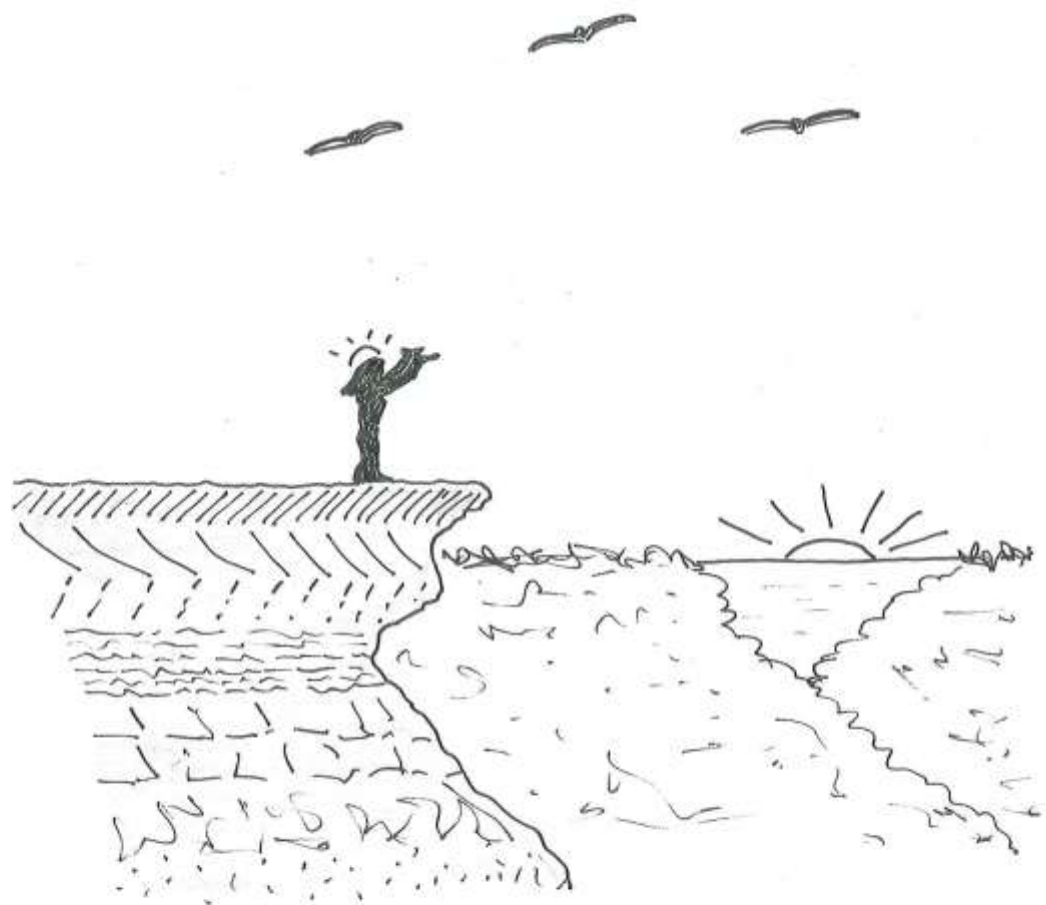


FIRST LIGHT



~ a graphic novel by
Brian Wilson Baetz

CHARACTERS ~



Gabriel Dunlop ~
Salt of the Earth



Mina Patel
~ Projecting Love



Kurt Winslow ~
Tweedy Academic



Magdalena
McDermott ~
Hipster
with Heart

Henri La Montagne



~ Brooding and Mysterious

Arabella Duke ~



Old Money Ingenue



Stephen
Tucker

~ Freemason, Free Thinker

Amy Wu



~ Student of Life

Rick Denton



~ Social Justice Activist,
of a sort

This graphic novel
is set in the
near-future ~



1., 2., 3., 4.,

5

years from now...

Yep, not now, but just
around the corner !

This work is set in a
small town, and is a story
about a community facing choices.
The choice of how to live and
how to perceive life, and how
to see ourselves and our neighbours.



Light is a strong aspect of this
work, both as a metaphor and
as a way to reflect the evolution
in consciousness of each character.
The title reflects the central importance
of early morning light and its
corresponding dissipation of
shadow and darkness.





C'mon Strider,
move along now!

You can poke around a bit
later,... that drizzle has
certainly picked up its pace!

PRELUDE



Right... do I re-read the
letters to the editor, or
take a stab at the Sudoku?

Why do I feel like I'm just waiting
around for something to happen?

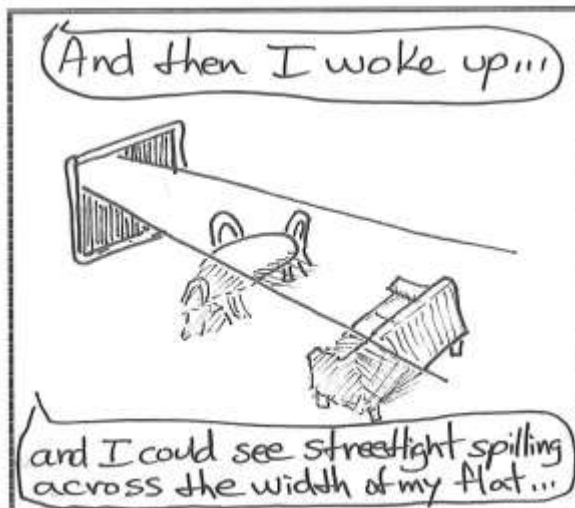


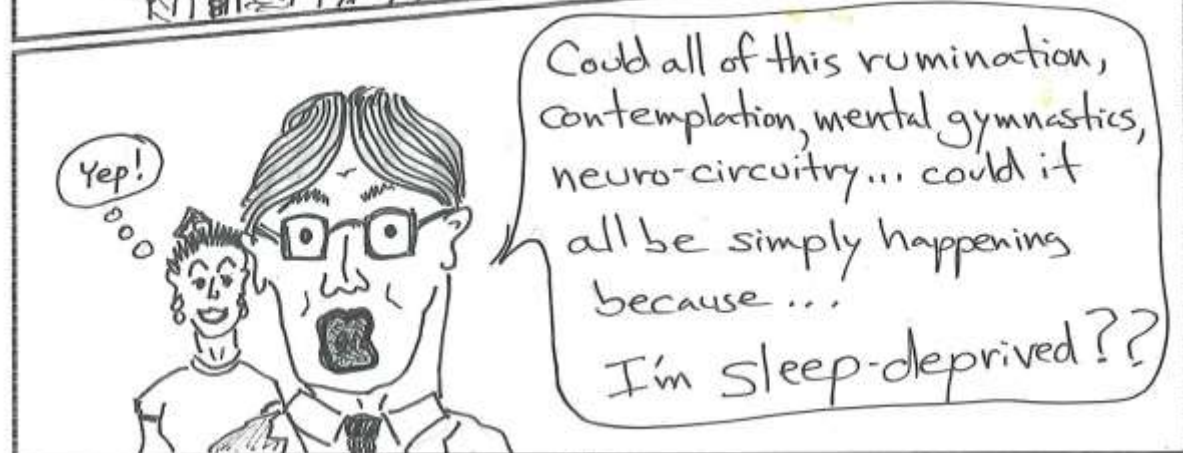
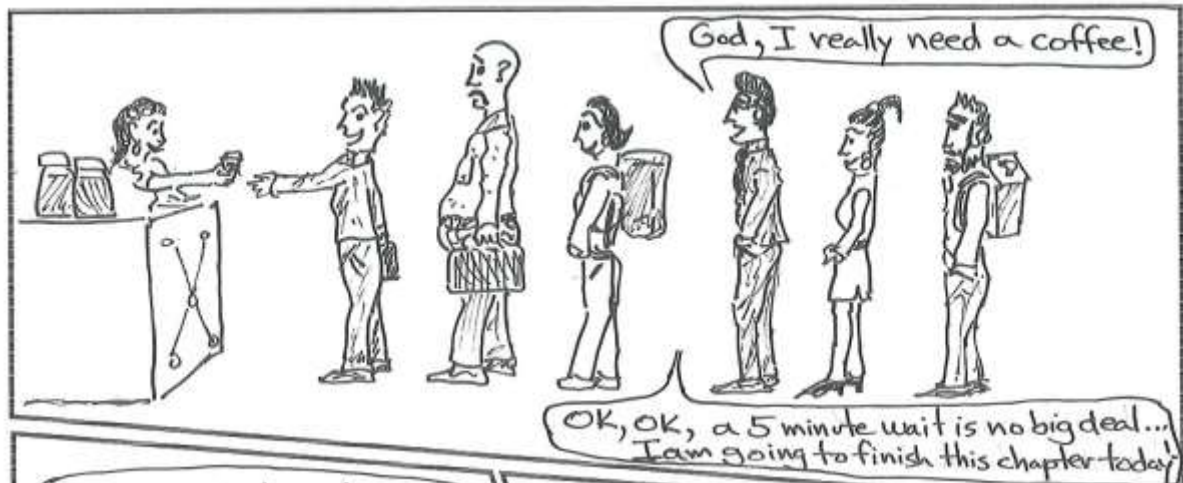
Eh, Strider?
Does that
resonate with
you?

Oh
yeah!



I had a dream
last night...
a truly vivid dream





ACT 1

Holding Two Solitudes



Scene 1:

A Meeting of the Minds



Well now, look at that, the Jones' have installed solar panels and a micro wind turbine...



Ever since The Changes, I've noticed more and more of this kind of thing...

Gabriel strolls down the street, talking to himself...

Hello!



I've always liked Eric, ever since he was a wee sprout in my Cub pack

Haven't seen him since high school, but I suppose he's moved back home, as rents are through the roof...



Kurt leaves home and jumps on his bike, riding it willy-nilly...



Mina takes her leave from her flat...



Kurt rides his bike right up to the back of Mina, who is virtually abreast of Gabriel...

Bang!

Groan!



I'm dreadfully sorry!



My mind was adrift, and I realized at just the last second I was about to plow into this woman!

Quite alright, young fella!
I played enough sports in my day to have taken considerably worse!



Although at my age, I'm certainly glad you weren't going any faster!



I have a class soon,
and felt that I needed a coffee...
had to stop off at the library,
and something outside
one of the shop
windows caught
my attention!



All well and good...
but I humbly suggest that
if you had been mindful, all
of this could have been
avoided...

Do you actually know
what being
mindful is?



Yes, yes I do...
at least... well, in
philosophical terms...



Errh,
not really...

I mean in practical terms, mindful
while working, cooking, doing the dishes
Mindfulness suggests a focus, a complete
absorption in the task at hand...

Enjoying the
journey...

while not
anticipating the
destination!



Like lady, when you break it all
down like that, you're right!

I was not being mindful...

Guilty as charged!





Scene 2 :
Venus Rising



Kurt and Gabriel meet up, and check the time...







Sit quietly with your eyes closed, hands in your laps...
now take a few deep breaths and slowly scan your body.
Wherever you feel tension, consciously relax that area,
and move on...



Your eyes are closed, but use your internal vision to
focus on the point between your eyebrows...
when you see the Bollywood starlets with
jewellery or makeup to adorn this area, their
tili is a symbol of their THIRD EYE...



Oh, I just
know I'm
going to be
hounded by
thoughts of
Bollywood in the
middle of
all this!

After concentrating on this area,
we will mentally focus on our
breath going in and going out...
not much else to do, stay
relaxed and focus on the breath

Gabriel,
if I
stop
breathing,
call somebody
will ya?



For meditation novices like
Kurt here, this might seem
too simple, but honestly
that's all we have to do



I find my mind
becomes very active,
a touch frothy,
when I sit still...



But the matter at hand
is your meditation. So when
a thought comes up, and it
inevitably will, you simply
excuse yourself from
that thought and go back
to your breath...





<Some time goes by>



OK, stretch your bodies, come back fully to the physical realm.

Mina made some tea, so pour yourself a cup and return to your seat for a reflection on what the heck just went on there...



Kurt, you were the one that seemed most in need of mindfulness. Share your thoughts on what you experienced.

Well, I thought about work, then came back to my breath, heard some street noises, back to my breath, a few Bollywood dance routines, and from there I stepped into some kind of altered state!



Exactly...



That's honest, Kurt... with more practice we'll hopefully see some improvement



How about you, Gabriel?



My neck started to feel rubbery, and I could hear a bunch of loud noises. Thought they might be coming from me, but then after a point I seemed to slip into a very deep sleep

I heard Magdalena calling us, but I resisted, like a kid falling asleep on the sofa watching reruns of The Twilight Zone! But overall, I suppose I kind of suck at meditation...

Well, after thinking a bit about my dog and how I miss my work, things became quiet and almost dream-like

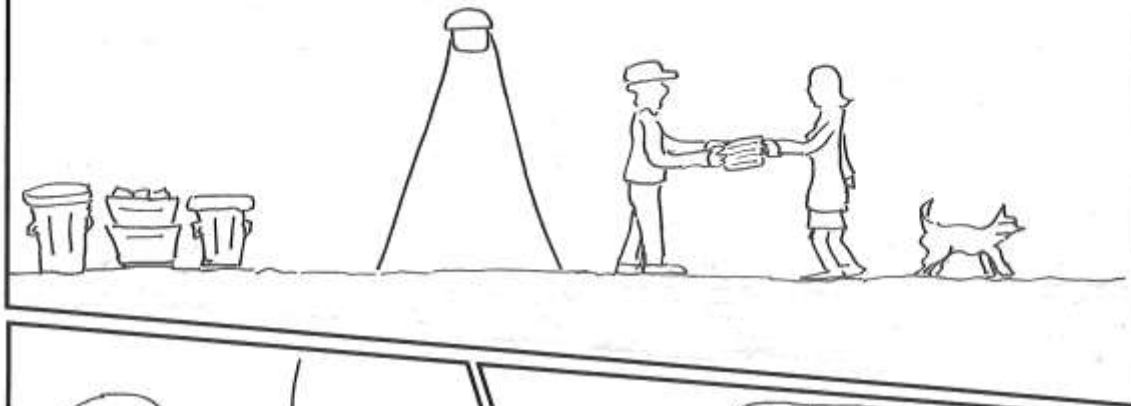
My head felt super heavy, and I could hear you speaking to me as if through a tunnel

Some thoughts came and nudged me, but they didn't seem like my thoughts, more like collective thoughts





Scene 3: Hidden Shadows



Allo?

Good Evening, fine Sir...

Macherie, how did I know it was you?

I suspect you have many private callers...

but some are hopefully more special than others

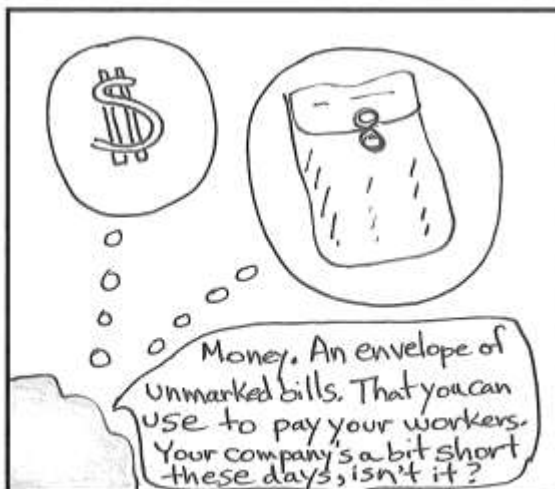
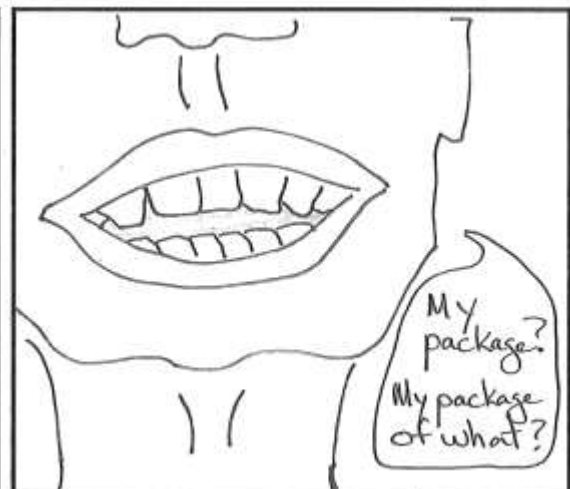
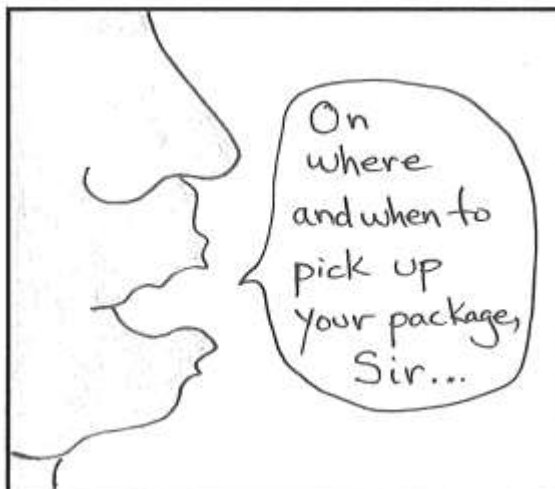
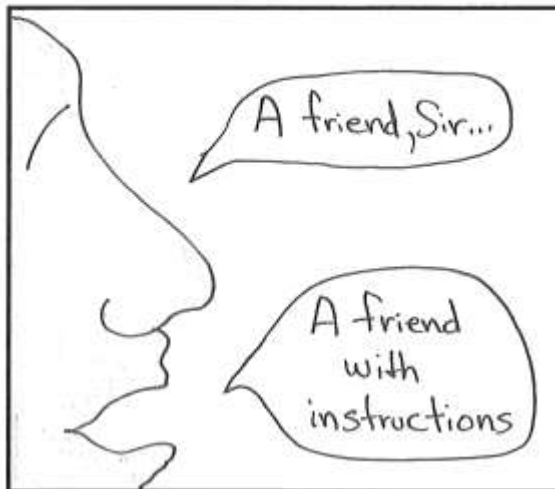


It's true mademoiselle, I am very fortunate to have you as a friend, a neighbour and a client

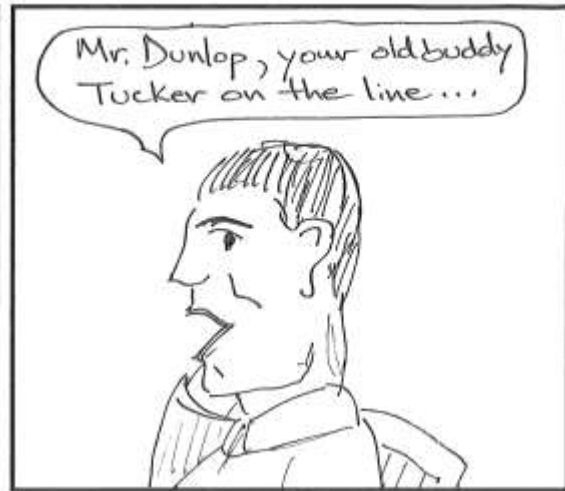
I know this is all very pleasant, but I do have some business to conduct. A doubling of my normal order, sir, and don't be a day late like you were last week!



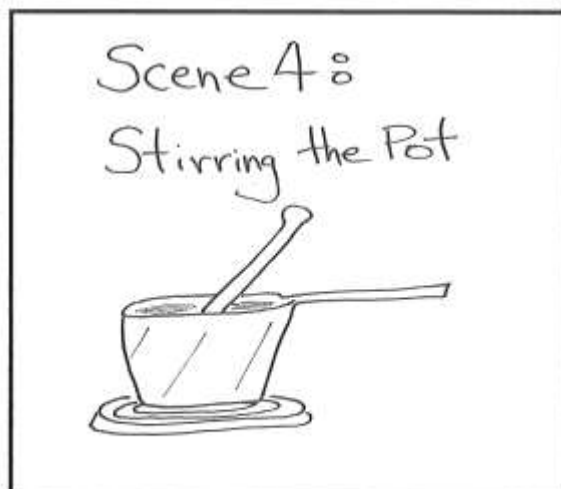








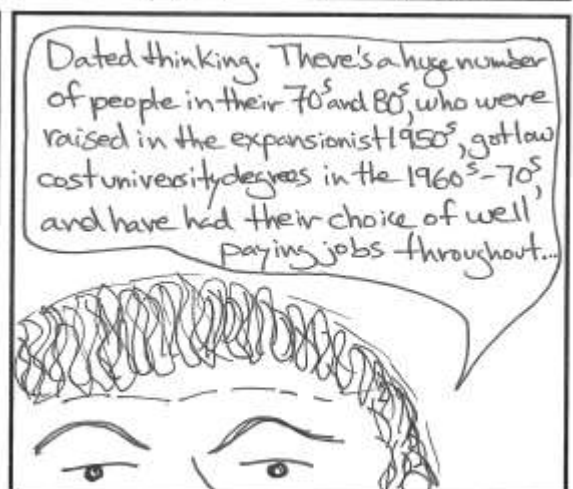




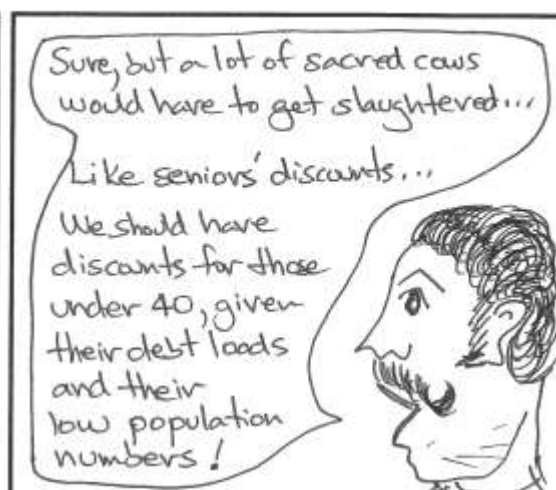












Scene 5: The Passing Parade

A perfect day,
just couldn't be
better...



I spend a good chunk of each day, riding
the pine, outside the old furniture store.
No chesterfields or La-Z-Boys
rolling out of here anymore, just
high-end wedding gowns

Yep, here we are on King Street,
watching the passing parade of
humanity. Now some of you may
judge me... why doesn't this guy
just go get a job? An opening in a
factory, or jockeying food out to
patio tables?



Nooooo, not
for this
caballero!

Why would I work for The Man?
The Man works for me... yep, I'm
on the dole. It's not a lot, but
enough to make ends meet. I have
the luxury of time, time to do whatever
the heck I want...

I do this micro-loan enterprise
here in my outside office, so don't
judge me and I won't judge you...



Wage slave, house poor, working for the weekend?
People, for me, every day's a Saturday!

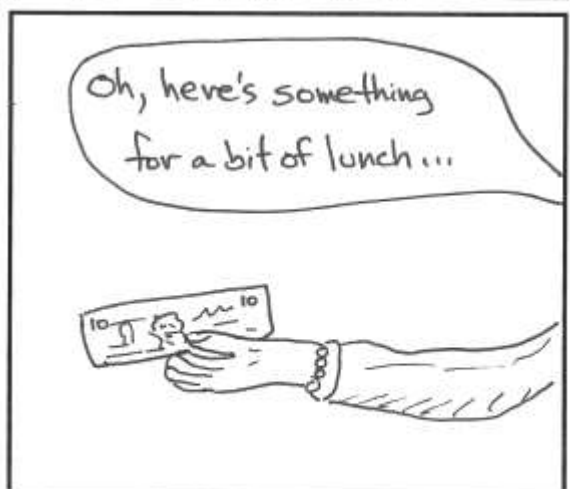
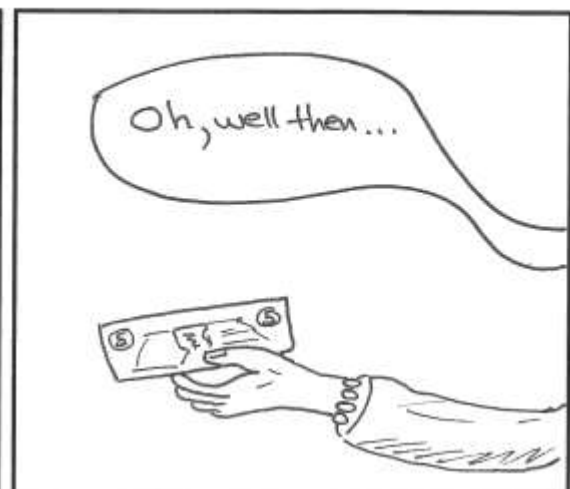


I just have to keep my eyes out for
any coppers, rolling by in their jacked-up SUVs!
The boys in blue don't seem to like
my little schtick.

Pardon me for a moment, here comes a
potential benefactor...















FIRST INTERLUDE



Percussion is the backbone of all music. Can you feel your own heartbeat? Percussive, no? Can you hear the heartbeat of the Earth? I hear her... I feel her. Can you feel the heartbeat of the Universe? There are days that I can both feel and hear this. And I can also feel some significant change coming...

Uni... one.
Verse... a poem, or
perhaps a song?
Uni-verse... what if
everyone in the universe
all started to sing the
same song?



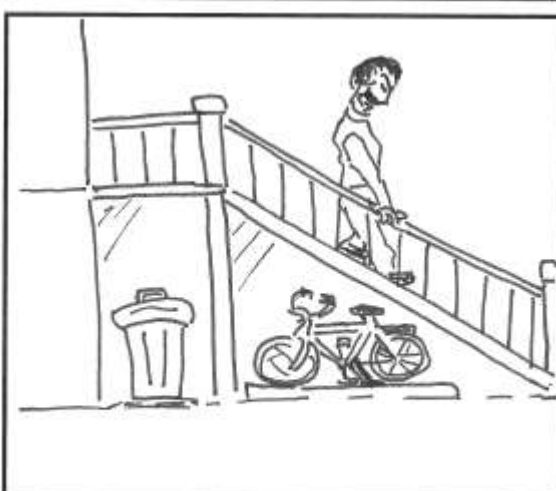
Now what might
that one song be?



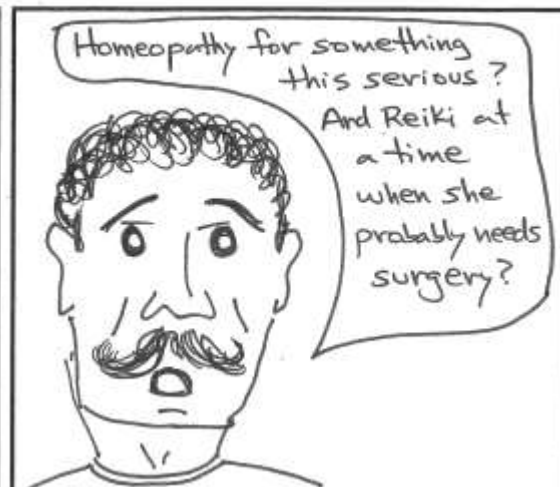
LIGHTS
GOTO
BLACK

ACT 2: LETTING GO
Scene 1: You'll Be In
My Prayers

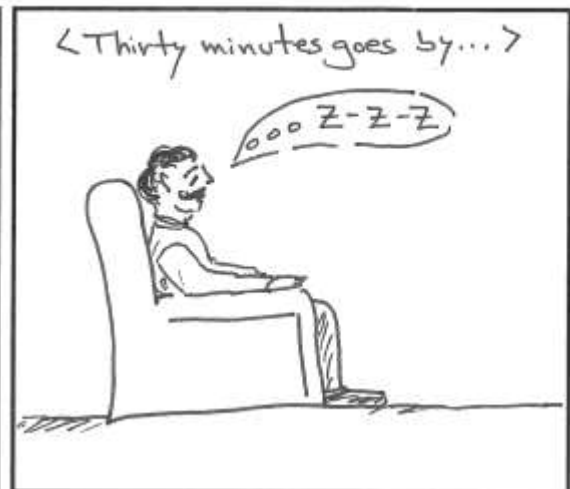












Shouldn't you be asking
Mister Big Guy to heal
her leg first, and then
thank him after
He's actually
done
something
about it?



No, the Big Guy, or the Big Gal, doesn't work
in a time-based environment like we do.
So the most effective approach is to thank
the Divine as if it has already happened...



Oh, my goodness, my leg can
actually bear weight without pain!
A bit surprising, I must admit,
but why does a miracle shock
me when Magdalena is in the house!



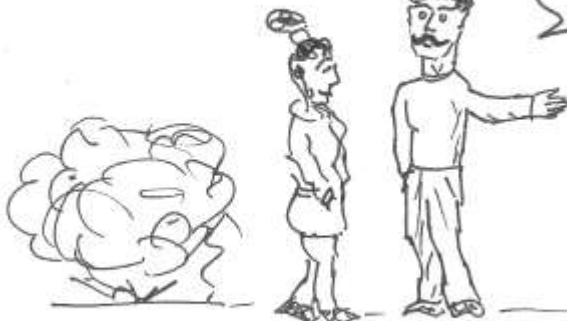
Perhaps some
lingering stiffness,
but nothing a good
night's sleep
won't put right!

Oh my, I can't
thank you
both enough!



Magdalena, um, was wondering if, uh,
sorry, awkward start!

OK, I'm just trying to find my
nerve here, as we've been
bumping into each other a
lot lately, and I was
wondering if we might be
able to have coffee
together some time?





Scene 2: Dreaming of Scarab Beetles

< The power goes out at 4 PM, with an abrupt ending to many activities >



< Gabriel reads on his deck, and he and Strider look up to register some ambient birdsong >



< Mina meditates in her flat >

< Magdalena and Henri do yoga on mats on Magdalena's deck ...



... having the air of two people starting to realize that they might actually enjoy each other's company >



< Kurt sits in his compact campus office, making notes for his book >



Gabe? Listen, the goddamn power's just gone out! If it stays off for more than a few hours, I think we should get ahead of it and start handing out blocks of ice from the back of the Anglican Church. Yep, so that fridges can stay cool until the contents are consumed. We certainly learned a few things from that big outage four years back. Five long months! I shudder just thinking about it! OK, see you at 6:00, out front on Melville, and bring your insulated gloves!

< Across town in the old hydro building, Gabriel looks up from his blueprints and gives out a sigh, before picking up his phone and calling Gabriel >

<the action shifts to Arabella's home>



Dear friends, so glad you could come by for dessert...



Take a seat, please, and don't mind the mugginess of the room!



Not to worry, Arabella!
This is what houses should feel like in the Summer!



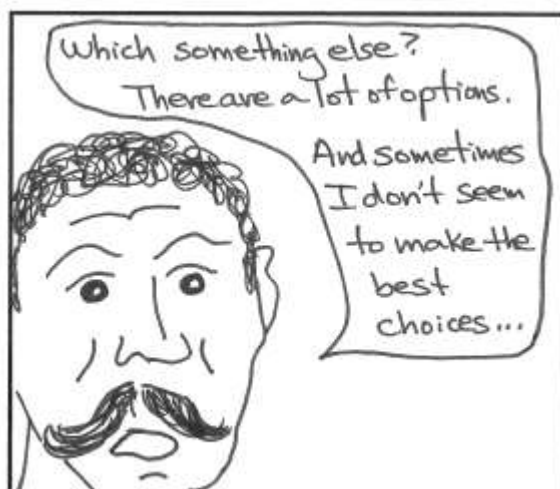
Take a glass of lemonade, at least the taps are running freely!



Thank God for the backup generators down at the treatment plant! You lose your pressure, only a drizzle will come out of a Kitchen tap or a fire hydrant!







Yes, Dr. Kurt, clues. So let me give you an example. Let's say you dream of being in a big, Gotham-like metropolis. And the next day at breakfast, you see a travel ad, touting seat sales to New York City. Someone at work tells you of the great long weekend they just had in Greenwich Village. You could ignore all of this, but if you are observant, you might just book one of those seat sale flights. And in New York, there will be a person or event or experience that will change your life immensely.

What if these are all mere coincidences? Surely random things just... happen?




Carl Jung used the term, meaningful coincidences, or synchronicities. Jung once had a client who dreamt of golden scarab beetles, and during one of her sessions, a large scarab beetle beat its wings against the window of the therapy room. It was a species of scarab beetle never seen in Zurich, hundreds of miles outside its normal habitation zone.

The scarab beetle was symbolically significant for her psychological healing, so some influence brought it up from Italy to central Switzerland.

What seems unconnected to our rational eyes is all meshed and linked together in some unseen fabric.

As the fabric of the universe unfolds, seemingly disparate things are brought together to give us the messages we need to live life more fully.

I was in Zurich once at a conference. Paid close to 20 bucks for a beer at a cafe in the central station...





Oy! Mina, Mina, Mina, this is bordering on being RIDICULOUS!!

Nah, I'm with Henri on this. Life is random... we're just dust particles swirling around in a vast universe! No order to it all, just a pantload of disorder!

So, please, just point me to the dessert table!

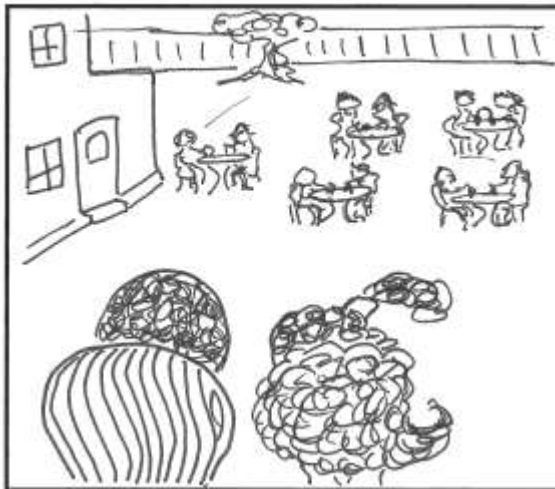
Henri? Politeress, remember? Basic courtesy at all times?









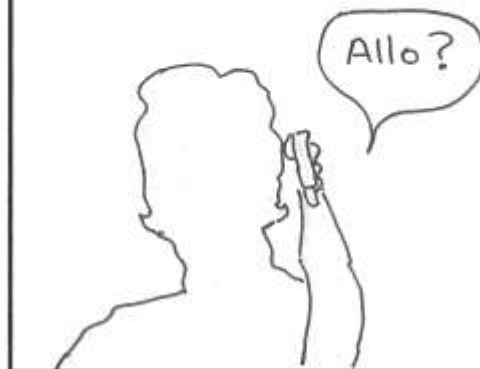








Scene 4: Owning the Darkness



Hey Schnoogums,
it's your gal pal...



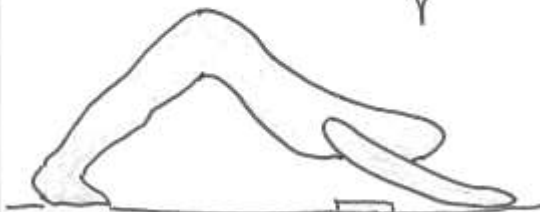
Jody, to what do I
owe the pleasure?



Listen baby, I'll take my pleasure
any way I can! Which brings me
to the point of my call... will you be
home in an hour or so?



I'm halfway through a longish
ashtanga yoga YouTube, so yes,
I'll be around... where are you
now?

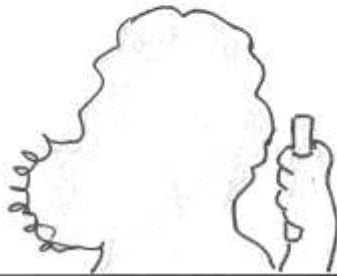


I'm just outside St. Catharines,
heading west. I had to run my
dead beat brother down to Buffalo
for some business, and we're
gunning it back home now...





Hello,
Arabella here...



Miss Duke, just a quick
call to let you know that
your package will arrive soon...



I'm starting to worry
about my little habit —
might it have become
more than just a
pleasant diversion?



We all have habits
tending towards
addictions. Isn't
that merely part
of a complex
life in our
uncertain times?



What if we just simply
terminated our
business dealings?



As you wish,
Arabella, but I
certainly count
on the revenue.
You'll have to
forgive your loan
to me as
balancing
compensation



Hardly fair at all! I'm starting to have my own cash flow problems, appearances notwithstanding. But perhaps you could come over to take care of other, uh, business, to whittle away at your debt?

I am many unenviable things, Miss, but being a gigolo is not one of them! I think we'll just call things even. And if that doesn't sound quite right to your delicate ears, then consider how your reputation might suffer if I let a few people in the neighbourhood know that you have quite the appetite for illegal fungi!

You wouldn't dare!
What if I let a few well-placed friends in law enforcement know that my brooding neighbour peddles illicit substances and can't stay away from unlicensed gambling joints!

A lovely songbird can have a very high fall from her elevated perch. A lowly weasel might get wounded, but can hunker down in the underbrush, licking his wounds. I think we're even. And I will now bid you a good night!

Click...

Tee..dee..tede..
dee.. teedee
te dee te dee...

Gabriel?













Nah, way too dark. And sometimes I just like to amble. Best way to think...



Whatcha thinking about?



Well, my book... uh, that sounds a bit too hopeful. Okay, some chapters that I think might lead to a book.



Dare I ask?
What's your book about?



That's the problem, man. I'm bouncing all over the place. My appointment's in Cultural Studies, but what in the heck does that really mean?



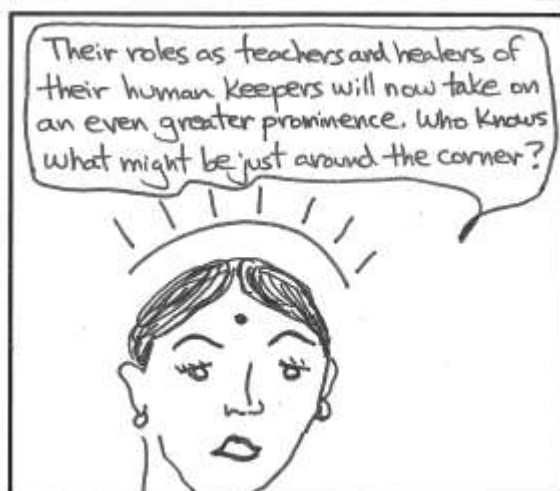
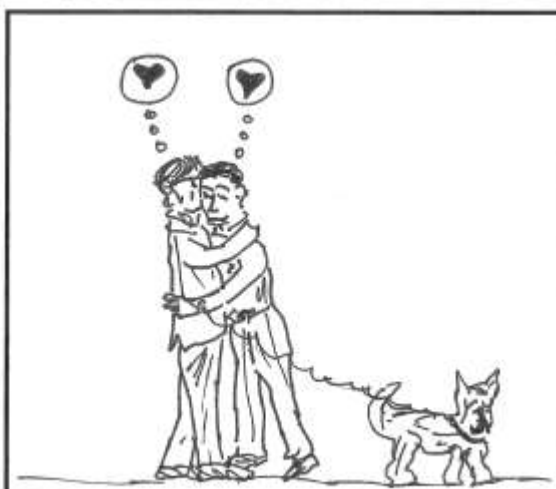
Cultural stuff, I guess?
Museums, art galleries?











Act III
Grasping a
New Reality

Scene I: A Rising Tide Moves All
Boats Upwards



Cripes, that was a long
five days! Hotter than hell,
and with no chance of A/C!



Challenging for sure, but tempers generally
stayed in check, and everyone helped one another
in a whole bunch of ways. Like this old
fashioned wood-fired BBQ we're going to put
on for the good folks who live here in
the Lions' Homes



Let the sounds of the creek come
into your consciousness, as if you
are hearing a language being spoken
that you have not yet learned.



Yep, ahh... that beautiful burbling
sound is percolating through... and to
think that when I first met you
I just wanted to hang by myself
and read a book!





I had a vision of me lying down on the grass here, then I went a bit higher and could see both of us by the creek, and then I went even higher and could see the creek and its ribbon of greenspace amidst the rooftops of the homes in the neighbourhood.



Hold on there Mags. I was just standing here, minding my own business, waiting to slap some burgers on the 'cue, y' know? But then I overheard you, and I went like, what the heck?

You mean you were seeing these things in your imagination, since your eyes were closed?



No, Kurt. I know it's subtle and a bit nuanced, but I saw them with my consciousness.

You don't need your physical vision to see...



No?

No, definitely not. To illustrate, let's all try an experiment...



Everyone close your eyes. Now think of your Mom. Can you see her? Can you see minute details of her face? Her hair? Her nose? Of course you can, we all can. But your eyes are closed. So you all have the capacity to see without your physical vision...



But I see good ol' Mom in my imagination! I have a strong mental image of her, so I see that, no?



Ahh, now hold on a second, this is reminding me of a Fringe Festival performance I saw a number of years back. The performer did a rendition of a century-past exhibition by a mysterious Signor Falconi. Falconi used to tape coins over his eyes and



blindfolded himself, and saw all manner of things through the fingertips of his right hand.

He was quite the sensation in Europe in his day, and the Fringe chap proved to be pretty flawless himself. I didn't know what to make of it at the time, but now you've really got me thinking...



What Falconi did, and thousands before and after him, was hone his ability to do remote viewing. In essence, we all have the ability to see things near or far without our physical vision. It can be close by, or halfway around the world. It's been said that the CIA's funded this kind of work for years, but for nefarious purposes...



You mean all that nonsense we saw in *The Men Who Stare at Goats*?



Not everything in Hollywood is made up, Sir...



I think my wife loves George Clooney...



I'm not surprised! And some might even suggest you can remotely view

the future, so it's not just seeing across distance, but also across time...

You mean I can take a peek into the future?



With the right caveats, yes, peering across distance is relatively easy. But once you try to look into the future, you have to realize things can get a bit fuzzy.



We shape the future with our decisions of today, and our thoughts of today. So at best, you have to squint your 'eyes' a bit, and pick out the most probable future.

Have you ever, like, done this?



Absolutely, just now. After I saw the creek, I went up, up, up above the Earth, and through, through, through to a future time.



So what did you see, Magdalena?



Well, with the caveats I have already mentioned, two things stood out. One, the Earth was a very lush and green place. I won't comment on the coastlines, but what was left remaining looked very beautiful indeed.



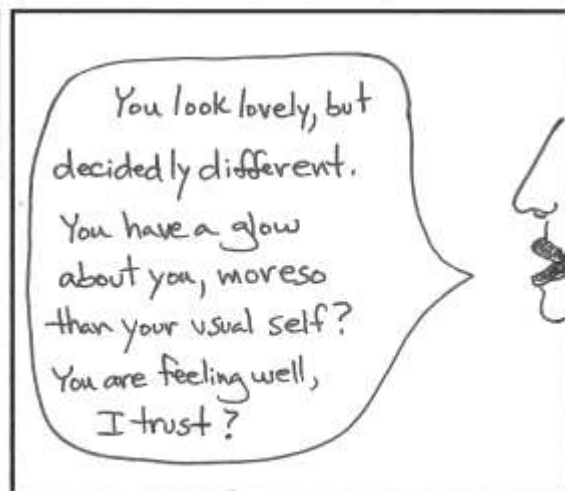
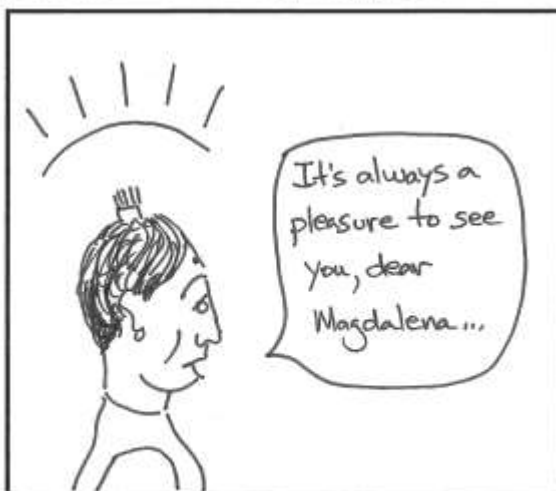
Oh great, we'll all be under water, but at least the trees will survive!

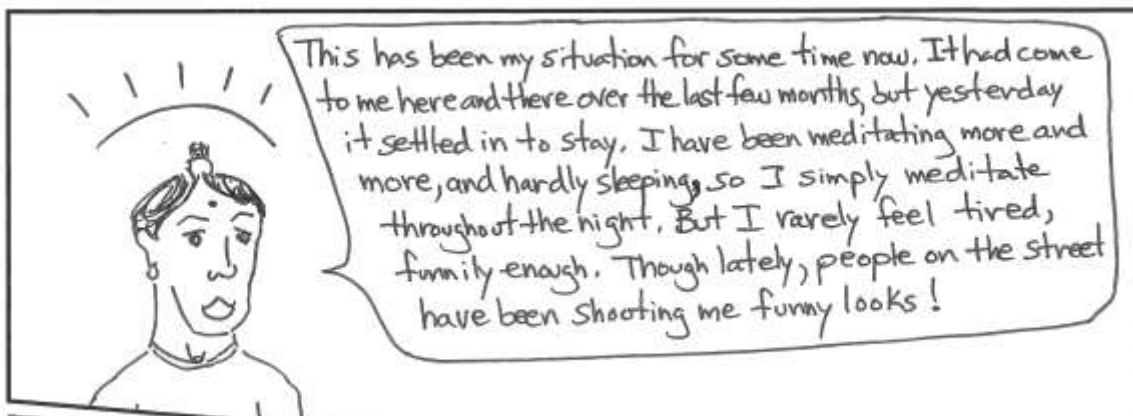


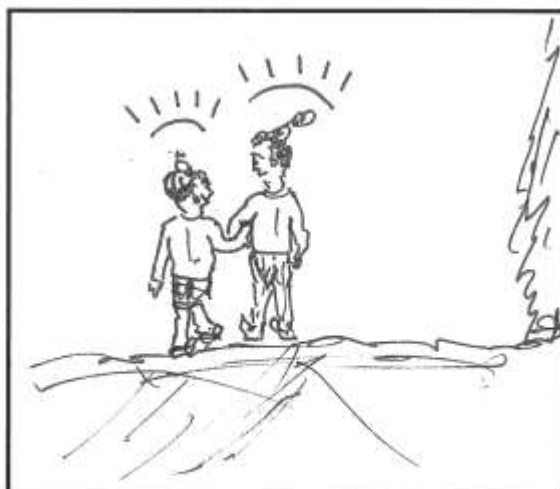
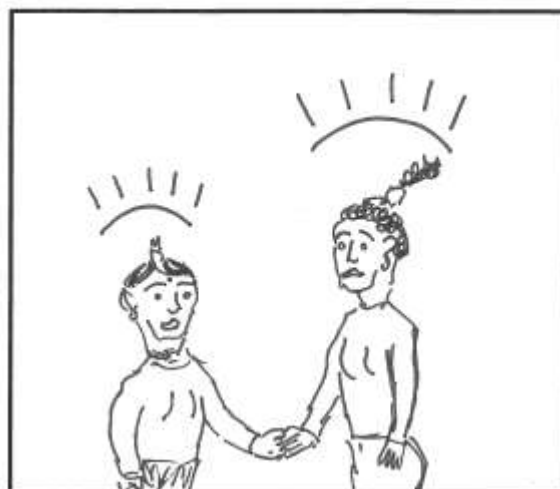
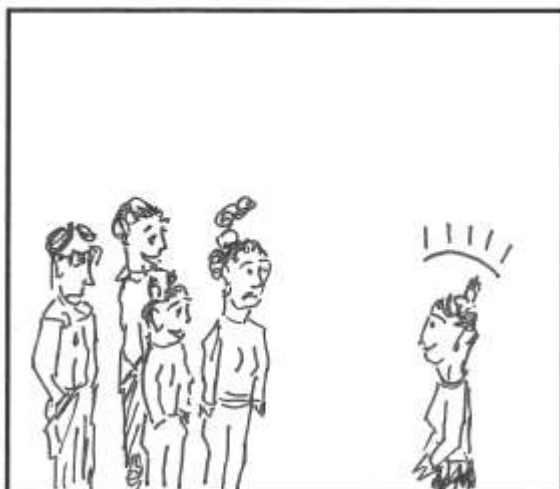
Two, when I looked down at our community, pretty much all I could see were points of light moving around. These points of light were connected to one another in a glowing gossamer-like, filament network.

It was a bit like the streetlights you see when you descend into a city in a plane at night, but imagine a fluid network of streetlights, all connected with one another. It sounds strange, I know, but that's what kept coming to me, over and over.









Scene 2: Perfect in Every Way



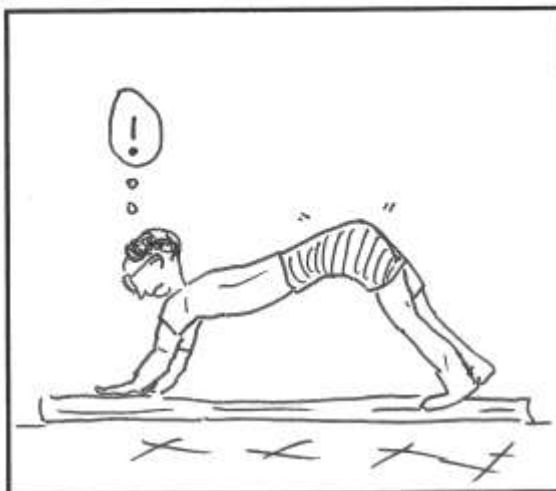
Alright, kind folks, down to business! First off, let's limber up, and then do some old-fashioned burpees and jumping jacks...

Gabriel, make sure Kurt doesn't slack off here!

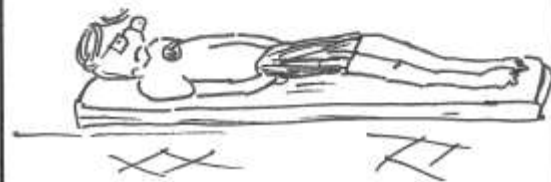


Okay, okay, I'll now guide you through some yoga poses that we will hold for some time, really letting the muscles stretch so we can go deeper within to find our true center...

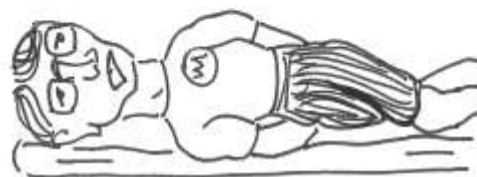




Every so often my lower back goes out on me! Arrrggghh! I swear it's the curse of every academic, since we sit on our duffs all day!



Uh, folks, don't worry about me, please carry on. I'll just limp off to the side here and die a slow death. Arrrggghh! But I may make a considerable ruckus in the process. Arrrggghh!



Kurt, just take a deep breath, and I'll talk you through some healing principles that I've learned over the years...



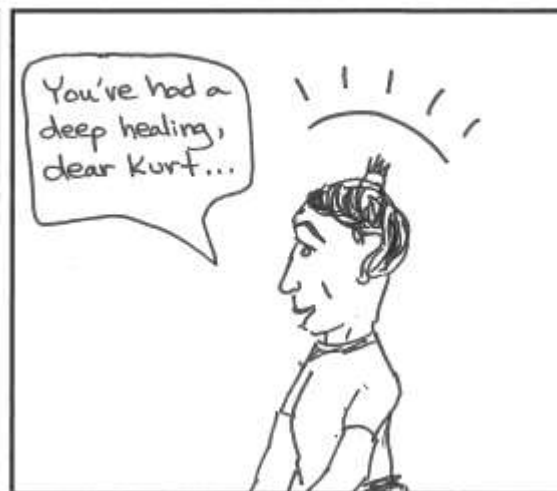
I think I may have a slipped disc! It's deep, and it's bad! My Dad was a truck driver, and I think he passed me the bad back gene. If I were a horse, you'd take me out behind the barn and shoot me!



So the premise is pretty simple. The Divine is in essence Pure Love, we can connect to this pure loving essence, and realize that we are a reflection of that Perfect Love...



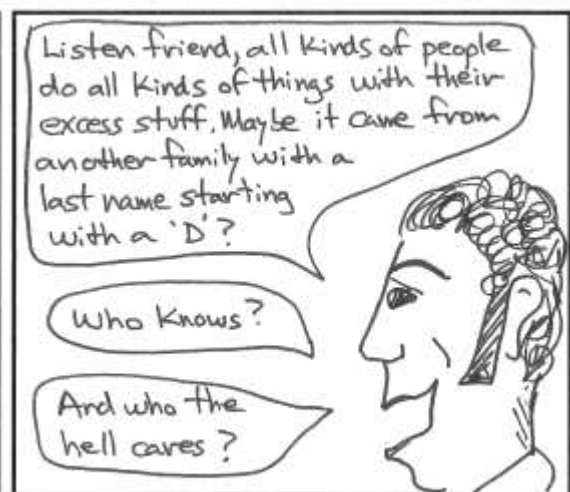
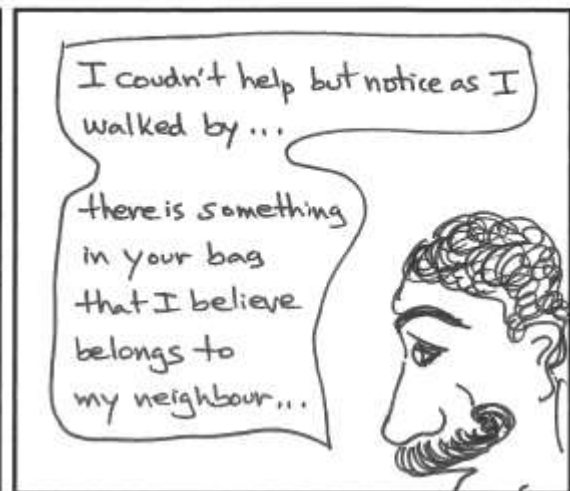












Okay, so let's see what else you supposedly purchased at the Bible Store. Pull it all out and put it on the table, and then maybe I'll walk away!

Pal, let me tell you, nobody in his right mind asks you to empty your goddamn duffel bag in a café! Now piss off!



Henri, are you setting up for a high-end garage sale?



I was just stepping away to the facilities, and I thought I saw some of Arabella's silverware in this guy's bag. I called him out, and he made up some crap about shopping at the charity store! And then I empty out the bag, and it looks like a blend of Holt Renfrew and the Antique Road Show! Given all of the recent thefts in town, I think we're going to have to walk across the street to the police...







Okay, okay, but hands off the merchandise, ok? Every week I slide into the city with the spoils, visit a few pawnshop guys I know or even make the odd run down to Buffalo, and then I roll back with a big wad of bills...



So this is about padding your bank account?

No dude, I live pretty damn simply. Most of the cash goes into an anonymous donation to the Food Bank, or a hundred bucks in an envelope under the door to families who I know need a hand. And I sleep very well at night. The people I take stuff from have way more than they will ever need. Steal from the rich, and give to the poor! Yep, I loved reading Robin Hood when I was a kid!

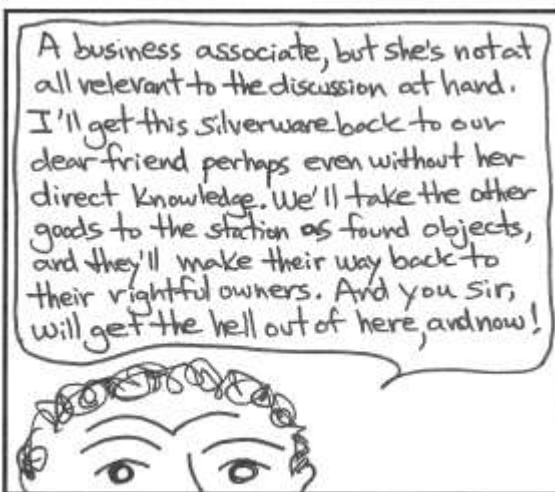
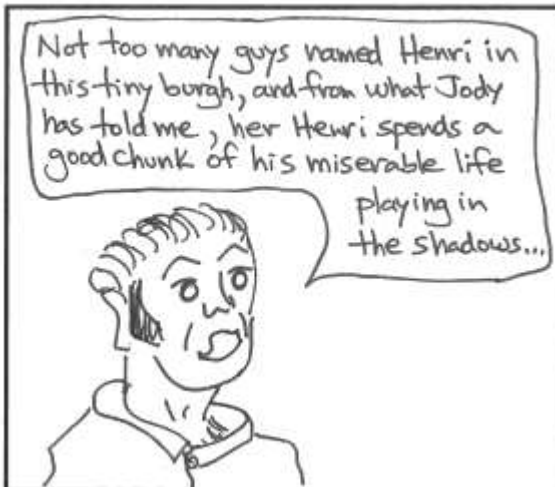


But it's against the law, man, and the kind lady you pilfered from has been traumatized by knowing that someone has invaded her personal space.

Henri, if I heard correctly? Henri LaMontagne? If what my little sister has hinted at is true, it's pretty rich that you're suggesting we should go chat up the constables!



I really do think we need to go see the police...





I have observed Rick many times on my walks. He would often be on Cross Street and would almost always have his duffel bag. I suppose I should have unravelled the puzzle by now...



Why would any one break the law, just so they could help poor folks?



I think most things in life come down to a person's level of consciousness...



Oh, not this bullshit again! He's a scoundrel, through and through. Let's call a spade a spade!



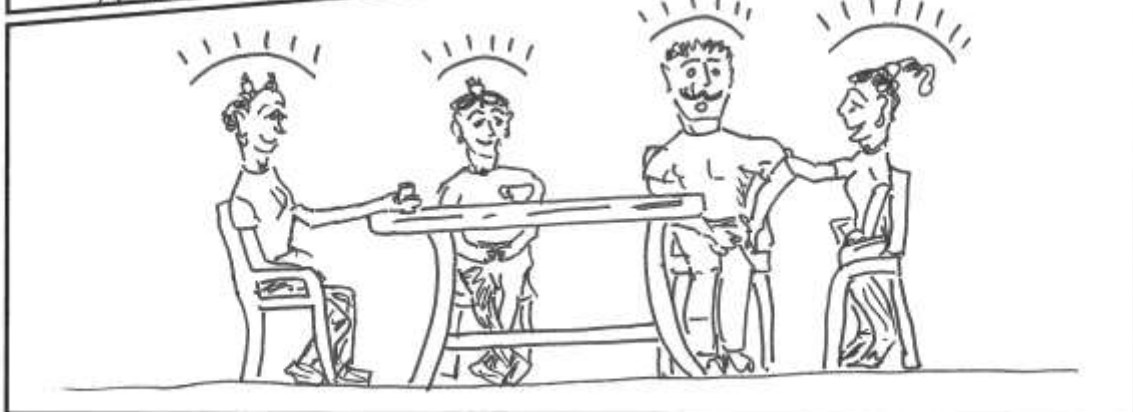
Rick's actions were controlled by his ego, which hovers largely in some emotional zone. He figured out a way to smooth out a few of the discrepancies in society to a certain degree, and then his ego made it habitual. It's a constant battle to vanquish one's ego...



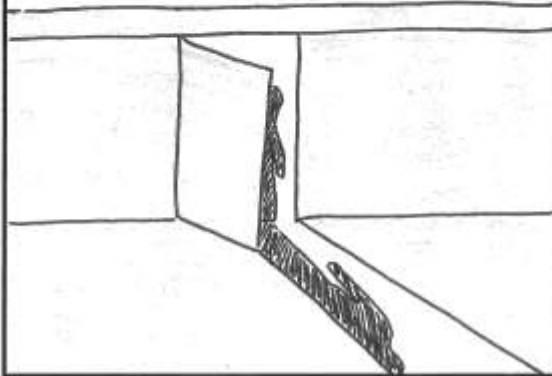
My ego seems to get me into a lot of trouble!



We need our ego for certain things. Taking a shower, combing our hair, putting on some nice duds to go out. If we didn't care what society thought of us, life would look pretty tattered!



Scene 4: Penetration of Light



Hello, dear neighbour...



Bon soir, madame. I wasn't sure if we would ever have another late night conversation. I am afraid to say that I have no more product, as I've

gotten right out of the business...



No, I'm just calling to close the loop. Tie off any loose ends. I've stepped away from my need for any substances, cold turkey. It came to me in a dream that I needed to change. To change many things...



Well, perhaps I shared the same dream. Because it has become patently clear that many changes need to be made in my own life as well. And if I continue to hang onto what I'm holding, things will become very painful as they are pried from my fingers. But if I just let them go, the way forward could become very clear...



How lovely ... it's so good to have a neighbour who's on the same wavelength...





< Henri dials a number, and clears his throat before he speaks in a contrived British accent >





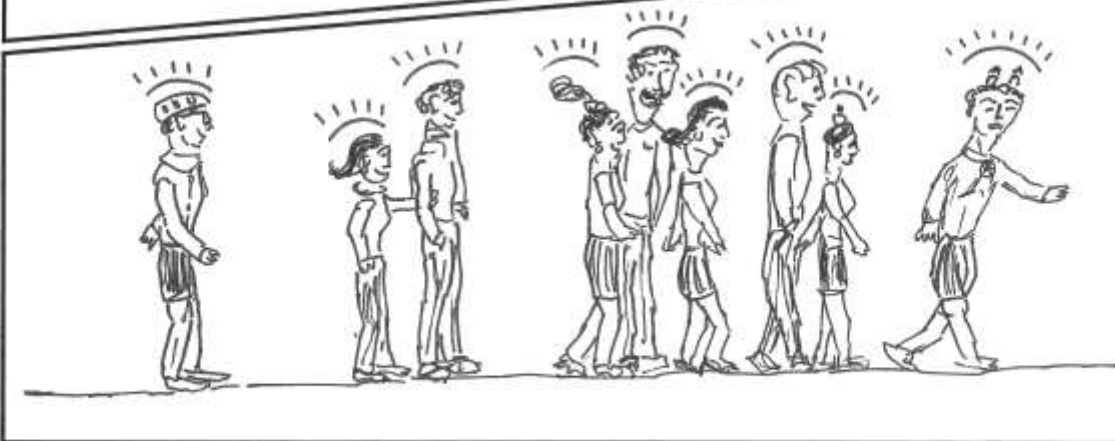
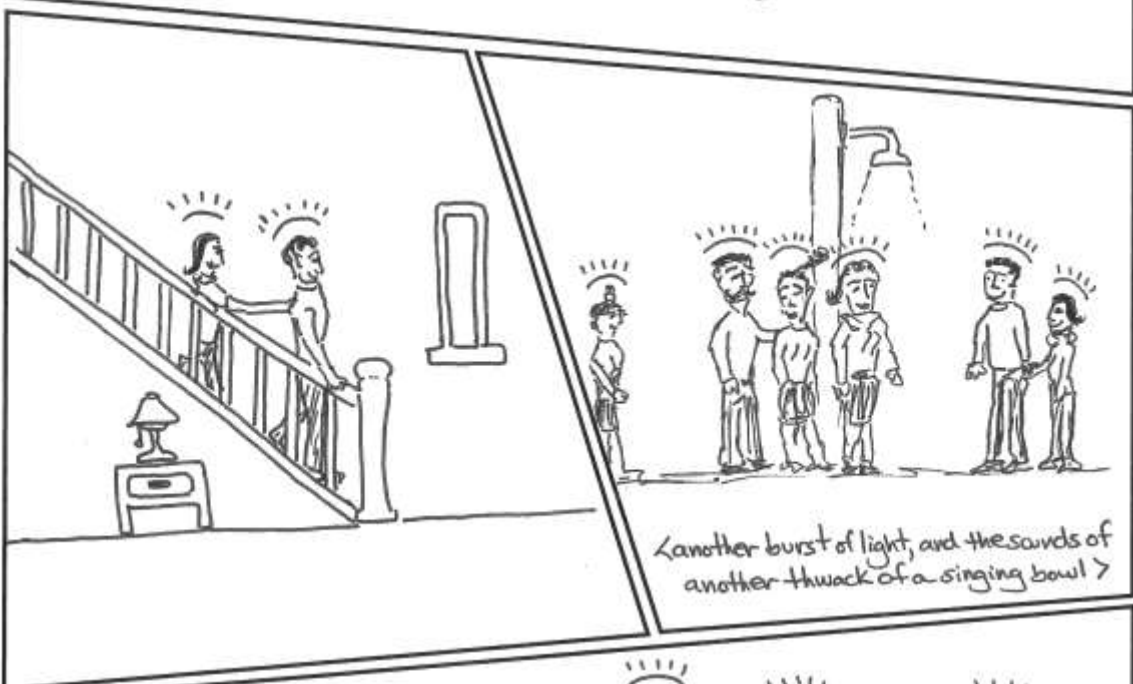




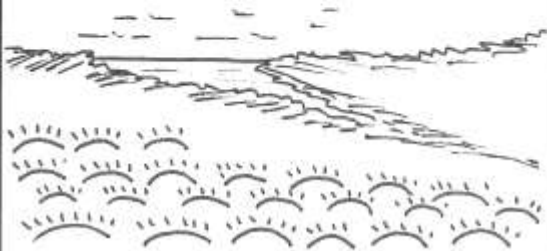




< A sharp blast of light is followed by the sounds of a thwack of a singing bowl >



< The throng makes its way east,
the sky brightening slightly as they
approach Cootes Paradise >



< At the flat area by the Desjardins
Canal, Henri looks backwards >

Mon Dieu, it
looks like the
entire town
has joined us
for our walk
to the Eco Park!



< A third blast of light, followed by the
sounds from a thwack of a singing bowl >

And ma chérie,
everyone's
glowing with
their
special
light!



What's that,
up ahead?



I don't
know...



but I'll
try to
find out!







~ THE END ~