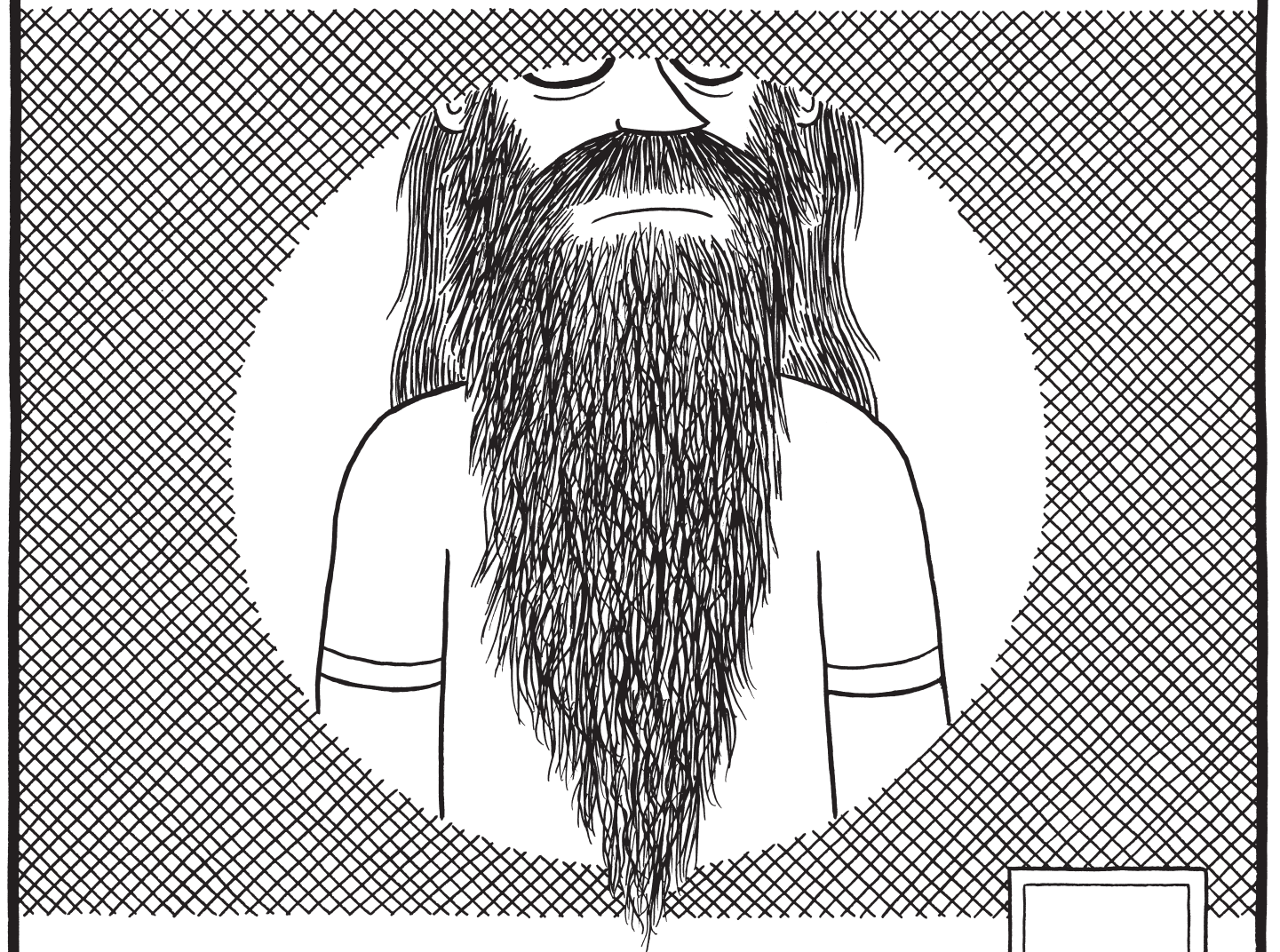




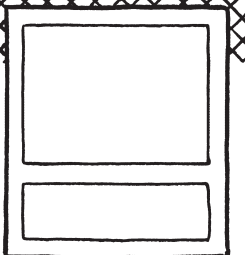
www.alec-longstreth.com

PHASE 7

#021 - \$5.00



A^E_C LONGSTRETH





ISSUE TWENTY-ONE

P.O. BOX 8907 SANTA FE, NM 87504

alec@alec-longstreth.com

JEEZ LOUISE! WHEN I SET UP MY FIRST P.O. BOX IN OAKLAND IN 2012, I REMEMBER THINKING THAT I'D HAVE IT FOR AT LEAST A DECADE. YET IT WAS JUST OVER A YEAR LATER THAT I MOVED TO ALAMEDA, CALIFORNIA AND SET UP A NEW P.O. BOX THERE. NOT EVEN TWO YEARS LATER, I'VE MOVED AGAIN! THIS TIME TO SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO. I DUTIFULLY SET UP A NEW P.O. BOX, WHICH IS LISTED ABOVE, AND IT SEEMS LIKE THIS MIGHT ACTUALLY BE THE ONE THAT MAKES IT THROUGH A DECADE....

AS I WRITE THIS, MY WIFE CLAIRE IS EXTREMELY PREGNANT. I HAVE BEEN FRANTICALLY TRYING TO FINISH THIS ISSUE BEFORE THE BABY (A GIRL!) ARRIVES. IT IS VERY LIKELY THAT BY THE TIME YOU ARE HOLDING THIS ISSUE IN YOUR HANDS, I WILL BE HOLDING MY DAUGHTER IN MINE.

CLAIRE GREW UP IN SANTA FE AND WE DECIDED TO MOVE BACK HERE SO THAT WE WOULD HAVE SOME EXTRA SUPPORT FROM HER FAMILY WHILE WE FIGURE OUT HOW TO BE PARENTS. SANTA FE IS ALSO CONSIDERABLY LESS EXPENSIVE THAN THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA, SO WE HOPE THIS WILL ALSO ALLOW US TO CONTINUE PURSUING OUR FREELANCE LIFESTYLE. IF YOU ADD ALL OF THAT UP, IT LOOKS LIKE I'M GOING TO BE HERE FOR A WHILE!

I'VE SPENT THE LAST YEAR OR SO STOCKPILING A FEW HUNDRED FULLY-SCRIPTED PAGES OF COMICS, WITH THE HOPE THAT THEY'LL HELP ME WEATHER THE FIRST FEW STORMY YEARS OF PARENTING. IT'S IMPORTANT TO ME THAT PHASE 7 CONTINUES, SO HOPEFULLY I CAN KEEP IT UP!

I'M EXCITED TO BEGIN THIS NEW PHASE OF LIFE, AND VERY MUCH LOOKING FORWARD TO LEARNING ALL KINDS OF OF NEW THINGS ABOUT LIFE IN THE COMING YEAR. UNTIL THEN, I HOPE YOU ENJOY THIS ISSUE AND I WISH YOU ALL A HAPPY NEW YEAR!

-ALEC SANTA FE, NM

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FIRST PRINTING - 400 COPIES

THE NEXT TWO ISSUES WILL EACH FEATURE A NEW STORY DRAWN IN THIS STYLE. THE REST OF THE ISSUES WILL REPRINT COMICS THAT I DREW FOR VARIOUS ANTHOLOGIES, NEWSPAPERS AND ZINES, INCLUDING SOME NEVER-RELEASED MATERIAL.

PHASE 7 #022



(13 PAGES)

PHASE 7 #023



(12 PAGES)

MY HOPE IS THAT THESE REPRINT ISSUES WILL GET ME THROUGH THE FIRST SLEEPLESS YEAR OF PARENTING.



THEN, FINALLY, IN ISSUE #024 I WILL BEGIN TELLING THE STORY THAT MADE ME WANT TO START PHASE 7 IN THE FIRST PLACE!



THE THIRD STORY IN MY "NERD TRILOGY" - THE FIRST BEING TRANSITION, ABOUT MY LOVE OF COMICS AND THE SECOND BEING WEEZER FAN, ABOUT MY FAVORITE BAND - PHASE SIX WILL EXPLORE MY LIFELONG LOVE OF STAR WARS.

PHASE SIX

I'VE ALREADY SCRIPTED OVER 100 PAGES OF THIS STORY. MY GOAL IS TO BREAK IT UP INTO SHORTER CHAPTERS SO THAT ISSUES OF PHASE 7 WILL COME OUT MORE FREQUENTLY.



DURING ALL OF THIS I WILL ALSO BE WORKING ON MY NEW, FANTASY WEBCOMIC FOR KIDS, ISLE OF ELSI, WHICH I'M REALLY EXCITED ABOUT!



WISH ME LUCK WITH ALL OF THIS STUFF. I CAN'T WAIT FOR ALL OF YOU TO READ IT!

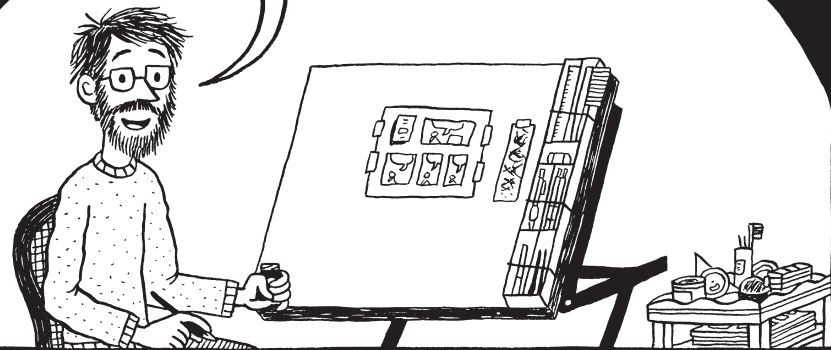


The Current

PHASE SEVEN COMICS

Plan

SINCE I'VE GOT A LITTLE BIT OF EXTRA SPACE AT THE END OF THIS ISSUE, I THOUGHT IT WOULD BE GOOD TO TALK ABOUT MY FUTURE CARTOONING PLANS.



AS MENTIONED IN THE INTRODUCTION TO THIS ISSUE, I HAVE SOME BIG CHANGES ON THE WAY IN 2016!



TO TRY AND MAKE THE MOST OUT OF MY INCREASINGLY LIMITED TIME, I'VE ALSO CHANGED HOW I'M DRAWING MY COMICS!



STARTING WITH THIS ISSUE, I NOW PRINT OUT MY ROUGH SCRIPT, USING LIGHT CYAN INK, DIRECTLY ONTO BRISTOL.



I THEN ESSENTIALLY SKIP THE PENCILING STAGE AND PROCEED DIRECTLY TO INKING. THIS HAS LOOSENED UP THE FINAL ART, WHICH I LIKE.



ALSO, IT IS A LOT FASTER! THIS ISSUE STILL TOOK A LONG TIME, BUT THAT WAS MOSTLY BECAUSE I WAS SO BUSY WITH SIDE PROJECTS AND BECAUSE OF THIS ISSUE'S HIGH PAGE COUNT!



LONGSTRETH FACIAL HAIR



FOR MY ENTIRE LIFE, MY FATHER HAS HAD A MOUSTACHE.



THERE ARE A FEW RARE PHOTOS OF HIM WITH A FULL BEARD.

HA HA! LOOK AT DAD!

WHOOOA...



WHEN I WAS ABOUT FOURTEEN, I STARTED NOTICING SOME "PEACH FUZZ" ON MY OWN CHIN.

GROSS!



LATER THAT YEAR, WHILE ON VACATION WITH MY PARENTS IN ARIZONA, I DECIDED THAT THE TIME HAD FINALLY COME!

D... DAD? DO YOU THINK YOU COULD TEACH ME HOW TO SHAVE?



HE SHOWED ME ALL OF HIS "GEAR"



AND THEN HE WALKED ME THROUGH THE PROCESS.

ALWAYS PULL DOWN NEVER SIDE TO SIDE. THAT WILL CUT YOU.



I WAS EXTREMELY NERVOUS!

I'M GONNA CUT MY FACE OFF!





ABOUT HOW I GOT 'INTO MUSIC' FOR THE FIRST TIME. SHE HAD NEVER HEARD A LOT OF MY STORIES AND WHATNOT, EVEN THOUGH MUSIC HAS BEEN A BIG PART OF MY LIFE AS LONG AS SHE'S KNOWN ME. YOU DID SOMETHING VERY SIMILAR, BUT ARTICULATED AND ILLUSTRATED IT AND SHARED IT WITH THE WORLD! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR DOING SO.

I JUST ORDERED BASEWOOD, BECAUSE EVERYONE RAVES ABOUT IT. I ALSO CAN'T FIND MY DROP TARGET ZINES #5 AND #6, SO I ORDERED REPLACEMENTS! I'VE BECOME FRIENDS WITH ANOTHER AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMIC ARTIST NAMED RYAN CLAYTOR OVER THE PAST YEAR, AND YOU MIGHT LIKE HIS WORK. CHECK OUT www.elephantateer.com FOR A LOOK AT HIS COMICS. I'VE INCLUDED OUR LOCAL PINBALL ZINE, JUST PRINTED YESTERDAY. I DON'T WRITE IT OR EDIT IT OR ANYTHING, ANOTHER LOCAL ENTHUSIAST DOES, BUT I FIGURED ZINES ARE MADE FOR SHARING!

THANKS SO MUCH FOR WHAT YOU DO. MAYBE WE'LL BUMP INTO EACH OTHER AT A PINBALL ARCADE ONE OF THESE DAYS AND YOU CAN TEACH ME HOW TO KARAOKE 'BUDDY HOLLY' IN PERSON.

DON WALTON, JR.
ALBUQUERQUE, NM

THANKS FOR THE LONG LETTER, DON! LET'S SEE IF I CAN ANSWER ALL OF YOUR QUESTIONS....

I WAS BORN IN 1979, SO YES! WE WERE ESSENTIALLY THE SAME AGE WHEN THE BLUE ALBUM AND PINKERTON WERE RELEASED.

I CAN'T REMEMBER IF I EVER GAVE MY SISTER A HARD TIME FOR GETTING RID OF HER BLUE ALBUM. I DO KNOW THAT SHE EVENTUALLY REPLACED HER GIFTED COPY WITH A NEW ONE FOR HERSELF.

I'M GLAD MY WEEZER STORIES ENCOURAGED YOU TO SHARE SOME OF YOUR OWN!

AS YOU'LL SEE WHEN YOU REREAD DROP TARGET #5, I ALSO KNOW RYAN CLAYTOR! HE DREW THE CENTER SPREAD "DREAM MACHINE" FOR THAT ISSUE AND CONTRIBUTED SOME GREAT INTERVIEWS TO ISSUES #6 AND #7 AS WELL. RYAN HAS BEEN A LONGTIME SUPPORTER OF PHASE 7, IS AN ALL AROUND NICE GUY, AND IS A VERY ENTHUSIASTIC PINBALL AFICIONADO!

THANKS FOR SENDING ALONG A COPY OF ALBUQUERQUE PINBALL QUARTERLY. I RECEIVED IT IN CALIFORNIA, BUT I HAVE SINCE MOVED TO NEW MEXICO!

SANTA FE IS PRETTY MUCH "DRY" AS FAR AS PINBALL GOES, SO I'M SURE I'LL HEAD DOWN TO ALBUQUERQUE ONE OF THESE DAYS FOR A PINCRAWL, AND I CAN USE THE LIST OF LOCATIONS IN ABQ TO PLAN MY ROUTE!

THANKS

FIRST AND FOREMOST, THE PHASE 7 SUBSCRIBERS WHO WAITED PATIENTLY FOR THIS ISSUE! THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT.

MY MOTHER, FATHER AND SISTERS.

JASON SHIGA FOR COMING OVER AND DRAWING AT MY PLACE. IT WAS A PLEASURE TALKING SHOP AND I APPRECIATE ALL OF THE CARTOONIST PARENTING ADVICE YOU GAVE ME!

GREG MEANS AND NICOLE GEORGES FOR BEING MY ACCOUNTABILIBUDDIES AND HELPING ME HAVE SOME VERY PRODUCTIVE MONTHS OF CARTOONING

OUR CALIFORNIA FRIENDS MONICA, KETTNER & LACY FOR HELPING US PACK UP OUR GIANT MOVING TRUCK

CLAIRE'S FAMILY → NATCH, DENNIS, ELLIE & MICHAEL → FOR HELPING US UNPACK OUR GIANT MOVING TRUCK, AND FOR WELCOMING ME INTO THE SANTA FE COMMUNITY.

JON CHAD FOR THE OCCASIONAL WORK PARTY WHILE I WAS SPORADICALLY IN VERMONT AND FOR STAYING STRONG ON THE PINBALL FRONT WHEN MY STRENGTH WAS FLAGGING. IT WAS A REAL HONOR TO WORK WITH YOU ON ALL SEVEN ISSUES OF DROP TARGET!

ALL OF MY STUDENTS AT THE CENTER FOR CARTOON STUDIES AND THE COMICS MFA PROGRAM AT THE CALIFORNIA COLLEGE OF THE ARTS. I OFTEN FEEL THAT I LEARN AS MUCH ABOUT COMICS BY TEACHING YOU, AS YOU LEARN FROM ME.

MY WIFE, CLAIRE, WHO CONTINUES TO STAND BY ME AND TO SUPPORT MY CREATIVE LIFESTYLE IN A HUNDRED DIFFERENT WAYS. I'M SO EXCITED TO LEARN HOW TO BE A PARENT WITH YOU. I KNOW YOU'RE GOING TO BE AN AMAZING MOTHER.

LAST, BUT NOT LEAST, "CLAIRE JR." WHO PROVIDED A LOT OF MOTIVATION IN THE HOME STRETCH. I CAN'T WAIT TO MEET YOU.

THEN I'VE READ PART TWO, WHICH I ALSO THOROUGHLY ENJOYED. I GOT TO SEE WEEZER PERFORM PINKERTON ON THEIR MEMORIES TOUR IN 2010, AND THAT WAS AN AMAZING EXPERIENCE, BUT I'D BASICALLY GIVE ANYTHING TO GO BACK IN TIME AND SEE THEM PLAY WHEN PINKERTON WAS ACTUALLY RELEASED, AND TO BE A PART OF THE FAN COMMUNITY THEN. NOW THEIR FANBASE IS SO HUGE, AND LARGELY BASED ON ALBUMS OF THEIRS I'M NOT A FAN OF (I.E. ANYTHING AFTER PINKERTON) THAT IT'S HARD FOR ME TO RELATE. THAT'S PROBABLY WHY I CONNECT SO MUCH TO YOUR ZINES, ACTUALLY—THEY FEEL SMALL AND PERSONAL, A 1-TO-1 CONNECTION BETWEEN THE FAN AND THEIR FANDOM. IT'S HARD TO GET THAT FEELING NOWADAYS.

I'M ALSO WRITING BECAUSE I FINALLY MADE MY OWN WEEZER FAN COMIC! WELL, IT ACTUALLY USES WEEZER (SPECIFICALLY PINKERTON) TO EXPLORE KIND OF A ROUGH TIME IN MY LIFE WHEN PINKERTON MEANT A LOT TO ME. I KNOW THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO FIND PINKERTON CREEPY, OR UNCOMFORTABLY PERSONAL, BUT THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I LOVE IT SO MUCH. IT WAS THERE FOR ME DURING TIMES WHEN I FELT UGLY AND LONELY AND ISOLATED. ANYWAY, THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR ENCOURAGING ME TO MAKE IT; HONESTLY, KNOWING THERE WAS SOMEONE OUT THERE WHO WANTED TO READ IT HELPED A LOT. I HOPE YOU ENJOY!

SINCERELY,
HANNAH WATANABE-ROCCO
BROOKLYN, NY

I'M HONORED THAT MY WEEZER COMICS INSPIRED YOU TO MAKE YOUR OWN, HANNAH! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR SENDING ME A COPY— I DID ENJOY IT VERY MUCH, AND I CAN RELATE TO YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT PINKERTON, ONE OF THE GREATEST ALBUMS OF ALL TIME!

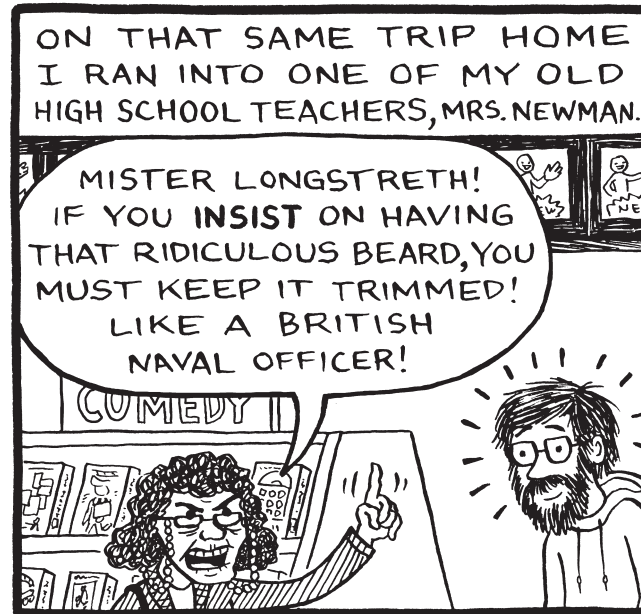
IF ANY PHASE 7 READERS WOULD LIKE TO CHECK OUT HANNAH'S COMIC "ACROSS THE SEA" YOU CAN READ THE WHOLE THING FOR FREE ON HER WEBSITE:
www.hannahwr.com/across-the-sea/

HEY ALEC,
JUST FINISHED READING THE 'WEEZER TRILOGY' OF PHASE 7, AND I LOVED IT! I HAVE FOLLOWED ALL THE ISSUES OF DROP TARGET ZINE, BUT THIS IS

THE FIRST NON-PINBALL COMIC OF YOURS THAT I'VE READ. I PICKED THEM UP BECAUSE I WAS A DIE HARD WEEZER FAN (FAN CLUB #604) FROM 1994-2000 AND BEYOND... A LOT OF THE STORIES YOU SHARE PARALLEL SIMILAR EXPERIENCES IN MY LIFE. YOU HAVE A MUCH BETTER MEMORY THAN I DO. I DON'T REMEMBER FIRST HEARING 'UNDONE,' BUT IT DID SPUR ME TO PURCHASE THE ALBUM BECAUSE I LIKED QUIRKY STUFF THEN (AND NOW). I REMEMBER THE DAY I BOUGHT IT, FROM MEDIA PLAY, A STORE THAT CLOSED DOWN AT LEAST 15 YEARS AGO. I ALSO REMEMBER THE DAY PINKERTON CAME OUT AND I RAN OUT AND BOUGHT IT AS WELL. I WAS ACTUALLY CRUSHED WHEN I HEARD THAT 'RAW' SOUND, AND THAT THE POLISH HAD BEEN KNOCKED OFF IT. RIVERS SINGING ABOUT SEX AND SWEARING ON THE ALBUM, AND IN THE WEEZINE, UPSET ME AT THAT AGE. I HATED LIVE ALBUMS AT THE TIME BECAUSE 'THE PRODUCTION WASN'T AS GOOD'. HA HA... ANYWAY, I GOT OVER IT AND PINKERTON IS STILL MY FAVORITE WEEZER ALBUM AND EASILY IN MY TOP THREE FAVORITE ALBUMS EVER. I WAS BORN IN 1980, SO I'M GUESSING WE ARE ABOUT THE SAME AGE BASED ON THE STORIES YOU SHARED. I HAVE TO ASK, WHY DID YOUR SISTER GIVE AWAY HER BLUE ALBUM??? HAVE YOU BUSTED HER CHOPS SINCE? HA HA... NICE THAT YOU NOTED 'SUSANNE' AS YOUR FAVORITE WEEZER TRACK. 'JAMIE' AND 'WALT DISNEY' ARE MINE. ODD THAT THEIR B-SIDES RESONATE EVEN MORE WITH FANS THAN THE SINGLES. ('BEVERLY HILLS' BEING MY LEAST FAVORITE WEEZER SONG. HOW YOU STUCK WITH THEM THROUGH THAT I'LL NEVER UNDERSTAND... HA HA...)

I WORE MY WEEZER T-SHIRT NEARLY EVERY DAY, WASHING IT CONSTANTLY UNTIL IT WAS THREADBARE. THEN I FINALLY FOUND A REPLACEMENT AND DID THE SAME. I WORKED FOR A RADIO STATION DURING THOSE YEARS BEFORE THE GREEN ALBUM CAME OUT, AND ALL THE LISTENERS AND BANDS WE WORKED WITH CALLED ME 'THE WEEZER GUY!' I EVEN BECAME FRIENDS WITH THE ORIGINAL MEMBERS OF SWITCHFOOT DURING THOSE YEARS BECAUSE OF OUR SHARED LOVE OF WEEZER, AND THEY WERE CONSTANTLY TOURING THROUGH ALBUQUERQUE.

ANYWAY, I JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR BRINGING BACK A LOT OF MEMORIES, AND FOR TELLING YOUR STORY WITH SUCH FOCUS, BUT ALSO KEEPING IT ENGAGING AND INTERESTING. A FEW WEEKS AGO I TOLD MY WIFE OF NEARLY TEN YEARS



BEARDOS

PART ONE



DURING MY FIRST WEEK OF COLLEGE I BOUGHT A PAIR OF HAIRCUTTING SCISSORS.

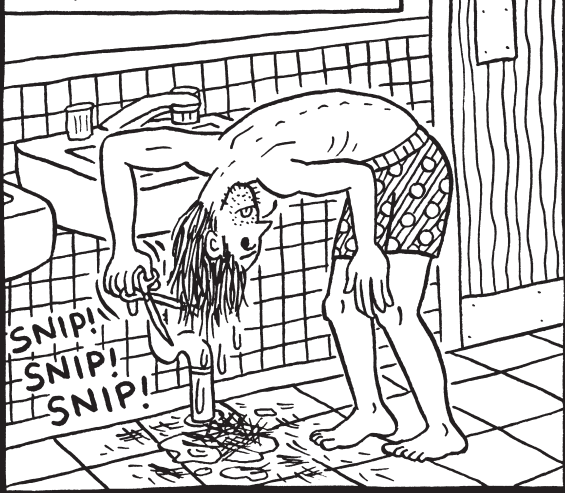
I'LL NEVER HAVE TO PAY TWENTY BUCKS FOR A HAIRCUT AGAIN!



WHENEVER I NEEDED A HAIRCUT, I'D JUST USE THE BATHROOM IN MY DORM.



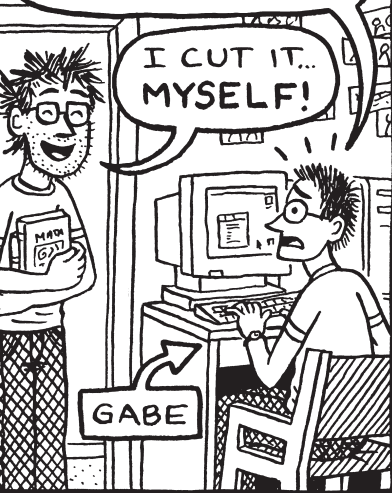
I DID MY BEST TO CUT ALL OF MY HAIR TO AN EQUAL LENGTH.



THE HARDEST PART WAS THE BACK.



LONGSTRETH, WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HAIR?



GABE WAS MY BEST FRIEND IN COLLEGE. HE GREW UP IN A SUBURB OF PORTLAND, OREGON AND I WAS FROM A SUBURB OF SEATTLE, SO SOMETIMES WE'D HANG OUT DURING WINTER BREAK.



EVERY YEAR, GABE AND HIS HIGH SCHOOL FRIEND GRIZZO THREW AN EPIC NEW YEAR'S EVE PARTY IN THE PORTLAND AREA. I NEVER MISSED IT.



THIS LETTER MEANT A GREAT DEAL TO ME. IT FELT SO WONDERFUL TO RECEIVE PRAISE FROM THE VERY BAND THAT INSPIRED THE PROJECT IN THE FIRST PLACE!

IN ADDITION TO BEING ONE HALF OF THE GREATEST WIZARD ROCK BAND ON EARTH, JOE IS ALSO A TALENTED CARTOONIST AND ZINESTER IN HIS OWN RIGHT. YOU CAN GET THE FIRST TWO ISSUES OF HIS MINICOMIC GOOD LUCK (ABOUT THE BAND, GOOD LUCK) AS WELL AS SOME OF HIS OTHER ZINES AT:

joedegeorge.bigcartel.com

WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, WHY DON'T YOU CHECK OUT HARRY AND THE POTTERS!
www.harryandthepotters.com

AND YES, I HAVE PLAYED WIZARD OF OZ, AND I AGREE THAT IT'S A GREAT PINBALL MACHINE!

DEAR ALEC,

JUST AN INDEFENSIBLY DILATORY NOTE OF THANKS/APPRECIATION FOR KEEPING ME 'UP TO DATE' ON ALL YOUR LATEST EFFORTS, FROM THE WEEZER MATERIAL (WHICH I READ WITH FASCINATION AND ORBITAL DISTANCE, HAVING NEVER HEARD A WEEZER SONG IN MY LIFE BUT OF COURSE BEING SYMPATHETIC TO YOUR ENTHUSIASM, AS WELL AS FAMILIAR IN MY OWN LIFE WITH INTERESTS PARALLEL THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY CONGRUENT...) YOUR HONEST LOVE AND EXCITEMENT FOR THEIR MUSIC IS HEARTENING.

ALSO WAS SURPRISED AND COMPELLED BY YOUR 'BASEWOOD' ROCK OPERA... I HAD NO IDEA. "FALLING" IS A GREAT SONG, BEAUTIFULLY COMPOSED AND HARMONIZED... ALSO LIKED "LOOKING UP" A LOT... SAVED THESE SONGS TO MY ITUNES... VERY IMPRESSIVE AND FINE WORK ALL AROUND —→ MY COMMENDATIONS, AND I HOPE YOU'VE ENJOYED DOING IT ALL...

AS ALWAYS, I SEND YOU MY VERY BEST AND WARMEST, AND HOPE ALL'S WELL.

CHRIS WARE

OAK PARK, IL

P.S. AND OF COURSE, CONGRATULATIONS FOR FINISHING 'BASEWOOD' —→ A HEARTY HANDSHAKE, ETC...!

FOR MY BIRTHDAY THIS YEAR, I CLEARED MY SCHEDULE AND THEN SPENT THE WHOLE DAY SITTING ON MY COUCH, LISTENING TO MY GRANDFATHER'S OLD JAZZ RECORDS AND READING MR. WARE'S LATEST COMICS PROJECT: BUILDING STORIES.

I INCORRECTLY ASSUMED THAT I WOULD BE ABLE TO READ ALL FOURTEEN OF THE DIFFERENTLY-SIZED COMICS THAT MAKE UP THIS BOXED SET IN A SINGLE DAY. IT TOOK ME THREE DAYS TO CAREFULLY READ EVERYTHING, AND IT WAS EASILY ONE OF THE MOST MASTERFUL PIECES OF CARTOONING I HAVE EVER EXPERIENCED.

I HAVE LEARNED A LOT ABOUT COMICS OVER THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS, WHILE I HAVE BEEN DRAWING THEM. EACH TIME I READ A NEW BOOK BY MR. WARE, I NOT ONLY SEE THE LESSONS I HAVE LEARNED IN ACTION, BUT I ALSO LEARN MANY NEW THINGS ABOUT WHAT IS POSSIBLE WITH COMICS.

AS COMICS MORE-AND-MORE BECOME A STEPPING STONE THAT MANY CREATIVE PEOPLE USE TO GAIN ACCESS TO OTHER MEDIUMS THAT THEY PERCEIVE AS MORE LEGITIMATE (ANIMATION, FILM, ETC.) IT'S A BLESSING TO HAVE MR. WARE STICK WITH COMICS, AND THROUGH HIS WORK, PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF HIS CHOSEN MEDIUM.

BUILDING STORIES IS AVAILABLE ANYWHERE GOOD COMICS ARE SOLD. I HIGHLY RECOMMEND IT!

DEAR ALEC,

I THINK THAT YOUR BOOK BASEWOOD IS GREAT! MY FAVORITE CHARACTER IS ARGUS. I LIKE THE DETAIL TOO. AT SOME PARTS THEY ARE SAD, BUT OTHERS ARE HAPPY.

I LOVE ALL OF YOUR BOOKS OF WHICH I'VE READ. I THINK YOU SHOULD KEEP ON MAKING BOOKS! TRUST ME, THEY'RE GREAT.

REX GRUBE
(AGE 8)

LOS ANGELES, CA

REX! THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR WRITING TO ME AND FOR ALL YOUR KIND WORDS. SOMEHOW, IT MEANS SO MUCH MORE TO ME TO RECEIVE A FAN LETTER FROM A KID THAN JUST ANOTHER ADULT (SORRY, ADULTS). I'M SO GLAD TO HEAR THAT YOU ENJOYED BASEWOOD.

MY NEXT COMICS PROJECT, ISLE OF ELSI, WHICH BEGINS NEXT YEAR, IS JUST FOR KIDS! I HOPE THAT YOU WILL READ IT, ALONG WITH YOUR BROTHERS AND SISTER (HELLO GEORGE! HI GOLDIE! WELCOME, SONNY!) AND THAT YOU WILL ALL ENJOY IT!

DEAR ALEC,

I DON'T KNOW IF YOU REMEMBER ME; MY NAME IS HANNAH AND I WROTE YOU A LETTER AFTER ISSUE #17 OF PHASE 7, WEEZER FAN PART ONE. SINCE

NOTES

1:1 - PICTURED CLOCKWISE IN THIS PANEL ARE 1) MY GRANDFATHER, THACHER LONGSTRETH, IN 1964. HE WROTE OF HIS FACIAL HAIR, "MY BEARD WAS A BRIEF AFFECTATION THAT ENDED WHEN A WAITRESS, SEEING IT, EXCLAIMED, 'OH, MR. LONGSTRETH—YOU'RE NOT ONE OF THEM!'" 2) MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER, JOHN CLAGHORN, WHO WAS A PAINTER AND AMATEUR CARTOONIST! YOU CAN SEE A COMIC HE DREW ABOUT A 1935 CAMPING TRIP ON MY SITE: www.alec-longstreth.com/comics/1935/ 3) MY FATHER.

3:6 - I SCRIPTED AND DREW THIS PANEL BEFORE KNOWING THAT I WILL, IN FACT, HAVE KIDS SOMEDAY!

9:3 - LEFT TO RIGHT: LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA; SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA; SEATTLE, WASHINGTON; PORTLAND, OREGON

13:4 - THE BASEWOOD BEARD FLICKR SET: www.flickr.com/photos/longstreth/albums/72157606486868834

35:3 - JASON LUTES WAS DRAWING BERLIN: CITY OF SMOKE, AVAILABLE FROM DRAWN & QUARTERLY. ISBN 978-1-897299-53-1

35:4 - JON CHAD WAS DRAWING THE BAD-VENTURES OF BOBO BACKSLACK AVAILABLE FROM ADHOUSE BOOKS. ISBN 978-1-935233-28-2

36:2 - WITH BIN LADEN DEAD, TEACHER SHAVES 10-YEAR-OLD BEARD: www.komonews.com/news/local/121107609.html

40:4 - BETH HETLAND'S WEBSITE: www.beth-hetland.com

41:4 - THE BASEWOOD BEARD VIDEO: www.youtube.com/watch?v=---4kLh5zhs

41:2 - SEE BACK COVER!

LETTERS

P.O. BOX 8907 SANTA FE, NM 87504

NOTE: LETTERS TO PHASE 7 BECOME PROPERTY OF THE COMIC AND ARE ASSUMED INTENDED FOR PUBLICATION IN WHOLE OR IN PART (UNLESS OTHERWISE INDICATED).

DEAR ALEC,
WORDS CANNOT CAPTURE MY AMAZEMENT AT THE BASEWOOD ROCK OPERA YOU HAVE PRODUCED. I JUST GOT HOME FROM TOUR AND FOUND YOUR LATEST PHASE 7 AWAITING MY ARRIVAL. YOU ALREADY HAD CREATED A BEAUTIFUL OPUS IN YOUR DRAWING OF BASEWOOD, BUT I WAS CERTAINLY NOT EXPECTING A ROCK OPERA FROM YOU AND YOUR COLLEAGUES. THIS IS MORE THAN JUST ICING ON THE CAKE, IT IS A WHOLE 'NOTHER CAKE WITH RICH AND SWEET FLAVORFUL TONES.

I WAS REALLY FLOORED WITH THE PRODUCTION. IT GOT ME VERY TEARY EYED TOWARDS THE END. YOU DID SUCH A GREAT JOB HERE, ALEC, AND I'M SO PROUD TO KNOW YOU AS AN ARTIST AND TO SEE YOUR VISIONS COME TO FRUITION. ALSO I ABSOLUTELY LOVE YOUR PERFORMANCE AS THE MONSTER. I LAUGHED AND I CRIED. IT'S REALLY WONDERFUL WORK. THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR PRODUCING IT AND FOR SENDING IT TO ME. I REALLY LOVE IT. I ALMOST FEEL LIKE IN A WAY YOU HAVE OUTDONE US, HERE.

I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO ALL YOU WILL BE PRODUCING. I HOPE ONE DAY I'LL BE ABLE TO MAKE SOMETHING WITH HALF THE QUALITY YOU PUT OUT. YOU'RE AT THE TOP OF THE D.I.Y. TIER. DON'T STOP!

I WISH WE WOULD HAVE HAD MORE TIME WHEN WE WERE IN THE BAY TO COME SEE YOU. I HOPE EVERYTHING IS GOING ALL RIGHT!

HAVE YOU PLAYED THE NEW WIZARD OF OZ PINBALL MACHINE? YOU GOTTA CHECK IT OUT. IT IS MY FAVORITE PINBALL MACHINE OF ALL TIME AND I THINK IT'S UP YOUR ALLEY.

I'M WISHING YOU ALL THE BEST, HERE. THANK YOU SO MUCH AGAIN, AND THANK YOU FOR THE SHOUT OUT. IT IS A REAL PLEASURE TO HAVE YOU ON EARTH. I HOPE YOU STAY ON THIS PLANET FOR A LONG TIME.

XOXO,
JOE DEGEORGE
PROVIDENCE, RI

AS I MENTIONED IN THE NOTES OF PHASE 7 #020, HARRY AND THE POTTERS WERE ONE OF THE MAIN SOURCES OF INSPIRATION FOR SONGS FROM THE BASEWOOD. THE IDEA OF SINGING SONGS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF CHARACTERS FROM A BOOK SET ME ON THE PATH FOR THAT PROJECT. IMAGINATIVE SONGWRITING COMBINED WITH OVER-THE-TOP LIVE PERFORMANCES, BURSTING WITH ENERGY, HAVE MADE HARRY AND THE POTTERS ONE OF MY FAVORITE BANDS. THIS IS ALL TO SAY THAT



WHEN I GOT BACK TO COLLEGE, I SCANNED THE PHOTOS AND THEN BUILT A PAGE ON MY WEBSITE TO HOUSE THEM.

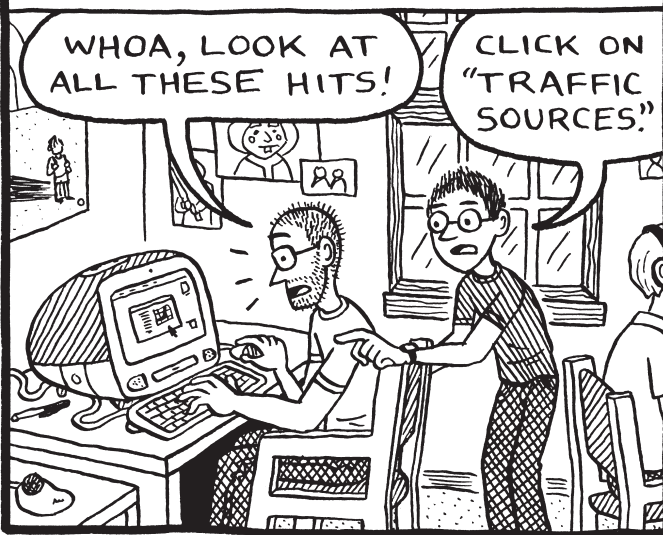


2000 HAIRCUT

On December 31ST, 1999, Grizzo cut off all... see the photos here

BARCODE

SUDDENLY MY WEBSITE WAS GETTING A LOT OF TRAFFIC!



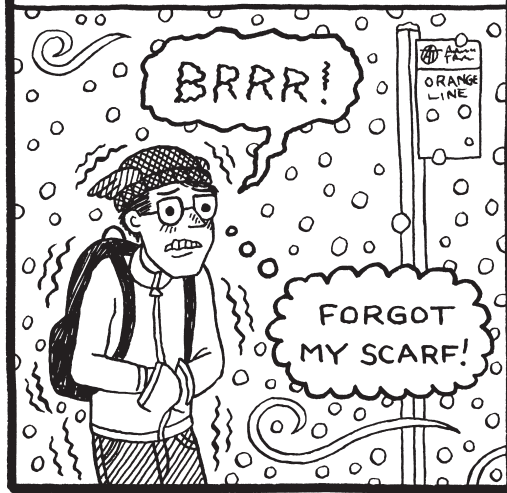
WHOA, LOOK AT ALL THESE HITS!

CLICK ON "TRAFFIC SOURCES."

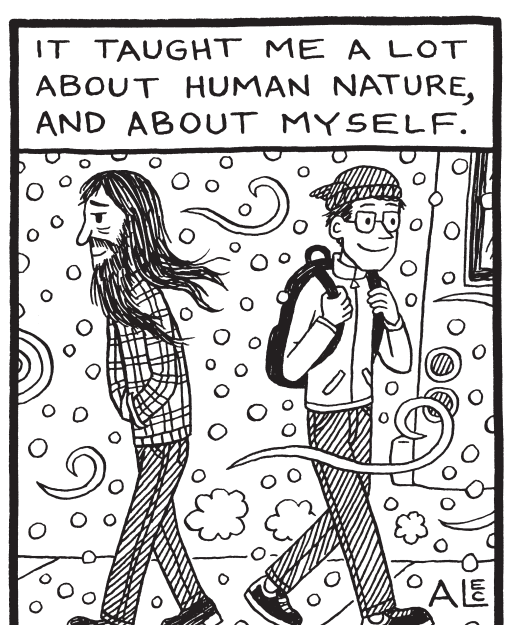
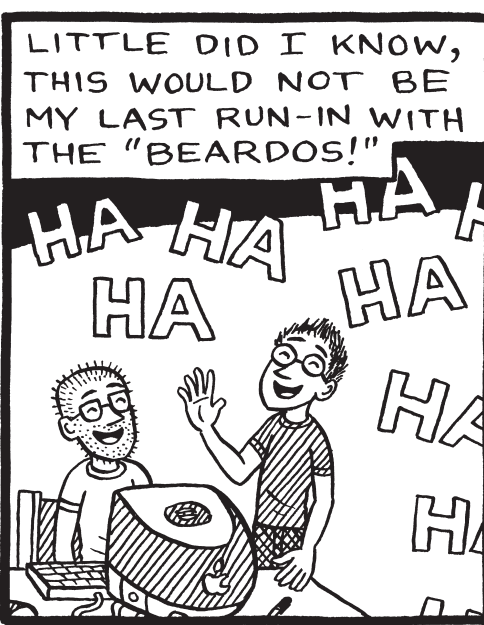
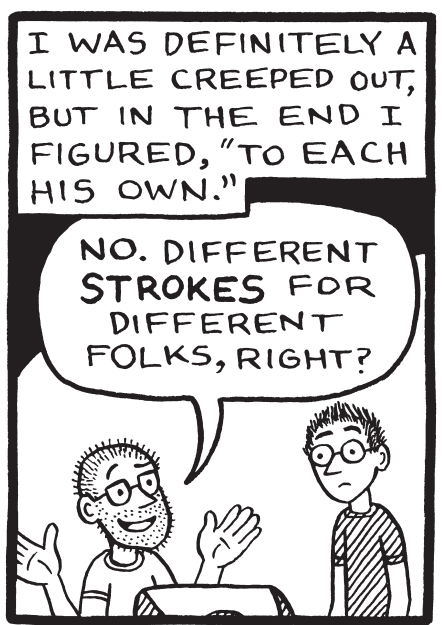
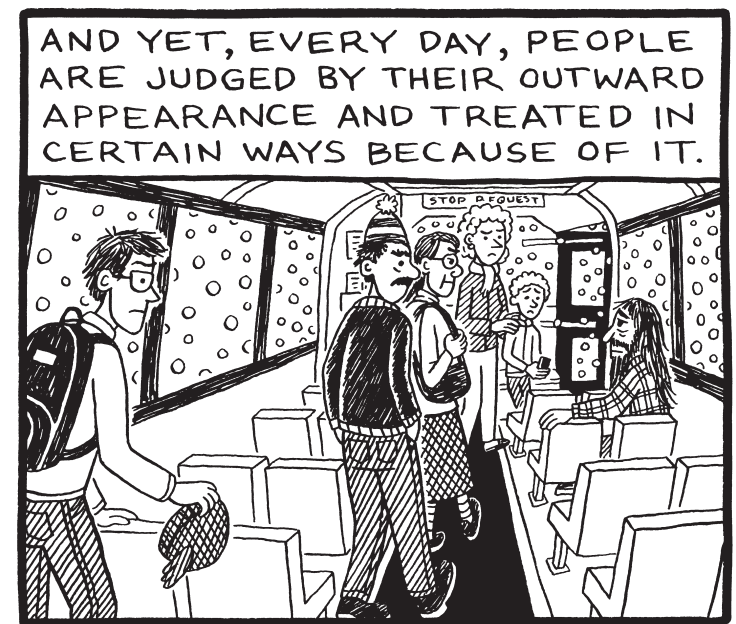
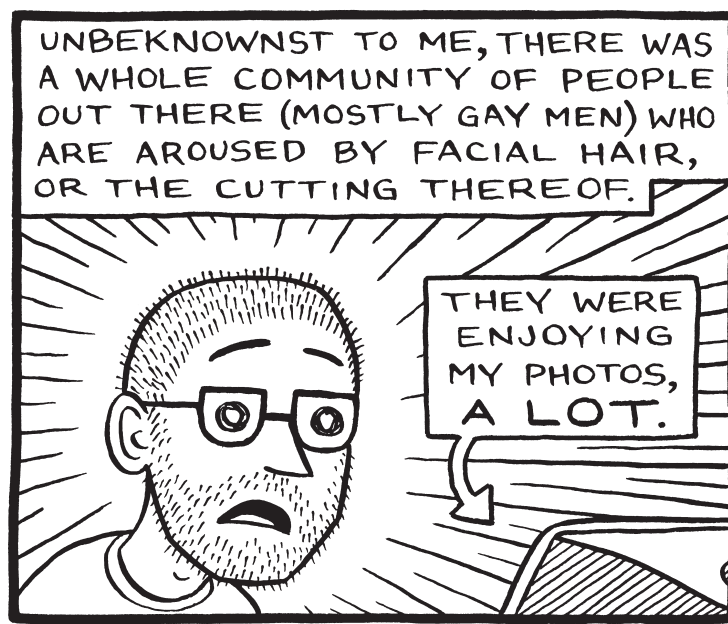
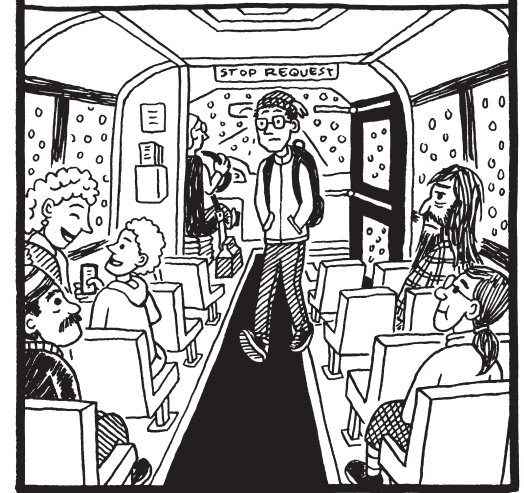
EPILOGUE



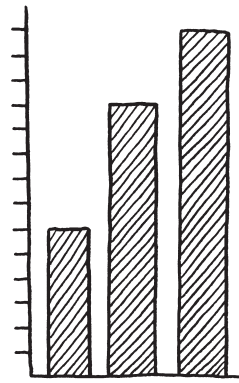
AND SO, JUST LIKE THAT, MY LIFE WENT BACK TO HOW IT HAD BEEN BEFORE.



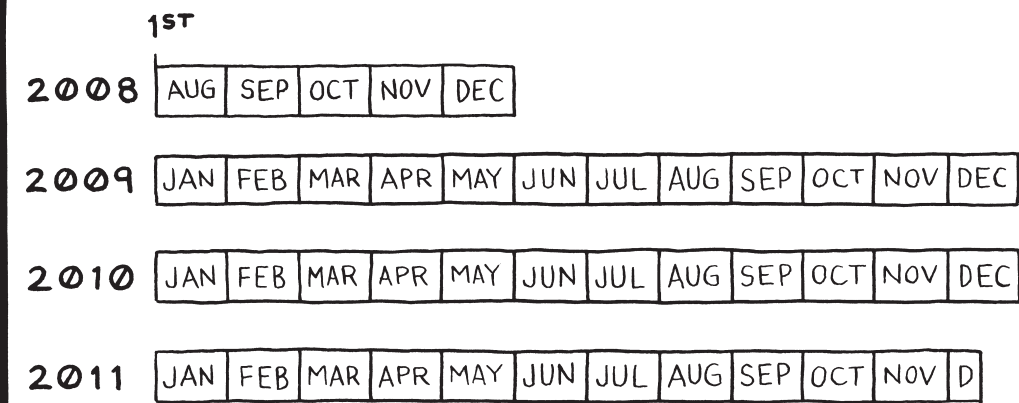
NO ONE STARED AT ME ANY MORE. I WAS JUST A "NORMAL" GUY AGAIN.



STATS

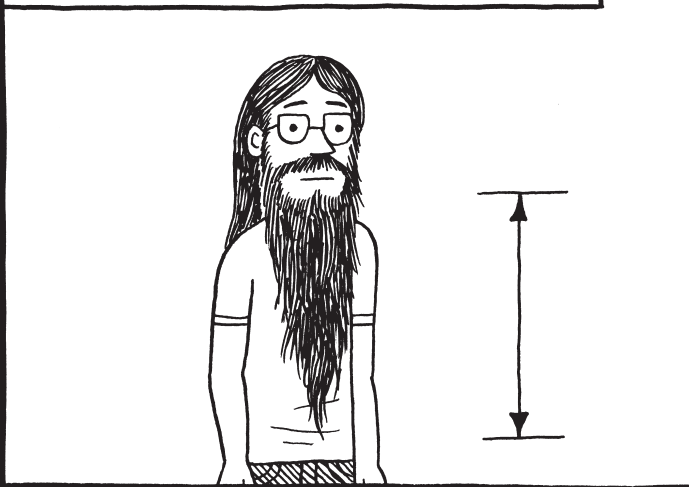


I GREW MY HAIR FOR THREE YEARS, FOUR MONTHS AND NINE DAYS, OR 1,226 DAYS.

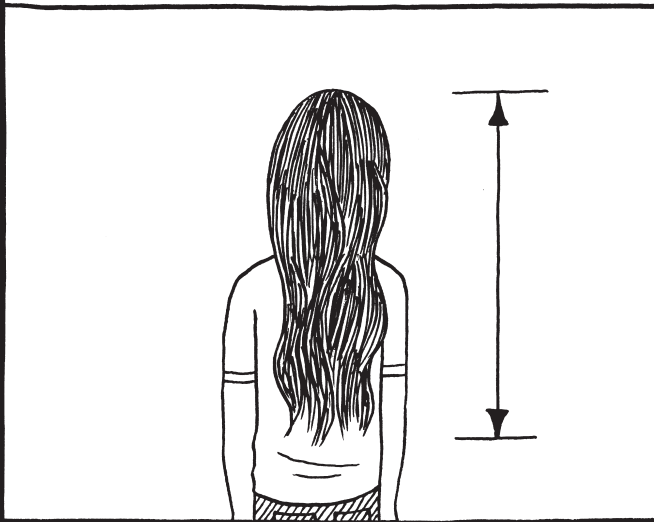


9TH

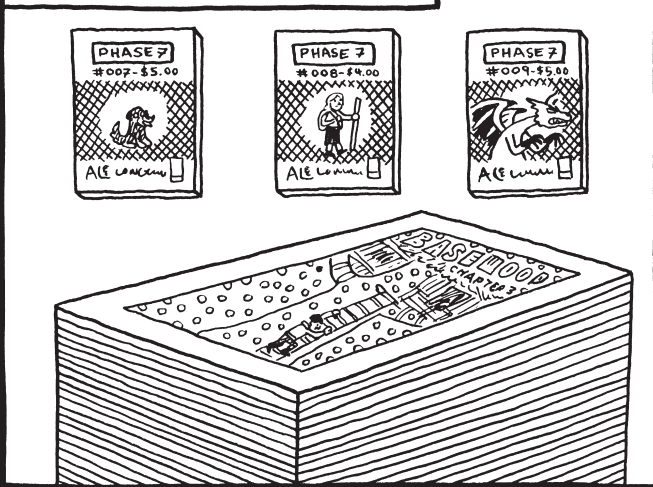
IN THAT TIME MY BEARD GREW TO A LENGTH OF ONE FOOT, TWO AND A HALF INCHES.



MY HAIR GREW TO A LENGTH OF ONE FOOT, NINE INCHES.



IN THAT TIME I DREW THREE CHAPTERS OF BASEWOOD, OR 125 PAGES OF COMICS.



ALL IN ALL, BASEWOOD TOOK ME ELEVEN YEARS TO WRITE AND DRAW. BY MY ESTIMATION, IT TOOK APPROXIMATELY 6,000 HOURS TO PENCIL AND INK ALL 204 PAGES.



THE CONCEPT BEARD PART ONE



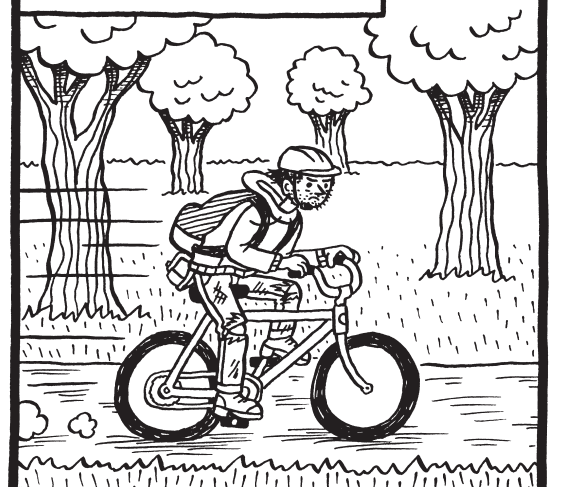
ON SEPTEMBER 11TH, 2001 I WAS A SENIOR AT OBERLIN COLLEGE. THAT MORNING I WOKE UP AND GOT READY FOR WORK, LIKE ANY OTHER DAY.



MY DORM ROOM WAS RIGHT ACROSS THE HALL FROM THE STUDENT LOUNGE.



I BIKED TO WORK, OBLIVIOUS AS TO WHAT WAS GOING ON.



I CLOCKED IN AT WORK, BUT THERE WAS NO ONE AROUND.



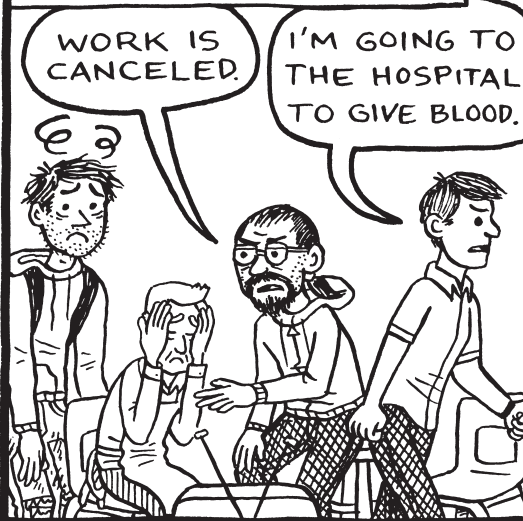
I FOUND EVERYONE IN MY BOSS, MIKE'S OFFICE.



I ARRIVED JUST IN TIME TO WATCH THE PLANE CRASH INTO THE SECOND TOWER.



WE WATCHED UNTIL THE TOWERS COLLAPSED.



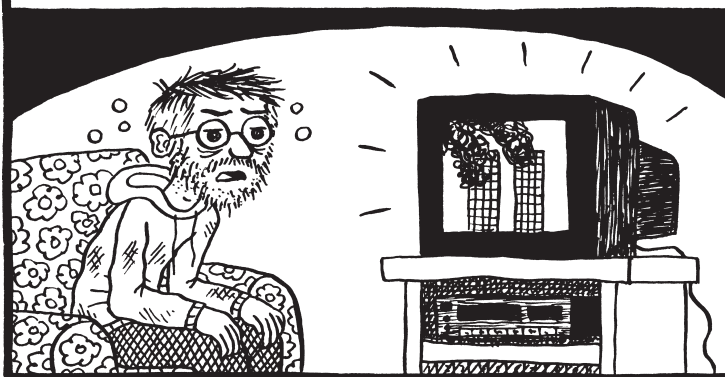
THE WHOLE SCHOOL TURNED OUT FOR THE EVENT, AND MY FRIEND LIZ PRINCE EVEN DROVE UP FROM BOSTON. WE STARTED BY SHOWING A VIDEO THAT CLAIRE MADE FROM ALL OF MY FLICKR PHOTOS AND THEN THE HAIRCUT BEGAN!



I COULDN'T BEAR TO WATCH ANY MORE OF THE HORROR ON TV, SO I SPENT THE REST OF THE DAY GLUED TO MY RADIO.



MEANWHILE, IN EPHRATA, WASHINGTON, A SUBSTITUTE MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER NAMED GARY WEDDLE BECAME SO OBSESSED WITH WATCHING THE NEWS THAT HE FORGOT TO SHAVE FOR A WEEK.



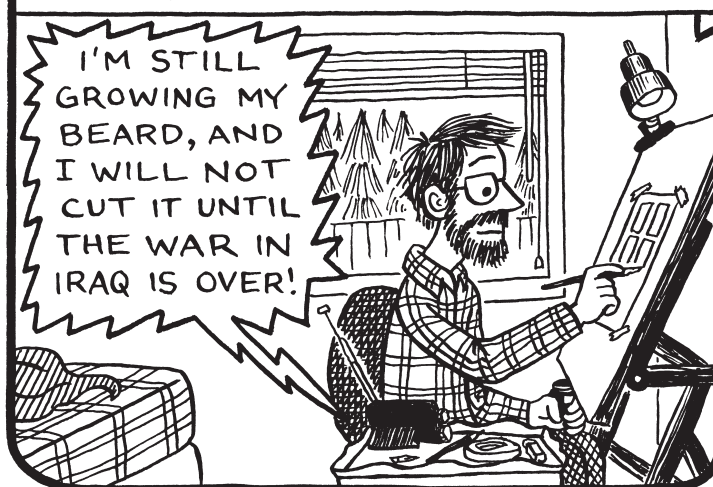
I ANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM THE CROWD WHILE CLAIRE PARTED MY BEARD INTO THREE BRAIDS AND THEN CUT THEM OFF.



WE DID THE SAME WITH MY HAIR SO THAT IT COULD BE DONATED TO A CHARITY THAT MAKES WIGS FOR CANCER PATIENTS.



EVERY COUPLE OF YEARS ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF 9/11 I WOULD HEAR INTERVIEWS WITH WEDDLE.



I LOVED THIS IDEA!



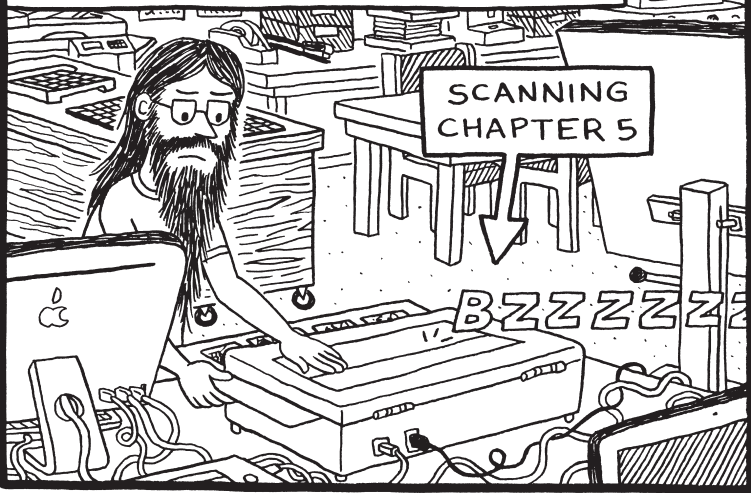
CLAIRE CLEANED IT ALL UP WITH SOME CLIPPERS AND A PAIR OF SCISSORS.



FOR THE FIRST TIME I FELT MY FACE TOUCH CLAIRE'S AS I GAVE HER A BIG KISS.



BECAUSE OF ALL THIS, I DECIDED THAT CLAIRE SHOULD BE THE ONE WHO GOT TO CUT MY HAIR.



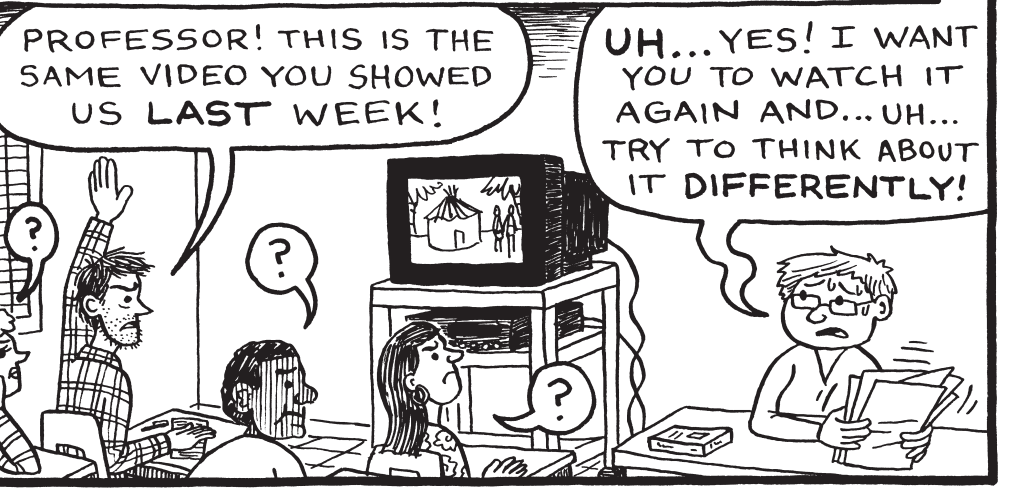
I FINISHED DRAWING BASEWOOD ON A FRIDAY, SO I SET THE BOOK RELEASE AND HAIRCUT FOR THE FOLLOWING FRIDAY.



THE BASEWOOD BEARD



MY JUNIOR YEAR AT OBERLIN, I HAD ARCHAEOLOGY 101, WHICH WAS THE WORST CLASS I HAVE EVER TAKEN, AT ANY SCHOOL LEVEL.



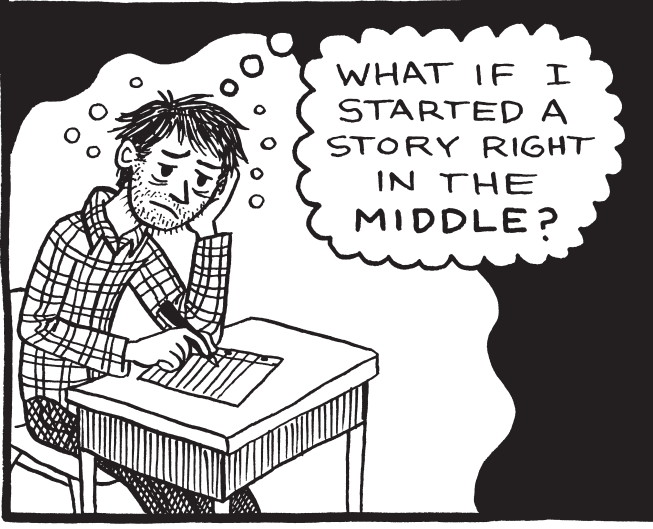
THIS GAVE ME ONE WEEK TO DO ALL OF THE PRODUCTION WORK FOR THE BOOK.



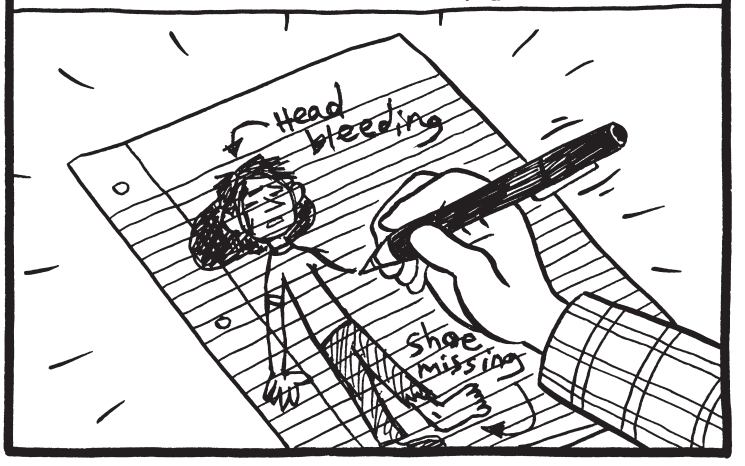
AMAZINGLY, ONE OF MY FORMER STUDENTS, BETH HETLAND, FLEW IN FROM CHICAGO FOR THE EVENT!



I STARTED DRAWING IN CLASS TO TRY AND STAY AWAKE.



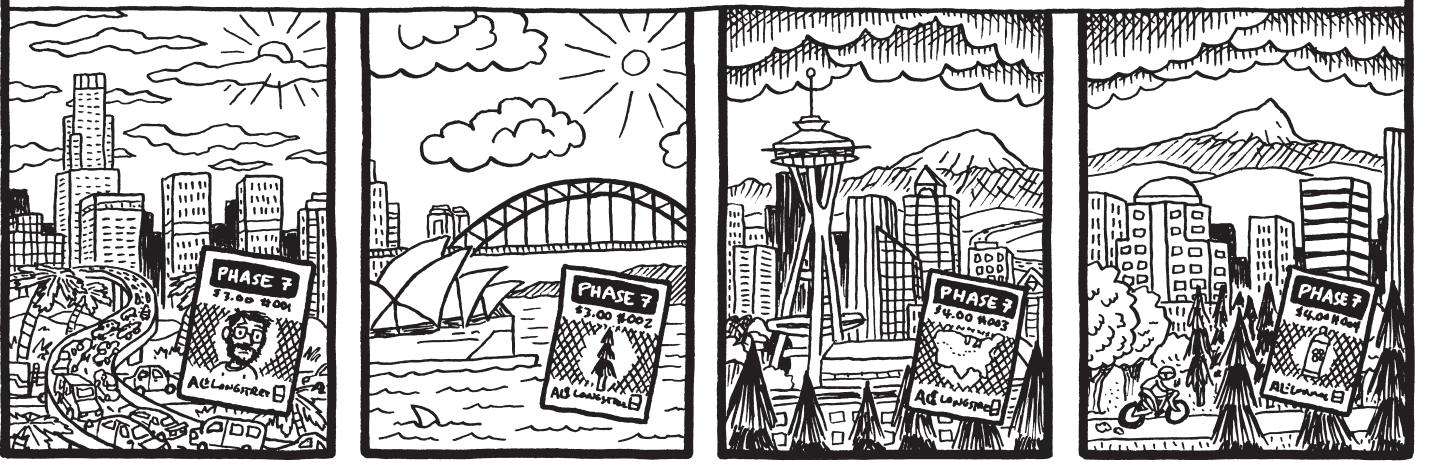
THAT DRAWING, MADE IN THE YEAR 2000, WAS THE SEED OF AN IDEA THAT EVENTUALLY GREW INTO MY FIRST GRAPHIC NOVEL, BASEWOOD.



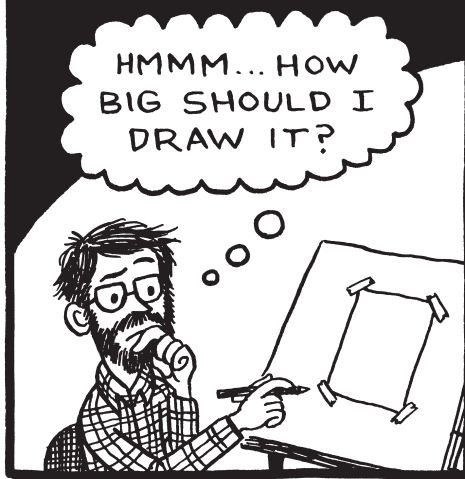
WE SET UP THE FIGURE DRAWING PLATFORM IN THE MAIN C.C.S. CLASSROOM AS OUR STAGE. CLAIRE HAD HER CAMCORDER SET UP ON A TRIPOD AND I RIGGED A LAPTOP TO LIVE-STREAM THE EVENT ONLINE.



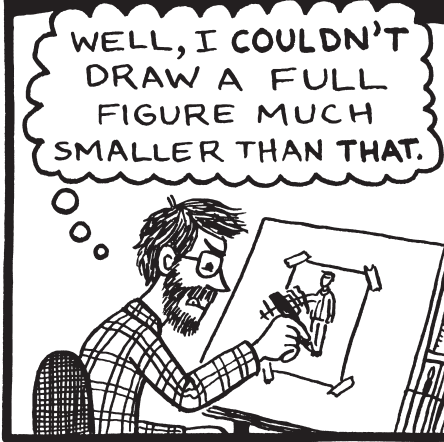
I CONTINUED TO DEVELOP THE STORY OF BASEWOOD, BUT I KNEW I WASN'T READY TO DRAW SUCH A LARGE PROJECT YET. SO AS I MOVED AROUND AFTER COLLEGE, I BUILT UP MY CARTOONING SKILLS BY PUTTING OUT ISSUES OF PHASE 7.



IN 2004, I FINALLY FELT READY TO START DRAWING BASEWOOD.



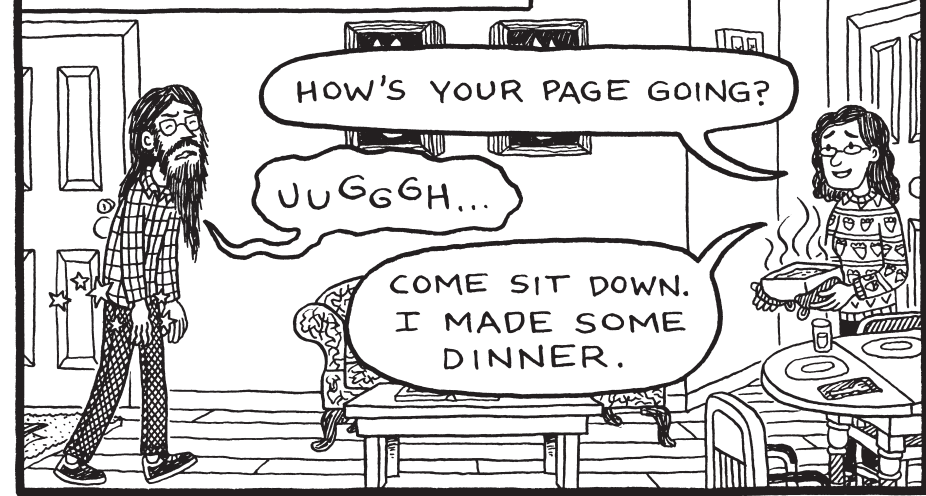
ONE OF MY WEAKNESSES AS A CARTOONIST AT THAT TIME WAS DRAWING SMALL.



AND SO, I MADE A HUGE MISTAKE!



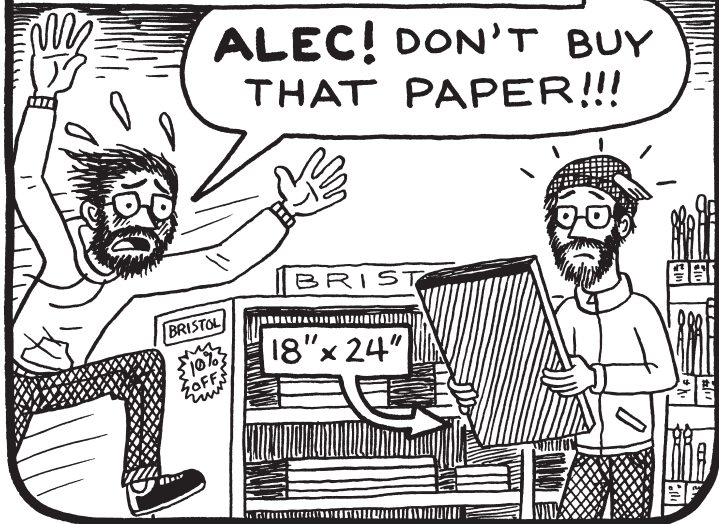
CLAIRE WAS MY MAIN SOURCE OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT DURING THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF OF BASEWOOD.



I'M NOT SURE I WOULD HAVE MADE IT THROUGH WITHOUT HER.



IF ONLY I COULD GO BACK IN TIME TO STOP MYSELF!



ALAS, I DIDN'T KNOW ANY BETTER, AND THUS BEGAN THE SEVEN YEAR PROCESS OF DRAWING BASEWOOD.



SHE ALSO HAD TO PUT UP WITH A LOT OF THE DIRTY LOOKS AND BIZARRE INTERACTIONS THAT WERE CAUSED BY MY BEARD.



HEY BRO, CAN WE BUY SOME GREEN?



IT TOOK NINE MONTHS TO DRAW THE TWENTY-EIGHT PAGES IN CHAPTER ONE.



I MOVED TO NEW YORK AND BEGAN DRAWING THE SECOND CHAPTER, WHICH HAD THIRTY-SIX PAGES IN IT.



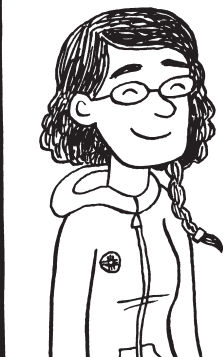
"GREEN"? I DON'T...



WHAT WAS THAT ALL ABOUT?



CLAIRE



I KNOW THAT CLAIRE LOVES ME FOR THE PERSON I AM INSIDE BECAUSE SHE FELL IN LOVE WITH ME WHEN I LOOKED LIKE THIS:



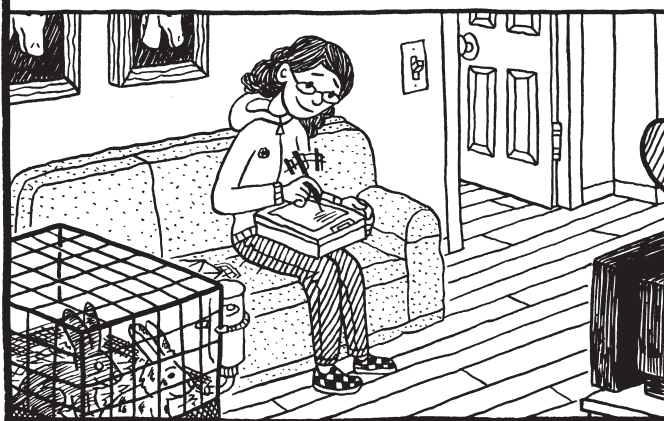
AND SHE STILL LOVED ME, THREE AND A HALF YEARS LATER, WHEN I LOOKED LIKE THIS:



THERE WAS SO MUCH COOL STUFF GOING ON IN NEW YORK, IT WAS HARD TO STAY PUT AT MY DRAWING BOARD. IT TOOK ME A YEAR AND A HALF TO FINISH DRAWING CHAPTER TWO.



WHEN THE BASEWOOD BEARD PROJECT BEGAN, CLAIRE WAS LIVING IN OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA. WE WROTE LETTERS FOR AN ENTIRE YEAR BEFORE WE BEGAN DATING.



THEN, AFTER A FEW VISITS TO VERMONT AND CALIFORNIA, WE CONTINUED TO WRITE TO EACH OTHER FOR ANOTHER YEAR, WITH THE OCCASIONAL PHONE CALL MIXED IN.



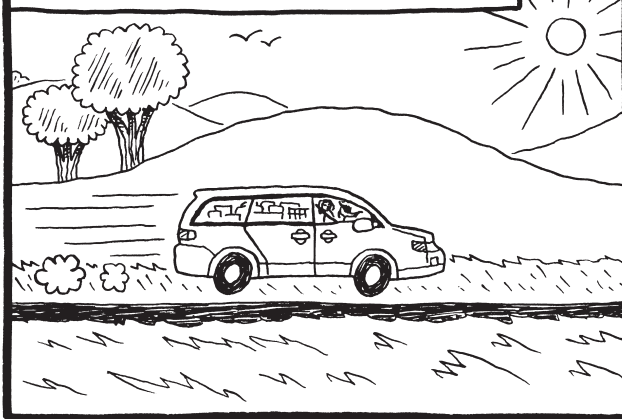
WHEN I STARTED ART SCHOOL IN 2005, I TOOK A BREAK FROM BASEWOOD AND CAME UP WITH MY "TRANSITION" PLAN.*



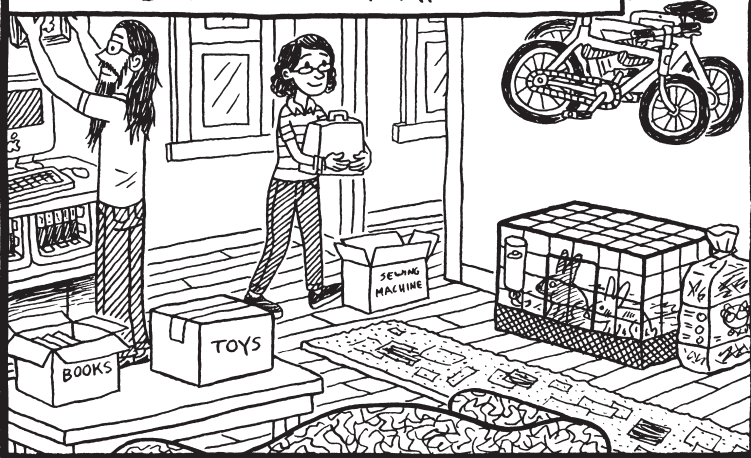
THIS ALLOWED ME TO PUT OUT NON-BASEWOOD ISSUES OF PHASE 7, WHILE I FOCUSED ON MY SCHOOLWORK.



FINALLY, IN OCTOBER 2010, WE PACKED UP ALL OF CLAIRE'S STUFF AND DROVE IT CROSS-COUNTRY, TO BEGIN OUR LIFE TOGETHER IN VERMONT.



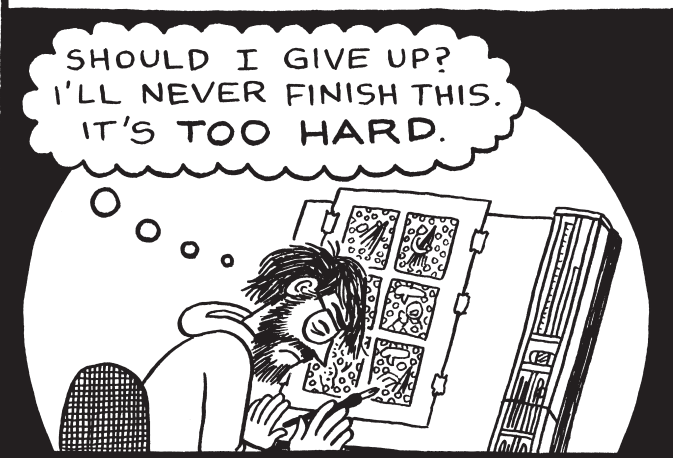
MOVING MY DRAWING TABLE AND GEAR TO MY NEW STUDIO MADE ROOM FOR ALL OF CLAIRE'S THINGS IN MY ONE-BEDROOM APARTMENT.



IT WASN'T UNTIL AFTER MY GRADUATION, IN THE SUMMER OF 2007, THAT I FINALLY STARTED DRAWING CHAPTER THREE.



THE OBSESSIVELY-DETAILED SNOW SCENE CAME CLOSE TO BREAKING MY SPIRIT. IT WAS THE LOW POINT OF THE ENTIRE PROJECT.



JUST WHEN IT SEEMED LIKE ALL HOPE WAS LOST, AN OPPORTUNITY AROSE TO BE A FELLOW AT THE CENTER FOR CARTOON STUDIES.

AN EMAIL FROM JAMES STURM!

IT TOOK ME ANOTHER YEAR OF DELIBERATION AND PLANNING TO ESCAPE THE GRAVITATIONAL PULL OF NEW YORK CITY.

WE'LL MISS YOU.

COME VISIT ME IN VERMONT!

I WAS DETERMINED TO MAKE THE MOST OF MY TIME IN VERMONT.

I HAVE TO TURN OVER A NEW LEAF!

COMPARED TO NEW YORK CITY, THERE WAS NOT MUCH GOING ON IN WHITE RIVER JUNCTION, A TOWN OF ONLY 2,000 PEOPLE.

I'LL FINALLY BE ABLE TO FOCUS!

AND SO, I CAME UP WITH A PLAN...

IT'S TIME TO REDEDICATE MYSELF TO BASEWOOD!!!

ON THE MORNING OF AUGUST 1ST, 2008 I CUT OFF ALL MY HAIR AND MY BEARD, AND VOWED TO NOT CUT THEM AGAIN UNTIL BASEWOOD WAS COMPLETE!

BZZZZZZZ

PEOPLE AT CCS WERE A LITTLE FREAKED OUT BY MY SHAVED HEAD, SO I MADE A QUICK MINI-COMIC TO EXPLAIN MY VOW.

WHO WAS THAT?

OUR CRAZY NEW FELLOW!

HOME STRETCH

PAGES

TIME

AS THE END OF A PROJECT NEARS, MY PRODUCTIVITY USUALLY INCREASES. I WORK EXTRA HARD TO TRY AND FINISH IT OFF.

THE FIFTH AND FINAL CHAPTER OF BASEWOOD WAS 52 PAGES → A QUARTER OF THE ENTIRE BOOK. I DREW IT IN A SINGLE YEAR.

WHEN YOU HIT YOUR STRIDE IN COMICS AND YOU'RE BEING PRODUCTIVE, REALITY SEEMS TO MELT AWAY.

ESPECIALLY WHILE INKING, YOU CAN FALL INTO A TRANCELIKE STATE WHERE YOU WORK AS IF ON AUTOPILOT AND LARGE SWATHS OF TIME DISAPPEAR.

I WAS COMPLETELY BURNED OUT FOR THE ENTIRE LAST MONTH THAT I WAS WORKING ON BASEWOOD, BUT I KEPT DRAGGING MYSELF TO THE STUDIO EVERY DAY.

HALF OUT OF MY MIND, I MADE ONE MASSIVE FINAL EFFORT AND FINISHED THE LAST THREE PAGES IN A 14-HOUR INKING MARATHON. AT 3:30 A.M. ON DECEMBER 2ND 2011, BASEWOOD WAS DONE.

THE CONCEPT BEARD
PART 2

ON MAY 2ND, 2011 I RECEIVED A NUMBER OF EMAILS FROM VARIOUS FRIENDS, ALL POINTING ME TO THE SAME ARTICLE.

"HAVE YOU HEARD OF THIS GUY, GARY WEDDLE?"

AFTER ALMOST A DECADE, WEDDLE HAD FINALLY SHAVED OFF HIS 9/11 BEARD.

BEARDOS
PART TWO

TO KEEP TRACK OF MY PROGRESS, I DECIDED TO TAKE A PHOTO OF MYSELF EACH TIME I FINISHED PENCILING OR INKING A PAGE OF BASEWOOD.

I THEN UPLOADED THE PHOTOS TO FLICKR, WITH A BRIEF SUMMARY OF MY CURRENT MOOD AND THE PROJECT'S PERCENTAGE OF COMPLETION.

THE ARTICLE DESCRIBED HOW HE HAD BEEN TEASED AND TREATED RUDELY, YEAR AFTER YEAR. I COULD DEFINITELY RELATE!

Mr. Weddle

I'M GROWING THIS BEARD FOR A REASON...

BUT SOMEHOW, ALL THOSE YEARS AGO, I HAD MISHEARD THE REASON FOR WEDDLE'S BEARD.

I'M STILL GROWING MY BEARD, AND I WILL NOT CUT IT UNTIL OSAMA BIN LADEN IS DEAD!

IN THE ARTICLE, WEDDLE'S WIFE COMES RUNNING TO TELL HIM THAT BIN LADEN HAS BEEN KILLED, AT LAST! HE DROPS WHAT HE IS DOING AND FINALLY SHAVES OFF HIS BEARD.

OSAMA BIN LADEN WAS A HORRIBLE PERSON, BUT IT TURNED MY STOMACH TO FIND OUT THAT MY BEARD WAS PARTIALLY INSPIRED BY A BEARD PROJECT THAT CELEBRATED THE CYCLE OF KILLING THAT PERPETUATES WAR, AND THE MURDER OF ANOTHER HUMAN BEING.

MY HOPE WAS THAT THESE PHOTOS WOULD SHOW THE PASSAGE OF TIME AND HOW MUCH EFFORT WAS INVOLVED IN THE CREATION OF A GRAPHIC NOVEL.

6-25% done	Inked Pg. 9-25.96% done	Inked Pg. 10-26.92% done
11-28.85% done	Penciled Pg. 18-30.77% done	Penciled Pg. 19-31.7% done

OF COURSE, SINCE THEY WERE ON THE INTERNET, I KNEW THE "BEARDOS" WOULD FIND THEM.

WHAT PEOPLE DO WITH THESE PHOTOS IS THEIR OWN BUSINESS!

WITHIN THE FIRST WEEK A FLICKR USER CALLED "BEARD FAN" MADE A PROPOSITION.

"I WILL PAY YOU \$100 EVERY FEW WEEKS TO TAKE SOME PHOTOS OF YOUR BEARD."

IT SEEMED A LITTLE CREEPY, BUT AFTER ASKING MY FRIENDS, I DECIDED TO GO FOR IT.

ARE YOU KIDDING? IT'S FREE MONEY. GO FOR IT!

AND SO, EVERY TWO WEEKS, I TOOK DOZENS OF PHOTOS OF MYSELF FOR "BEARD FAN." TEN FROM THE FRONT AND THEN TEN EACH OF SIDE AND THREE-QUARTER VIEWS.



AND THEN HE WOULD SEND ME THE \$100 USING PAYPAL.



AFTER THREE PAYMENTS, "BEARD FAN" MADE A REQUEST.



THE DISPLAY ON MY DIGITAL CAMERA HAD CRACKED A YEAR EARLIER, SO I COULDN'T CHANGE ANY OF THE SETTINGS.



IT STILL TOOK GOOD PHOTOS, BUT THE RESOLUTION WAS STUCK ON A SETTING THAT LOOKED FINE ONLINE, BUT DID NOT PRINT WELL, WHICH WAS FINE BY ME!



HE OFFERED TO BUY ME A NEW DIGITAL CAMERA, WHICH CREEPED ME OUT. I TOLD HIM I WAS HAPPY WITH MY CURRENT CAMERA.



I FINISHED CHAPTER FOUR OF BASEWOOD DURING THE FINAL WEEKS OF 2010. THERE WAS NO RELEASE PARTY, I JUST QUIETLY DISTRIBUTED IT OVER MY WINTER BREAK.



MY NEW STUDIO SPACE REALLY INCREASED MY PRODUCTIVITY BECAUSE IT OFFERED NO DISTRACTIONS. I WENT IN EVERY MORNING AT 8AM.



I'D DRAW AS MUCH AS I COULD BEFORE HAVING TO TEACH FOR THE REST OF THE DAY, AND THEN I'D COME BACK AFTER DINNER AND DRAW UNTIL MIDNIGHT.



HOW ARE YOU HOLDING UP, MAN?



I FEEL LIKE I'M IN CREATIVE JAIL.



THERE ARE SO MANY OTHER THINGS I WANT TO BE WORKING ON, BUT I'M TRAPPED, SLOGGING THROUGH THIS.



CON PRO



AT COMIC SHOWS YOU END UP HAVING THE SAME CONVERSATION OVER AND OVER WITH ALL THE PEOPLE WHO COME UP TO YOUR TABLE.



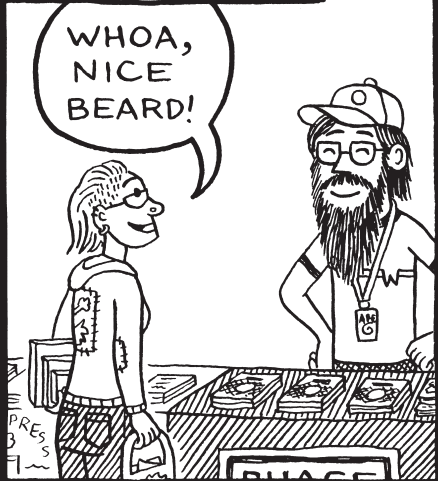
DURING THE YEARS I WAS GROWING MY HAIR OUT, THE FOCUS OF THIS CONVERSATION SHIFTED TO MY MASSIVE BEARD.



I KNEW THIS WOULD HAPPEN. THE HAIRCUTTING VOW WAS DEFINITELY ONE PART PUBLICITY STUNT.



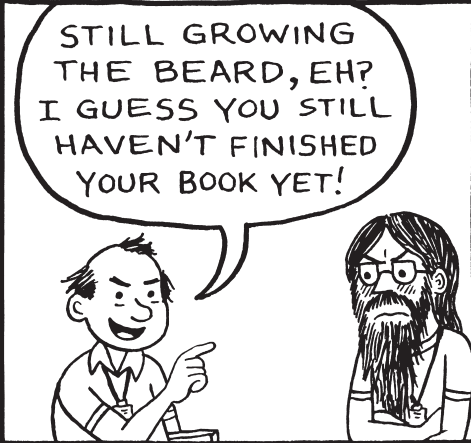
AT FIRST, I ENJOYED THE EXTRA ATTENTION IT GENERATED.



BUT PRETTY SOON IT FELT LIKE MY HAIR WAS OVERSHADOWING MY COMICS.



A FEW YEARS OF THIS AND I WAS SICK AND TIRED OF TALKING ABOUT MY BEARD.



WE SWITCHED TO AN ON-DEMAND SCHEDULE; USUALLY ABOUT ONCE A MONTH HE'D CONTACT ME.



I UPLOADED ALL OF THESE PHOTOS TO HIS PRIVATE FLICKR ACCOUNT, WHICH GOT VERY LITTLE TRAFFIC.



ALL IN ALL, I TOOK ELEVEN SETS OF PHOTOS FOR "BEARD FAN" OVER A PERIOD OF ABOUT A YEAR. I WAS PAID \$700 TOTAL.



THE WHOLE THING WAS DEFINITELY PRETTY BIZARRE, AND I HAVE NO IDEA IF THE IMAGES WERE EVER SEEN BY ANYONE OTHER THAN "BEARD FAN."



BUT \$700 WAS A MONTH'S RENT, AND I WAS GROWING MY BEARD ANYWAY, SO I LIKE TO THINK THAT THESE PHOTOS BOUGHT ME SOME TIME TO KEEP WORKING ON BASEWOOD!



POST OFFICE

PART ONE



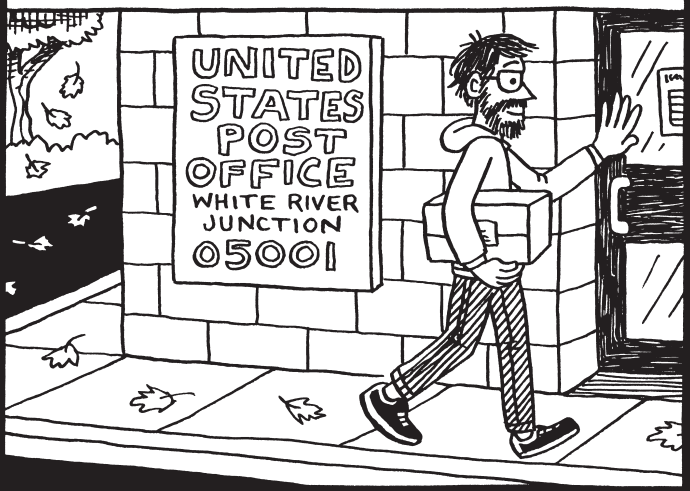
MY HAIR GROWS VERY FAST, SO A MONTH OR TWO AFTER I SHAVED MY HEAD, I LOOKED "NORMAL" AGAIN.



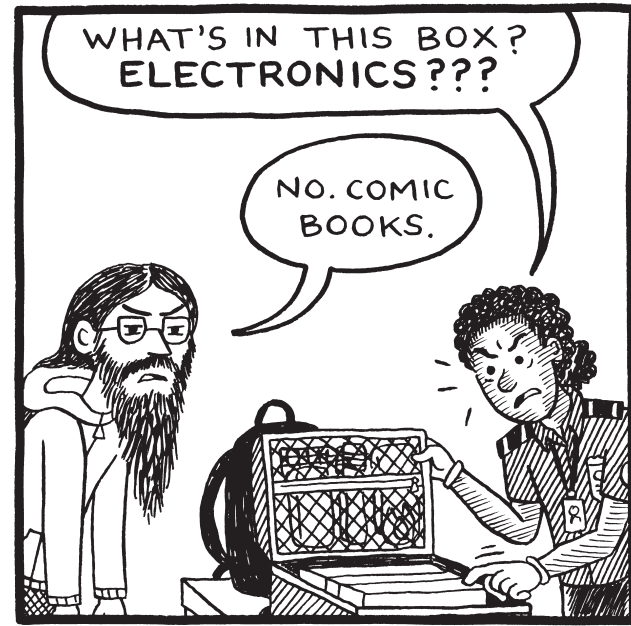
I AM A STRAIGHT, WHITE, CIS-GENDERED GUY. THIS PRIVILEGED POSITION IN SOCIETY HAS LEFT ME WITH PLENTY OF SELF-ESTEEM.

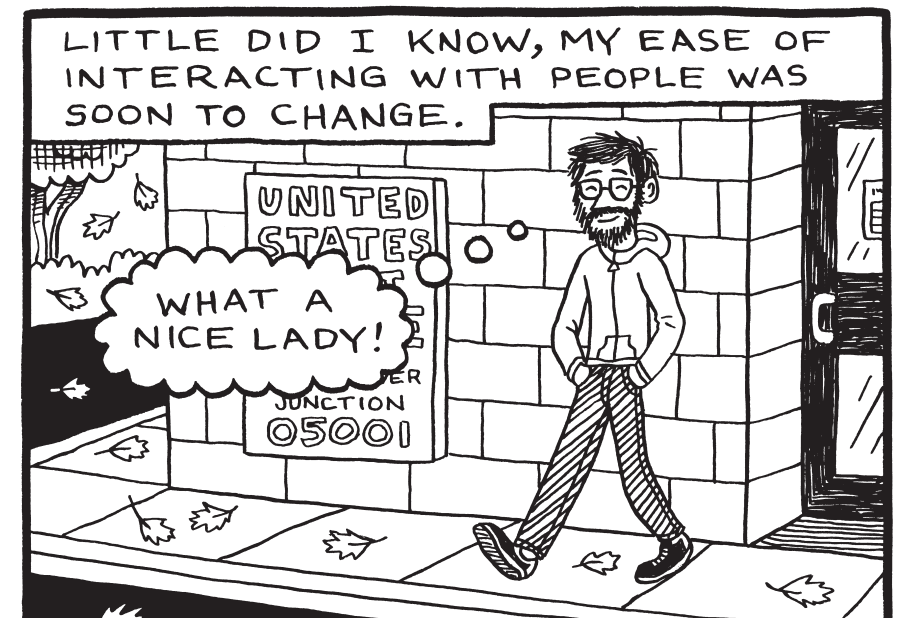


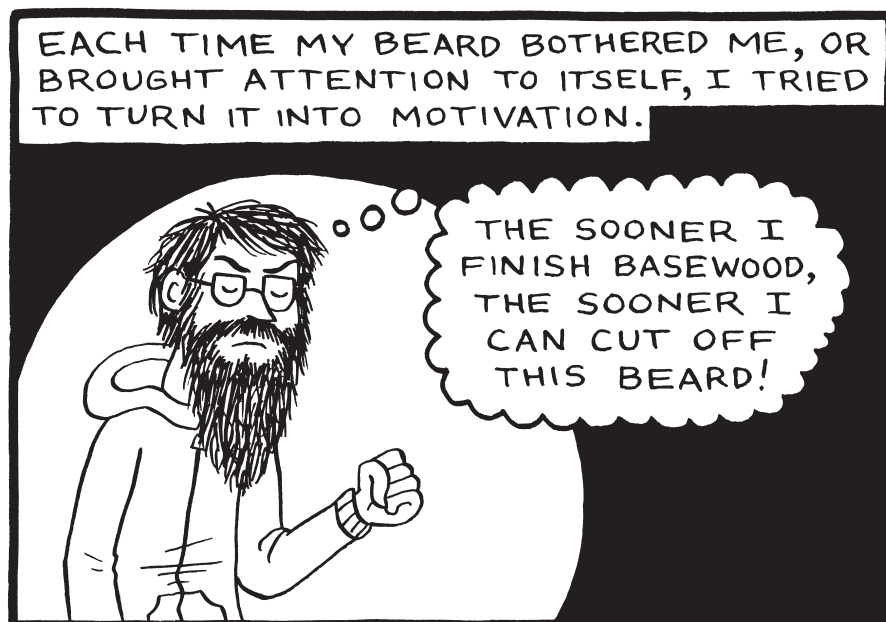
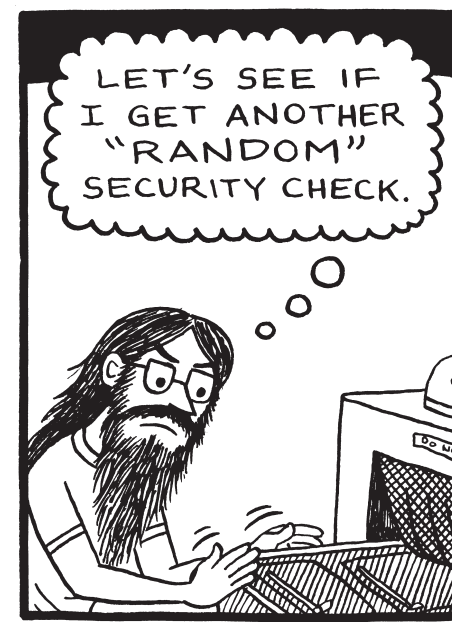
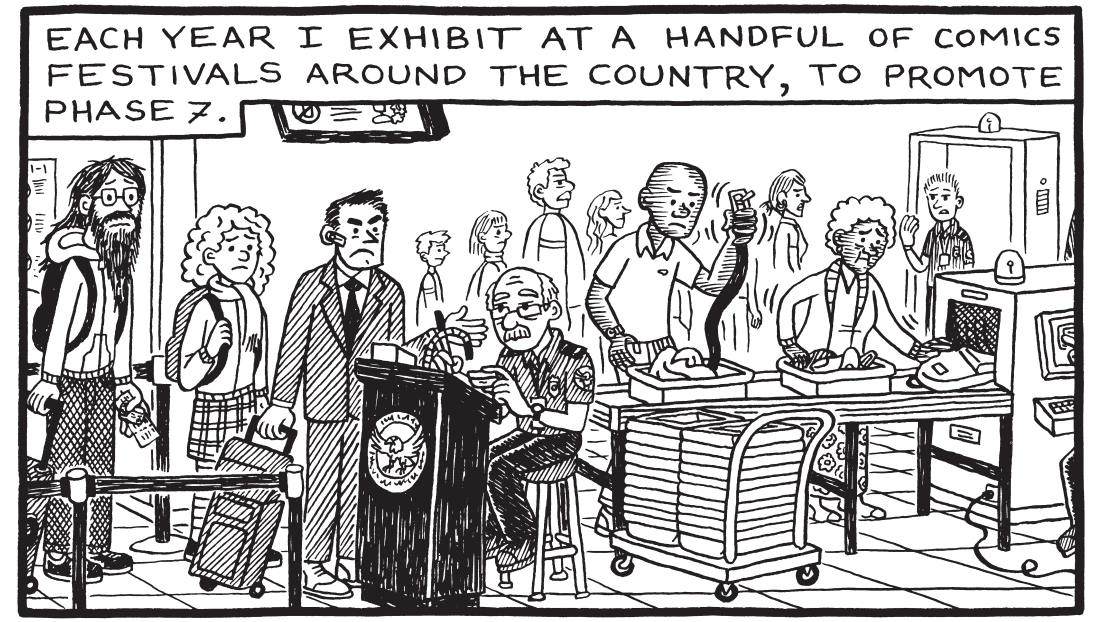
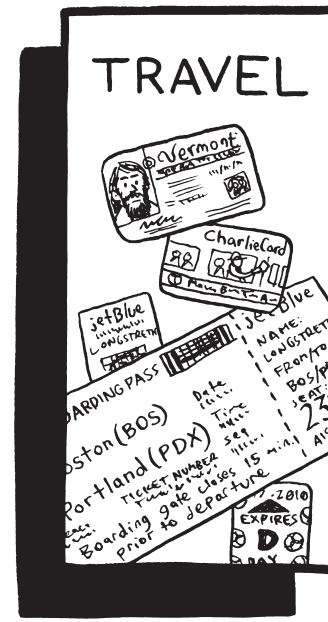
I WOULD SAY THAT, IN GENERAL, MY INTERACTIONS WITH PEOPLE ARE PLEASANT AND STRESS-FREE.



OKAY, SIR, WHAT I'M GOING TO DO RIGHT NOW IS OPEN YOUR SUITCASE TO CHECK ITS CONTENTS.







AS GALEN'S WEDDING APPROACHED, MY MOM TRIED OVER AND OVER TO GET ME TO CUT MY HAIR.

YOU'RE GOING TO RUIN ALL OF THE WEDDING PHOTOS!

MOM, THE PHOTOS ARE SUPPOSED TO DOCUMENT THE EVENT. THIS IS WHO I AM RIGHT NOW.

ON THE DAY OF THE WEDDING SHE WAS STILL VERY UPSET.

I JUST CAN'T BELIEVE YOU'RE DOING THIS!

BEARD UPDO

AFTER MY FELLOWSHIP YEAR, I WAS HIRED AS AN ADJUNCT FACULTY MEMBER AT THE CENTER FOR CARTOON STUDIES.

WELCOME TO ANOTHER YEAR AT CCS!

FACULTY MEETING

IT WAS MY JOB TO TEACH THE PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES CLASS, ALTHOUGH MY CURRENT APPEARANCE WAS NOT VERY "PROFESSIONAL."

MAYBE I'LL GET DRESSED UP EVERY WEEK FOR CLASS!

OF ALL THE SELFISH THINGS TO DO ON YOUR SISTER'S WEDDING DAY....

MOM!

NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO WITH YOUR HAIR, NO MATTER HOW YOU LOOK, OR ACT OR CHANGE...

AND SO, BEFORE EVERY CLASS I HAD A LITTLE RITUAL.

UGH! OUT OF SHAMPOO AGAIN?! CURSE THIS LONG HAIR!

FIRST, I PUT MY HAIR UP INTO A BUN.

THE EASY PART!

NEXT, I'D SPLIT MY BEARD INTO TWO SECTIONS...

I WILL ALWAYS LOVE YOU.

SHE DIDN'T HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY TO THAT.

DING!

ALSO, THERE WAS TOTALLY ANOTHER GUY AT THE WEDDING WITH A HUGE BEARD!

AND BRAID EACH ONE.

I NEVER THOUGHT I'D GET THIS GOOD AT BRAIDING!

THEN I'D USE LITTLE RUBBER BANDS TO HOLD THE ENDS.

PIPPY LONG-BEARD!

THERE WAS A WAY TO SORT OF TUCK BOTH BRAIDS INTO EACH OTHER.

ABOUT A DOZEN BOBBY PINS LATER AND MY BEARD WAS OFFICIALLY "UP."

TO FINISH OFF THE EFFECT, I'D PUT ON SOME SLACKS AND A SHIRT AND TIE.

Welcome to PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES Class #1

THIS BECAME A CCS TRADITION OF SORTS. YEARS LATER, EVEN AFTER THE BEARD IS GONE, I STILL GET DRESSED UP FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES.

NOW TAUGHT REMOTELY USING GOOGLE HANGOUTS.

WELCOME!

AND ON THE LAST CLASS, ALL OF THE STUDENTS GET DRESSED UP TO PRESENT THEIR FINAL PROJECTS.

THE BEARD UPDO WAS ALSO A GREAT WAY TO COOL OFF ON HOT SUMMER DAYS.

AHHHHH

WHIRRRRRR

THE ONLY DOWNSIDE WAS THAT MY BEARD LOOKED TWICE AS CRAZY WHEN I TOOK IT OUT OF THE BRAIDS!

HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA HA

FAMILY TIME

TWO MAJOR FAMILY EVENTS HAPPENED WHILE I WAS GROWING OUT MY HAIR: MY GRANDFATHER POP'S 90TH BIRTHDAY PARTY AND MY SISTER GALEN'S WEDDING.

THIS HAS GONE FAR ENOUGH! YOU CAN START GROWING YOUR HAIR OUT AGAIN AFTER POP'S PARTY.

I'M SORRY, MOM. I AM NOT CUTTING MY HAIR.

MY EXTENDED FAMILY IS VERY CLEAN CUT. MOST OF MY COUSINS AND UNCLES WORK IN FINANCE, AND SHAVE EVERY MORNING FOR THEIR OFFICE JOBS.

THERE WERE PROBABLY ABOUT A HUNDRED MEN AT POP'S PARTY. MY FATHER AND I WERE THE ONLY TWO GUYS WITH ANY FACIAL HAIR!

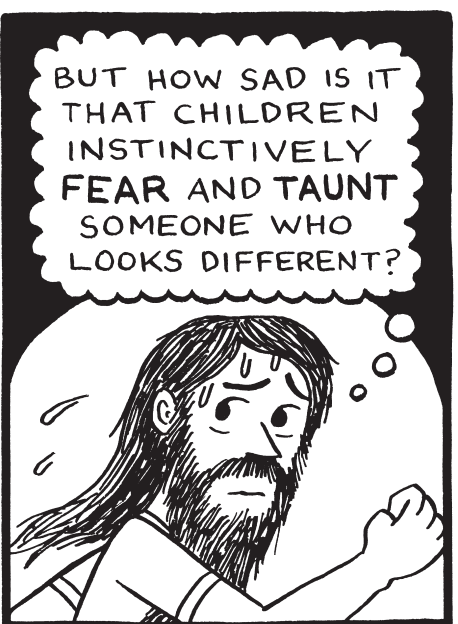
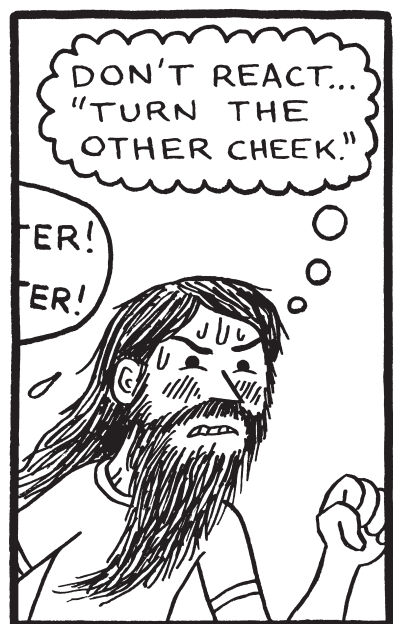
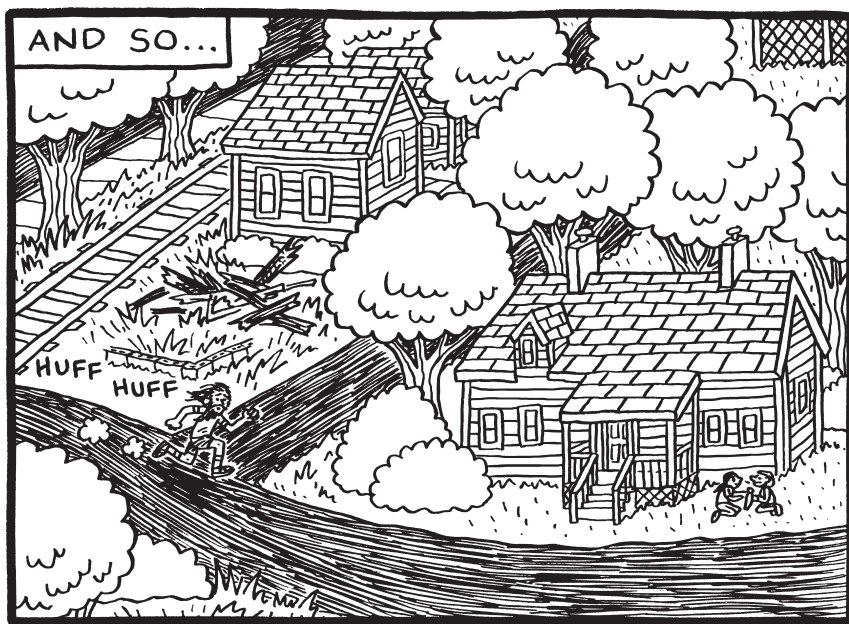
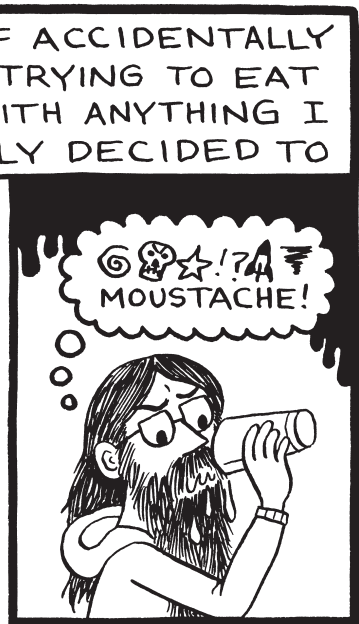
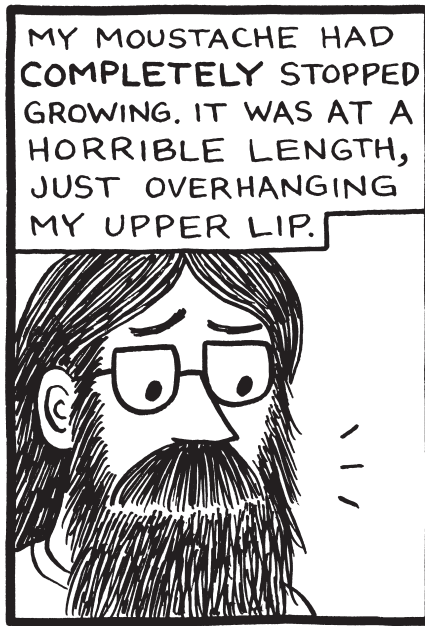
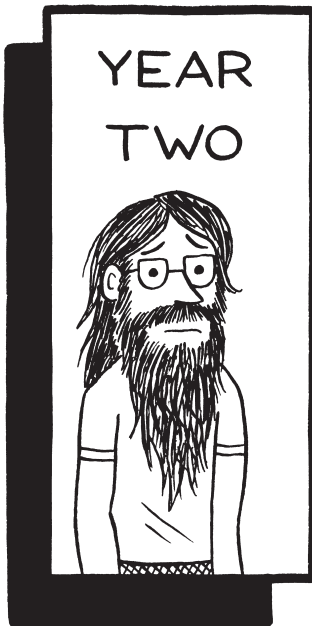
THE BEARD WAS CERTAINLY A GOOD CONVERSATION STARTER!

ALEC? IS THAT YOU?! WHAT'S WITH THE BEARD?

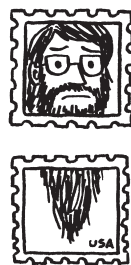
WELL, I'M WORKING ON A BOOK...

I'M SURE MY APPEARANCE EMBARRASSED MY MOTHER, AND IT GAVE ME NO PLEASURE TO DO SO, BUT I FELT I HAD COMMITTED TOO MUCH TIME AND ENERGY TO MY HAIRCUTTING VOW TO GIVE UP ON IT, OR TO START OVER.

SAY "CHEESE"

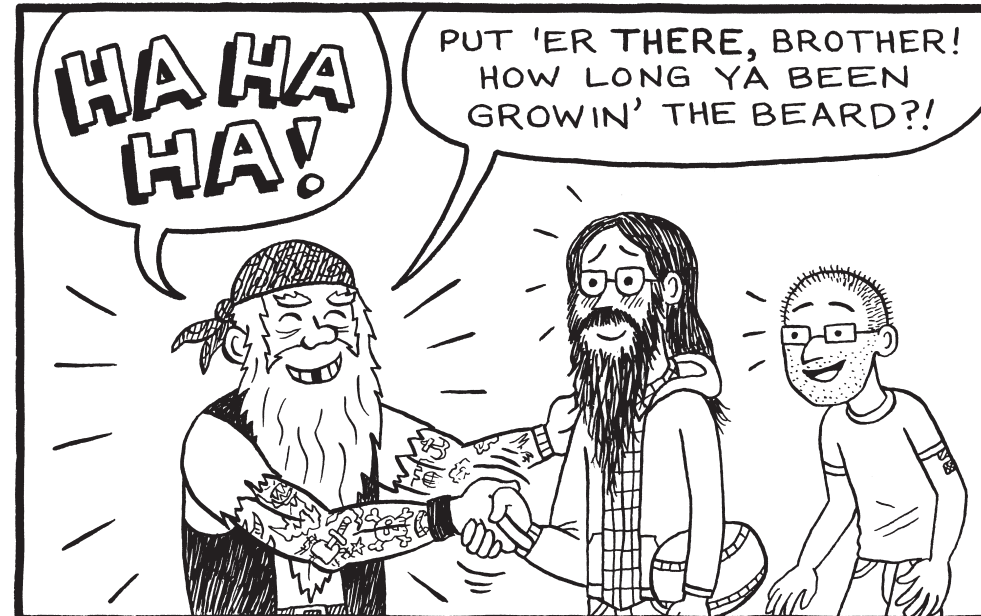


POST OFFICE
PART TWO



I GUESS I COULD HAVE TAKEN THE BUS...

OH WELL. I NEED THE EXERCISE.



HA HA HA!

PUT 'ER THERE, BROTHER! HOW LONG YA BEEN GROWIN' THE BEARD?!



THIS WAS THE MOST OVERT EXAMPLE OF "BEARD LOVE."



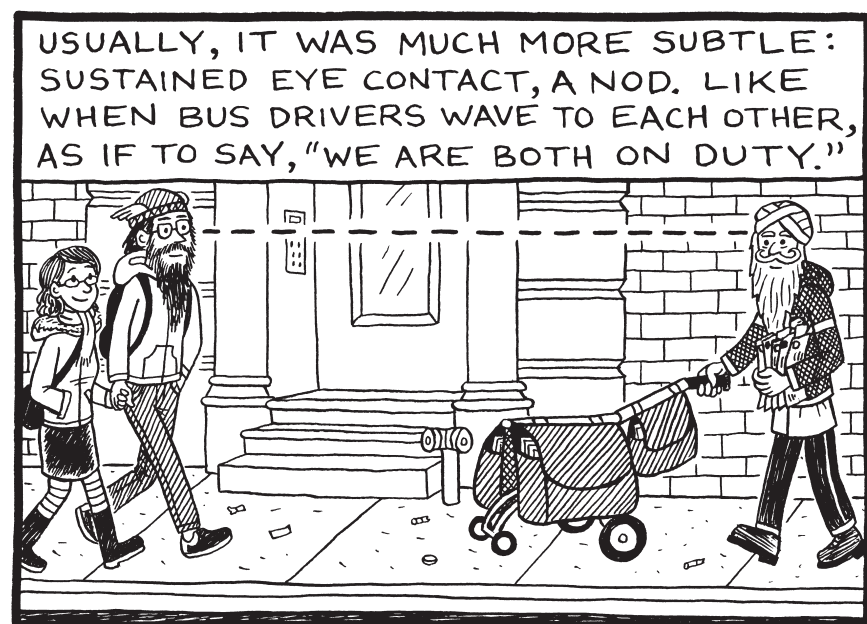
NICE BEARD, FAGGOT!!!

SPLOOSH!

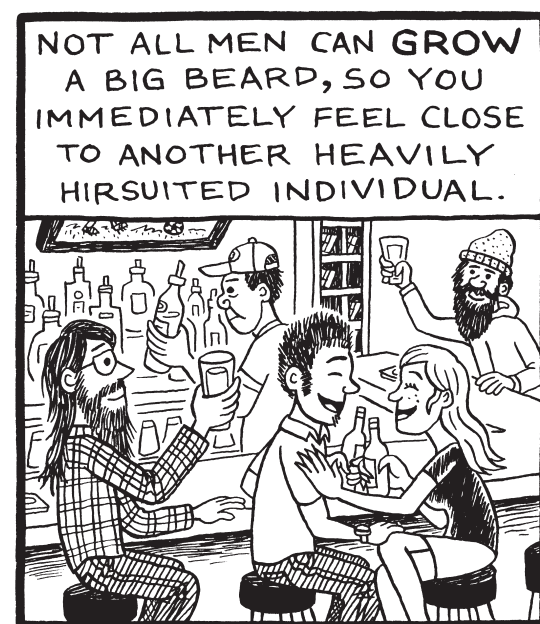


TRY NOT TO BE ANGRY AT THEM. FEEL SORRY FOR THEIR IGNORANCE AND IMMATURITY.

WHITE RIVER JUNCTION
05001



USUALLY, IT WAS MUCH MORE SUBTLE: SUSTAINED EYE CONTACT, A NOD. LIKE WHEN BUS DRIVERS WAVE TO EACH OTHER, AS IF TO SAY, "WE ARE BOTH ON DUTY."



NOT ALL MEN CAN GROW A BIG BEARD, SO YOU IMMEDIATELY FEEL CLOSE TO ANOTHER HEAVILY HIRSUITED INDIVIDUAL.



NEXT!

HELLO.



I'D LIKE TO SEND THIS OUT MEDIA MAIL PLEASE.

WHUMP!



WHAT'S IN THIS BOX?

BOOKS.



AND WHEN YOU TAKE INTO ACCOUNT HOW SOCIETY TREATS PEOPLE WHO HAVE DECIDED TO GROW BIG BEARDS, THERE IS AN EVEN STRONGER FEELING OF CAMARADERIE.



THESE MOMENTS OF "BEARD LOVE" WERE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN, BUT THEY PROVIDED A NICE CONTRAST TO THE CONSTANT FLOW OF NEGATIVE REACTIONS TO MY BEARD.

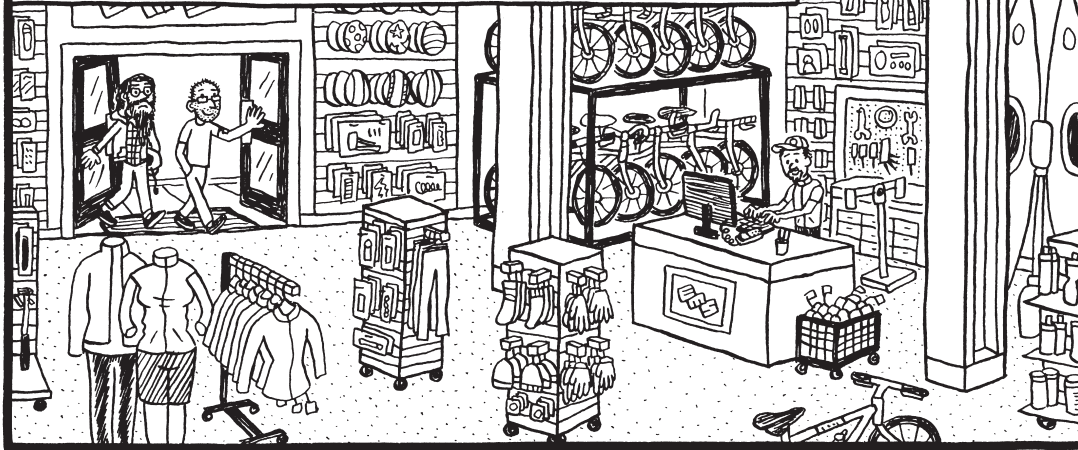
NICE BEARD!

THANKS! YOU TOO!

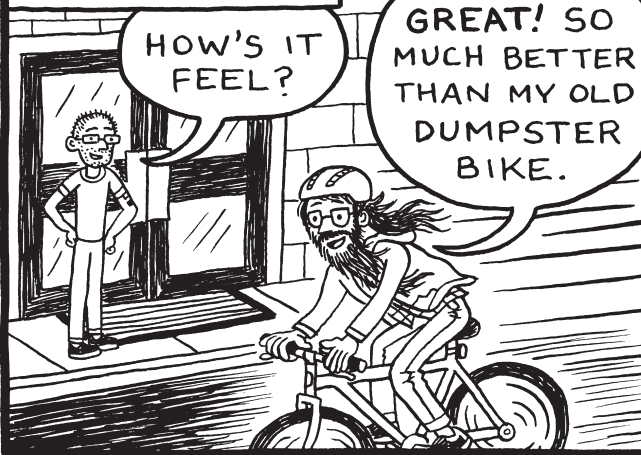
BEARD
LOVE



FOR MY 30TH BIRTHDAY, MY PARENTS OFFERED TO BUY ME A BICYCLE. I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT BIKES, SO I ASKED MY PAL JON CHAD TO HELP ME PICK OUT A GOOD ONE.



HE FOUND A GREAT BIKE THAT WAS IN THE RIGHT PRICE RANGE, AND THEN WE BOTH GAVE IT A TEST RIDE.



HOW'S IT FEEL?

GREAT! SO MUCH BETTER THAN MY OLD DUMPSTER BIKE.

THE BIKE SPECIALIST TOOK MY MEASUREMENTS AND THEN BEGAN MAKING THE FINAL ADJUSTMENTS TO THE NEW BIKE.



WE'RE ALLOWED TO INSPECT MEDIA MAIL SHIPMENTS. SO IF THIS IS NOT BOOKS, IT WILL BE RETURNED TO YOU WITHOUT A REFUND.



IF YOU RETURN HER NEGATIVITY YOU WILL ONLY REINFORCE THE ASSUMPTIONS SHE IS MAKING ABOUT YOU. KILL HER WITH KINDNESS!



I'D BE HAPPY TO OPEN THE BOX AND SHOW YOU THE BOOKS.



HMPH.

LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME FOR YOU TO GET A HAIRCUT, YOU GODDAMN HIPPIE.



WELL, THIS IS IT! SOME REDNECK VERMONTNER IS FINALLY GOING TO BEAT ME UP BECAUSE OF MY BEARD!



GULP!

E... EXCUSE ME?



HAVE A NICE—
NEXT!!!



GOD! PEOPLE ARE SO SHALLOW AND JUDGEMENTAL!

