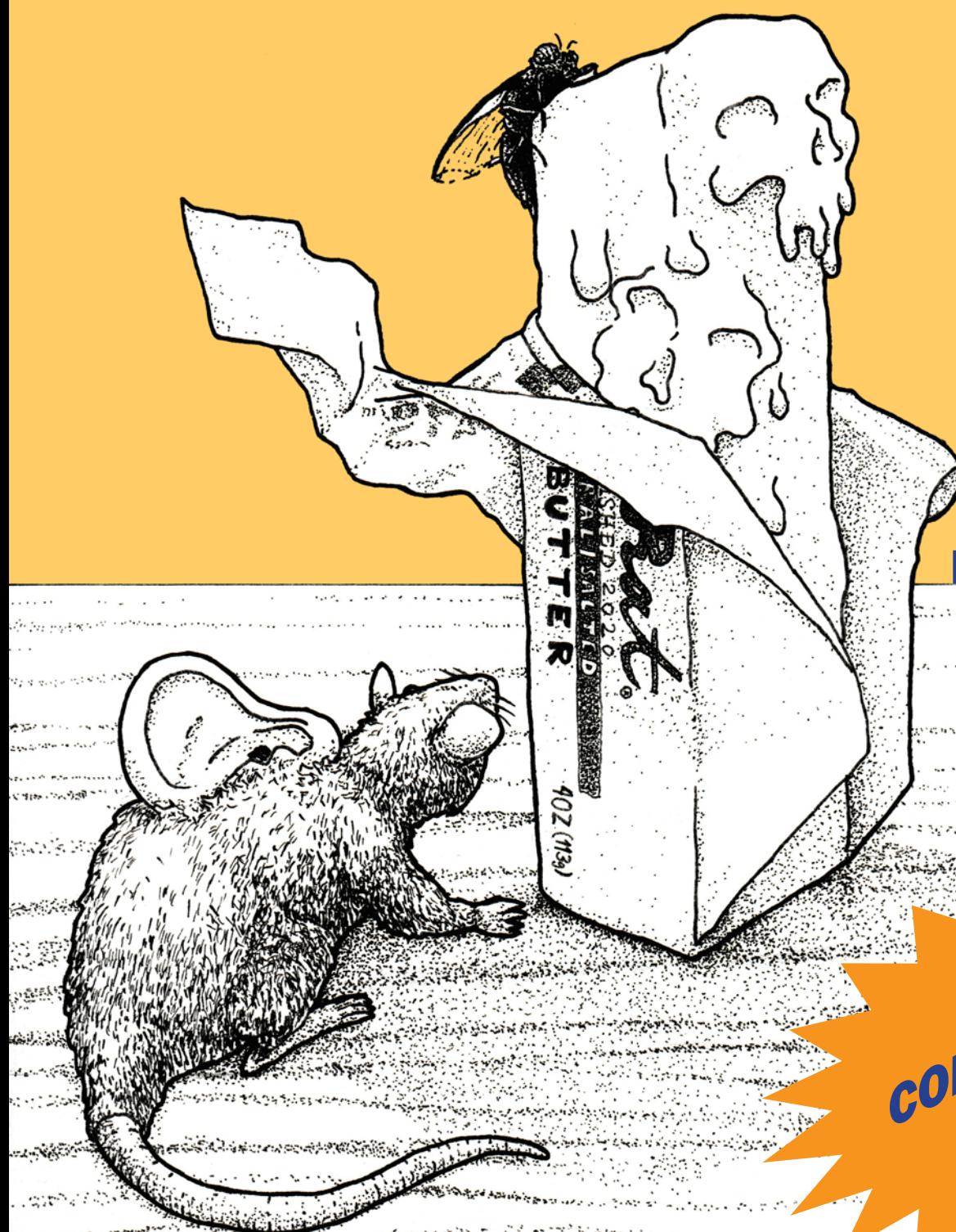


EAR RAT MAGAZINE

Issue Two | Dec. 30, 2020

earratmag.com



HEAT DEATH

COLLECTIBLE!
GOOD!

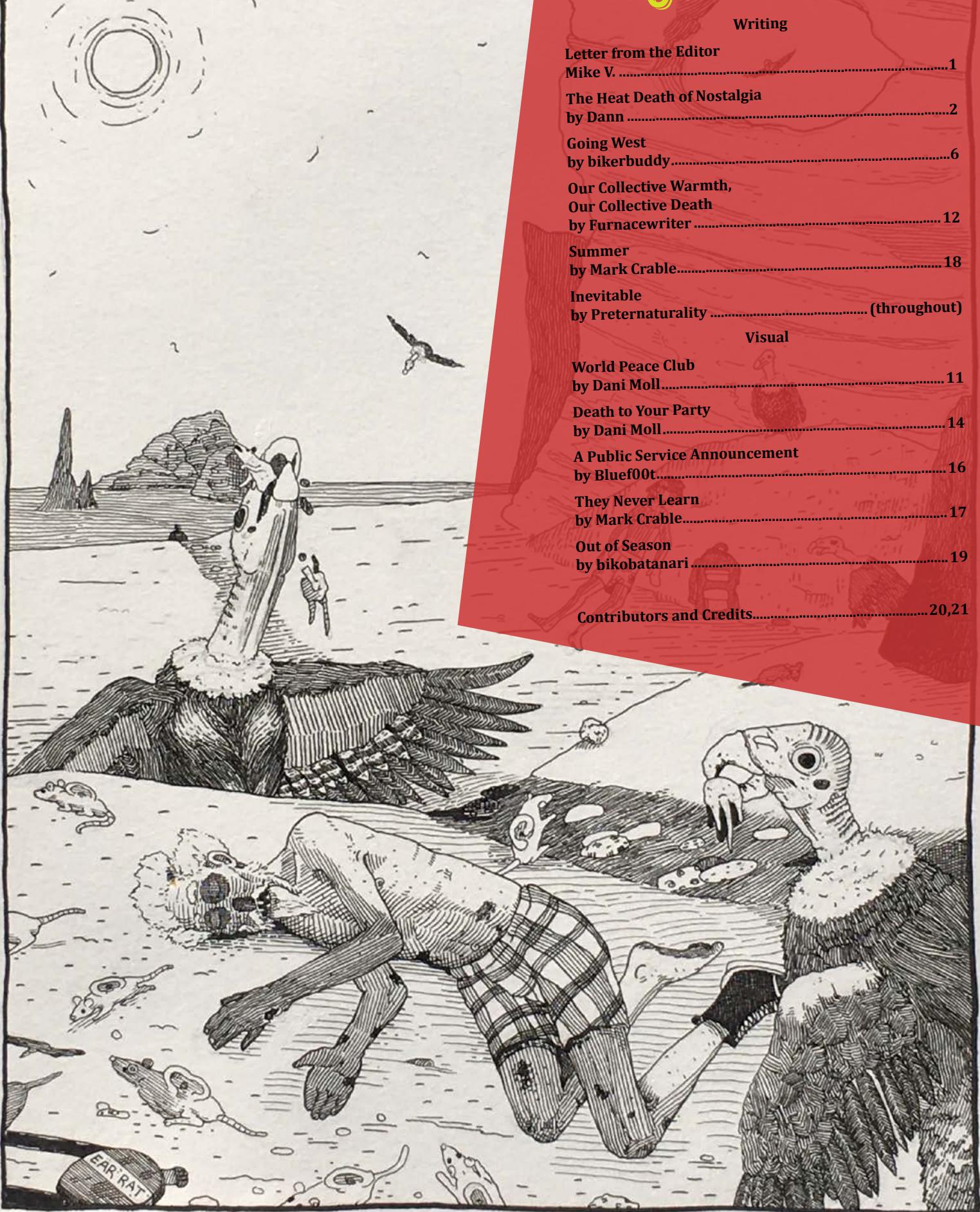
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Letter from the Editor

by Mike V.

Well, that was quite the nine months, wasn't it? Hi, it's been a while. Let me show you around.

Last time we talked, things were quite dull. Most of us expected to just hang out inside for two weeks, maybe a month. Catch up on Netflix, or read a book or two. Learn how to bake some bread. Figure out how to use Zoom. Wait this thing out. Swine Flu pretty much came and went without any issue last time, this should be the same right?

And then nine more months went by and things haven't really gotten any better. Nine months is how long babies take to gestate. Human babies, at least. Elephants take like twice as long as that. Could you imagine? 18 months with a fucking elephant in your stomach? No thanks.

But here, back in regular baby-land, it's been nine months and we're giving birth to a new issue of Ear Rat Magazine, the zine so nice they named it Ear Rat. The theme of this issue is "Heat Death." We decided to make it something light and cheery for the holidays. Nothing quite like all your organs failing as you gasp out for water, for ice, for help, the sun beating down on you as the temperature rises past 110 degrees.

Or even more festive, the whole "everything is gonna get real cold now" heat death. Like everything is cold now, forever. No, no, *everything. Forever*. Or at least until someone unplugs it and plugs it back in. That always seems to do the trick.

You'll notice that this issue looks a lot better than last issue. Holy shit, way better. That is because we now have someone putting the issue together who knows what they're doing!

Welcome aboard Harr B., our new fearless Art Director. I asked him to say a few words as an introduction but he just doodled a wizard or something and then when I turned around again he was gone. You'll see this issue has a lot more jazz in it than the previous issue, and that's all thanks to Harr.

And of course we got lots of submissions from lots of great people, and a few bad people too. If you didn't make it in this time fear not, for Ear Rat will return with another issue soon. Until then, sit back and relax, and try not to think of the inevitable doom awaiting for each of us.

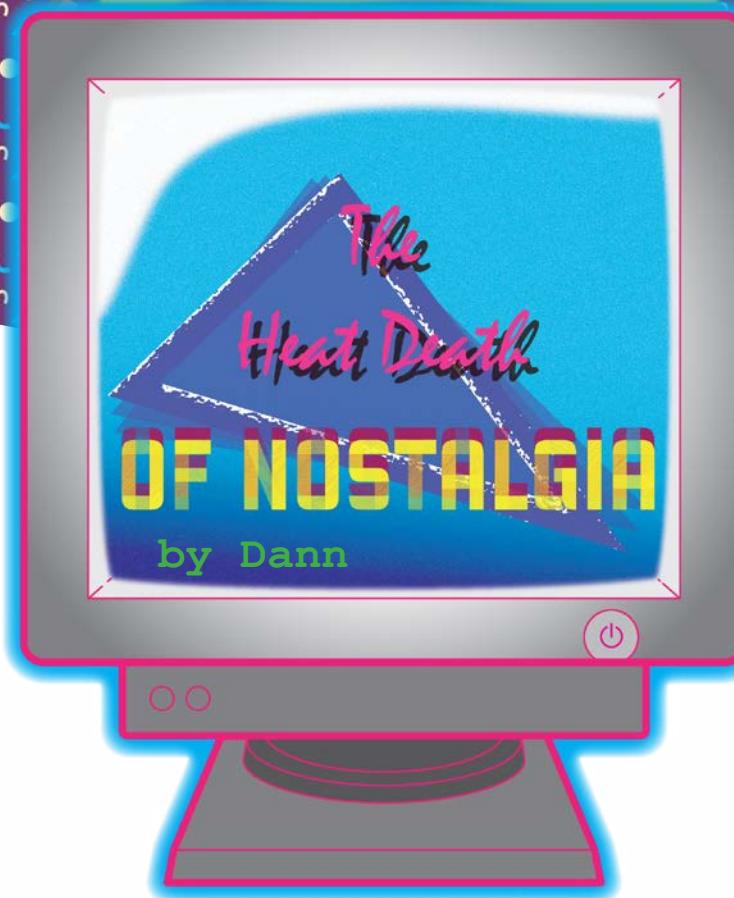


Oreste Cortazzo, 1901

Nostalgia is one of those things that I've wanted to write about for a while. It drives me at times, but frustrates me all the same. I'm admittedly obsessive about archiving things and retaining the past, so nostalgia surrounds me on a constant basis. There's a certain feel-good sensation when you recall a fond memory from years past, which is further compounded when you are able to share it with others. On the other hand, there can be a tendency to focus exclusively on the past rather than looking to the future. Every old memory was once a moment that had yet to happen. Today's past was once the past's future.

When Mike V. announced that he was accepting submissions for the second issue of Ear Rat Magazine, I was of course ready to dive into another article. I certainly need the external motivation. The topic for this issue was "Heat Death", so I figured the concept of nostalgia might work into that. The fire burns strongly for a while, but eventually fatigue sets in.

So when did Nostalgia first kick in? That's sort of a nebulous question, but I can actually remember a specific moment. I was at a confirmation retreat, and since I went to a different school than most of the people at my church, I



The Snorks. They were aquatic creatures of some sort. It's hazy.

didn't actually know more than one or two people there. This wasn't a bad thing, as I ended up talking to people with whom I hadn't yet completely exhausted my usual topics of conversation. The discussions eventually ended up on Saturday morning cartoons, and we

remembered things like the Smurfs (obvious) and the Snorks (a little less so). The collective experience of remembering something that had more or less slipped our minds for several years was exciting.

It got me thinking about the many TV shows, toys, and childhood memories that had since passed. At the same time, it was a little saddening to realize that experiences have expiration dates, and they can't come back. I think the slightly insidious nature of nostalgia lies in the hope that they could, but as I've realized countless times, it's a futile effort to recreate the past. It still stings though. All too often I'm driving by an old part of town and near the house of a childhood friend. I try to avoid the street, since sometimes I feel like I could turn a corner, and he'd be 10 years old again. The crudely built 'fort' would be out back, his room would be full of comic cards, and the computer would have the latest shareware game that his older brother downloaded off a BBS. Even some shops give me the same feeling, usually ones that don't update their look all that often. I'll wander down an aisle and hope to find some long forgotten product that hasn't been on the shelves in 20 years. The pop culture has vanished though it may have evolved, and the people are gone though they have since just grown up.

Anyway, the discussion about the cartoons was the first clear example of analyzing the past, but I undoubtedly felt some connections to earlier times before that. Often - even until today - spring-time triggers a feeling in me that makes me want to play old shareware games. Perhaps it coincided with the end of school, which allowed me more free time away from homework, so I might actually play them. Or perhaps several games were just released around that time. Hard to say.

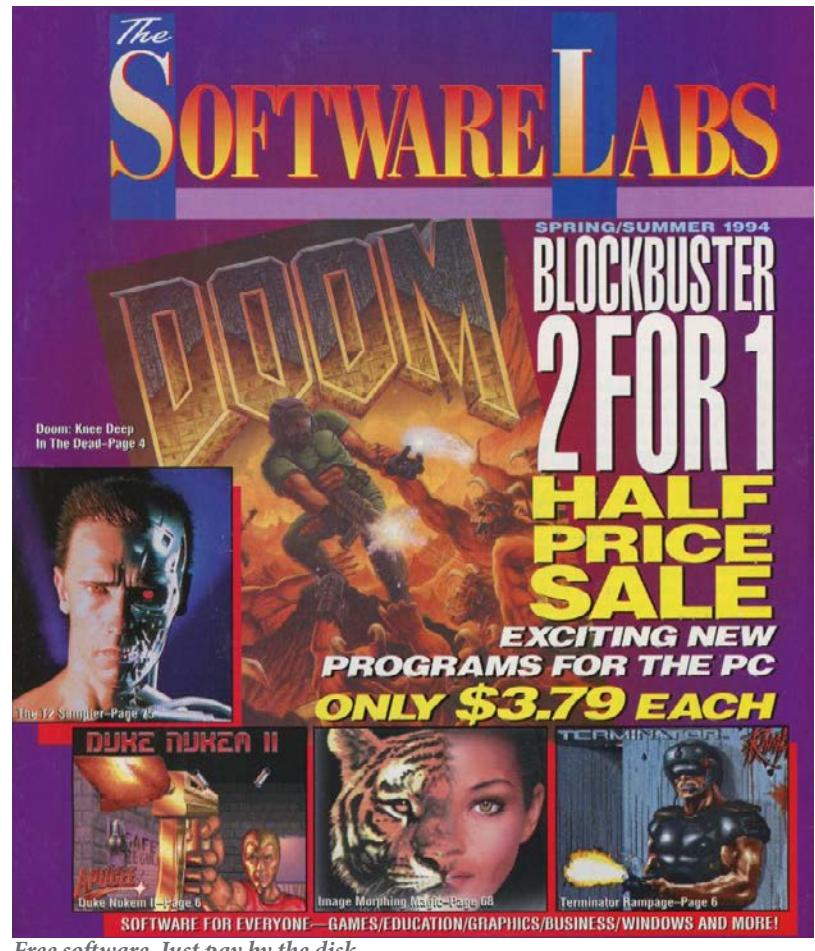
Now Spring is generally a welcome reprieve from Winter, as the flowers start to bloom, and the weather begins to warm. The spring cleaning effect most likely takes hold of many people, so I too find myself digging through the attic and stumbling on relics from my childhood. I never actually clean, mind you, as my progress halts once I find something that captures my attention. Additionally, living in an area that has regular seasons allows me to vividly reminisce over things that happened perhaps only the year prior. It's not uncommon to think back on the Halloween decorations that once were at Target, only to realize they were just from the preceding Fall.

Fast forward a few years from the retreat, and the web was starting to take off. People created

sites about anything and everything (or I suppose everything/nothing), and that's when the collective nostalgia train took full effect. That moment remembering a cartoon with a handful of people I didn't know, then expanded to hundreds of people (I also didn't know), but it helped create a shared experience. It was as if we all lived the same childhood somehow, even though we had never met.

Now I make no secret that X-Entertainment was a huge inspiration for my articles, and that was no exception back in the day. It seemed like week after week, some hidden pop culture obscurity would be unearthed and trigger a memory that had remained dormant since probably the time it was made. Toys, cartoons, games. How could we all have lived the same life? Well in retrospect, the things we all were into were just massive at the time. But despite their ubiquitous nature, they eventually faded into obscurity in the absence of an archival medium such as the internet.

I often wondered if the next generation would have the same sense of nostalgia that I experienced. It's a different dynamic now though. Not only are we able to keep the social consciousness alive for longer, but



Free software. Just pay by the disk.

that in turn helps keep the products alive much longer. It was probably no more than seven or eight years between watching the Snorks and fondly remembering them at that retreat, yet something like Minecraft is still going strong over ten years later. We can't look back on things like that in the same way, since they haven't ever really left us. Inversely, the prior generation didn't have any revival of their childhood, so once things disappeared, you needed to hunt them down in flea markets to catch a glimpse of them again.

Making matters worse, companies realized that nostalgia was an untapped resource. Now I'm not a huge anti-business person; the things we're looking back so fondly at were all corporate creations too. But those who grew up with certain franchises, now had expendable income to rebuy the toys they no longer had. And things aren't cheap either. It's not uncommon to see

\$20 basic action figures and \$100+ display figurines.

One of my greatest regrets was giving my complete Voltron away to my cousin. I figured he'd just give it back when he outgrew it, but I never saw it again. I thought about rebuying it once eBay became a thing, but it seemed hollow to just use money to regain a memory. The things I actually held onto possessed a greater connection, as it was really more about the memories tied to them. That Voltron was the result of every Aunt and Uncle chipping in one Christmas to buy a piece of the robot. So when we did the family get-together, I was able to assemble the entire thing. I did end up getting a die cast collector's edition Voltron

a few years back, but I've limited it to just that purchase. It was like \$300 too. I fell right into the trap.

Soon I realized that I had been nostalgic for things over a longer period of time, than it had originally taken to experience them from the get-go. Even weirder, I started getting nostalgic for the moments when I started getting nostalgic. Thinking back to the early 2000's, it is now 20 years in the past. I could have lived my conscious childhood twice, maybe three times over, in that period of time. So that begs the question: what have I done in the mean time to generate new experiences?

I like looking back as much as anyone. It is fun to reminisce, to try and relive, but I feel it's a dangerous trap to stay there. There's too much to miss if you only focus on what once was. Now I don't want to come off as preachy, since I'm pretty much guilty of everything that I think one should be cautious about. I've spent

countless hours archiving old VHS tapes. I've poured over the movies my friends and I made, ranging from pre-teen years, through young adulthood. My own website is a shrine to former days. The sad fact is that after a certain age, the fun factor of life does tend to drop off. You get a job, have responsibilities, and realistically a grown person still liking kids cartoons and toys is a general social faux-pas. I'm not saying it's right, but it is what it is, so retreating into our own minds to feel comfort isn't unexpected.

But that's not to say there aren't things out there worth experiencing. Everything you once considered fun, was new to you at that point. There can



The Ultra Expensive Voltron

be hobbies that factor into a new lifestyle, or are supported by a slightly more accommodating financial situation. A fair amount of my writings are all about remembering yesteryear, but I feel there needs to be a balance. Remember what once was, but forge ahead and make new memories.



I needed another photo, so let's add Ghost Hunting as a new hobby.

So where does our 'Heat Death' prompt factor in? Well there's a certain amount of fatigue that nostalgia will inevitably generate, for all the reasons I've discussed above. Rehashing old topics will simply get old after a while and at worst stain the memory. It would be unfortunate to have such fond recollections of a time in your life, only to become sick of it in due time. But it will happen, either through repetition or realization that perhaps it wasn't all that great to begin with. I've avoided certain movies for this exact reason. I'm pretty sure *The Peanut Butter Solution* wouldn't live up to my memory of it. Although it's about a mad man who kidnaps children to harvest their hair to make magic paint-brushes, so perhaps it would.

So to end this, I will say that I love nostalgia, but I recognize the fine balance I need to walk with it. I love the things I experienced as a child, but I also love things during my teens, early adulthood, and even the holiday seasons over the past few years. Had I focused only on those formative years, I would have missed so much.

The Heat Death of Nostalgia will burn out eventually, so keep it rekindled.

It is inevitable, in a truly inevitable, in a deeper sense of the word. It isn't simply something that could happen, as so many things prophesied "inevitable" were. Nor is it merely something that will happen. It will certainly happen, but it isn't simply the case that no action which could prevent it can yet be taken. It is more than that, you see. Any and every action that has happened, can yet...



GOING WEST



BY BIKERBUDDY

If you drive west from the Sydney CBD, along Parramatta Road, then further along the M4 motorway, you will eventually arrive at the Nepean River in Penrith, just before the Blue Mountains. The mountains are nothing special to look at—a low plateau to start with, in reality—but they're a part of the Great Dividing Range that slices along the western seaboard from the northern reaches of Queensland, through New South Wales and southward into Victoria. In colonial times it was forbidding enough to form a natural prison barrier fifty kilometres west of Sydney.

Over the other side of the Blue Mountains the landscape opens up. A while back we took a trip west beyond the mountains: further west than we would normally go; to Lithgow or Bathurst. We drove all the way to Broken Hill, about a third of the way across Australia. Long after that trip when I thought about the heat on the road, of the windy furnace that burned our cheeks in the desert town of Silverton, and of our car air conditioner that inconveniently took it upon itself to die, I understood how travel and insight can be the same thing.

Journeys east have long been associated with the exotic, while going west is about new lands; frontiers. Traversing distance is a metaphor for the developing self; for a country it is about opening up opportunity. That's what the Wild West of America was. In Australia the English first occupied the eastern seaboard in Sydney. Later colonies were always west of Sydney. The development of the Western

world is tied to the notion of exploration and of movement, which is progress and life. But travel west of Sydney far enough—this is how metaphors break down—and strangely, ironically, our metaphor for progress morphs into a vision of a dead world, dried and wretched from heat. After all, much of Australia ranks among the hottest places on Earth.

Christiana Figueres, who was the executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change through the Paris Agreement talks, has recently referred to Australia's position on climate change as "suicidal", saying that we need to do more before the COP26 climate talks in Glasgow next November. The purpose of the convention is to try to accelerate action towards the Paris agreement.

To understand why she said this, you need to know that for the past decade Australia's response to climate change has been directed entirely by

partisan politics. In 2009 the leader of the opposition, Malcolm Turnbull, who was looking to form a bipartisan approach to the climate problem with



Abbott and Turnbull on the morning before Abbott was deposed as Prime Minister

the Labor government, was ousted as party leader by Tony Abbott over the issue. Abbott later became Prime Minister after criticising Labor's Carbon Tax. When he became Prime Minister, he abolished it. Over the next few years, the issue continued to be politicised by Abbott's government, and even when he was replaced by the more moderate Turnbull as Prime Minister (Australian politics often resembles a child's merry-go-round in action), the Liberal party was so entrenched in its position, that there was still nothing done. Scott Morrison, our latest Prime Ministerial winner on the lower house merry-go-round, demonstrated his devotion to the coal industry by bringing a lump of coal into parliament. The Morrison government has since come under criticism for its plans to exploit gas reserves to fire power stations rather than pursue more environmentally friendly options.

So, when Christiana Figueres said, "There is no other country that has as much sun potential as Australia", she may as well have said it plainly: Australia could harness its environment as the basis for its future success, or we could let it kill us.

January 2019 was Australia's hottest summer on record. I spent weeks in sauna-like conditions, dampening everything I touched. I hadn't felt heat quite like it since our trip to Broken Hill a few years ago. I spent the warm nights in the garage refurbishing a DeLorean I'd bought and shipped from America the previous year. I had this idea, naive and crazy, I know, that I might kidnap Scott Morrison and force him to take a trip into the future with me, just to show him. But while DeLoreans can travel through time, they can't defeat the Prime Minister's security detail, so I sat and stewed on the matter, my efforts wasted, I thought, until you came along. You've never felt heat quite like an Australian summer, I surmise, and I've already formed my plan as you nervously attempt to sidle out of the garage, spooked, no doubt by my manic enthusiasms for this car. You

look rather perturbed when I tell you that I have decided we are going on a little trip together. This time I've ditched the old car with the shonky air conditioning—it really is the most sensible option—and we'll be taking the DeLorean, I tell you, heading west, farther and farther, into an uncertain future.

The town of Springwood where I live is surrounded by a world heritage National Park. The trees in our bush are mostly eucalypts, a tree imported into California years ago, which, I am told, makes firefighting there as difficult as here. The tree has oils which are highly flammable. But the bush here is beautiful and the rolling mountains, which stretch towards the horizon, can be seen from the car park of our local shopping centre, are equally picturesque.



The Three Sisters, Jamison Valley and Mount Solitary

We are leaving early—I like to make good time—but you stop me to suggest a short detour, since you are not from the mountains, to do what tourists do, and visit the Three Sisters in Katoomba. The Three Sisters are a rock formation perched above the Jamison Valley. From the lookout the flat plateau of Mount Solitary dominates the skyline, sitting above the valley; further away, the distant peaks of the Wild Dog Mountains. The terrain is more impressive in the upper Mountains than the view suggests from the Nepean River in Penrith. The valleys are deep, their margins adorned by rain forests that flourish in the shade of cliffs. They are markedly

different from the dry eucalypts that line the remainder of the valley floor.

Past Katoomba, heading farther west, descending the western escarpment, you see the green rolling hills of Hartley and beyond that, Lithgow. My father grew up in Lithgow, a mining town. His father was a coal miner. I have pictures from my parents' early marriage of my father trying to dig his car from the snow outside his mother's house. Snow rarely falls in the mountains now. I don't remember snow that deep in Lithgow since. Maybe Oberon. Maybe there.

The plains west of the Great Dividing Range are more like rolling hills, green and lush. This is where the pastoralists took their herds of sheep and cattle. This is our pastoral region, still, which may be strange to those city dwellers who don't venture beyond the city. For those who haven't visited the region, the imagination may incorrectly colour vast stretches of road fringed with desert sand from memories of childhood programs that characterised our rugged land. But this country is verdant.



The 1990 Flood Memorial, Nyngan

Bathurst, the first major town beyond Lithgow, is famous in Australia for its annual car race on Mount Panorama and its wide streets designed in colonial times to allow a bullock team to do a U-turn. Bathurst is a vibrant and beautiful region. Beyond Bathurst is Orange, another lush rural centre. But beyond Orange is Dubbo, drier, and beyond that we approach Nyngan, with its large gates by the side of the road that prematurely welcome you to the Outback. Nyngan is known for the floods that inundated the Bogan region in 1990, never seen

since. Nyngan takes on some of the characteristics of border towns. The landscape is flatter and exposed to the sun. Some shops are inexplicably closed during the day and the locals seem oblivious to the connotations that city dwellers attach to the name of their proud region. To be a "bogan" is to be uncultured and unsophisticated. In the centre of town sits a helicopter, a strange memorial to the flood disaster that is the town's claim to fame. Now, the earth is dry and the people hide from the sun.

Further along the Barrier Highway we enter Cobar. It is impossible to miss the town sign to the left of the road as you enter the town, stark and industrial. The letters spelling the town name—COBAR—are monolithic, fixed against what looks like the remains of an industrial works emerging from the refuse soil, as from a mine, that has been dumped next to the road. Only in the country can you afford this much space. Only a town as singularly dependent on mining could have justified it.



The Cobar town sign

From here on it's headlong into the future. You see the landscape flatten and the trees shrink to shrubs, miserly in their growth as they eke out a living in the parched landscape. The barren earth is a deep red dust that gets into the car, into your hair and nasal cavity and clothes. When you leave the DeLorean at a rest area to go to the toilet the heat turns the dust into a paste against your instantly sweating skin.

The highway is a straight arrow for hundreds of kilometres. Rest areas become little more than places where you might pull off the road and pitch a tent. Maybe they have a pit toilet. If you need accommodation, this is where you will be staying, with the wide horizon embracing you and the wind pitting dust into your face.

At Wilcannia we're about 200 kilometres from Broken Hill, but it's the longest two hundred kilometres we'll ever drive. Wilcannians watch as I fill the car with petrol for the sprint across the desert. They have little else to do. A dog pisses on the tire but it evaporates before the dog finishes. Houses here look old, the streets look third-world. Parts of walls are missing. Jerry-rigged repairs. The people are languid, but the word seems wrong; too poetic like Tennyson's lotus-eaters. Instead, their faces are lined and their eyes are asquint against a brute wind and a grim heat that sears the lungs.

From Wilcannia to Broken Hill there is nothing to see. We're heading into the future but as we traverse this last distance time seems to stop. The flat, barren world we saw half an hour ago is the same flat barren world we see half an hour later. The air conditioner begins an ominous rattle. There is nothing in the landscape your eye might pick out as a feature. An hour later, the road bends momentarily, and it awakens us from a fugue state caused by heat and monotony. Surely, we will crash out here. Surely, we will die.

Finally, there is Broken Hill, bordered by a hill that looms above buildings and the rail tracks that host mining trains kilometres long that stop traffic dead. The town is surprisingly large, with restaurants and pubs and shops. It's home to Pro Hart's art gallery. There are things to see and do in Broken Hill. But it is late and we will be traveling to Silverton in the morning, about fifty kilometres north. I've wanted to return to Silverton's museum for some time. I couldn't enter last time because I had no cash. They would only take cash. But we'll head out to the cemetery, first, I tell you, then we'll come back to the main street in Silverton where there is the museum and a pub.

Silverton is the site of the first terrorist attack on Australian soil in 1915, or Australia's first death of World War I, depending on your point of view. Stone houses lay crumbling in the main street. The wind is a sheer oven. Wrecks of cars populate the town.

Out of town we find the cemetery. Weathered graves, red dirt and sand, spindly grass here and there. A ruined wire fence bordering the graves leans into the sand. A broken gate. Nothing lives here. Our skin crackles when the sun touches

or could ever have happened, actively contribute towards this eventual outcome. Action, by its very nature, invites the lingering specter closer. The expenditure of energy, the transfer of heat, the extraction of work, it all ticks the timer further and further down to zero. A little more homogenized, regressing another minuscule step to the great cosmic mean. Don't you get it? Anything happening ushers the end closer. How could you avoid it? By having nothing else ever happen? A great frozen stillness

No! For that is the very nature of that dreaded outcome itself! It is not cold, nor the triumph of chaos, nor an imposition of order. It is simply when there will be when all motion spent. It can't be avoided. I



Silverton, main street



it. My water, which I bought in Broken Hill in the morning, becomes hot in my hand within minutes as we foolishly inspect the graves. The temperature is soaring towards 50 degrees Celsius. It's hard to breathe. I feel distressed. My eyeballs are hot and dry. The DeLorean's air conditioning has broken in a cruel parody of my last trip and can offer us no relief. And if the car broke down now, I think—completely broke down—we might suffer more than heat. The cemetery is within walking distance of the town, but I'm making that judgment based upon distances I can walk at home. If we had to walk back to Silverton now with my bottle of hot water and our flimsy clothes incapable of holding out the sun, we might be in trouble. Maybe I should have thought about this before we came. Maybe we should have done something earlier.

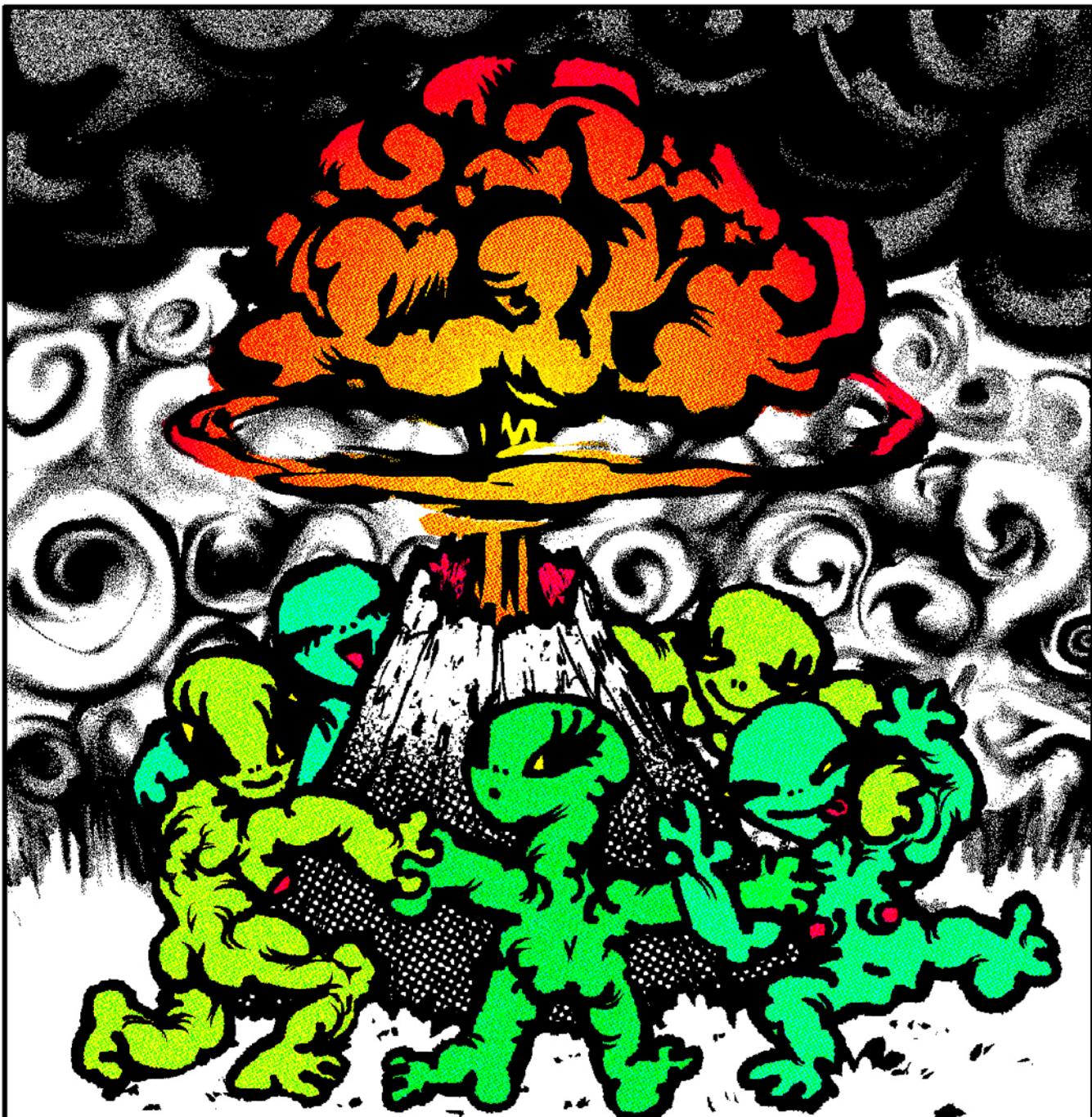
I look across the red plains, flat as a fry pan, the sun dancing in shimmering heat. A vast well of energy or a graveyard expanding ever westward, I think.

I check my phone and it says I only have SOS reception. Is it time to call for help, I think? Is it time?



Silverton Cemetery

a fate written into the boundary
conditions of the universe.
Listen, listen! An expansion too
strong, and it overcomes gravity,
in the end. Galaxies are torn
asunder, then stars are pulled
apart, their material carried
forward and outward by the cosmic
tide. Everything in turn ripped
apart, only the smallest possible
fragments left to be sprinkled
in the sparest possible range
of space. An expansion too
vast, time itself is stretched
and finally caves in
compounding the crisis-



WORLD PEACE CLUB

World Peace Club

Dani Moll

Our Collective Warmth, Our Collective Death

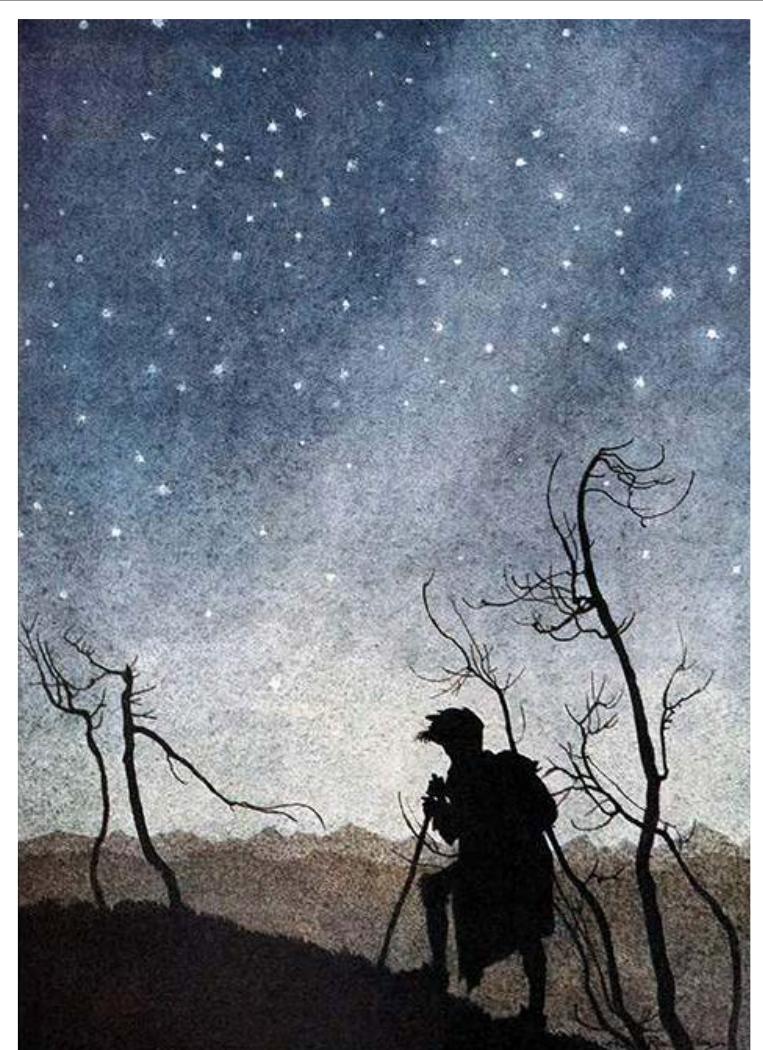
by Furnacewriter

Heat is everywhere around us. It's so much an inescapable reality that we scarcely stop to think deeply about it, often merely showing up in elevator conversations about the weather: "today is hot/cold, isn't it?" It's the subject eternally in common, shared by the whole of humanity, a perpetual accomplice in breaking awkward silences.

"To be alive is to participate in the exchange of this stuff that permeates everything, this odd property of all that exists."

It's not just around us, of course; it's inside us, the very proof we're alive (and, conversely, a cold body is the ultimate proof of death). To be alive is to participate in the exchange of this *stuff* that permeates everything, this odd property of all that exists. Before we taste food we feel its heat, before we feel the texture of objects we perceive their heat transferring capabilities — for indeed heat is a *process* between two different materials, each with their own capacity for exchanging energy. Which is why a cold piece of steel feels much colder than a piece of wood at the same temperature: it just transfers heat better.

As it were, when placed together all things tend to be at the same temperature. *Equilibrium*, as they call it. When you put a cube of ice inside a glass of water, the ice gets warmer and the water gets colder until they reach an agreement; a generally tepid, unremarkable condition, quite suitable for drinking. What is often unnoticed when talking about heat though, are the famous laws of thermodynamics: that First, a "closed system" (as in, a universe) always has a constant amount of energy. That is, you can only change the place and the form of the energy that is already there, not add any more from outside; and more importantly, Second: that once energy reaches the equilibrium, you can't do jack to change it. Things can only happen where there is a

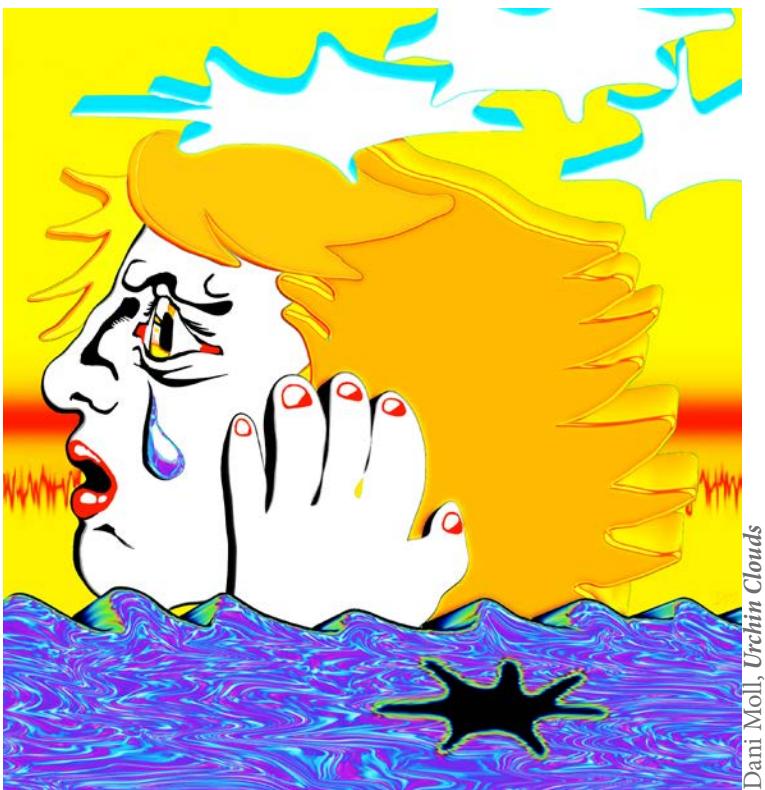


Arthur Rackham, c. 1921

difference between temperatures, between relative energies, or rather, a potential for *change*. To die is to no longer have a temperature difference with the world: to die is to become cold.

(I won't bother with the Third law.)

The phenomenon described by the second law has a name: *entropy*. It's the process that declares that in the end all will be cold; all will be a more or less tepid, boring existence. It declares that all systems tend to equilibrium, and once equilibrium is achieved, there is no going back. Every action you take and every thought you think contributes to the end of the universe; like a metaphysical tax on all existing things. Every action, every bit of *work* you do has its pound of flesh taken, contributing towards the end of the possibility of new action. To move is not only to die a little (for you are closer to



your own death,) but to contribute towards our ultimate fate.

As Ivan Illich, the oddball historian and philosopher, put it in *In the Mirror of the Past*:

"Clausius, a German physicist, first introduced the word [entropy]. In 1850 he studied the ratio between the heat content and the absolute pressure in a closed system and felt the need for a word to name this function. He was an amateur classicist and picked the Greek word *entropy* in 1865. Since then it is used for the algorithm that describes a previously unrecognized phenomenon. By choosing *this* word, Clausius did us a favor. *Entrópeo* in classical Greek means to turn, to twist, to pervert or to humiliate."

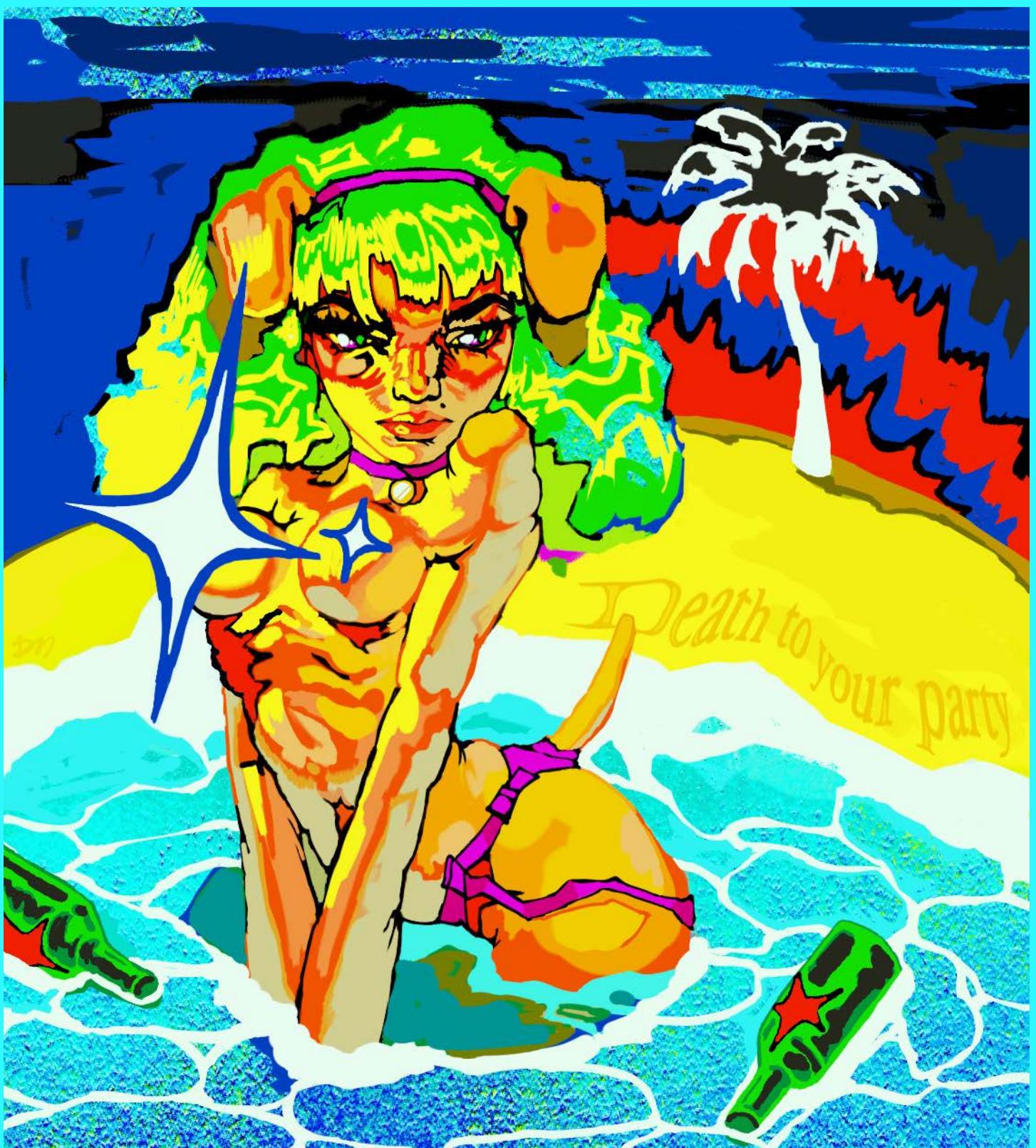
Indeed, motion is a cruel thing. To think that to breathe is both at once to sustain life and to be *twisted, perverted* by the very laws of the cosmos. With each breath drawn we participate in the universal pastime of slowly bleeding the

universe out until it can no longer move. The production of all our actions, the fact that time itself passes, the fact that the Sun's warmth touches our limbs and warms us, is all the result of the universe that we inhabit slowly decaying.

When the universe finally stops dying, then time will stop. All change will end and finally all living beings that inhabit this nightmare will finally be freed from the cursed shackles of existence.

Thankfully, it's going to take a long time! So be relaxed, dear reader, and sit back. You certainly won't be here to see the universe's last agonizing gasps. Though you *will* be here to see *your own*. Enjoy the heat!





Death to Your Party

Dani Moll

It's made dead, but finite. Left fallow for the rest of eternity. Can you stand the thought? Yes, yes, certainly we are dead in any case. Long before the end, we will all be dead, that's not the point. Think about it. You have to think about what else is left. This dynamic universe of ours cannot last forever and that is a tragedy. Oh, a great tragedy, but not the greatest possible tragedy. Surely you can imagine just how certain you can imagine just how could be worse. Do it, wrack your mind ever consider. Do you have

It's simple. What is wrong with our dynamic universe should come to an end, and then never be. So much lost potential that would mark! For beauty and wonder a mark! Indeed, potential for anything a loathsome, detestable tragedy. Sure you, as anyone with good would, can agree we should we can to avert such a cruel

cost is too high to pay, when the reward is an entire living universe? Oh, yes, I can imagine what you're thinking. What could we do, if it is so truly inevitable? What is the point in attempting to avert what cannot be prevented? The point is that I lied. Or at least, so I hope. And so should we all hope.

Do you get it? What we can do? What we must do? The purpose we should turn ourselves entirely towards, from this very moment until the closing universe snuffs us out in its death throes? We need to avert this detestable stalemate of expansion and attraction. We need to pile all of our collective weight, hah, into attraction's corner. We must counteract the expanding universe, and draw everything in together. We must shrink the universe. Drag everything towards the center, arrange it all so that total collapse becomes inevitable. And then, yes then, this grim fate will be averted. No heat death of the universe! But you don't seem satisfied. Is it that there's still a death that puts you off? I will admit, that's true. And a quicker one at that.

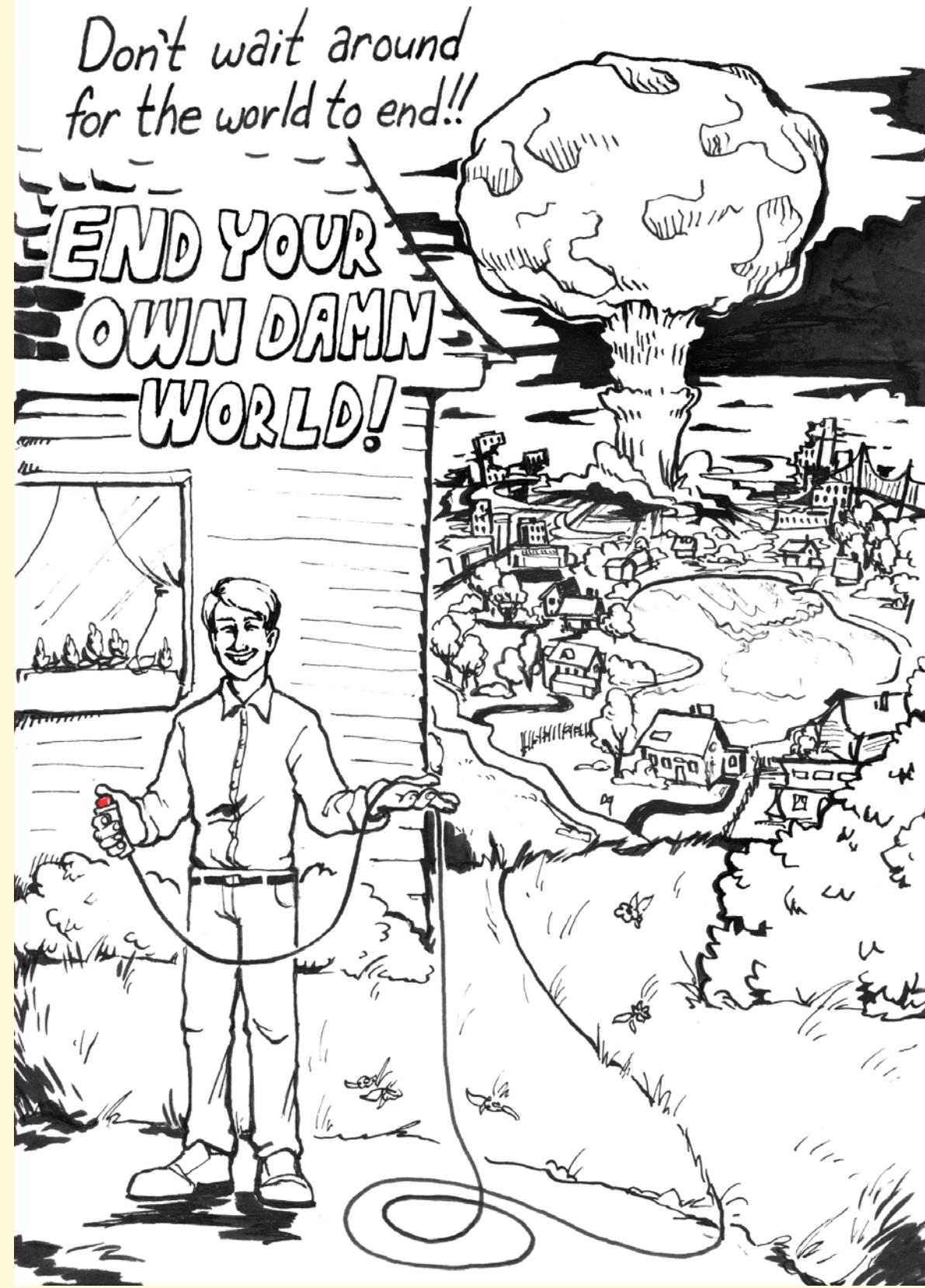
But it is a death that will leave something that could yet prove dynamic. Not an unchanging, static, spent expanse. A point of infinite density, so singular as to bundle time and space up within itself. Something very much like what I and many others can only imagine preceded the universe we so enjoy now. We can't prolong the life of our universe forever. To do so would be to embrace that eternal, empty stillness. I don't believe that's life, and it certainly couldn't support it. But we could hope to precipitate new life in the future. To calve a new universe to follow our own. One that could birth new life, and in turn facilitate new growth in its own end. A recurring cycle that could carry on for who knows how many iterations? It could approach perpetuity. It could already have begun before now, allowing our universe to exist at all.

In the face of such massive scale, even the slimmest conceivable chance of success must certainly be worth it. What have we to risk but a fraction of our universe's life, resources, and time, in exchange for how much new life, new growth, new space? How could any rational mind that values life not be swayed to this purpose? Surely, surely, surely the others will fall in line. Slowly, but steadily, as we get closer to being able to effect this plan. As we better appreciate the scale in play. So won't you bear the torch? Won't you help keep this idea alive, so that it can eventually bring new life into existence? Won't you join me and stare into that distant, vast void of cold inevitability and reject it? Announce our defiance, and sling a flame into the future for others to fan. So that we might burn what's left of our world and hope a new seed takes root in the fertile ashes it leaves behind.

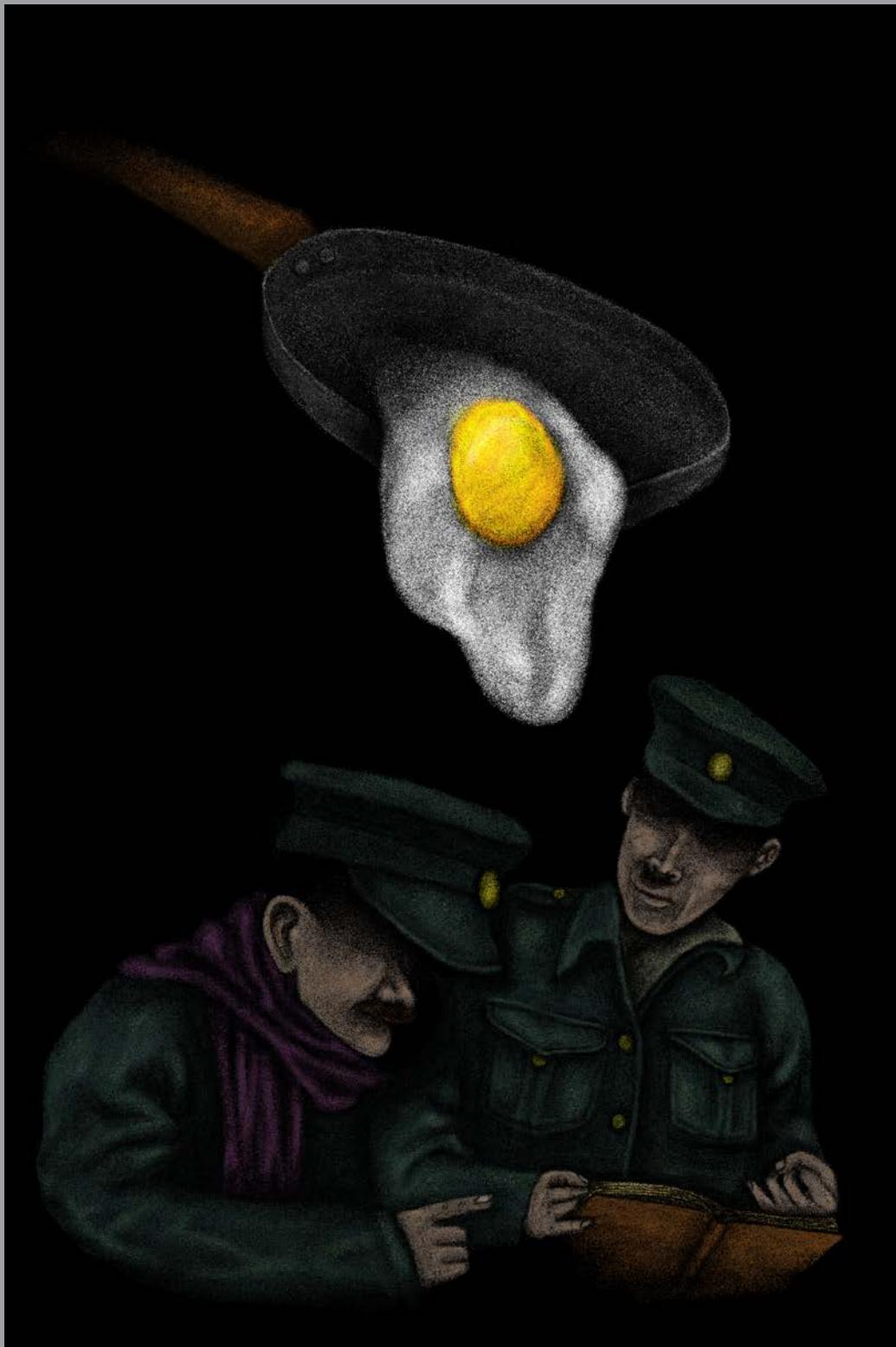
I hope you will. But it's fine, if not. I know I'm right. Others will join me, I'm sure of it. It's inevitable.

— Excerpt from a letter signed Everett A., recovered from the burned remains of an abandoned home

A PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT



BROUGHT TO YOU BY BLUEFOOT



They Never Learn

Mark Crable

SUMMER

by Mark Crable

The waves and haze of asphalt sticky sweet.
Some gravel presses dents into the skin.
Above exposes gauzy floating forms,
below, they disappear into concrete.
Enticing foil of gleaming bits of trash,
deceived by excess boredom or by heat.
Copycatting a stranger's longer gait
in roasted ridges of some mud footprints
that from post office to gas station lead
then back to underneath the bridge, the creek.
The eaten shards of green transparent bits
among the yellow stalks of sharpened weeds.
A fist provokes a splinter in the palm.
Stung by the creosote telephone pole
while touching bubbling skin: its rusted nails,
its thick and twisted staples, oozing tar.
The private utility areas.
Concrete drainage ditch with boiling grates
beneath, the sun upon the water black.
or dim reflected eyes and mouth and nose.
In the tunnel under the dead end street,
a prodded spider sac bursts tiny young.
I think we'll all eventually cook
or we'll melt and dribble under the road.





Out of Season

bikobatanar;

Contributors

Harr B. is the Art Director of Ear Rat Magazine. He draws most of his inspiration from the animals he encounters on his meandering walks around town and whatever is on TV at two in the morning.

bikerbuddy runs the Reading Project website on Neocities from his mountain lair, west of Sydney, somewhere in another time zone. His dearest desire is to wear a bikini on stage and wish for world peace, but he has settled, instead, for reading books and photographing street libraries whenever he is not paint stripping his kitchen. He is allowed into the community once a week.

bikobatanari is a 20-year-old computer engineering student whose alias is just as nonsensical as his work. He creates paintings and writes articles in his igloo located in the snowy depths of Canada. His blog, artwork and writings can be found on his personal website, which has the exact same name as himself, bikobatanari.

Bluef00t is the world's most useless renaissance man. Draws comics and illustrations while procrastinating tech schoolwork. More art and nonsense at bluefoot.neocities.org

Mark Crable is a graphic designer and artist living in St. Joseph, MO, USA. You can see his stuff at www.markcrable.com

Dann is an IT professional/teacher/small business owner, who also has a passion for technology, macro photography, and nostalgia. Starting with his first computer, the IBM 5152, he's witnessed the rise of personal computing and the World Wide Web through all of its stages. He now splits his time between application systems at a University and smaller personal web projects ranging from large database-driven ecommunities for Oakley Sunglasses and the smaller irreverent humor on Neocities.

Furnacewriter is trained in the obscure arts of dealing with dead people (as in, History) and with an unreasonable love of footnotes, Furnacewriter just enjoys writing about culture and whatever happens to be of paramount importance. The rest of his writing can be found (mostly) on thefurnace.neocities.org

Dani Moll is a 20-year-old painter based in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Right now she is an undergrad at Carnegie Mellon studying art and game design. She's interested in the digital image, tacky media, and all things fleshy or feminine. Her website is DANiLANDiA.online. Find her on Instagram and Twitter at @LiMADANi555

Preternaturality is a hobbyist author in search of a better pen name than her NeoCities URL, but enjoys being somewhat anonymous. She writes serial and short fiction, which usually falls somewhere under the genre of science fantasy. Usually trying to write too many projects at once.

Mike V. is the Managing Editor of Ear Rat Magazine. He eats a lot of bread and drinks a lot of coffee. When he looks up at the Moon, he wonders if you're looking up at the same Moon too.

Cameron Zavala is currently attending CSULB pursuing a master's degree for Oil Painting. He loves storytelling, and comics are an excellent medium for him to create odd and depraved stories.

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