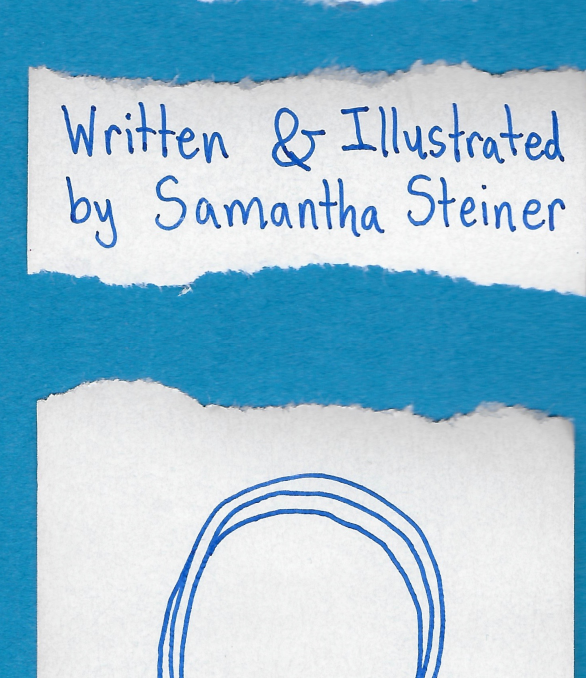
TWO BOXES

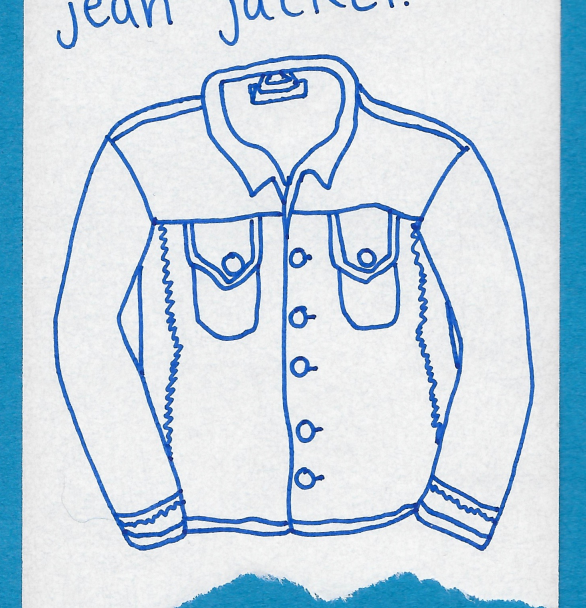
A Story in Scraps

Written & Illustrated
by Samantha Steiner

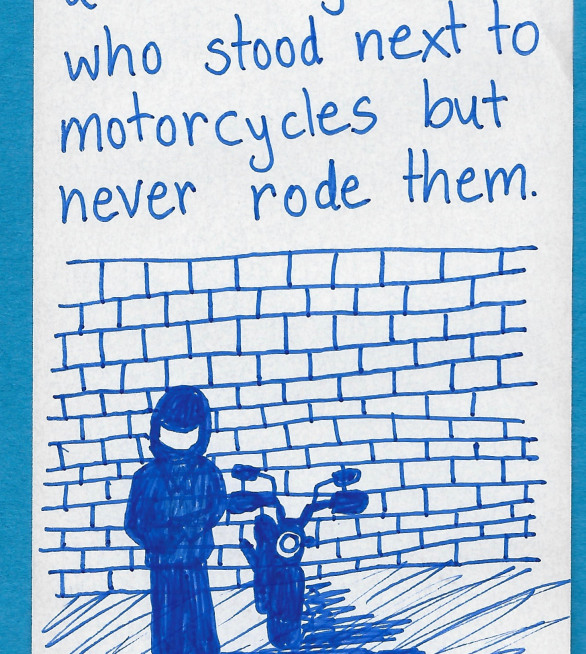


Here's the way I wanted it to happen.

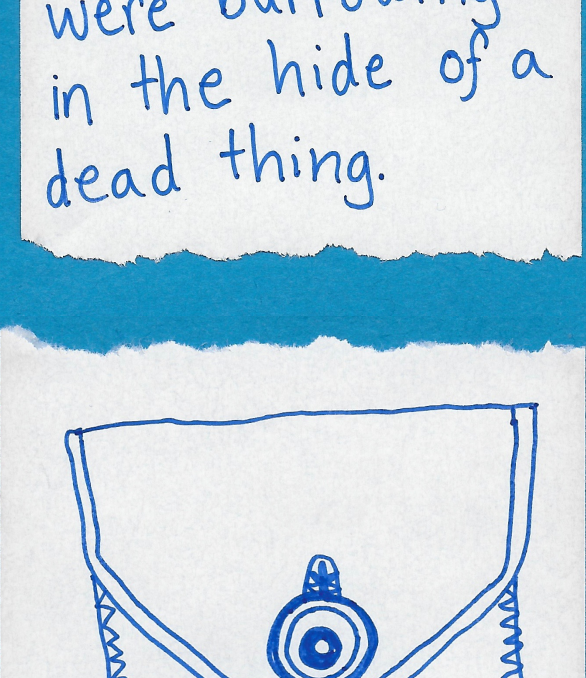
You come to my dorm room smelling of your jean jacket.



When I was little I dreamed of someone who wore a leather jacket, who stood next to motorcycles but never rode them.

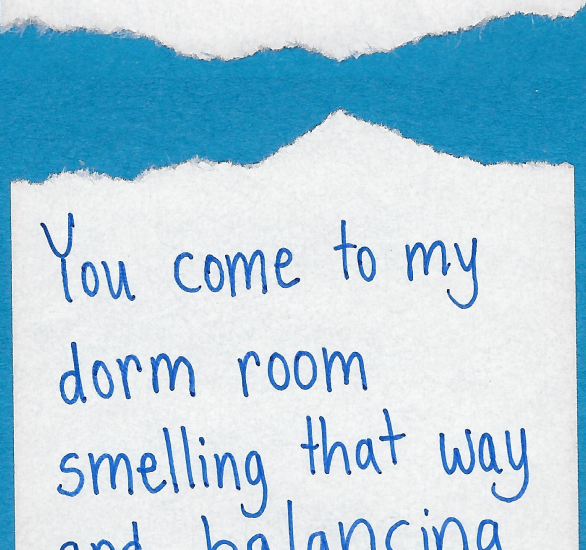


You don't have a leather jacket. When I offered to buy you one you said they made you feel icky, like you were burrowing in the hide of a dead thing.



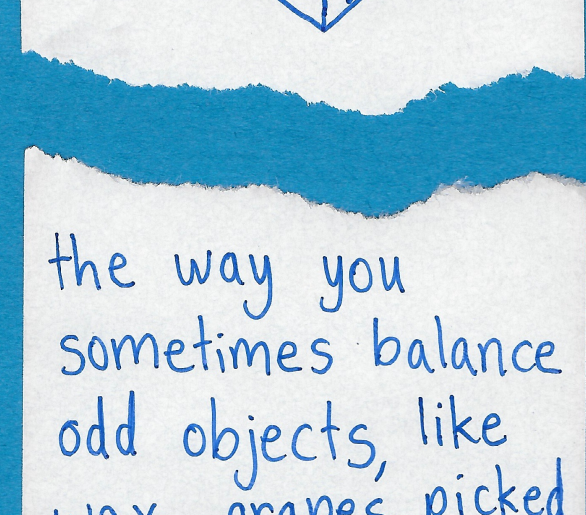
I got used to your jean jacket. I liked the smell of aluminum from the studs on the pockets.

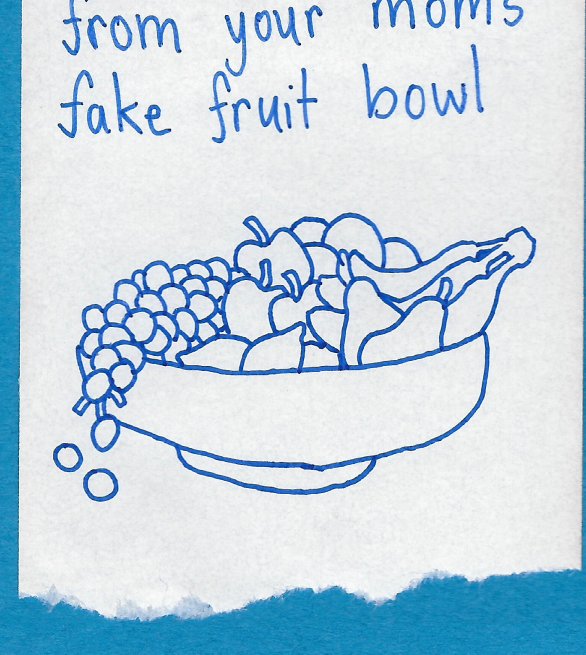
You come to my dorm room smelling that way and balancing



A little paper box
on the tip of your nose

the way you sometimes balance odd objects, like wax grapes picked from your mom's fake fruit bowl



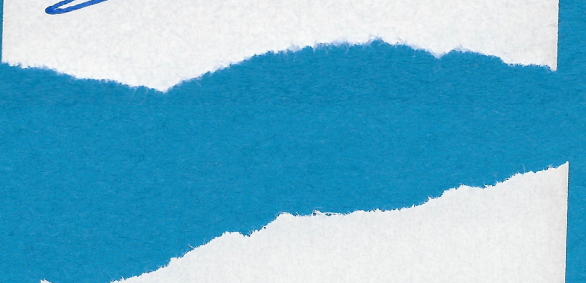


or the miniature stapler I keep in my backpack.

You balance the box on your nose and stumble toward me and say,

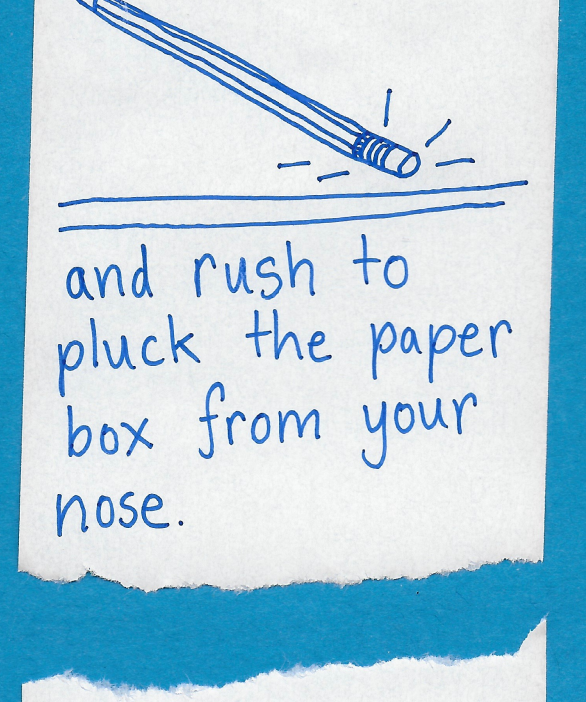
Quick, before I drop it!

And I drop my pencil on my desk

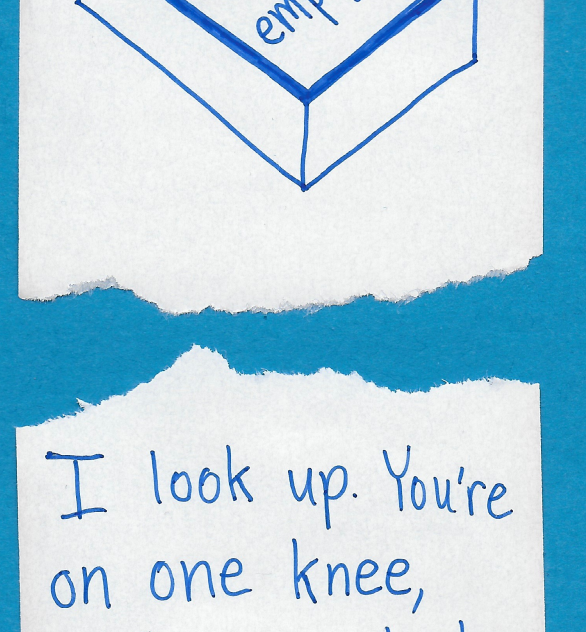


and rush to pluck the paper box from your nose.

I open the box.

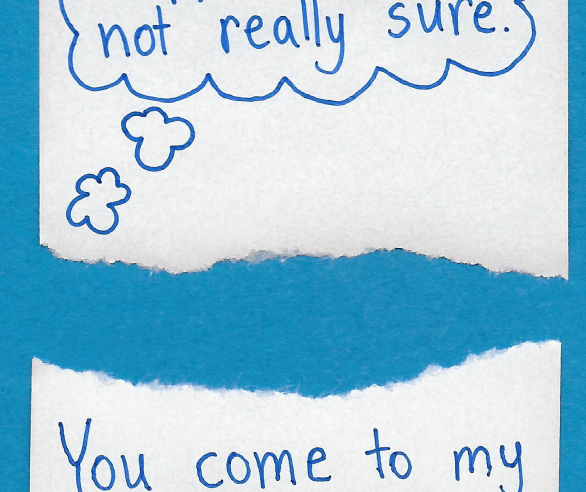


I look up. You're on one knee, holding a glint of gold.



Here's the way I think you wanted it to happen, but I'm not really sure.

You come to my dorm room and find me at my desk with my back to the door. You set the



little paper box
on the tip of your nose.

Two years ago, you showed me that box

and gave me its twin.

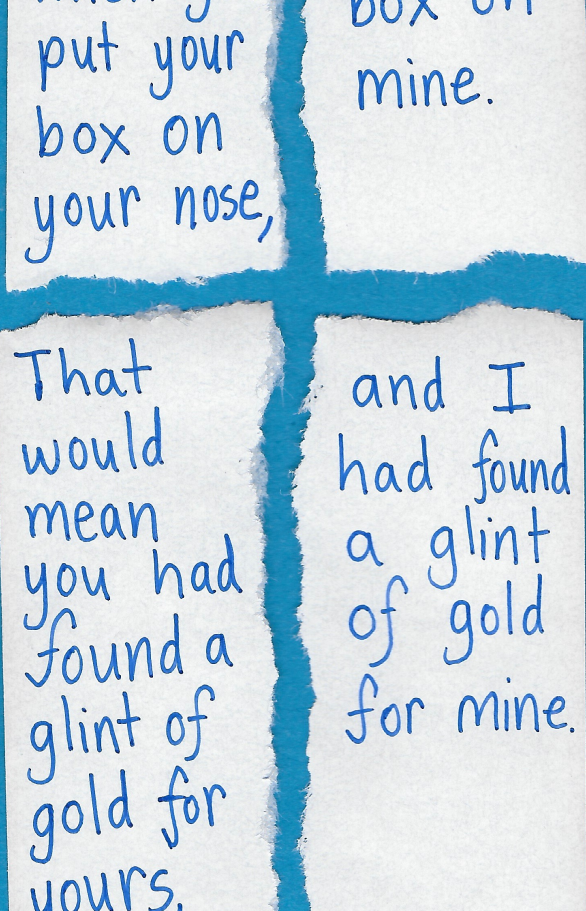
They were both empty then.

You told me that when you put your box on your nose,

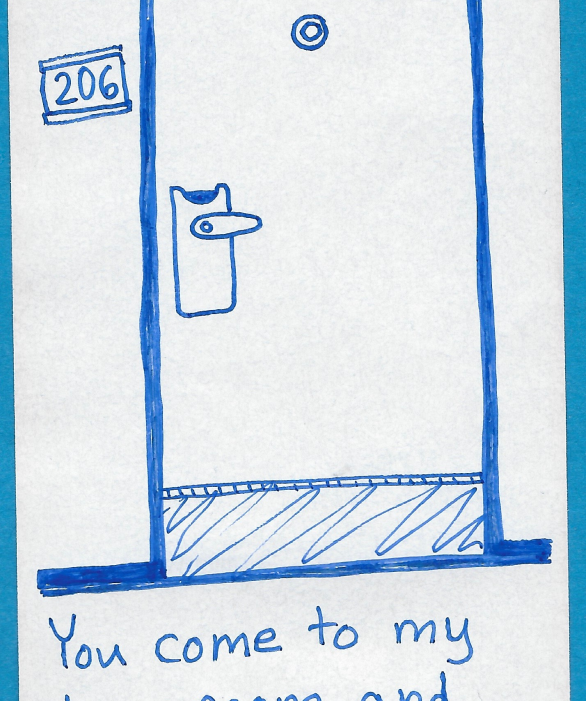
I should put my box on mine.

That would mean you had found a glint of gold for yours,

and I had found a glint of gold for mine.

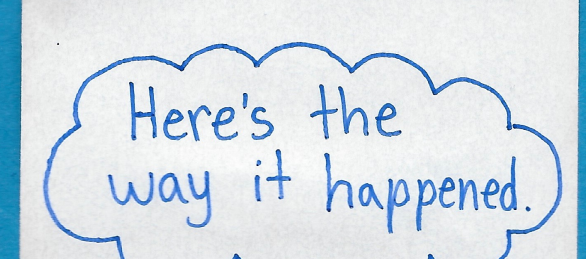


You come to my dorm room and put your box on your nose. I put my box on mine. Each of us holds the other's face in two hands.

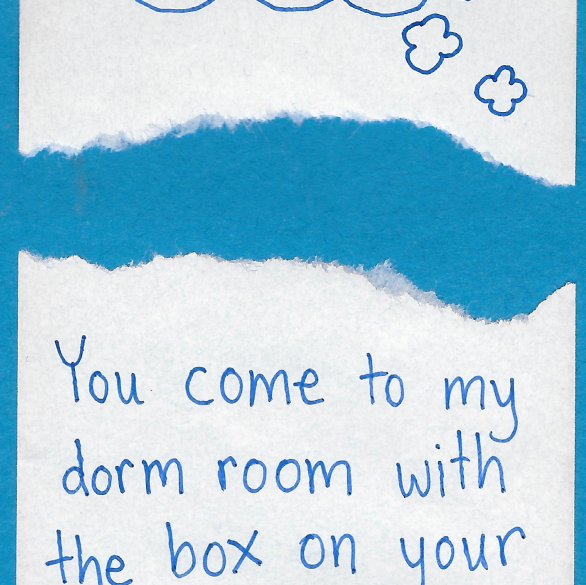


Here's the way it happened.

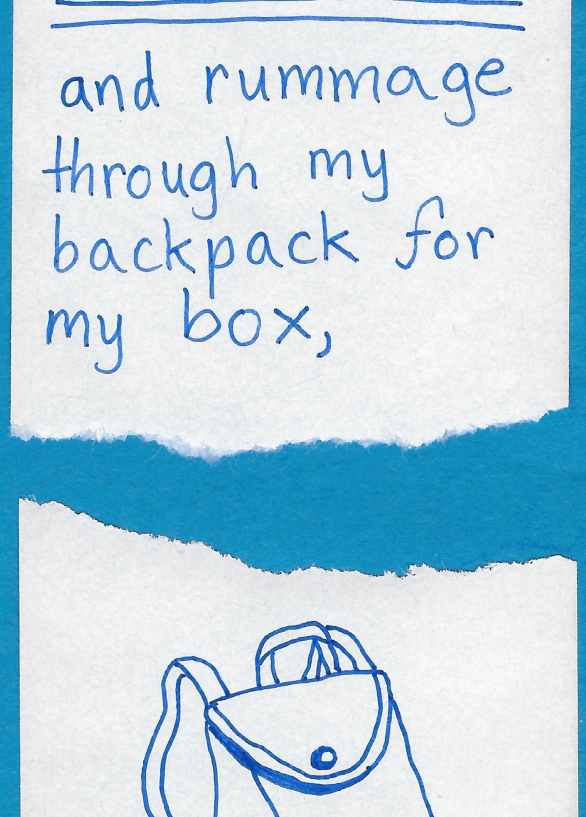
You come to my dorm room with the box on your nose. I drop my pencil



and rummage through my backpack for my box,



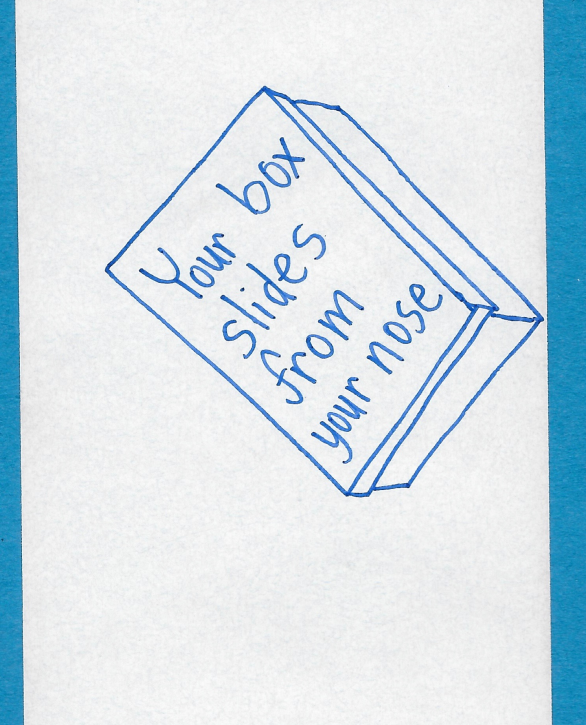
though I know exactly where it is, in my desk drawer, still empty.



Your box slides from your nose.

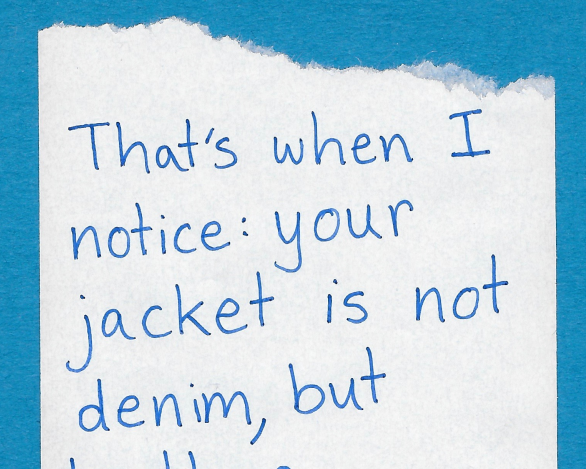
to your cheek.

That's when I notice: your jacket is not denim, but leather.



You're right. It looks like a dead thing.

The box falls to the carpet and a glint of gold tumbles out.



I pick up the empty box

You pick up the gold.

You leave.

I stay.