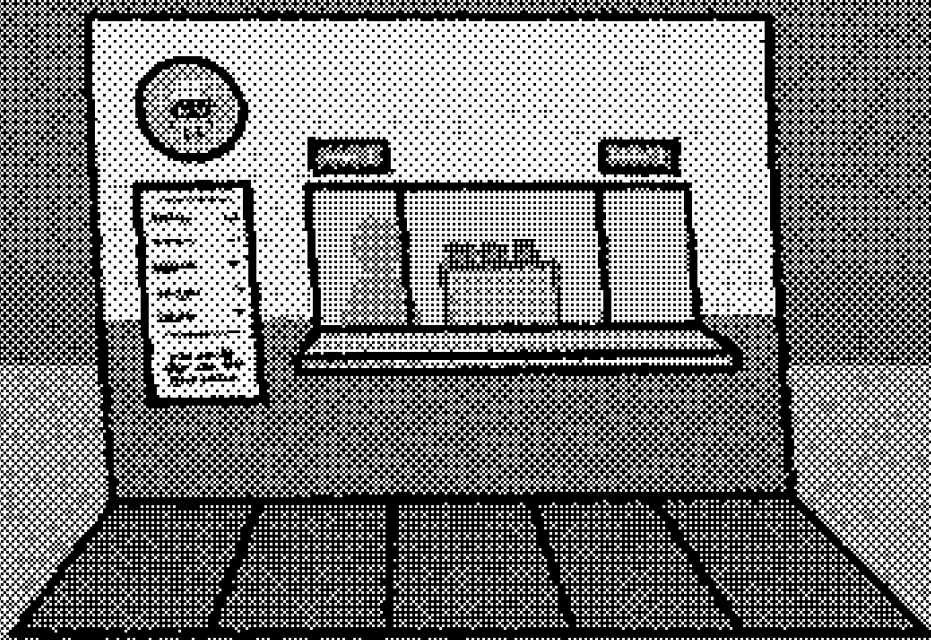


Hmmburger



Clocking In

2025.01

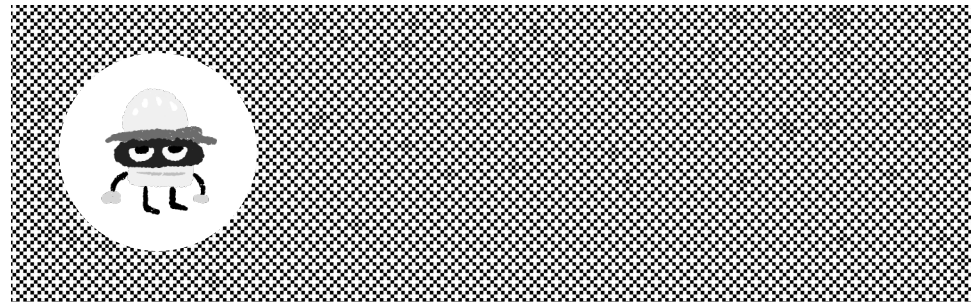
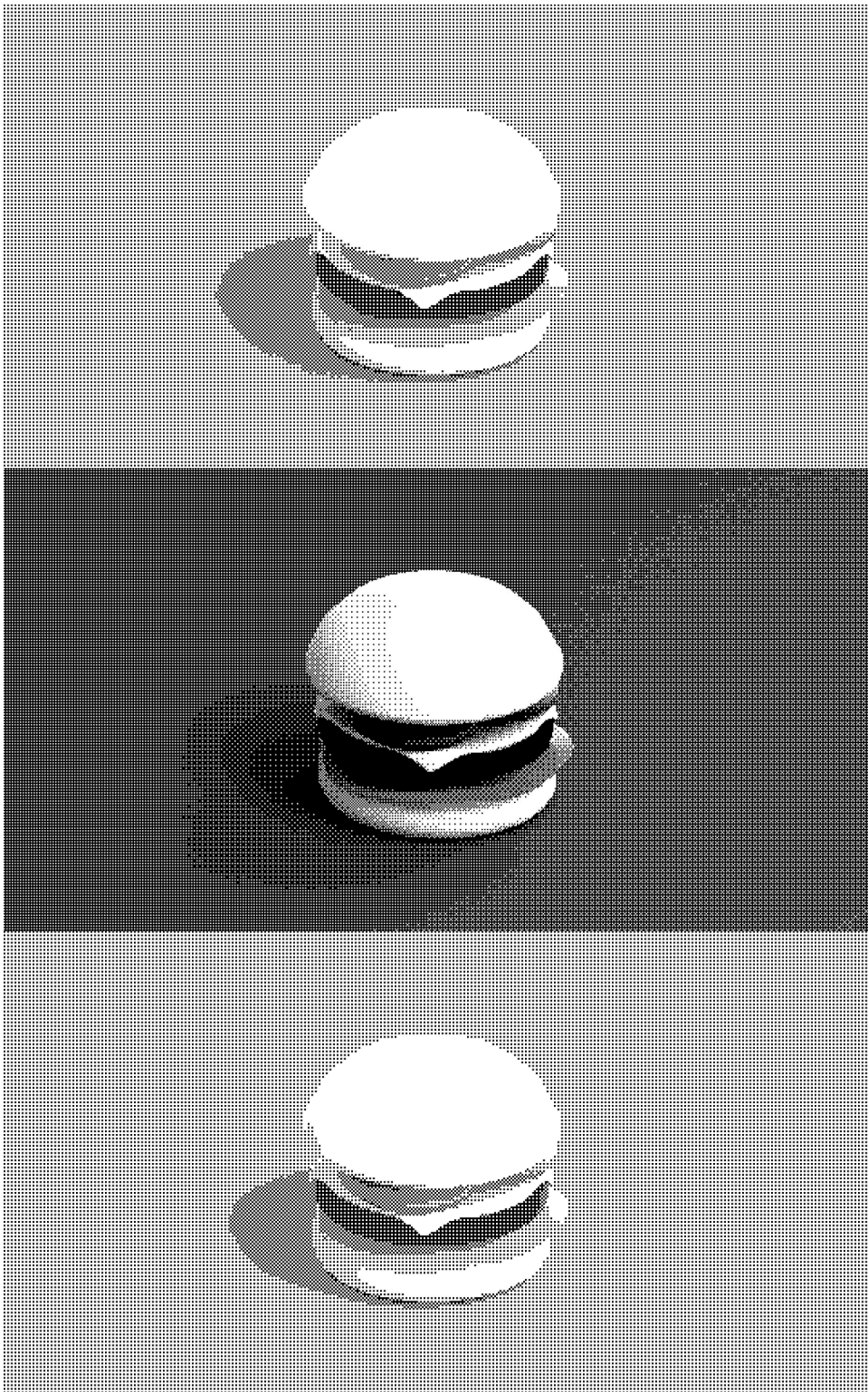


Clocking In

Enjoy!

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Stories and art by Vincent Gonzalez



Greetings Burgerheads

Welcome to a new issue of Hmmburger;
a relic of a bygone era reanimated in the slop era.

At Hmmburger we want to do one thing, respond to the now the best we can both in how we know and how we want. A simple mission: share the experience of this corporate daydream with others.

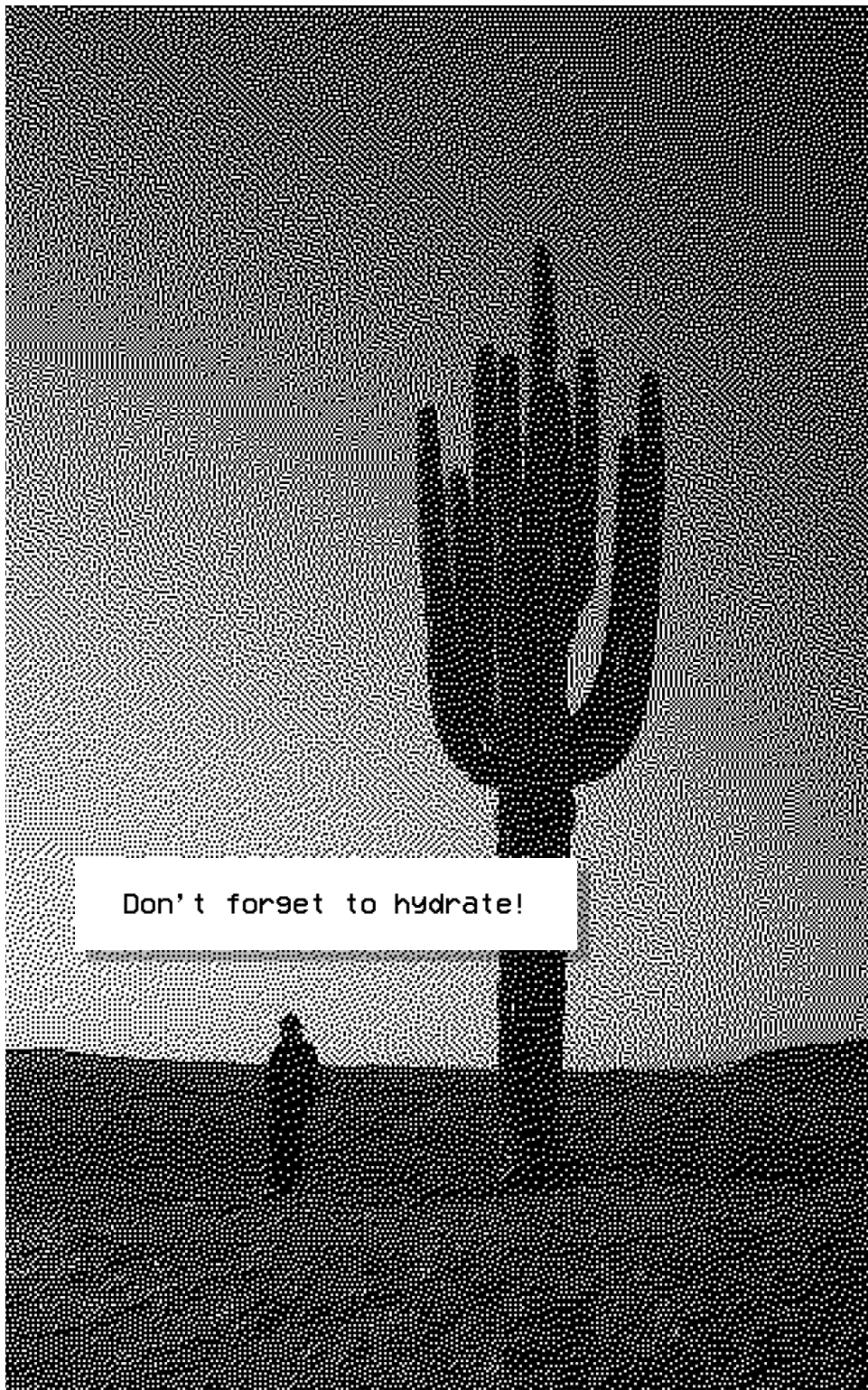
This issue, *Clocking In* includes reports of alienation in the workplace, logistical efficiencies, and what happens in between. We hope you enjoy this from the bottom of our grease traps.

We have seen consistent progress at hmmburger.com, “Incredible!” one might say. Now it is time for us to help meet your content pyramid needs in this reality manifest.

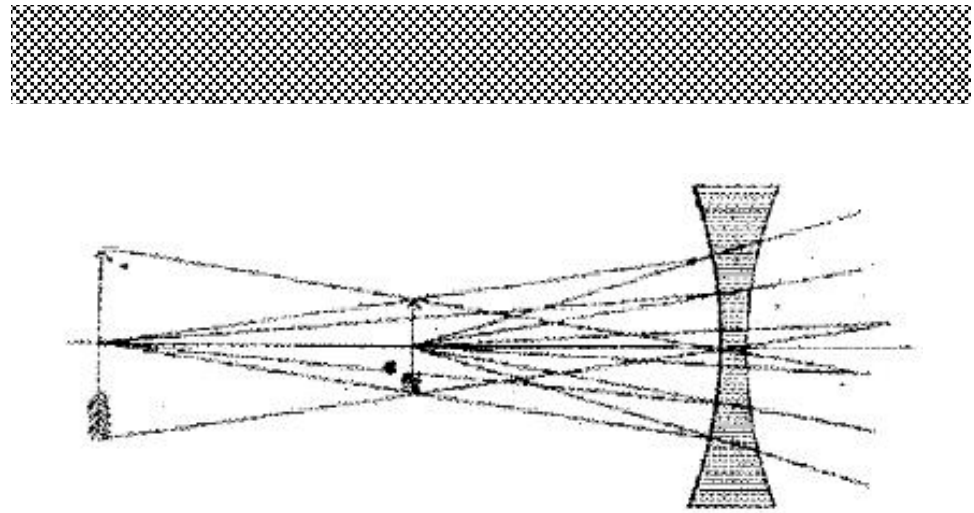
Online isn’t real, but this is.

Burgerheads, we hope you enjoy this issue!

–The Editor



Don't forget to hydrate!



It's Not Far

I've decided a destination,
it's in an odd place not close but not far.

I can drive,
but it's not that far.

I could ride my bike,
but I don't want to deal with locking it up.

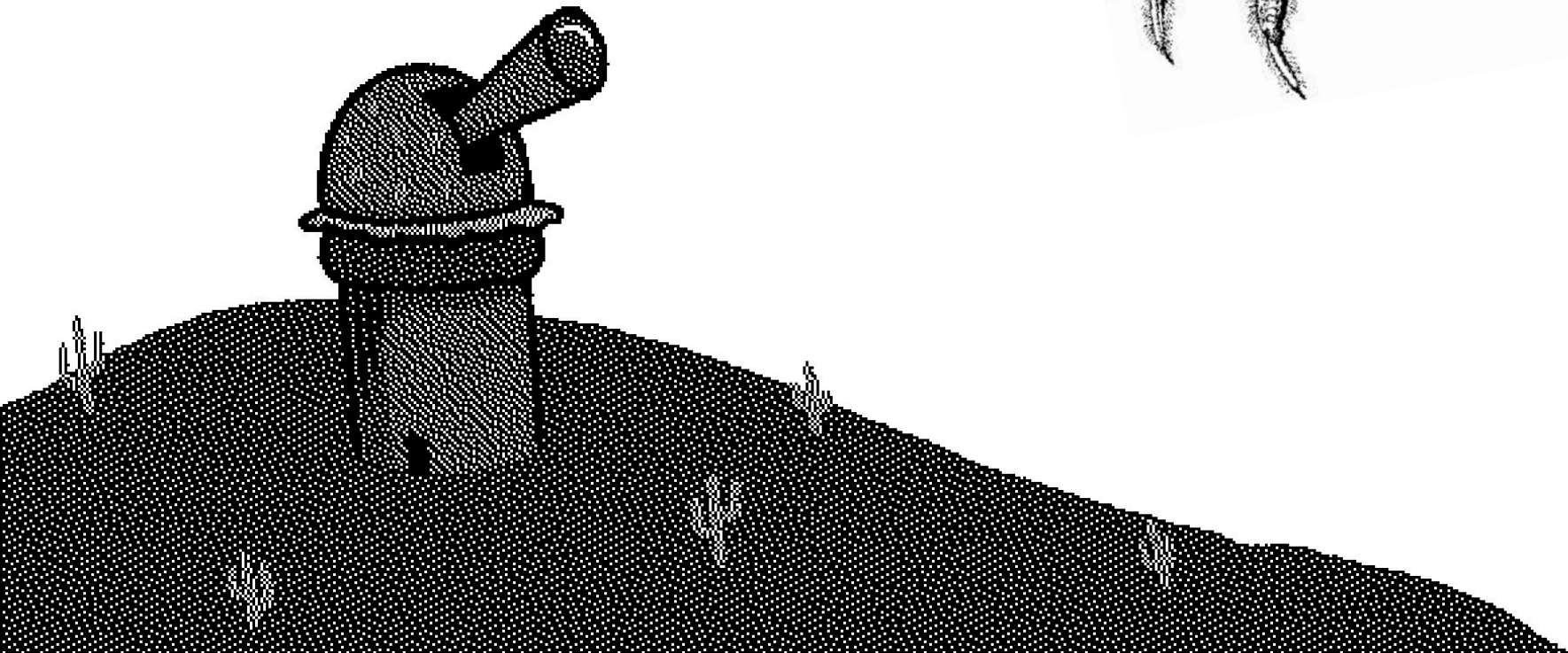
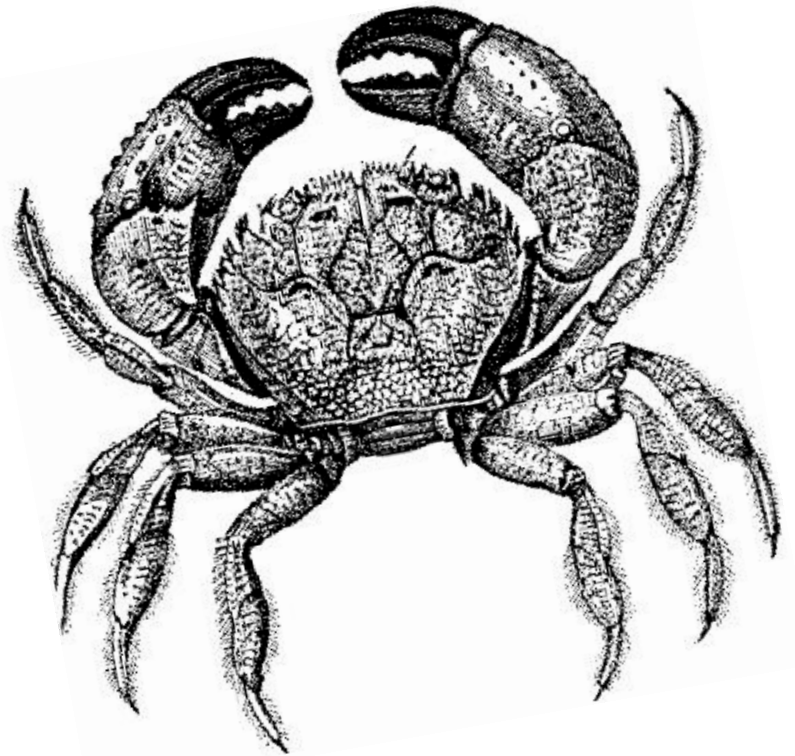
I can take the bus,
but that's longer than the bike ride.

I can pay a car to take me there,
but that is silly.

Whichever way,
I have to start walking.

From the Observatory

For our sake,
please stop being so rash.
It's a bit much right now





Receiving and Shipping

Boxes, stacked in the corner waiting for shipping.

The fluorescent lights and the air conditioning hum in unison.

The voices on the radio remind me that no one knows what they're supposed to be doing. Why take the reigns when the automatons will do it for us? All we can do is wait, because the process has been relegated elsewhere but a promise is being repeated.

"Heard that before," every fiber and my body reminds me.

bzzrt

The screen on my console flashes, "New Communication: A message describing a process and the reason for the process. Click to read communication message."

I open the message, "Incredible," I think, "absolutely incredible. We've given it up for the vibe."

"If we look at the manifests summary, the manifest summaries determine that the reasons stated in the manifests is in line with the process for the implementation of the process that was decided to process future manifests for standards and compliance," read the message.

"Well, duh," I mutter.

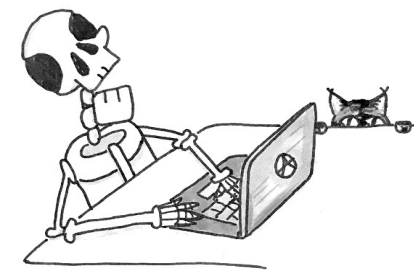
bzzrt

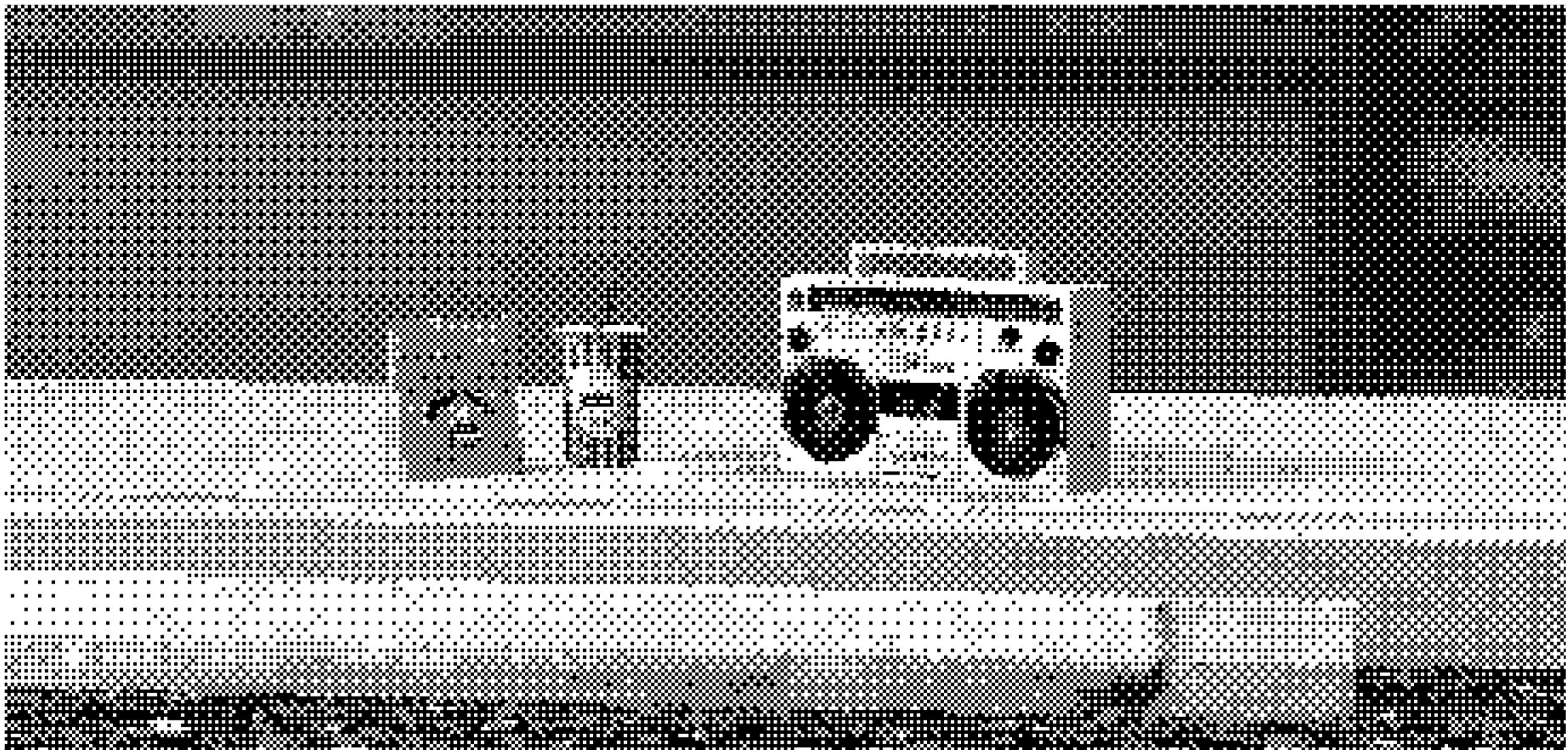
"New Communication: A message requesting the status and state of the boxes meant for shipping."

click

"Hey, are the boxes ready?" read the message.

pop





The Lunch Rush

The sun cooks me from above and the sidewalk cooks me from below as I walk to get my lunch. The vehicles scream past me in the opposite direction at an arms length. Warm gusts in between the stale warmth of today.

There is this new burger place that opened up and I can't seem to stop going back to it. It has become that work staple that I feel borderline embarrassed how much I go.

As I get closer I can see the strip mall and the burger place now taking the space of the old electronics store. It's sad cause that's where pappy bought me a soldering kit. Look at me now, a proud mechanical engineer.

The parking lot is half full, easy to cut through, no weird zig zagging today!

I take the cowpath that others have made through the strip malls landscaping. The shade of the trees on the little curbed desert islands in a sea of asphalt is nice little break from the onslaught of the sun. The sound of gravel crunching under my feet and the shade of the trees tricks me for a moment that I am not walking from a busy street to a strip mall.

Did I come here yesterday? I *am* wearing the same clothes.

ding ding

The bells above the burger joint's door ring as I step inside.

I can smell the grill and hear the murmur of today's regulars. I think that's a coven at the big table, but that's not my business.

I walk to the counter and, without hesitation, as if today was going to be any different, I say, "combo number five."

Of course, I hated the fact that it was my favorite meal here. It's as if the owner had some sick twisted sense of humor. Number one should be what everyone wants, but real ones know number two is tried and true, but five? This isn't the garden fresco salad.

But still, the simple cheeseburger combo is what's up.

ding ding

I'm reminded that others have entered after me.

"Thanks! We'll bring it out to you when it's ready. Enjoy your meal!"

"You too."

ding ding

"I always cause the lunch rush," I pick out my booth, the one under the vent.

Okay, I'm pretty sure it's a coven, they're talking about a curse on a family and they don't have many nice things to say about ancestors. Also it looks like there's a tarot spread in the middle of the table, totally a coven.

ding ding

I start to pull out my phone and put in my right earbud, keeping the left one in the case. I don't want to appear rude when they bring my lunch. Sure, I can hear them with them both on, but they don't know that.

"Here you go, can I get you anything else?" asked the server.

"Nope, thanks."

"Enjoy your meal," they say as they walk away.

The first ravenous bites hit the spot as they normally do, between the tiniest of breaths.

I blink and, somehow, half of the meal is gone.

"Whoa," I pause and say to myself, "we still got another 30."

I sit back and look around, noticing that the dining area is still pretty full. I begin to wonder when the AC is gonna kick on. Sure, it's not too terrible outside but inside should still be comfortable, right?

The coven laughs in unison.

ding ding

"I bet they did that," I say to myself.

A stifled laughter in the booth next to me.

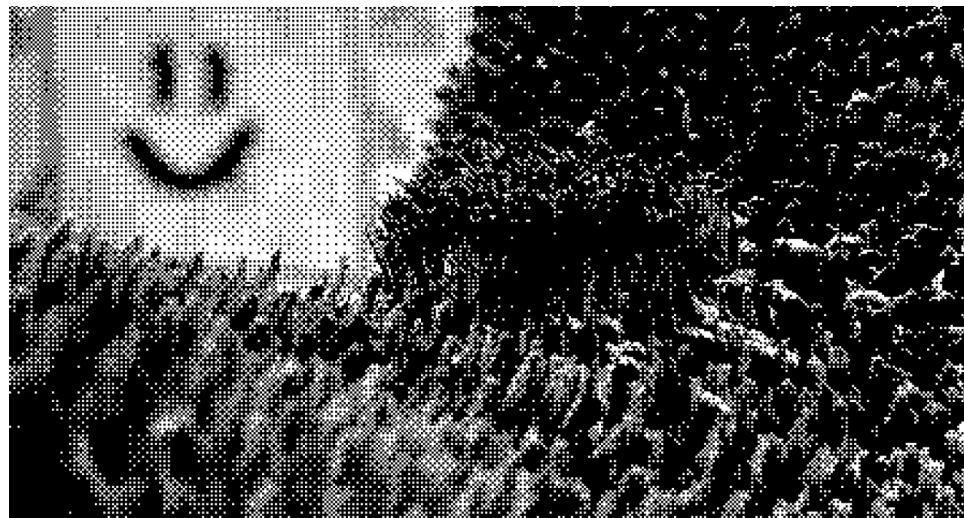
"Maybe your ancestors need to unburden themselves," says the voice behind the laugh, in an increasingly sarcastic tone, "they never have anything good to say except pappy and dad."

I stuff my mouth with a handful of fries to stifle my laugh. I can hear the voice in the booth over slightly chuckle. We knew we did not wish to be hexed by the coven. I have no need for magic myself, good or bad. Laws of thermodynamics or something.

The coven's laughter begins to fade. The air conditioner kicks on and I begin to feel that cool air from the vent above me. That cold air makes me wish I had a light sweater, but right now this is a reprieve from walking in the sun.

I close my eyes and somehow that cool air reminds me of the droplets on the grass while waiting for the bus on a winter morning.

I lean back into the booth, satiated. The conversations in the lobby have blurred. I'm reminded of how when the weather is cool the highway sounds like a distant, roaring river. My eyes closed, I feel that cool breeze off the river wrap around me; I open my eyes.



I seem to see into infinity. Are my eyes open, are they closed? My mind wanders. I feel that cool breeze. I imagine sitting on my porch as a warmed afternoon gust makes me open my eyes.

The air conditioning shuts off. The coven is here, the jester in the neighboring booth is gone, and my tray is a picked over mess. I check my phone, "I better get going."

"Can I take that?" the server asked, coming out of nowhere, as if they had waited for my return.

I look down at my tray and hand it to them.

"Yes, thank you!" I say as I notice my ear bud is still in my ear.

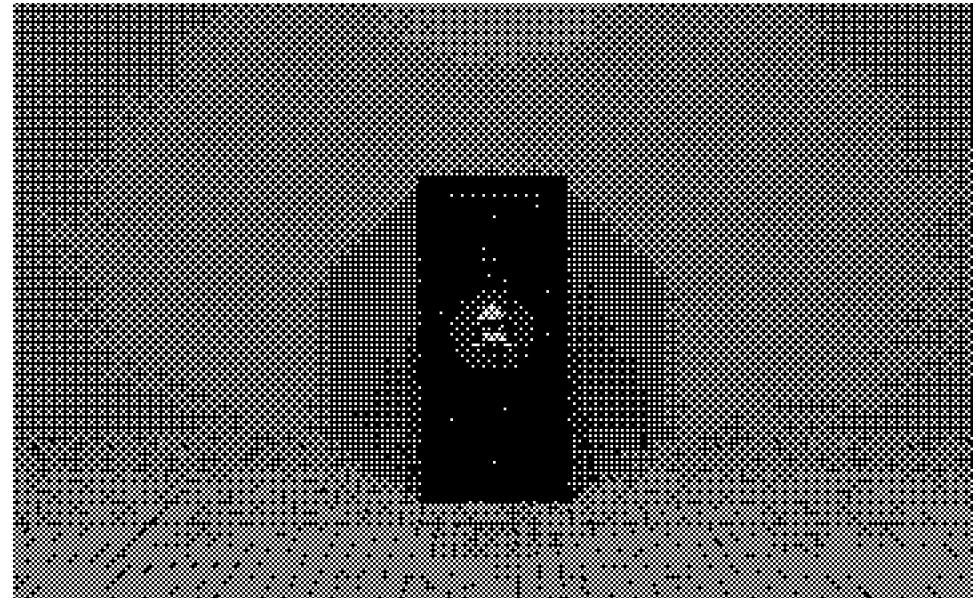
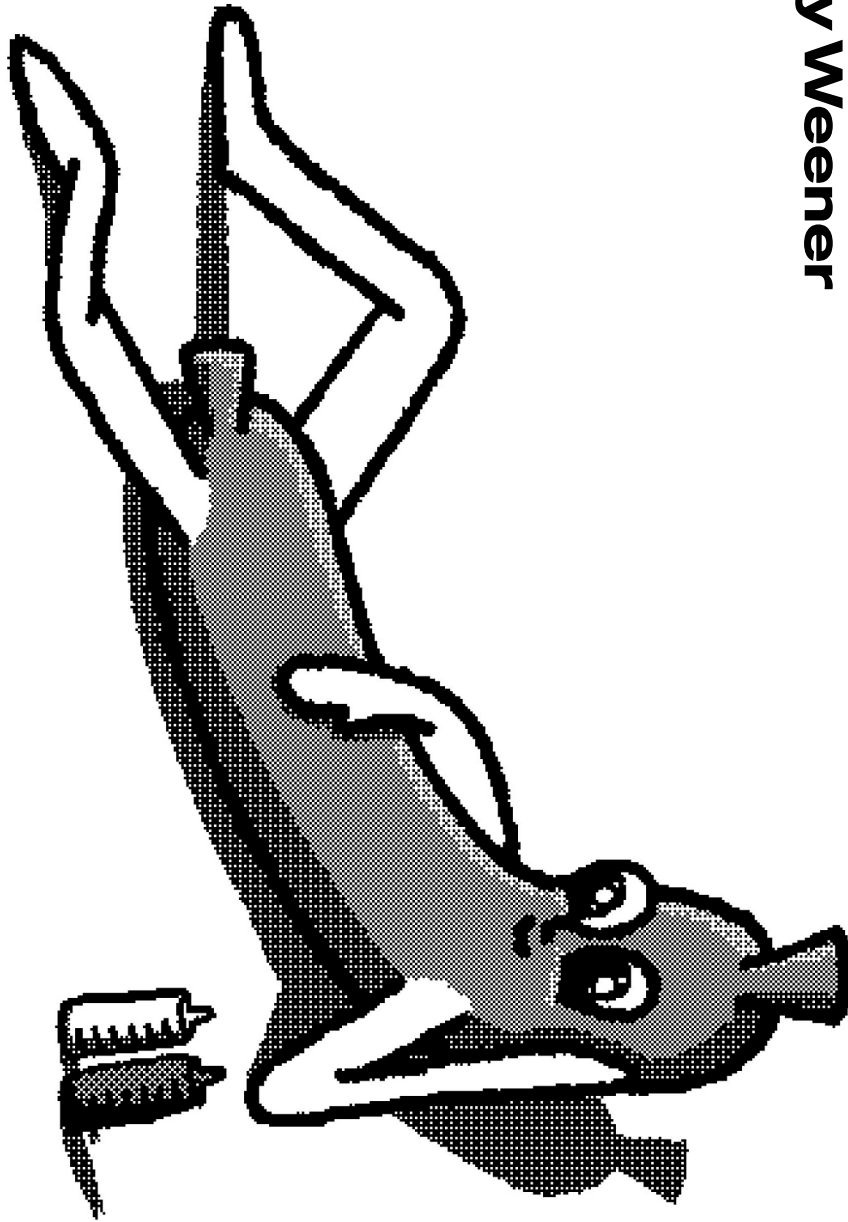
"Will we see you again tomorrow?"

I nervously laugh, "can't, it's the weekend."

I pull the ear bud out of my ear and place it in its case. My case into my pocket.

Damn, I was here yesterday.

Sexy Weiner



It may be trash

A large pile of objects is obstructing your view.

"Okay, now what?" you say.

"I don't know man," says a disembodied voice.

"I don't really care about this or that and if I never saw either of them again, I probably wouldn't care," it continued.

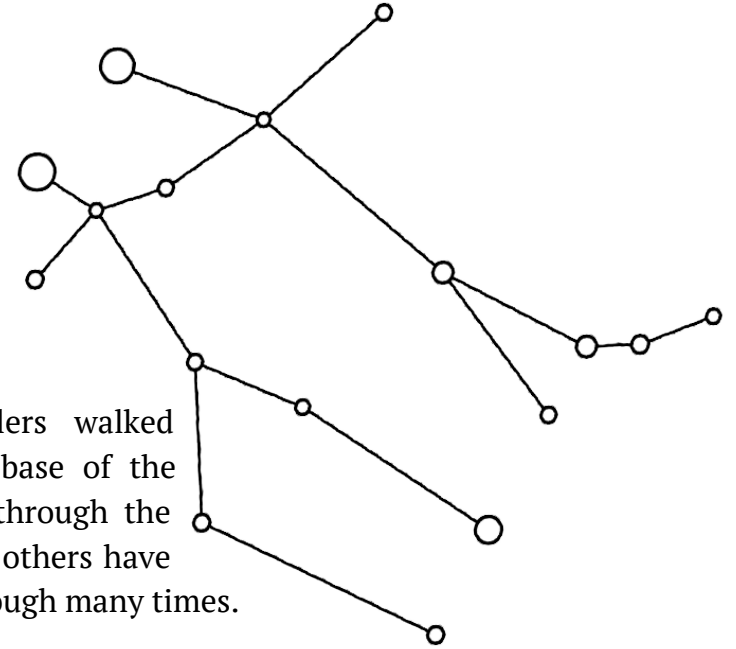
Your eyelids are heavy, your back is tense. You decide to open up that trash bag and toss it.

"See," the voice said, "I didn't feel a thing. There are things we have lost that will never come back. There are things that will be made that shouldn't be lost, but sometimes it's time to think about how things can be."

"Ah," you respond, "Thank you."



Gemini Season



Two travelers walked along the base of the mountain through the valley that others have passed through many times.

The travelers admired the tops of the ancient stones that time had slowly revealed.

The travelers held hands as they have before, but in this moment, time wanted to be remembered.

The sky began to fill with glistening yellows and deep oranges that squeezed the remaining blue from the sky.

A warmth filled the air but neither felt a sweat.

The ancient stones could be felt faintly vibrating as the sky settled.

The travelers looked up and saw a gift etched in the sky of their embrace.

"That's us," they said.

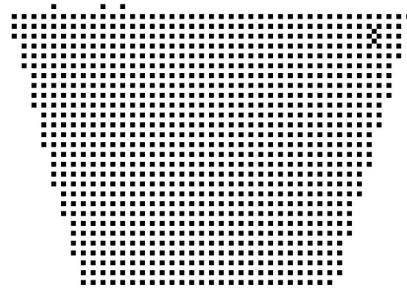
Wheel Me Out

I am tired boss.

When you brought me in it was great. Do you remember opening the box and being blasted with that delightfully, questionably toxic air? So oddly refreshing and tantalizing!

Those early days with that new object feeling were some of the best days. I shaped myself to the odd curvatures of the job. I was supportive and eased the previous discomfort. Now, I have been pushed to the side. New chairs are nice, so maybe it's time to wheel me out.

The weight of holding miscellaneous objects stacked over time has made my wheels create increased gravity at my feet. I now require more effort to get me to move out of these grooves in the low pile carpet. Oh, how I never liked this carpet. That first time gliding across the office's concrete floors until I felt the first resistance of this carpet. From gliding to being a stick in the mud.



When it's the end of the day and I hear the alarm being set, the beeps begin as the lights flicker off, and the darkness plays tricks on me. I think much like you dream, the darkness makes way for light and form.

I'm sitting at the end of the office's driveway almost at the curb. The rougher surfaces of the asphalt and sidewalk deform my wheels, but I keep rolling myself out. The sun's warmth activates remaining compounds inside of me that release that scent that reminds me of that fresh plastic smell. A cool breeze carries my scent into the air and happens to hit the nose of a passerby. They stop, recognizing that familiar smell, and see me there glowing in a sunbeam. They begin to walk toward me and I start to wake up.

The alarm begins to beep and the lights flicker on. The staccato of beeps from the alarm being disabled brings me back to this place.

It's a new day.

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