



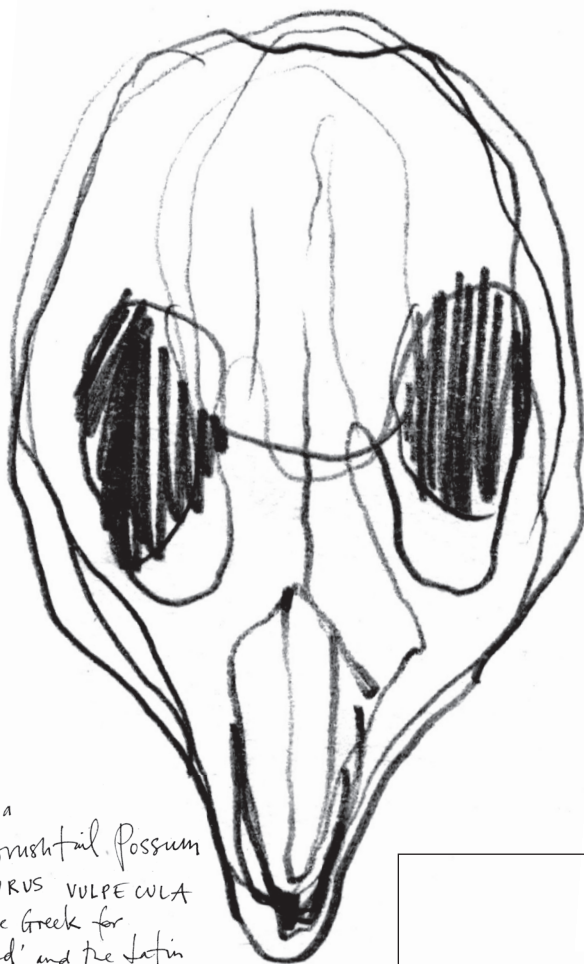
CABINETS of CURIOSITIES
ZOË SADOKIERSKI

BOX

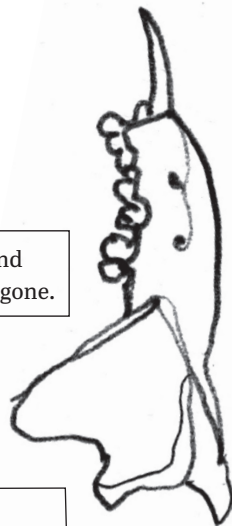
1.

FOX | BRUSHTAIL POSSUM | IBIS

Sometimes when I'm talking to Dad,
he's not there.



I look over and
see that he's gone.



He stands with his feet hip-width apart,
slightly hunched forward, arms out-
stretched, hands clasped, one thumb
overlapping the other.

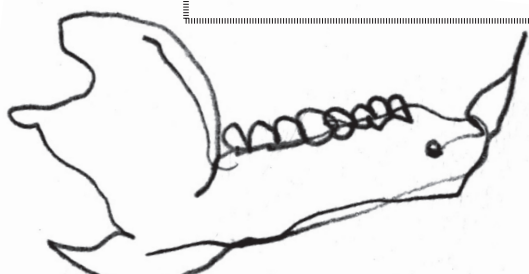
Practicing his golf stance.

He swings an imaginary club back
—pauses—
and follows through, gazing off to
where the ball would have shot.

(probably) a
Common Brushtail Possum
TRICHOSURUS VULPECUA
— from the Greek for
'furry tailed' and the Latin
for 'little fox'

When he's like this,
I could say anything...

Dad, I'm struggling being a working
parent so I've started injecting heroin.



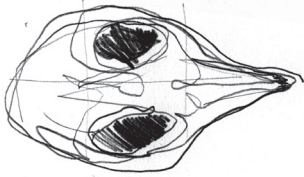
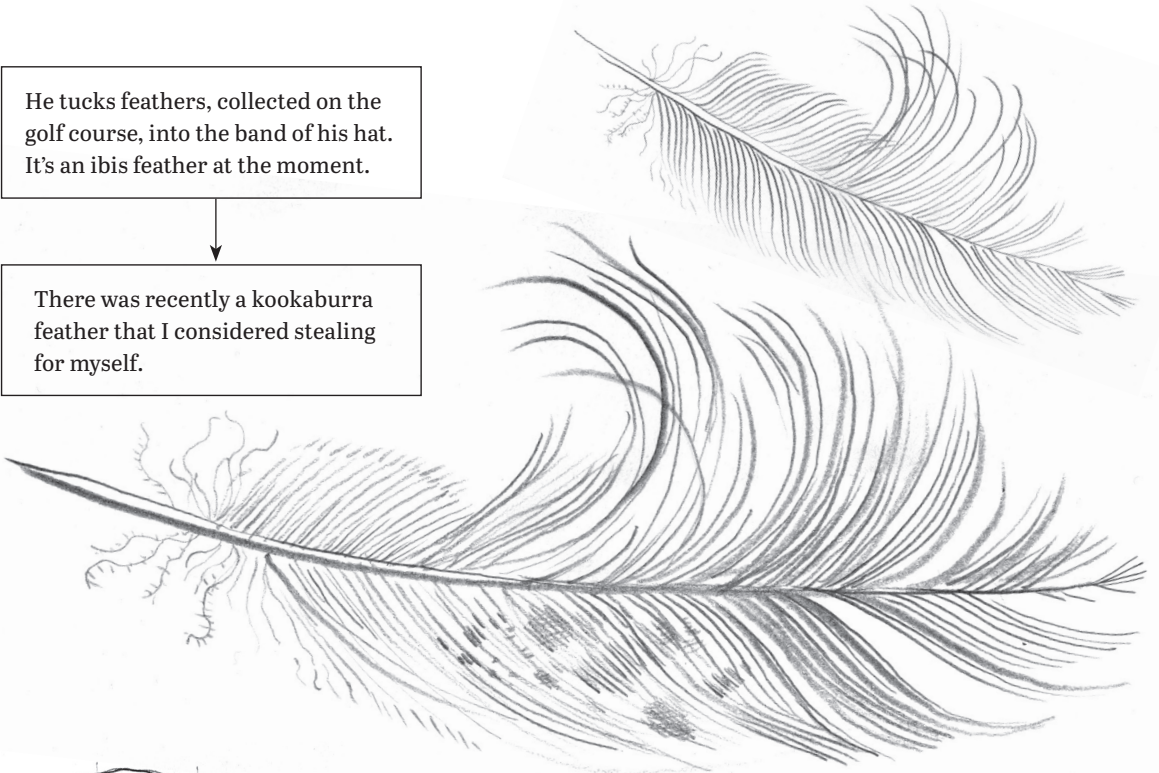
Hmm.

Just thought you should know.

Hmph.

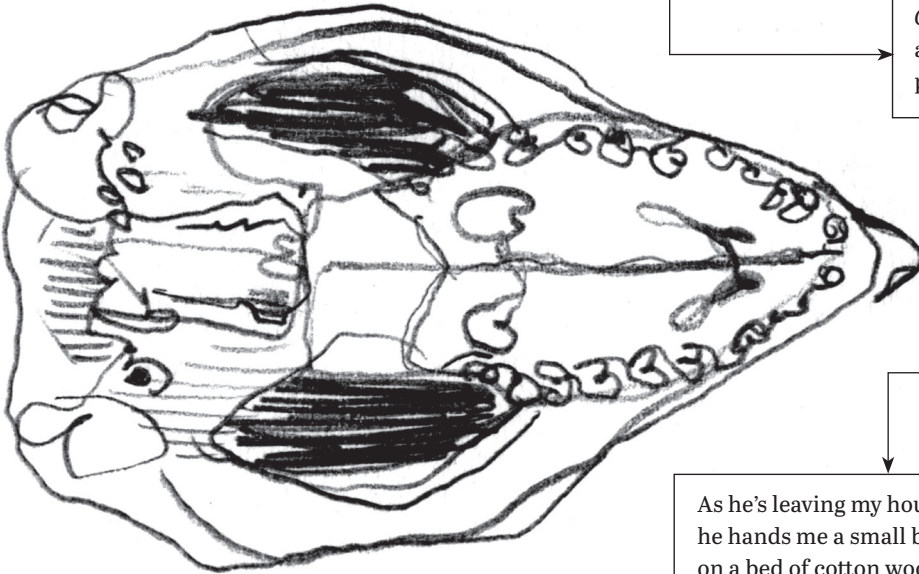
He tucks feathers, collected on the golf course, into the band of his hat. It's an ibis feather at the moment.

There was recently a kookaburra feather that I considered stealing for myself.



I think there's a fox on the golf course, he tells me one day when I call for a chat. I see little bones around the hole. I'll get your mum.

Get me a skull. I quip, as the phone is hot-potatoed to Mum.



As he's leaving my house at Christmas, he hands me a small black box. Inside, on a bed of cotton wool, is a little skull.

He does listen.

BOX

2.

CICADA

4am: I wake in fright.

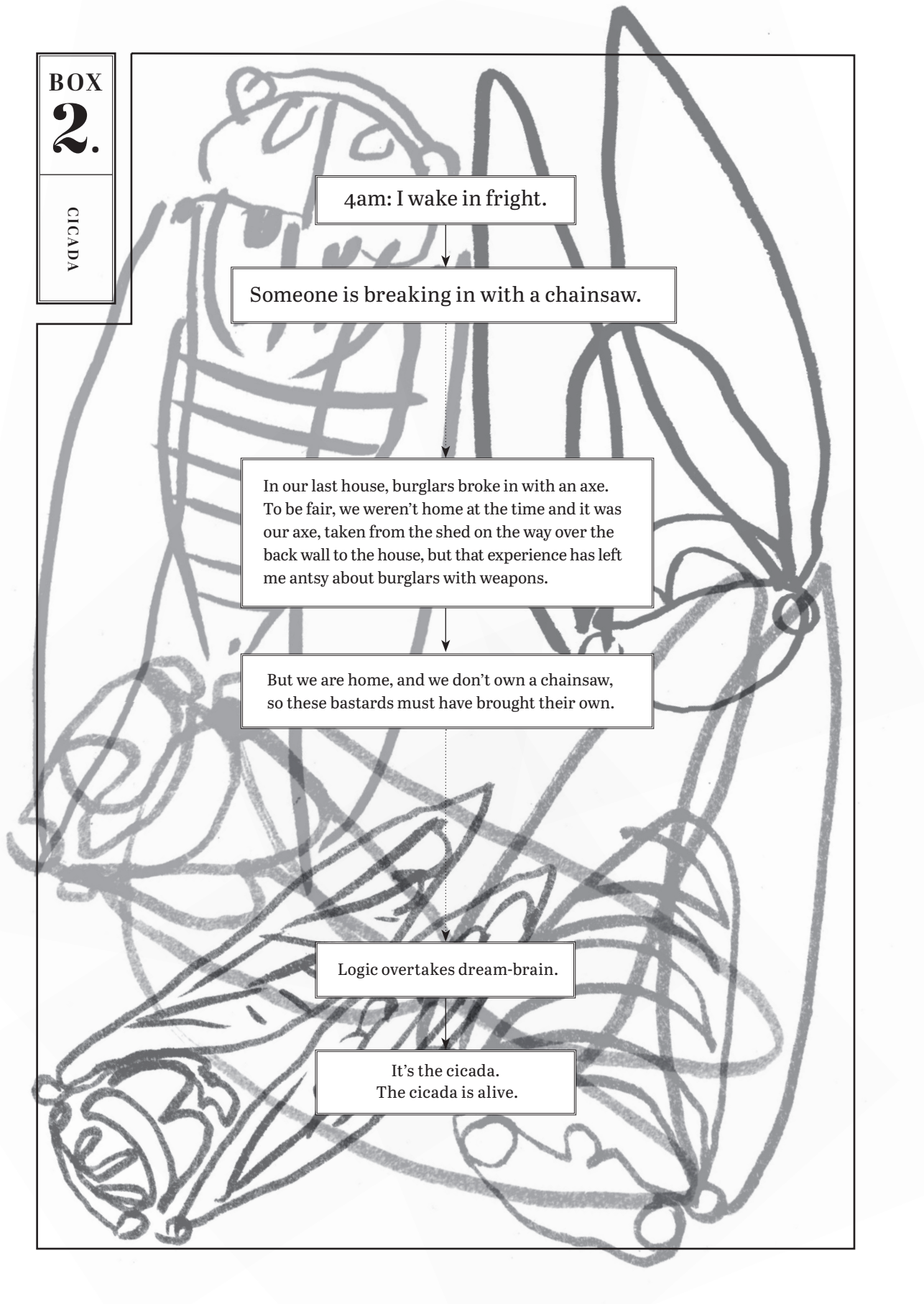
Someone is breaking in with a chainsaw.

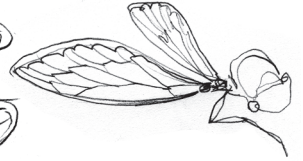
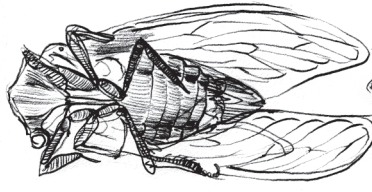
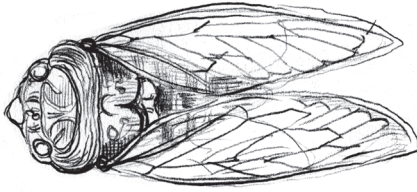
In our last house, burglars broke in with an axe. To be fair, we weren't home at the time and it was our axe, taken from the shed on the way over the back wall to the house, but that experience has left me antsy about burglars with weapons.

But we are home, and we don't own a chainsaw, so these bastards must have brought their own.

Logic overtakes dream-brain.

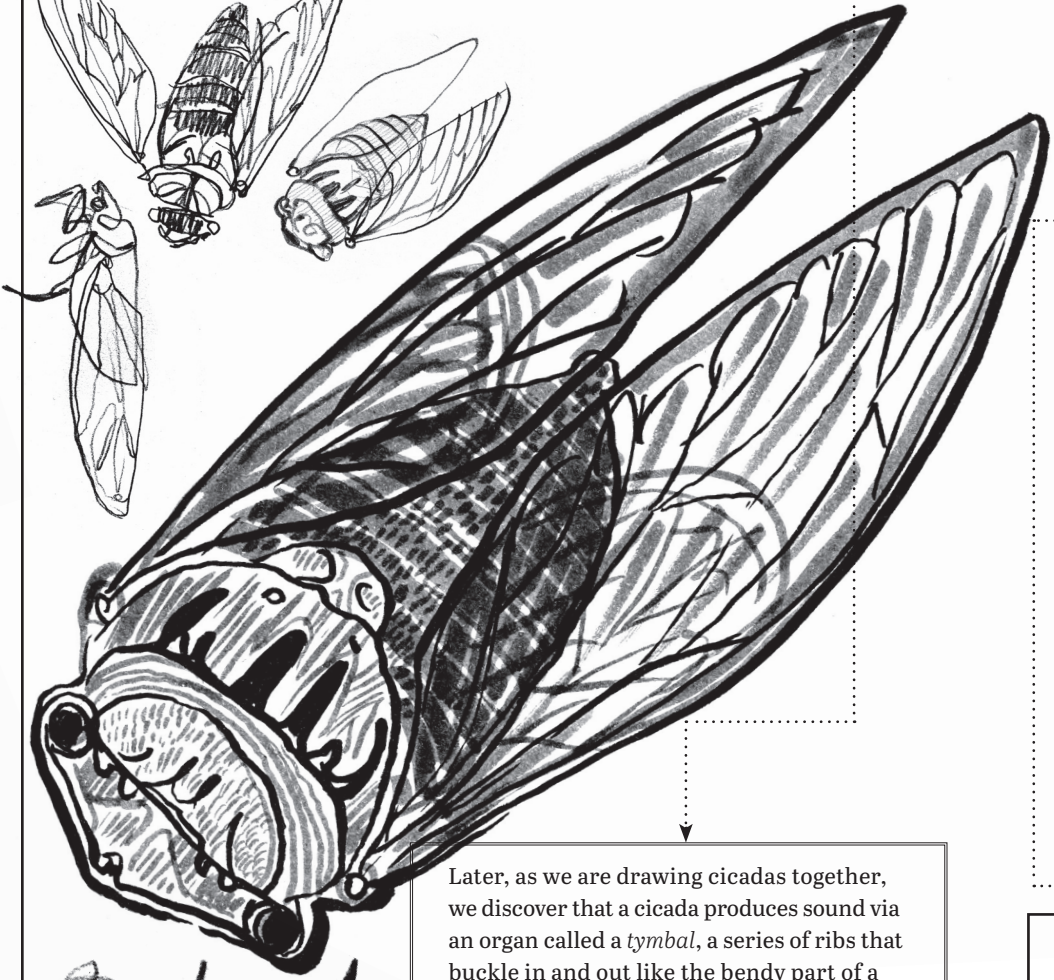
It's the cicada.
The cicada is alive.





We found it in the garden a few days ago and put it in a plastic takeaway container; a possible exhibit for daycare show and tell.

Apparently it was asleep, not dead. The plastic container now functions as an amplifier for the cicada's frantic buzzing.



We never got that axe back. It's still covered in dust for fingerprints in the evidence room at Newtown police station. I hope.

Later, as we are drawing cicadas together, we discover that a cicada produces sound via an organ called a *tymbal*, a series of ribs that buckle in and out like the bendy part of a straw, each rib-buckle producing a click. The cicada flexes its tymbal so rapidly that the clicks sound, to human ears, like buzzing.

Amplified, they sound like a chainsaw.

CICADA
by RAPH,
AGED 4



BOX
3.

MUSHROOMS

AT THE START OF LOCKDOWN, before the play equipment in the park across the road was cordoned off with police tape, I had to figure out how to teach an experimental printmaking workshop to my honours students over Zoom.

....

In the park, pushing Raph on the swing so I could stare in the distance and think with a bit of space around me, I noticed a flurry of mushrooms, after the rain. We harvested them and took them home to experiment, careful to wash our hands. Always careful to wash hands

BACKS OF HANDS

BETWEEN FINGERS

OVER THUMBS

RINSE— PROPERLY

DRY— PROPERLY

iteration 2:
colouring like Raph.



1 | DRAW THE FORMS. PLAY WITH COLOUR.

2 | WITH A SHARP BLADE, CUT A FLAT SURFACE.

3 | INK THE FLAT SURFACE, PRESS ONTO PAPER.

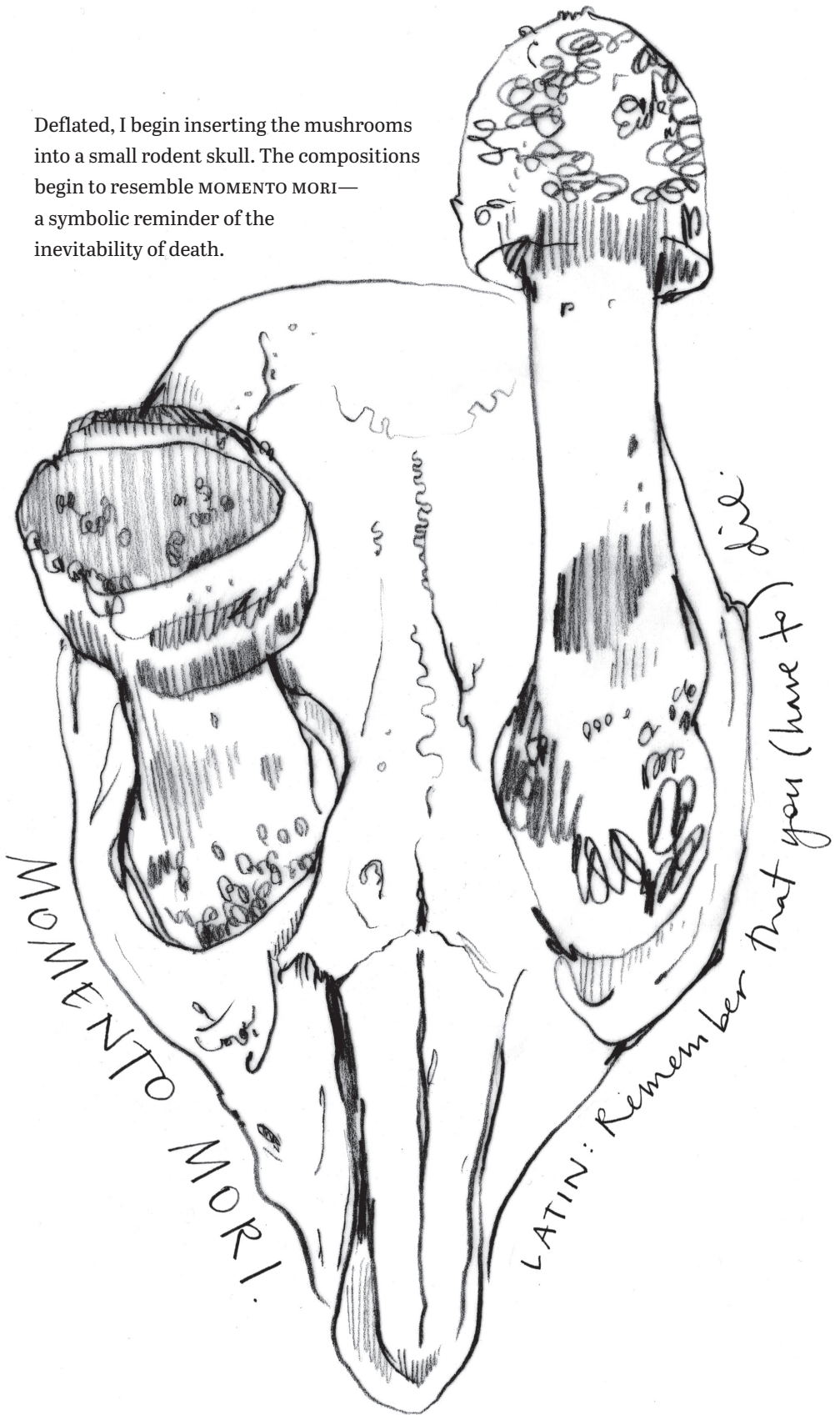
RAPH'S USE of COLOUR IS PSYCHEDELICALLY MORE EXPERIMENTAL THAN MINE, A REMINDER THAT STUDENTS NEED TO SEE WHAT EACH OTHER ARE UP TO (some how, over Zoom).

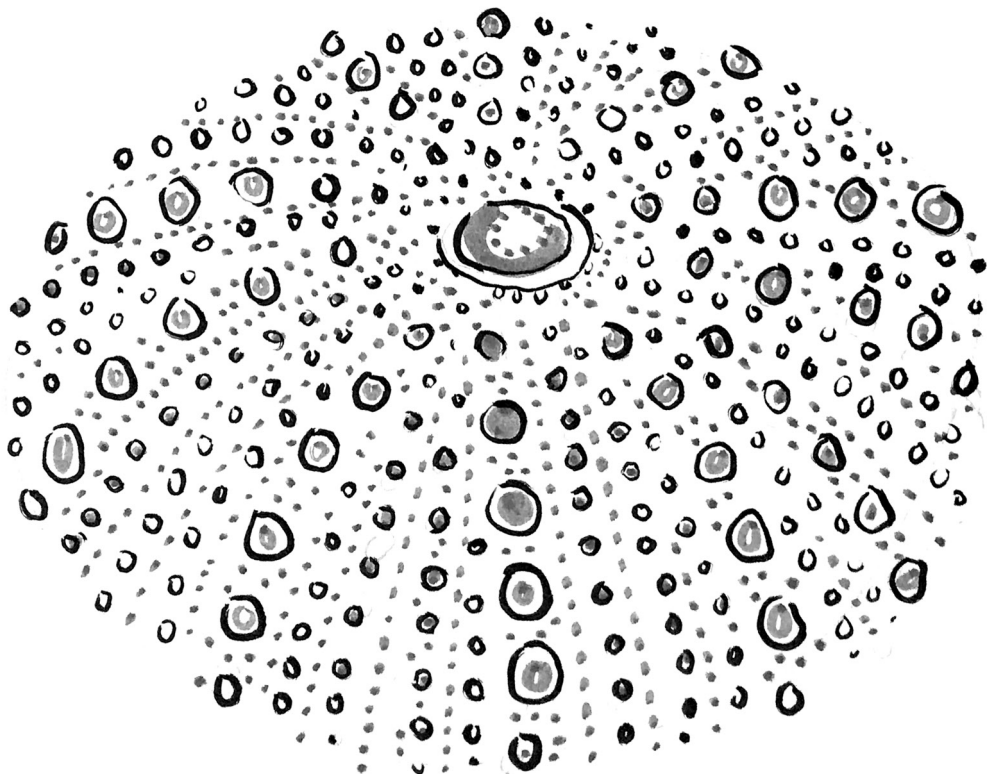
I'M WARY OF CUTTING POTENTIALLY POISONOUS 'SHROOMS WITH OUR KITCHEN KNIFE, SO USE A BLADE. Halved, one mushroom looks like a BEE.

THE SPONGY MUSHROOMS DON'T MAKE CLEAN PRINTS. ESSENTIALLY, I'VE COME UP WITH A less effective POTATO STAMP TASK. FOR UNIVERSITY LEVEL DESIGN STUDENTS.

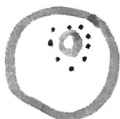
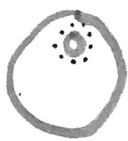


Deflated, I begin inserting the mushrooms into a small rodent skull. The compositions begin to resemble MOMENTO MORI—a symbolic reminder of the inevitability of death.



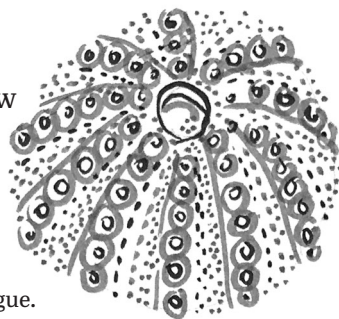


*Stop collecting, these are not yours to take,
I reprimand.*



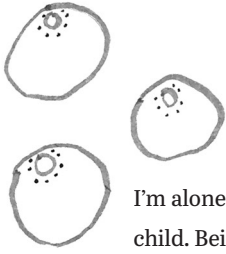
Tiny sea urchins, no bigger than grapes, are tumbled among a tideline of seaweed, broken shells and spheres of pumice. I've never seen them so small, or in such numbers.

*But they are dead, I object, even though I know
it takes more than the living to maintain a
healthy ecosystem.*

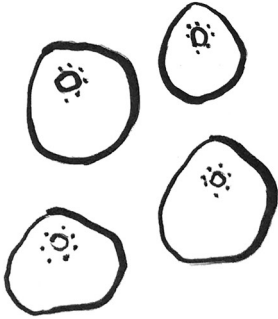
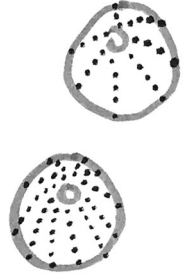


I think about writing down this internal monologue.
I wonder if it will sound silly, if I will sound silly.
Hubris, vanity, self obsession. A planet crawling
with selfish selves.

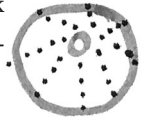




I'm alone, taking a break from all of my screens. And my partner and child. Being a working parent in a pandemic is exhausting, there is no personal space, no respite from neediness. I have so little to complain about, my life is all privilege. And yet, *I am not ok.*



The bush track down to the beach looks like a charcoal drawing. Lines of blackened trees, themselves giant sticks of charcoal, the aftermath of the fires that choked our home, hours away, with particle-thick smoke. Barely six months ago, but now forgotten, that unprecedented thing displaced by this new unprecedented thing.



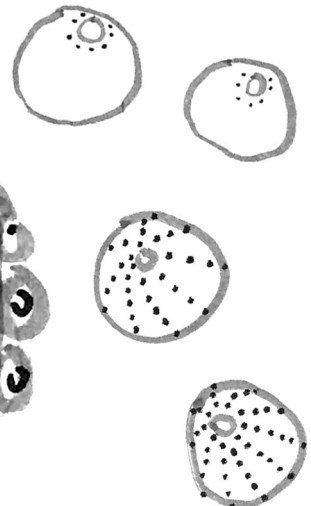
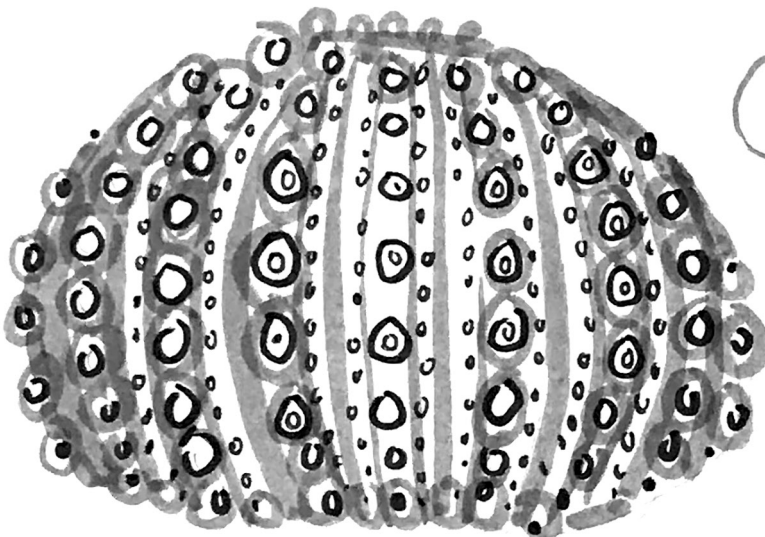
I'm not ok.

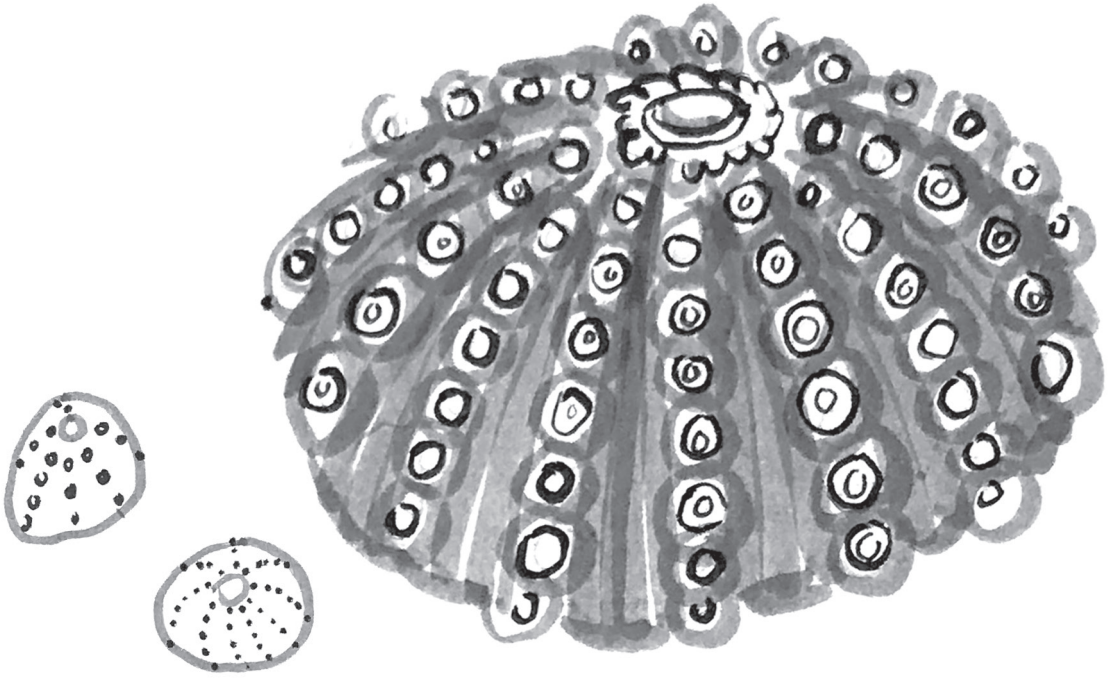


I should be taking a constitutional, like a Bronte sister heroine, casting my gaze at the horizon, drinking in the cloudless dusk over a deafening ocean. Instead, I hunch over, obsessively scanning the sand for these tiny, precious urchin shells amongst the beach rubble.

I have turned my precious timeout into:

A PROJECT.





A decade ago in Fiji, I found a flawless fist-sized urchin shell, the colours of a bruise. I painted it, anticipating that it would not clear customs; a legal indicator that moving specimens from one place to another has consequences. I understand, too, that to tread lightly in a cultural and ecological sense, things should not be removed from their natural place of origin.

I know all this, yet I find myself cradling a few of the most perfect urchins on the trek back. Not (only) for myself; I want to give them to Raph, to show I was thinking of him, even when briefly apart.

A wordless apology for not being present enough.

