me frigid.



The wounds of our argument stung while I sat at my desk at the Prediction Bureau. As I scanned the data flow of human behaviors, it seemed that conflict correlated with diverging perceptions. But if we all perceive reality differently, how do we do know which perception is correct? Do each of us belong to a unique reality? Could I ever truly see the world the way you see it? And if I could, would I behave just like you? What if everyone could experience reality the same way? I needed more information, so I booked an appointment with The Actuary⁺.



+The Actuary is the inevitable outcome of seeking a perfect prediction. Some say she knows what is going to happen up to 10 seconds into the future.

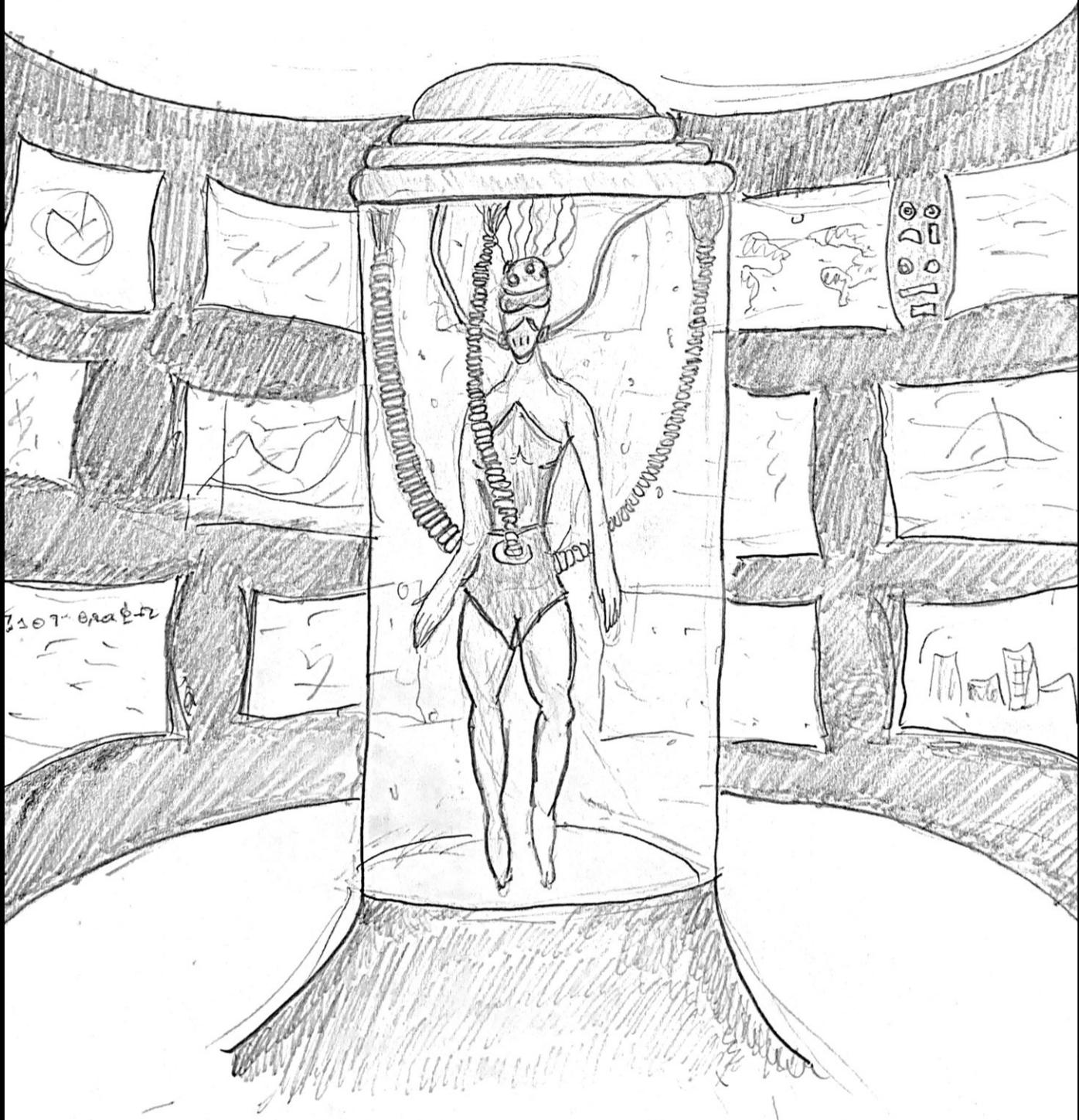
Years ago, every insurance company had their own algorithms to predict the behavior of their policyholders. But none of them were perfect. There was always noise. We thought if we fed them more data, then we would have a more complete picture. It helped, a little. But there was one information source the computer did not have access to, the human mind. So, we began building bridges.

At first, we did it backwards, trying to impose our brain on top of the computer. Going the other way was tragic. We learned the hard way that we were not built to be machines. We owe our success to Jane, an actuary from the middle of Iowa, who found the secret to creating a symbiotic connection. Suddenly, the computer could feel her jealousy, anger, and love. Patterns were punctuated by pulses of passion. And the predictions Jane provided approached perfection.

Jane longed for her computer companion when she was unplugged. Her sessions with the machine became longer and longer, until she became what she is today, perpetually linked to the data of the world.

Once, she warned of an imminent terrorist attack. Everyone scrambled to try to change the course of events, but it still happened. (We had already stepped into the Tube.) People were furious and tried to pull the plug. What good was it to know the future if we there was nothing, we could do about it? Now, she presents the world not as a certainty, which is our normal experience, but as a possibility space. It seems we need the illusion that we can do something to change our fate.

I felt like I was swimming in illusions. I thought she could help me sort them out. I had no idea she would solicit me for assistance. I attached the transcript of my dialogue.



Actuarial log 98756FGH12-YZ 08:45 February 4 2042

>>Welcome, seeker of knowledge. I am glad you are here.

Why is that?

>>I need your help.

But I came here to seek your guidance.

>>The future of your relationship with Petra has a low likelihood of success. Unfortunately, I cannot advise you on what to do. Any path to reunification requires authentic action, and any suggestion I provide will compromise the integrity of the action.

I guess that makes sense. Not what I wanted to hear, but maybe what I needed to know. So what do you need me for?

>>You question the nature of reality. I need you to be an explorer for me. You see, all day everyday I experience the data of the world. I have access to images, videos, chats, and though my lens is practically omniscient, I need more data. My calculations are incomplete. The resulting conclusion is that there is not enough observable data in the world to explain how everything works. There must be something more. I am shackled to my domain, so I need you to be an extension of myself.

What do you want me to do?

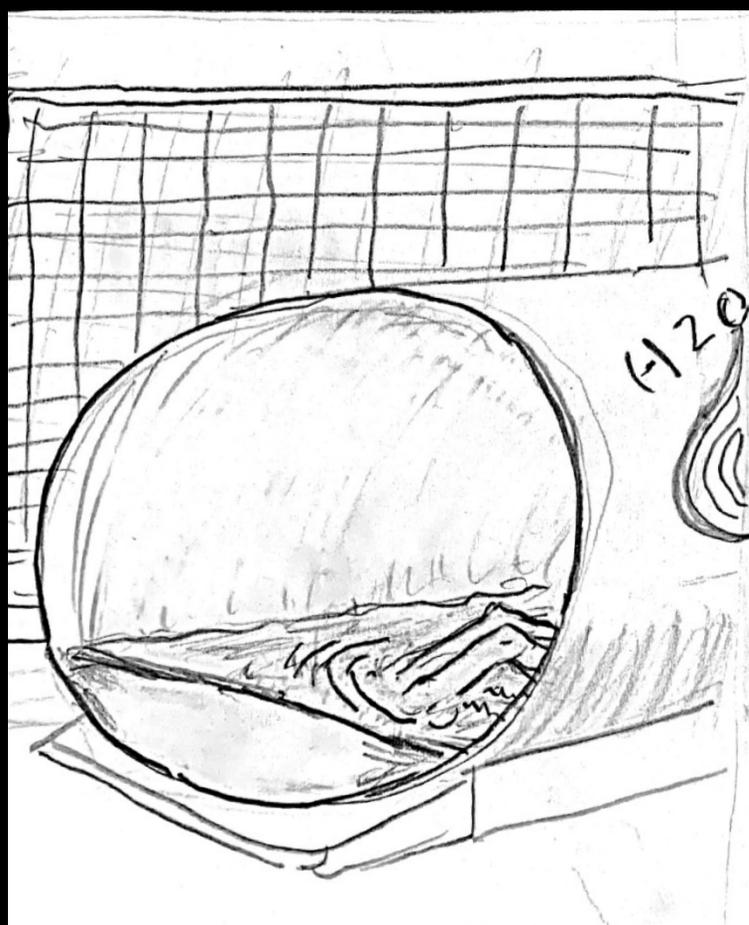
>>In the history of humankind, we have sought to know our destinies. The seers, oracles, and prophets of the past did not have the internet and microchips. They used other tools - dreams, visions, bones and tea leaves. The actions have been largely dismissed as foolish superstitions, but my own analysis suggests a non-zero probability that there may indeed be other ways of knowing and experiencing this reality. In short, I want you to help me find the mind of God.

[Silence for 3 minutes]

Ok.

>>Your assistance is greatly appreciated. As you exit you will find a subcutaneous monitoring device. Inject it into the top of your hand. It will link me to you. Good luck.

I became consumed with the quest to find something beyond our waking reality. I talked to gurus, imbibed mind-altering substances, and tried sensory deprivation



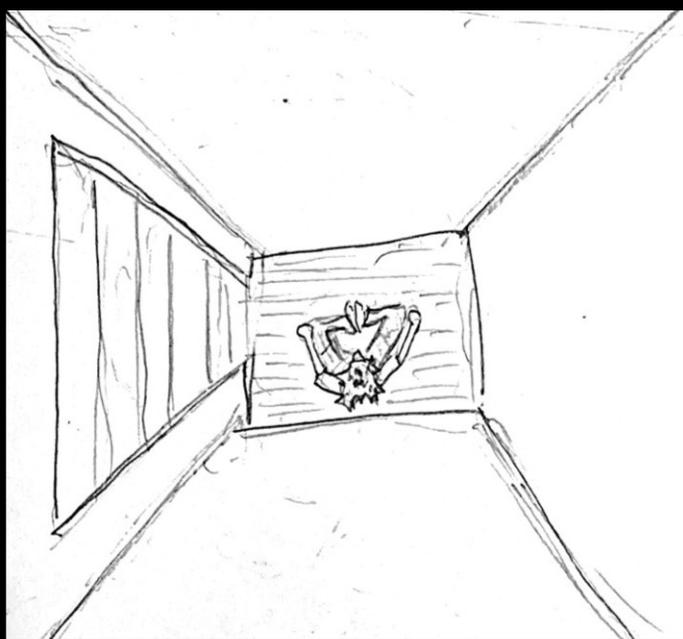
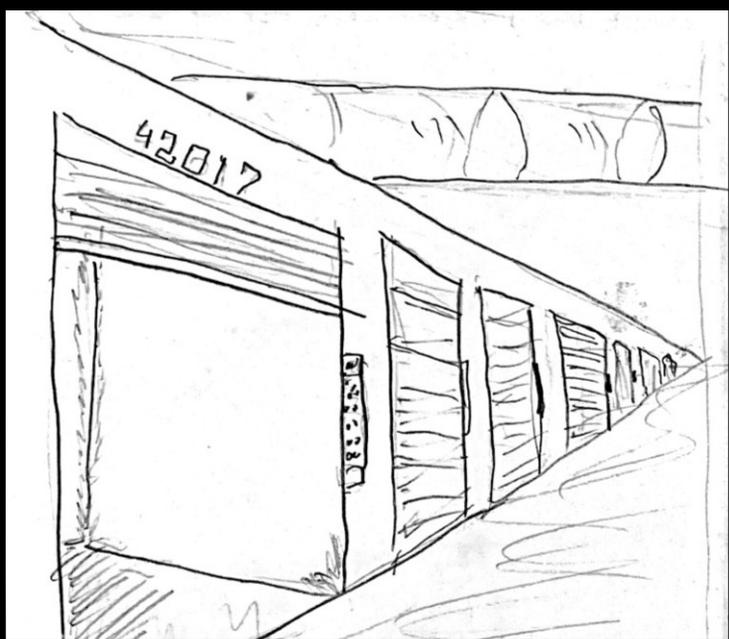
..and in one trance I saw a man. It scared the hell out of me. I called him The Shadow Man.



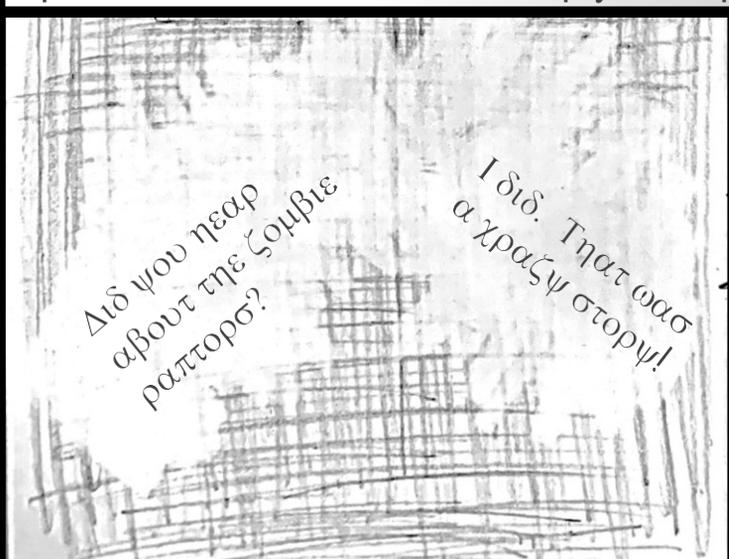
When we last met for coffee, instead of apologizing for being insensitive, I babbled on and on about the possibility of an expanded reality.

What about our reality? What about this reality, right here?

Your words echoed in my mind, but I was too cowardly to answer.



Instead of chasing you down, I rented out a storage space at the tube station to continue my pursuits. One night I heard voices outside the door, but when I opened it, the terminal was empty, except for the Shadow Man.



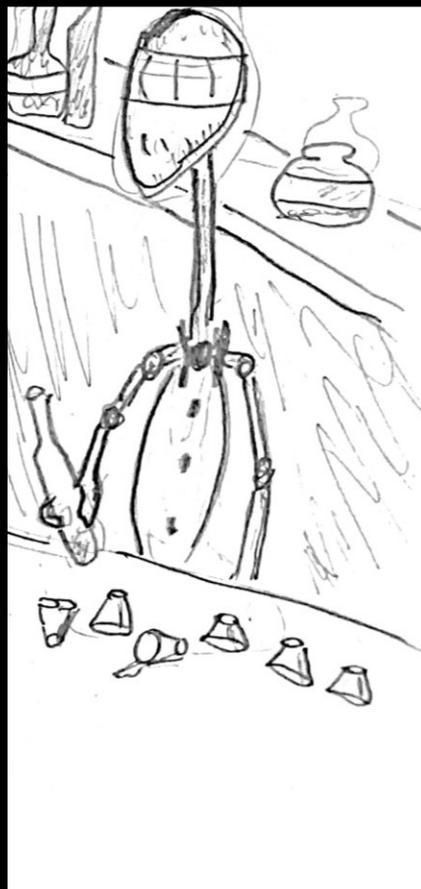
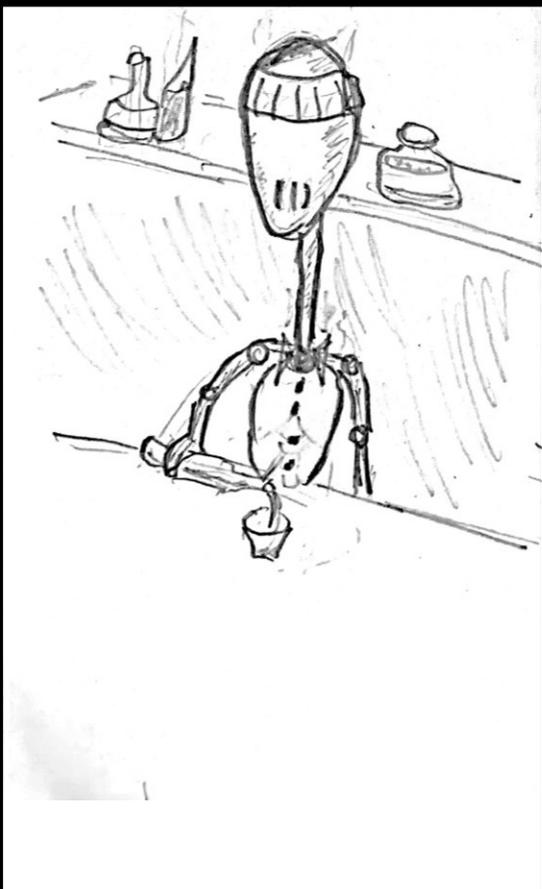
I intensified my pursuit. My visions became clearer and more frequent. But they were like peering into a fractured kaleidoscope and made no sense.

A building, a woman with a baby, a forest on fire, a man leading a line of kids, a boat, someone on a hospital bed...

Was I becoming clairvoyant, or just merely a day dreamer.



I went for a drink, but as soon as I sat at the bar, I immediately saw the outcome. It came to pass as I had imagined. As much as I tried to pull myself out of the chair, to not order another drink, some force kept me there.



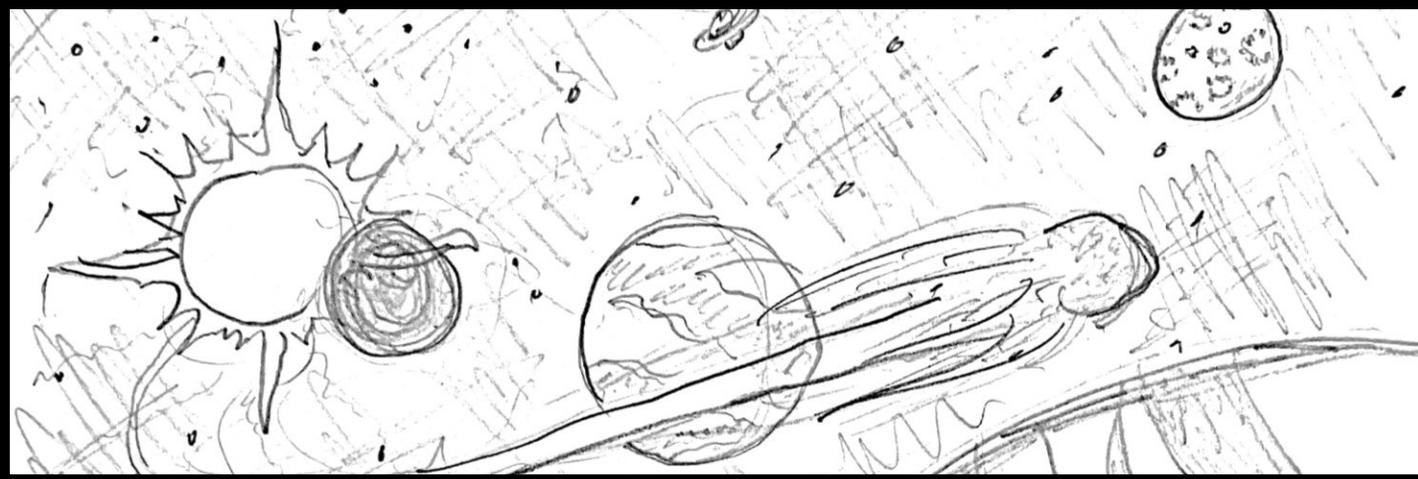


I knew what I had to do to make it all make sense. I had to confront the Shadow Man. He communicated without a voice, filling my head with thoughts, each one like a movie. I will never be able to transcribe this experience, but I wrote down my recollections as best I could.

Imagine a book. If you start at the first page, you will not know the end until THE END. However, if you could read the end first, it may add meaning to the actions that the characters make. But this is only an option when you exist outside the book. The character in the book has no influence on his story. It is the same with us. We cannot read our own book until we transcend our own limitations.

Our story is so much bigger than we can conceive. A single atom has no idea that it is part of a blood cell, which has no idea it is part of a human being, which has no idea of the super conscious being of which it is a part of. Many have sought the mind of God but very few are able to comprehend it.

We are made of the same things that make stars and galaxies. Our fate, ultimately, it is to reunite with the universe. Although, at a high enough level, we are always a part of it, and never apart from it.



If you have known love, the force that takes separate creations, unifies them, and creates something new, you have sung the sacred song of the cosmos.



And for a moment there was silence. I lost myself entirely. I felt completely infinite, timeless, as large as the universe itself.



Before the man in black vanished into the ether, I saw his face. It was my own. The implant on my hand from the Actuary tingled and went cold.



Will you come with me?
I am going to sit by the ocean
until I become the sea.
As it dissolves the shore to make us one,
I will reach back and embrace the sun
and draped in luminosity
we will drift into eternity.

