



Illustration by Dan Santat

## **ANDREA GIBSON**

### **CRAB APPLE PIRATES (CALAIS, MAINE)**

We were chubby-faced school kids,  
Snickers bar windpiped, crab apple pirates,  
backward-baseball-capped, knee-scraped snow angels,  
Dukes-of-Hazard dreamers, bumper-car-bodied  
salamander catchers,  
Michael Jordan believers.

I couldn't fly, but my hang time was three minutes and ten  
seconds.

Smart kids were stupid. Books were trees cut down.  
I was a tomboy in love with Malcolm Cushion.  
He had a birthmark in the shape of Canada on his left cheek.  
The teachers didn't trust him.

His mother was the accidental broken tooth in a bar fight.  
I had one black friend. Her name was Erica. She had a jackknife.  
She carved a gash into the center of her palm, another into  
mine.

We pressed our hands together and she asked if I thought  
it would turn her blood white.

I couldn't read her fear or hope.

I thought history was over.  
I cried during the national anthem.  
Once I found a butterfly's wing on the sidewalk.  
I wanted to keep it but I didn't.  
I knew there were things I should never find beautiful.  
Like death.  
And girls.

On Saturdays I walked around town  
with a wheelbarrow collecting aluminum cans.  
On Sundays my father paid a penny  
for every cigarette butt I'd pick up in the driveway.  
I was picking up cigarette butts  
when Tommy Chambers punched my tooth out.  
I spit on his bike seat and beat the crap out of his older brother.  
I started writing songs,

recorded them on my ghetto blaster  
and mailed the tapes to the local radio station.  
They never played them because they never had good taste.  
My mother did. She was a secretary.  
Her fingernails were red and she loved my father,  
who after the war became a mailman  
so when I was a baby she would carry me to the post office  
and weigh me on the postal scales.

Once, years later, I got lost in the mail.  
The next day I came home from college and corrected my  
father's grammar.

When I was ten my mother had another daughter.  
I had heard babies sometimes die in their sleep  
so at night when my parents went to bed  
I'd put on my Karate Kid kimono  
and I'd sneak into her room to guard her heartbeat.

The heartbeat thieves didn't find her for fifteen years.

At eleven I discovered beer.

At thirteen, shame.

At fourteen I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal lord  
and savior.

At nineteen I nailed my palm to Amanda Bucker's vagina,  
actually drooled on her breasts,

and said yes so loud God couldn't disagree.

But my family did.

So I lost them for a while, and in that while

my uncle Barry lost his fingers to the paper mill.

My uncle Peter lost his liver to Vietnam.

My mother lost her legs to God's will.

In her will I inherit everything:

the seventeen photographs we didn't lose in the fire.

All of them with charcoaled edges.

My mother holds them to her chest and tells me she can  
still smell the smoke.

I tell her I will guard them well.

My father's freckled shoulders.

My sister's brown, brown eyes.

My mother's patient hands buckling my tiny blue suspenders.

That one December when we built a bonfire in the middle  
of the frozen lake  
and I skated around the flames  
with my snowsuit's frozen zipper sticking to my tongue.

My mother called my name.  
Told me to smile for the camera.  
I still remember the flash.  
And that enormous fire.  
With the ice beneath it.  
That didn't even crack.





Illustration by Anis Mojgani

## **STEVE ABEE**

### **THINGS TO DO (ECHO PARK, CALIFORNIA)**

Clean my desk.

Look out the window forever.

Wait for the robin to bring the pomegranate seed of eternal  
spring and sex to my backyard  
and watch it grow and grow.

Get up in the morning and brush my hair. Just brush my hair.

Get up in the morning and then go back to sleep, pull her  
close to me,  
fall down into the warm sea of her breath. It's true,  
it is that deep.

Buy an engine from the machine shop of night.  
Order one starry dynamo,  
and a bag of heavenly connection.  
Tip the Angelheaded Hipster.

Learn how to repair my own Angelic car.

Listen to the radio, any station and weep at the miracle of  
language,  
drink my tea, and agree with it all.

Buy an alarm clock that wakes me up  
and puts on my clothes, and gives me plenty of time  
to meditate and write.

Turn the water of the mind off  
before it floods everything  
and comes through the window  
and ruins the couch of complacency  
on which I nap.

Oh, let the water wake me. Be not afraid of your own  
minds water.

Quit writing, stop forever, lay down on the floor,  
make amends for all the bad words and wrong words I  
have ever written,  
burn something, weep, apologize to the dawn sky  
because you have misused it so.

Take another nap.

Develop a healthy form of coma.

Learn to levitate over things that aren't there.

Make a drip castle on the sea shore of melancholia.

Fail the test of time.

Then create my own test,  
but forget to study, fail it, then kick myself out of  
my own school.

Not create anything to last.

Bring the trumpet of my sorrow to my lips, play it loud  
and bad, out the window of my 1942 Hope Street  
apartment, sending that note through the fire escapes,  
down the curbs, through the car light, street light,  
through the light in the bones of the man drinking a  
cup of coffee at Jim's Café, looking out the window,  
looking back at his hand, checking the clock on the  
wall, thinking it's time and then laughing to himself,  
"Time for what?" Ah yes, the trumpet I will play.

Invent a math that I am expert in, that I know all the  
answers to, that I can use in my own personal sciences,  
measuring the arc of light that comes from my eyes  
and lands on your body and causes you to recline  
illuminated and awesome on the throne of my mind.  
That will be a good math.

Kiss myself good-bye, as I go to work.

Change the way I feel about emptiness.

Remember what I was going to say.

Say strange and beautiful things to anyone, especially

when they aren't listening.

Drop this class of time.

Apologize to the lady on the bus who I insulted last week,  
if I happen to see her again and I happen to feel like  
doing it, if I don't get defensive and chicken out.

Paint my mind golden.

Find some paint that doesn't peel off the mind.

Have fun, have lots and lots of fun, have the kind of fun  
that incites riots of envy and panics of desperation.  
Have so much fun that I get shot down like a balloon.

Be a Love Terrorist. Send love bombs in the mail, put love  
in cars, buses, in empty bottles of Sprite left behind  
Jon's market on Vermont. Blow up everyone I see with  
a love bomb. Ka-Boom! There, you're loved.

Talk positive to myself. Tell myself it's all OK.  
Convince myself that everything is fine.

Wait until tomorrow to really get started.  
Begin when I finally get an idea.  
Jump in when I find the confidence.

Execute some bad habits. Devise new ways of abolishing  
my hating and resentful mind to the backseat of the  
car that is me and drive myself into the timeless ocean

of awareness that surrounds every molecular atomic breath of this very big now of universal bus ride love.

Think of old beatnik cafes in Venice and how lonely and faraway they must have been, on the slum ocean edge of 1940's, 50's Los Angeles, a city that barely even existed. Living in the land of oblivion, high in the early morning low clouds shrouding the Lincoln Boulevard gas station, dirt lot sand lot next to that, Stuart Perkhoff writes 'Art is God is Love on the wall', which Wallace Berman said, and nobody is watching. But of course the god is always watching and that's how I am thinking of it.

Open the doors of love. Take the door off the entrance of love. Love must have no door. It must be open. All the time and for all, but oh that is a scary and strange door to keep open when some asshole mafia type in Glendale driving 80 miles an hour almost kills you and your wife.

Oh, for this I must take down the walls of love. Let love out of the room.  
Realize finally that it was out of the room all along.

Witness the energy of a second grade sock ball game with my daughter as the sun goes down and an airplane flies by, and the smog and dust and city junk is lit the tender pink of life and death.