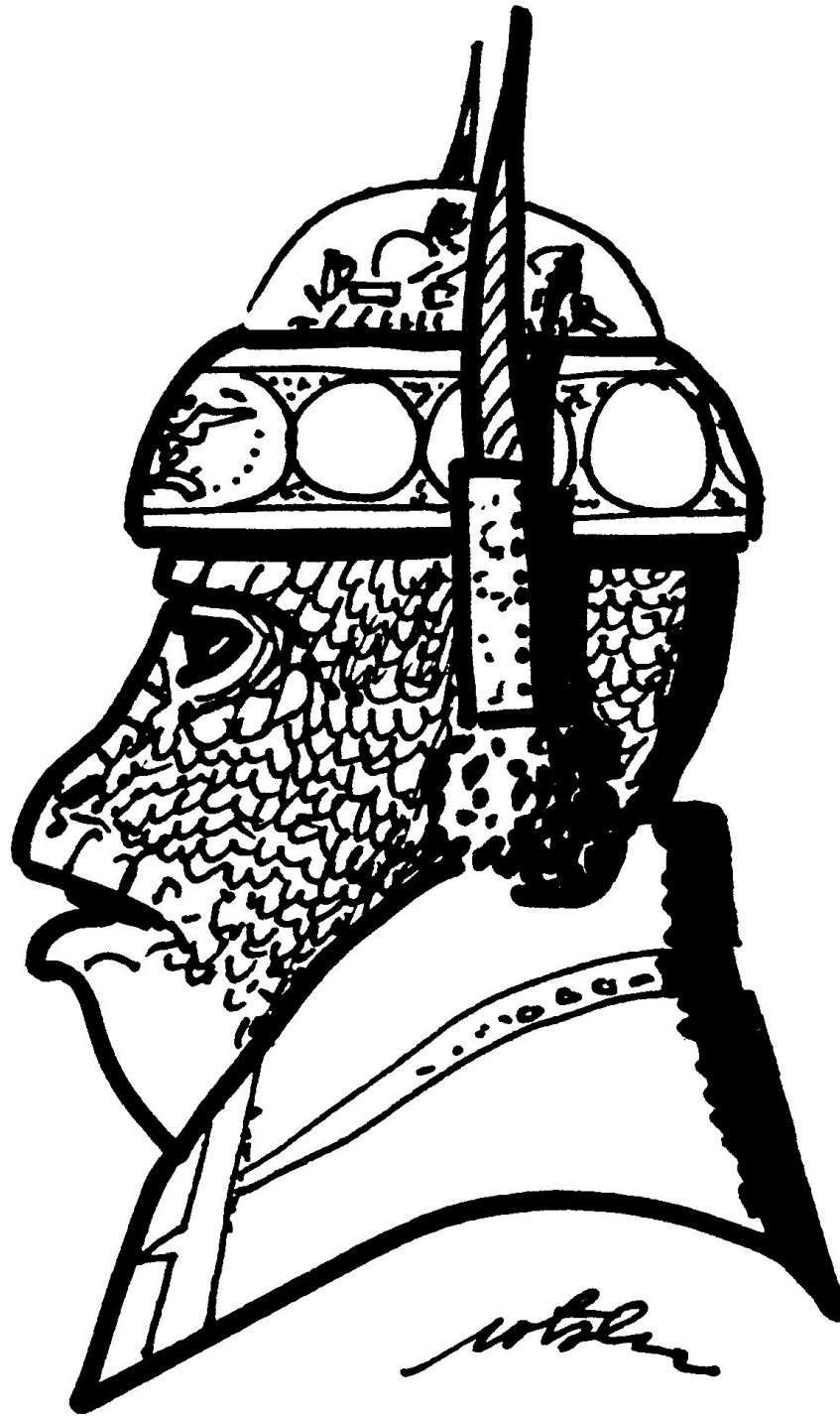


# Claims Department 70



## I was given a Smokehouse Almond gift basket; I now have gout.

OK, it's highly likely that I've had it, to one degree or another, for a long time. My foot pain issues have been around, but the various different versions of that pain would seem to indicate that there's not just gout going on.

"You've got complicated feet." Said the ER doctor.



Oh yeah, I was in the Emergency Room two times over the course of 5 days.

So, on a Thursday afternoon, I woke up with my foot hurting. It wasn't bad, but it was noticeable and I could tell that it was making walking difficult for me. I went to work, and it kept getting worse. I couldn't figure out why, as this was starting to feel worse than any other foot pain. I stopped working about 11 and headed over the hill to Santa Cruz's Dominican Hospital, where a very nice doctor ordered some tests and an X-ray, and figured there was probably an infection and giving me some pills.

I took them, but it got worse over the weekend.

You see, I had the kids, so I needed to do things like make dinner and take care of the cats. That meant I couldn't elevate my foot the way I needed to, so it got worse, and specifically it spread to my knee. The pain got worse and worse, I missed work on Monday, and that evening I went to the ER again.

This time, they had a different guy on and he ran the same tests again, but wasn't satisfied with the results, so he got me a room in the ER and did a needle thingee where he numbed my knee and drew off two huge syringes of fluid from my knee and ran tests, these showed that I did, in fact, have gout, but that didn't explain everything. The official diagnosis was gout, with minor cellulitis, exacerbated by over-use.

Sounds about right.

I stuck with the meds they'd given me earlier, and I added prednisone, which really helped. I didn't make it home until 6am Tuesday, when I finally slept, and managed to remain with my foot elevated all day. The next day, I went to work and it all managed to work out. Yeah, I still hurt and used my crutches, but overall it was an improved situation.

Now, you may know a little about gout. It's sometimes seen as a high-living syndrome. There are foods that are high in taurines tend to be a bit rich, things like red meat, shellfish, processed and especially smoked meats, dairy, and booze. As is well-known these days, I don't do the hooch, but I love beef and shellfish.

And here is where that gift basket comes in.

You see, I rarely have the cash to afford to have extra food around the office, and when something comes in for communal eating, I'm usually all over it in those times when I am made of starved. The gift basket showed up on a Monday, six tins of amazing smokehouse almonds in flavors like Elote (only OK), Smoked Almond (very good), Korean BBQ (great!), Steakhouse (excellent!) and one that I don't remember what they called it, but it had this lovely smokey flavor.

They were all packed with sodium.

Some of you may recall I had a bout of critically low sodium that saw me admitted to the hospital for three days. Since then, and somewhat paradoxically, I've been severely lim-

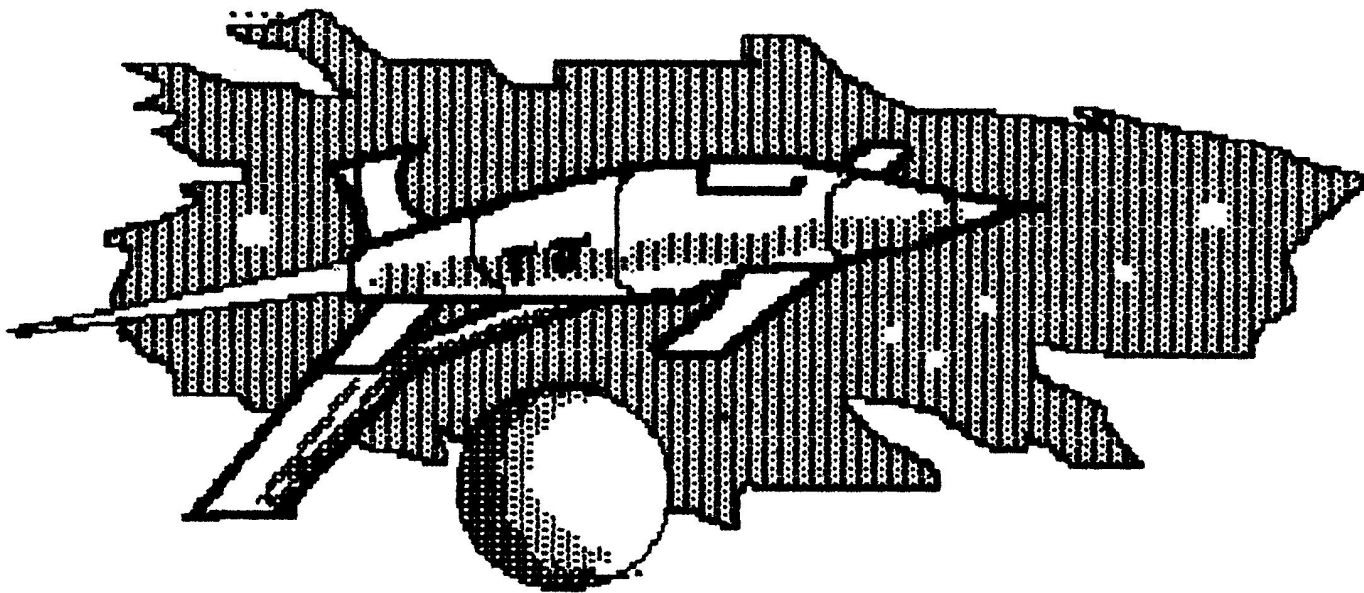
iting my sodium in-take, mostly to help my blood pressure. This, though, blew that out the window.

I was also broke, and one thing I do when I'm broke is buy a Costco 5 dollar chicken for three lunches, and a cocktail shrimp tray.

I made bad choices.

Now, the amount of nitrates and sodium, coupled with the taurines, led to a gout flare up that was the most painful thing I've ever encountered. I ended up missing three days of work, but did manage to do some stuff at home so I only lost two days of pay. I elevated my foot, and instead of cooking, I discovered that DoorDash does, in fact, deliver to our little mountain home. We had chicken. It was good.

So, I've got to deal with gout now, which is OK. We're going to Fogo de Chao, the place that brings endless meat on swords. I'll just be having the market table, which has Feijoada and salads and soups, which I love. The kids and Vanessa and the various guests at our 10 year anniversary renewals (we're doing it at SFMoMA, standing in for our original marriage, which took place in NYC's MoMA) will likely indulge in great piles of meat, but me, I'll have to keep it simple. It's just like when you find our your diabetic right before Halloween...which also happened to me.



## Art this issue

Cover by Bill Rotsler

Page 2 by Joe Mayhew

Page 3 by Terry Jeeves

Page 5 and BaCiover by España Sheriff

Page 6 (Top) and Page 7 - Vanessa Applegate

Page 6 (bottom) K8

## It's been a year of starting again. Not starting over but resuming.

The first, and most obvious, is that I'm bringing back *Exhibition Hall*. It started as a Steampunk zine in 2009, and then it sorta petered out, kinda following the path of Steampunk fandom as a whole.

Yes, I know it's still a vibrant fandom around the world, but it was no longer that new hotness by 2014.

Plus I got married and had kids. Go figure.

So, I put together an 8-page issue, and I even printed it! If you want one, let me know!

I still love Steampunk, and I've been reading a little. If only there were Steampunk cozy mysteries included with my Audible subscription! That would blow my world apart.

Then, I'm podcasting again. I've re-launched the Journey Planet interviews, starting with TAFF winner Sarah Gulde. Yes, she beat Vanessa, but it was a bit of a long-shot and Vanessa's gonna try again and hopefully we won't have health issues right in the middle of the race. I'm regularly updating Three Minute Modernist, and have done episodes of Registry, Computer History with Chris Garcia, and AI True Crime. I need to do a bunch more, but it's a start. I am hoping that I can get a good catalog of episodes done this year and turn some into articles.

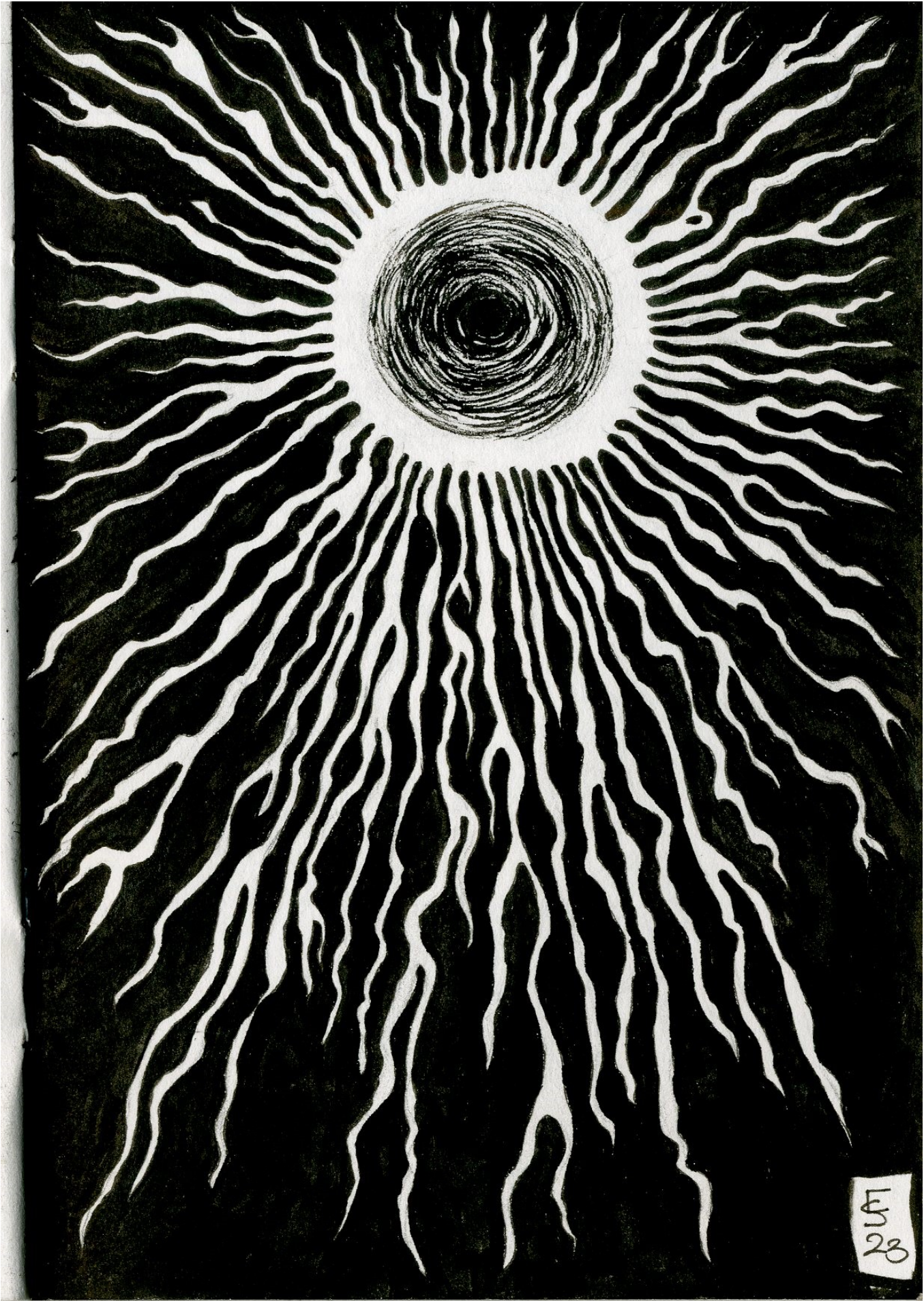
The Drink Tank continues well along. Alissa and Chuck keep me going, just like James did back in the day. It's never a thing that falls away for me, but there are times it gets harder to just bring myself to do the stuff. Knowing that such amazing people are there with ideas and asking folks for material makes it so much easier for me. I have the weirdest motivational needs; I just need someone to be there. They don't necessarily have to do anything, or they can do a ton, I just need to know that they're there. I'm weird.

Writing for the Drink Tank lately has been easy. We're doing a Goth issue, so I've been creating playlists on Spotify, writing about them, and then digging into other stuff. After that, we're doing an issue on Neurodiversity, and that one will have some deep talk about my kids and me, how we related and deal with their issues, and me with mine. It's going to be hard to write, I think, which is a rarity for me.

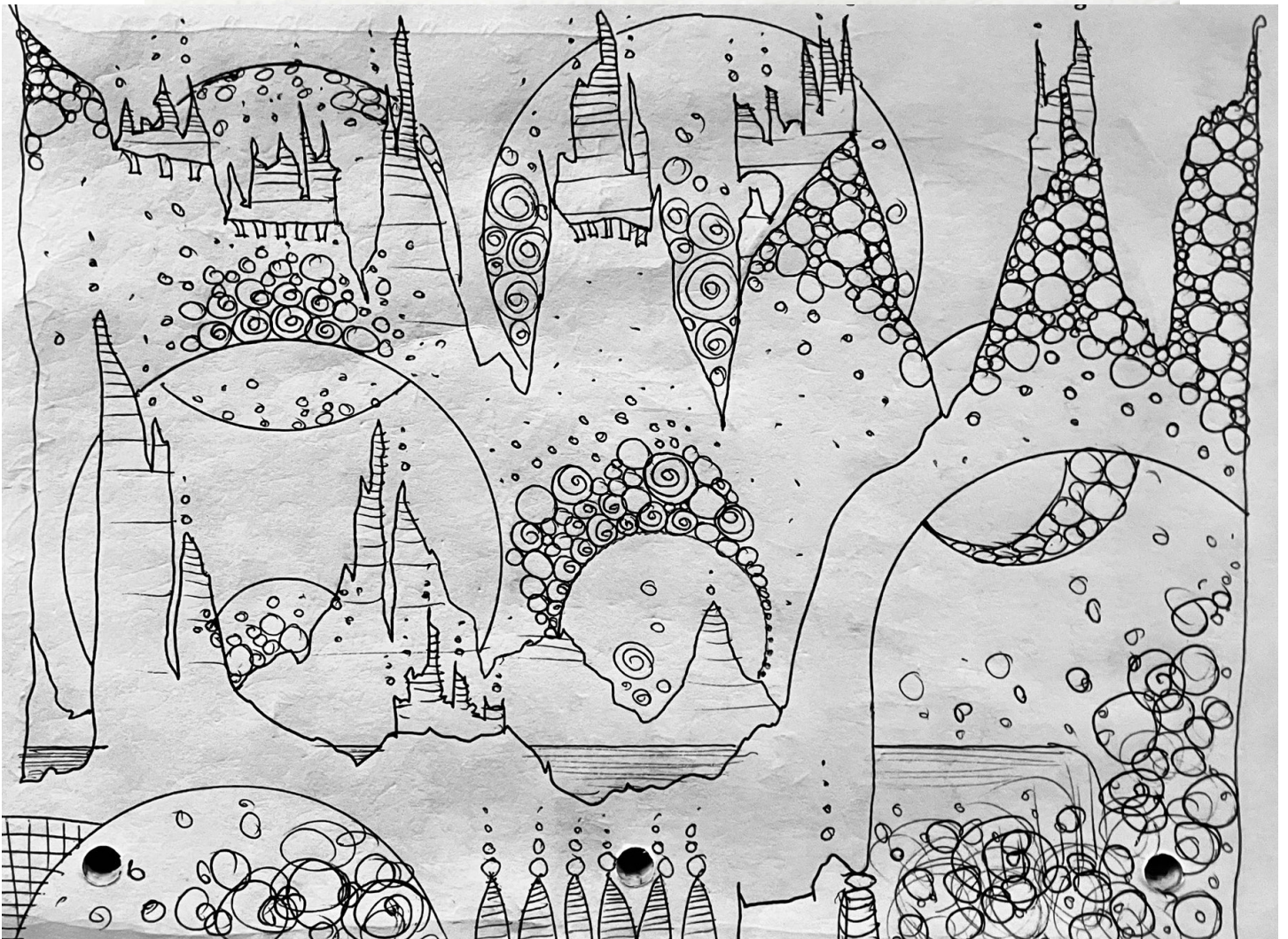
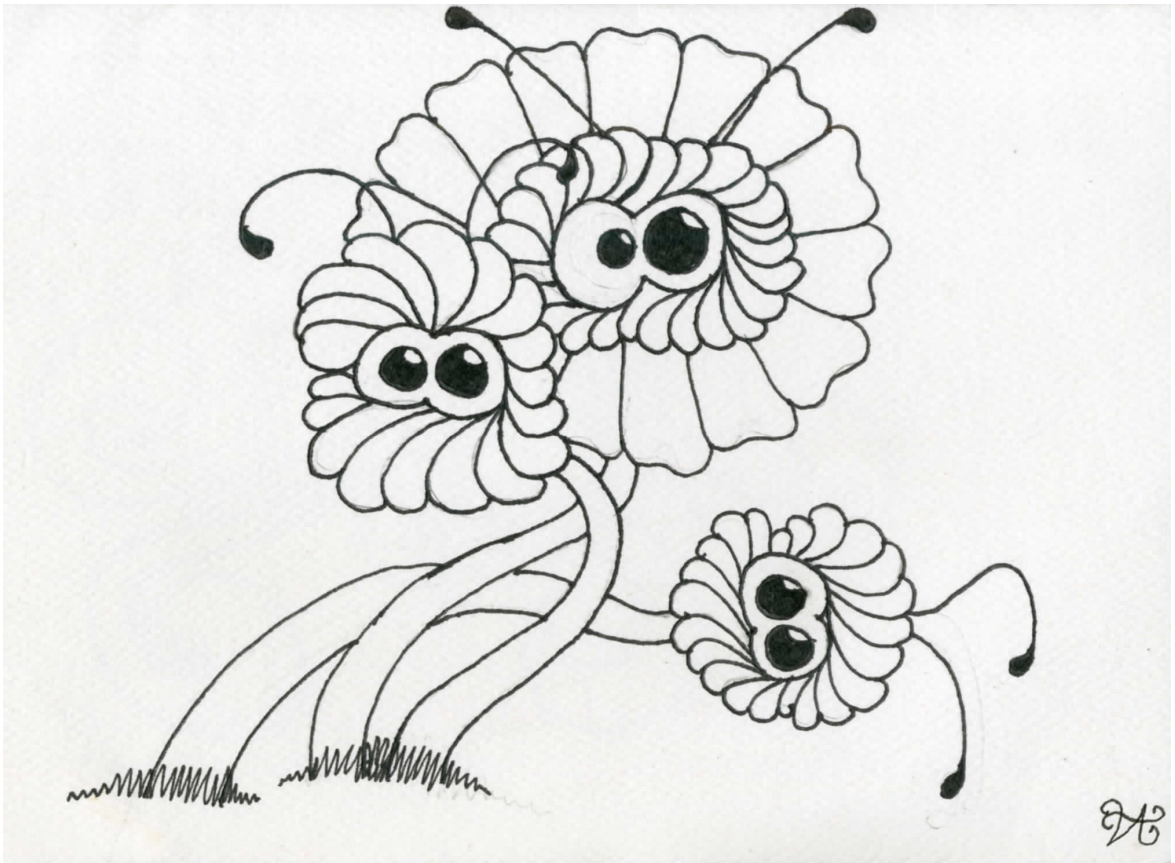
After that, it's movies so bad they're good, which I am excited for. The ones that I think get too much hate are *Ishtar* (actually a funny, off-beat, strangely-paced film) and *Dude, Where's My Car?* (completely wrong marketing, but a story that is so damn start) and, of course, *Hudson Hawk* (it was a comedy film that somehow became an action film, and is so damn watchable) that are my faves.

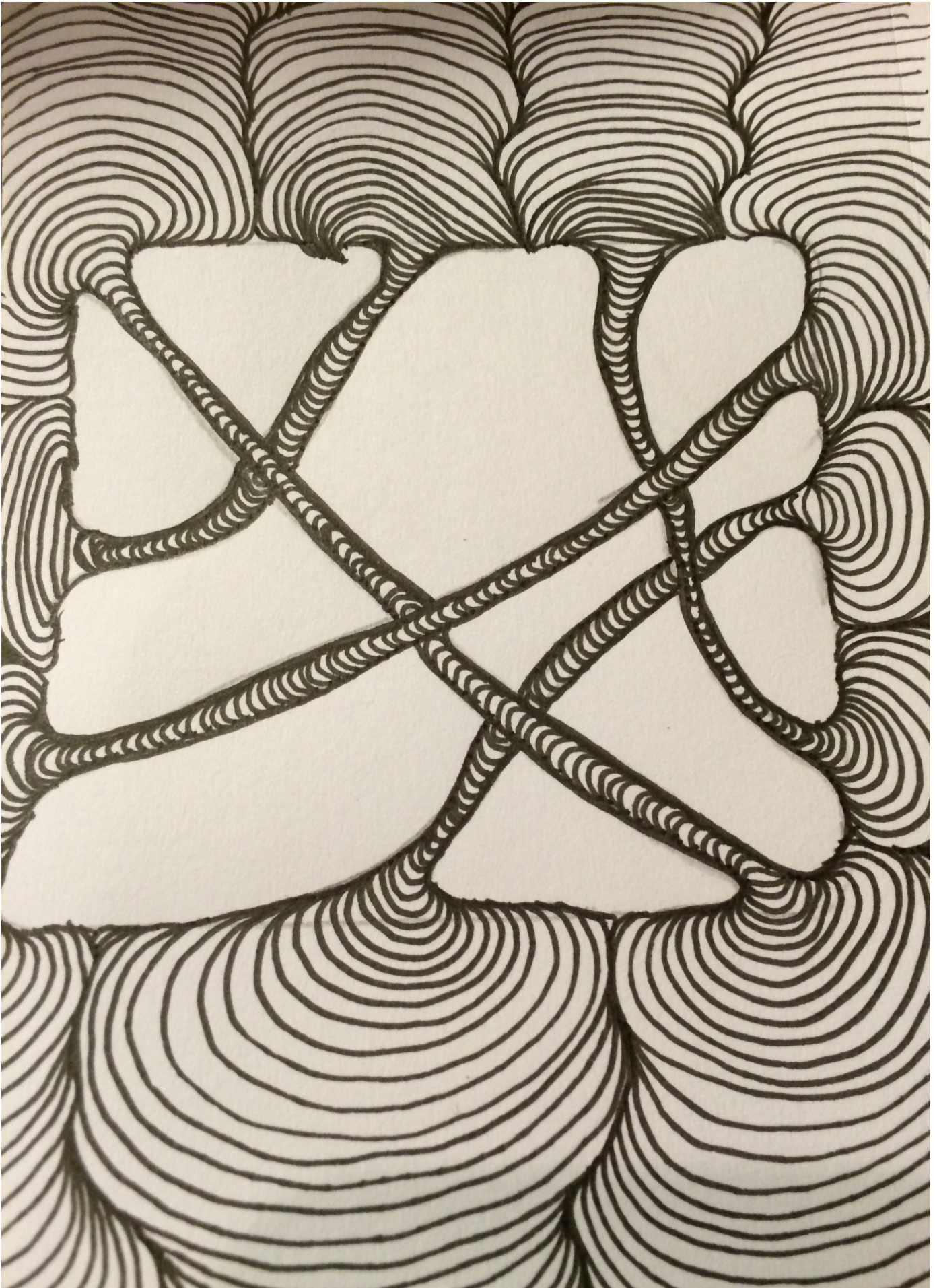
Journey Planet has a bunch of stuff, including an issue about SciFi food and that has me so excited!!! I'm gonna be writing about the kids' desire to have real versions of fictional food. Blue Milk (easy), Crabby Patties (they're basically burgers gussied up a bit), Muppet (don't ask), and *mélange* (this one will be interesting.) We're workin' for Jean Martin again, and we're coming up on 20 years of collaborating on-and-off! That's crazy pants!

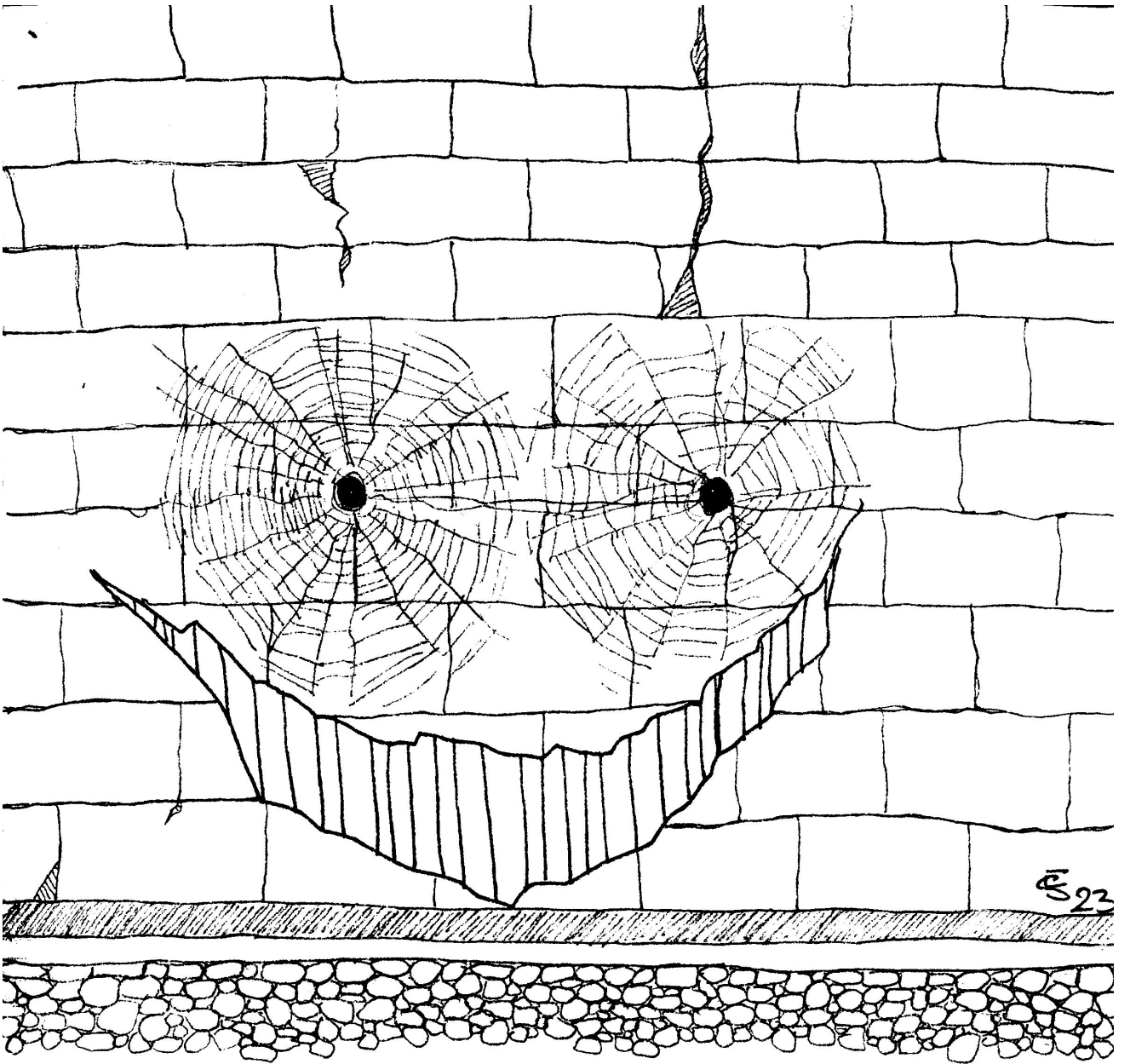
OK, this issue is pretty much just a check-in, but really, I just wanted to write a little. Here's some more art from Vanessa Applegate. K8, and España Sheriff .



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May 10th, 2024

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