

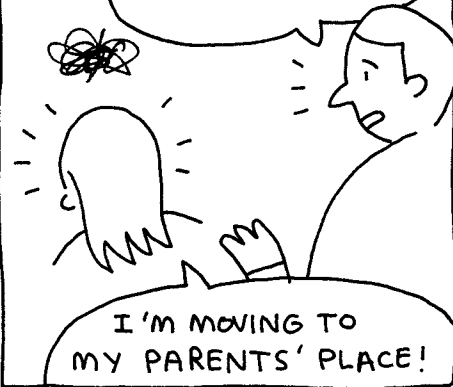
WHEN I WASN'T AT WORK,
I WAS HOME, TRYING TO
HEAL THE RIFT BETWEEN
KERA and MY MOM...



BUT ONE DAY-- I DON'T EVEN
REMEMBER WHY-- THINGS
TOTALLY EXPLODED...



WHAT?! WHERE ARE
YOU GOING??



KERA'S PARENTS LIVED
IN ELGIN, TEN MILES
AWAY... BECAUSE HER
FOLKS HAD A CAT THAT
WAS FIV+, WE COULDN'T
TAKE MAISIE THERE...



SO I DECIDED TO STAY AT
MY PARENTS' HOUSE FOR
THE TIME BEING, TO TAKE
CARE OF MAISIE...

IT'S OKAY-- IT'S ONLY
TEMPORARY... WE CAN
STILL SEE EACH OTHER
IN THE
EVENINGS,
and ON
the
WEEKENDS,
JUST
LIKE
BEFORE.*



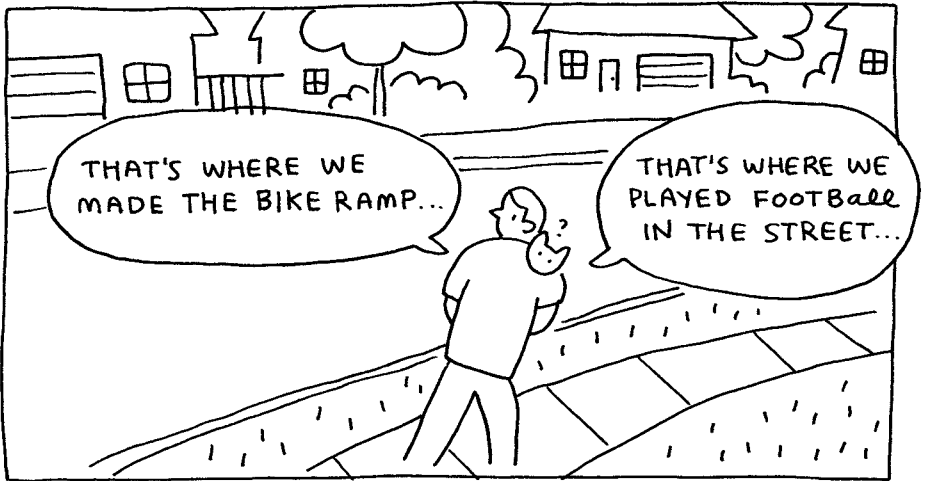
I TRIED TO STAY CALM

I'D BEGUN TO LOOK AT
LIFE AS A SERIES OF
PAINFUL EVENTS THAT
ONE SHOULD QUIETLY
ENDURE...



SO I TRIED TO MAKE
THE BEST OF IT.

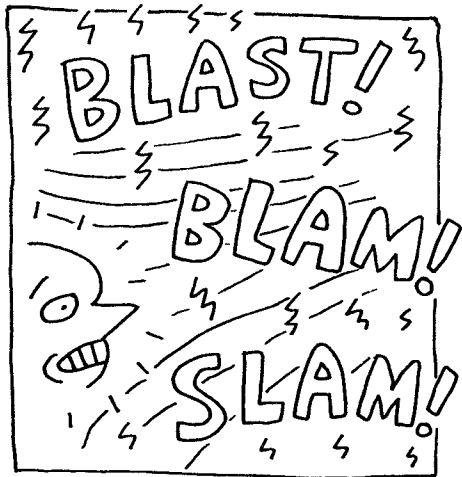
* When we were dating in the '80s, ed.

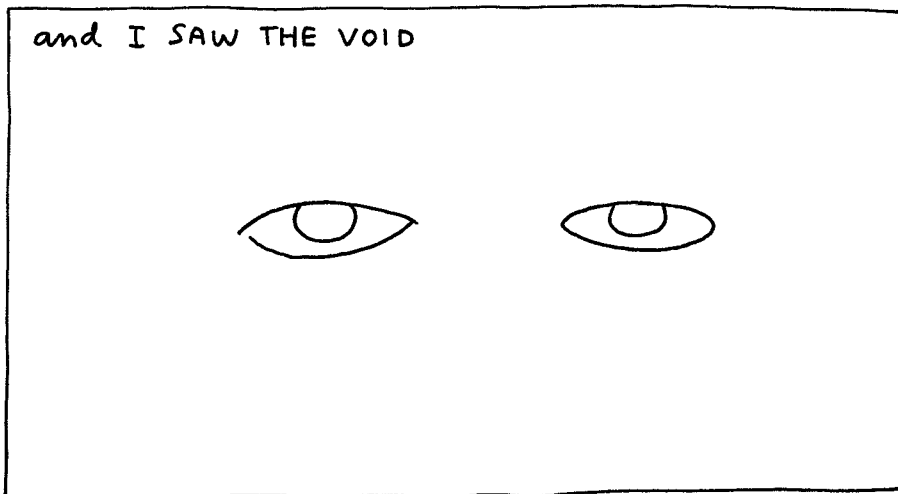


BACK IN DENVER WE USED TO GO SEE ART-HOUSE MOVIES, and MY EARS ALWAYS DID OKAY...

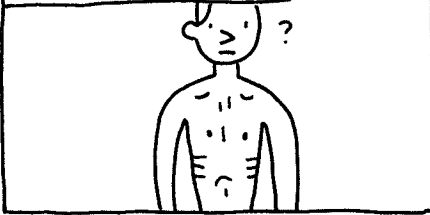
...AND NOW... OUR FEATURE PRESENTATION...

BUT I GUESS I WASN'T PREPARED FOR THE SOUND OF A MODERN, SUBURBAN MEGAPLEX...

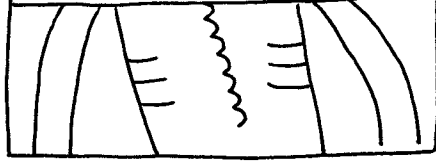




THAT SPRING, MY HEALTH, WHICH HAD BEEN FAIRLY STABLE SINCE THE SURGERY, BEGAN TO TAKE A SERIOUS TURN FOR THE WORSE...



I'D LOST ABOUT 30 LBS DURING MY ILLNESS THE PREVIOUS SUMMER, and I'D NEVER BEEN ABLE TO GAIN THEM BACK, BUT NOW all of a sudden, I WAS GETTING EVEN THINNER...



FIRST I TURNED GREEN

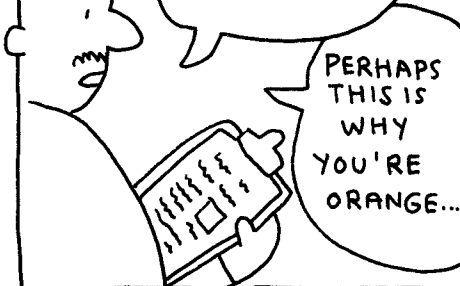


THEN I TURNED ORANGE

I HAD INSURANCE NOW, SO I WENT TO SEE THE DOCTOR...

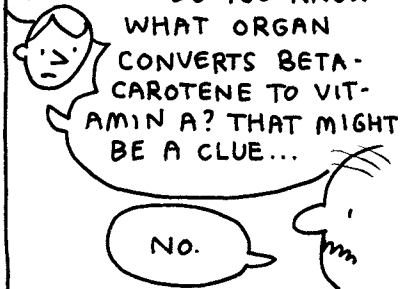


THE BLOOD TESTS SHOW YOUR BETA-CAROTENE LEVELS ARE OFF THE CHARTS!



PERHAPS THIS IS WHY YOU'RE ORANGE...

BETA-CAROTENE IS A VITAMIN A PRECURSOR, RIGHT? DO YOU KNOW WHAT ORGAN CONVERTS BETA-CAROTENE TO VITAMIN A? THAT MIGHT BE A CLUE...



I WENT HOME and LOOKED IT UP. IT WAS THE LIVER.

I BEGAN SEEING A HOLISTIC MD IN THE CITY... HE RAN all KINDS OF TESTS...

GLUTEN INTOL-ERANCE
GLIADIN



LYME DISEASE

EVERYTHING CAME BACK NEGATIVE ...

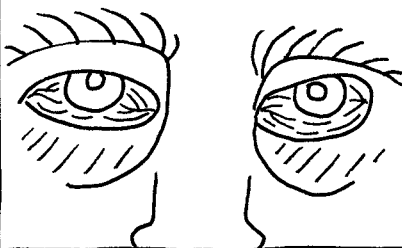
TO BE HONEST, I'M KIND OF STUMPED. LET ME TALK TO A FEW OF MY COLLEAGUES and SEE WHAT WE COME UP WITH...



AT HOME, I WAS TAKING all KINDS OF MEDICINE, VITAMINS, MINERALS, HERBS; I WAS TRYING ANYTHING BUT THERE WAS NO IMPROVEMENT...



UNEXPLAINED BRUISES APPEARED all OVER MY BODY... MY EYES WERE CONSTANTLY BLOODSHOT



MY JOINTS HURT, MY MUSCLES WASTED ... I HAD FAINTING SPELLS.

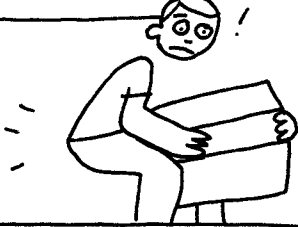


EVERY TIME I ate I'D GET SICK



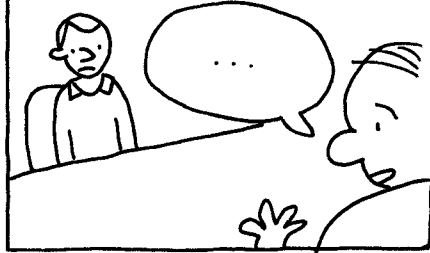
I HAD DIARRHEA SEVEN OR EIGHT TIMES A DAY...

WHEN I PICKED UP BOXES at work, I RAN THE RISK OF SHITTING MY PANTS...



... and THEN MY EYE-LASHES FELL OUT.

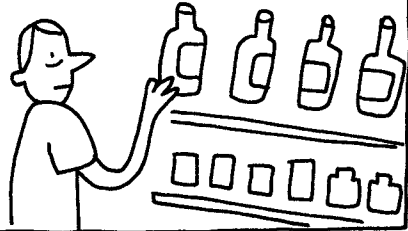
THE DOCTORS I WAS SEEING WERE COMPLETELY BAFLED... IT OCCURRED TO ME THAT MAYBE I WAS DYING.



BUT IN THE MIDST OF all this, I FELT A STRANGE PEACE. IN A WEIRD WAY, I LOOKED FORWARD WITH CURIOSITY TO WHAT WOULD COME NEXT. IF IT WAS MY TIME TO DIE, THEN I WAS OKAY WITH IT.

"IF YOU DIE, JUST DIE." *

* SOYEN SHAKU (1860-1919)



I ONLY HOPED I'D LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO SEE MY BEARS PLAY IN THE Fall...

Part Two