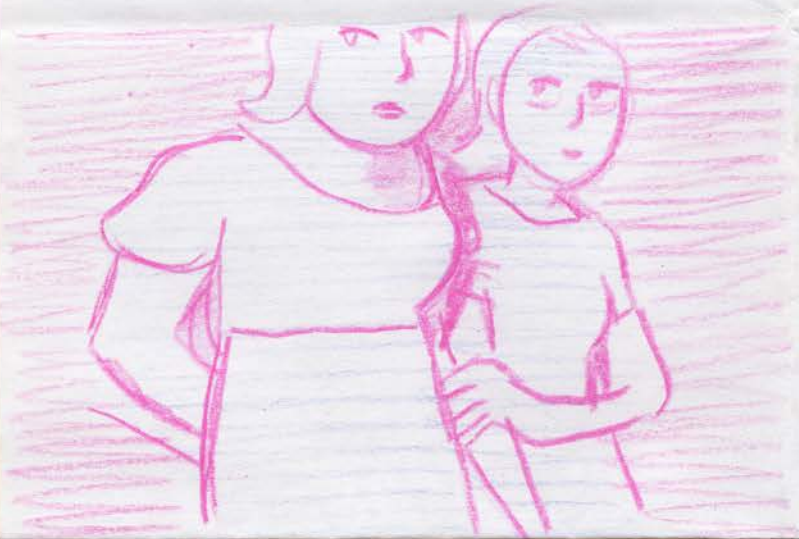




MY MOM WAS HOMECOMING
QUEEN IN HIGH SCHOOL.



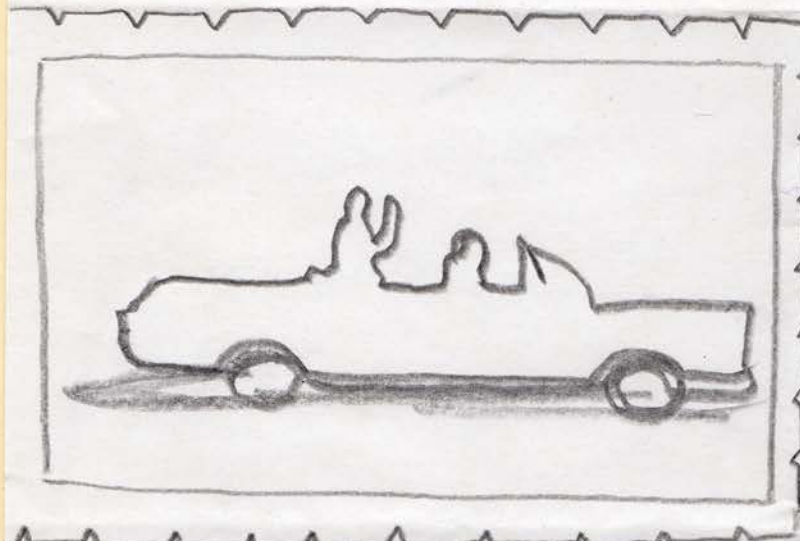
MY DAD WAS ALREADY
IN VIETNAM.

THERE'S A PHOTO OF ~~HER~~ HER
RIDING IN A WHITE CONVERTIBLE
IN HER ~~B~~ WHITE DRESS.



MY DAD SAID THAT
WHEN MOM WAS
HOMECOMING QUEEN
SHE GOT A TON OF
PHOTOS MADE -

AND MAILED THREE THICK
ENVELOPES FULL OF THEM
TO HIM IN VIETNAM.



AT MAIL CALL, THE
COMMANDING OFFICER WAS
~~SO~~ ANNOYED THAT MY DAD
GOT THREE BIG LETTERS -
AND THREW THE ENVELOPES
~~AT MY DAD.~~ AT HIM.

THE SHARP CORNER OF ONE
OF THEM HIT MY DAD HARD,
SQUARE BETWEEN THE EYES.



NOW DO
20 PUSHUPS
FOR EACH
LETTER



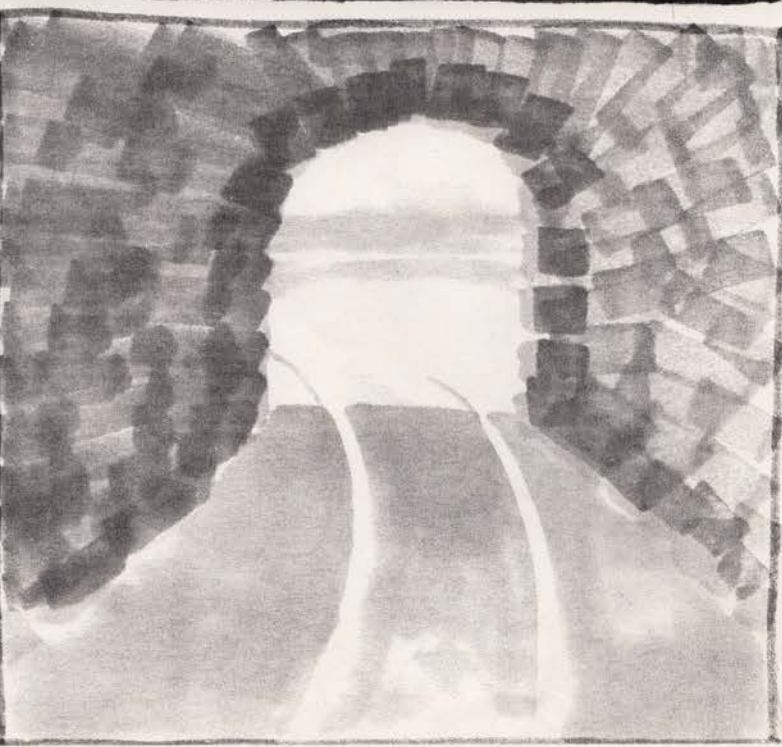
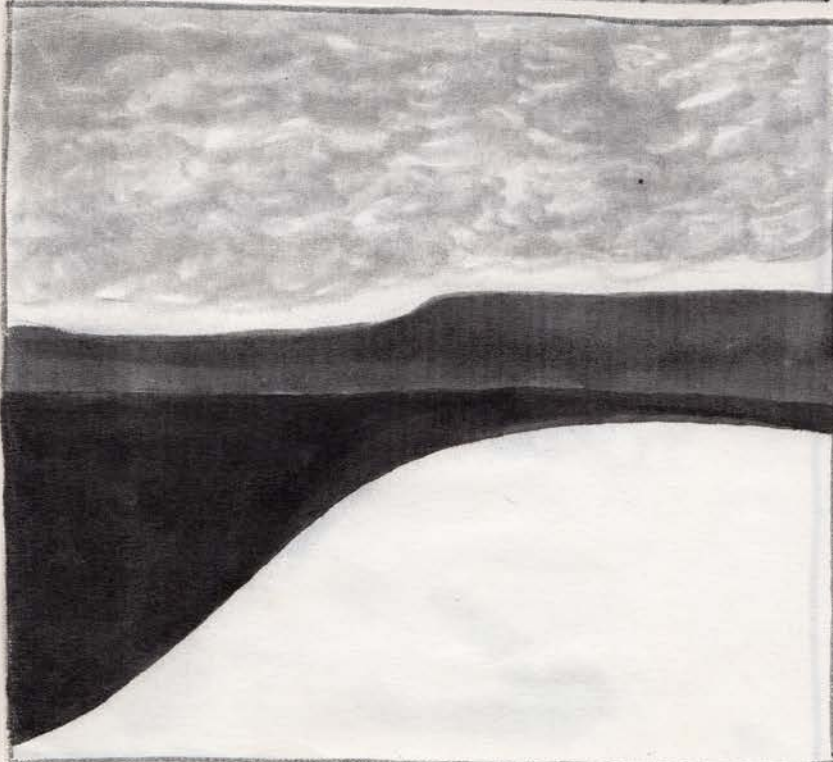
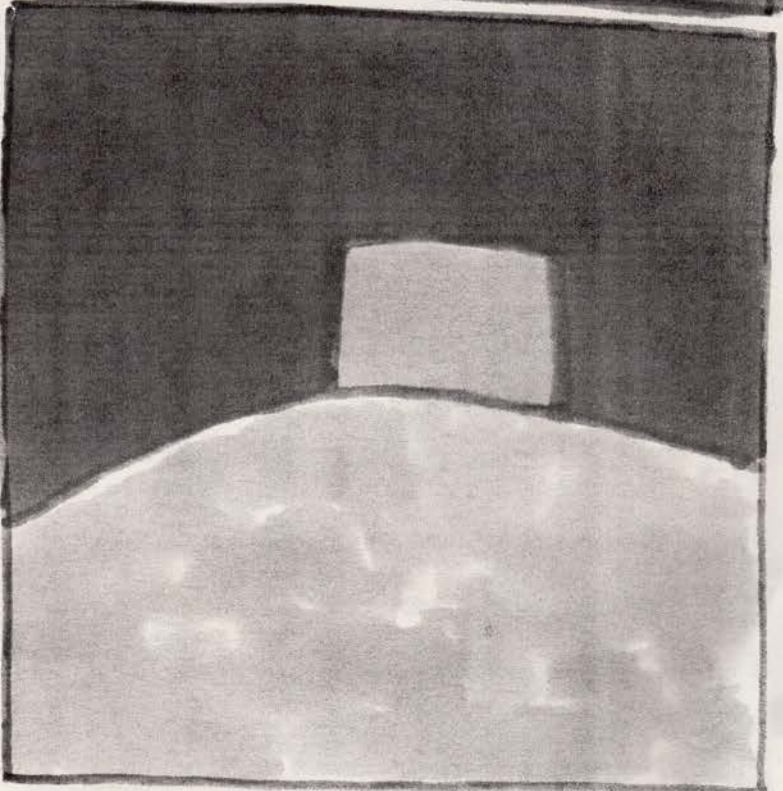
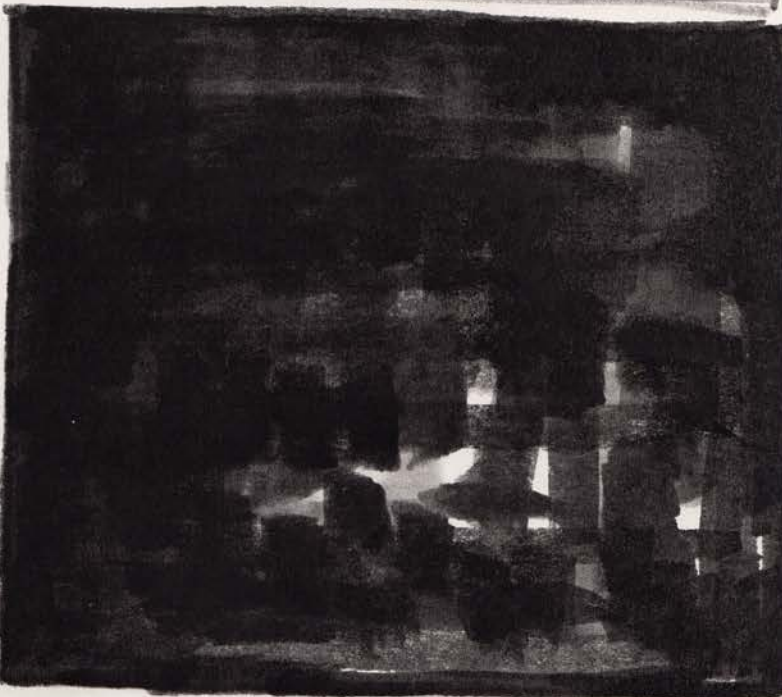
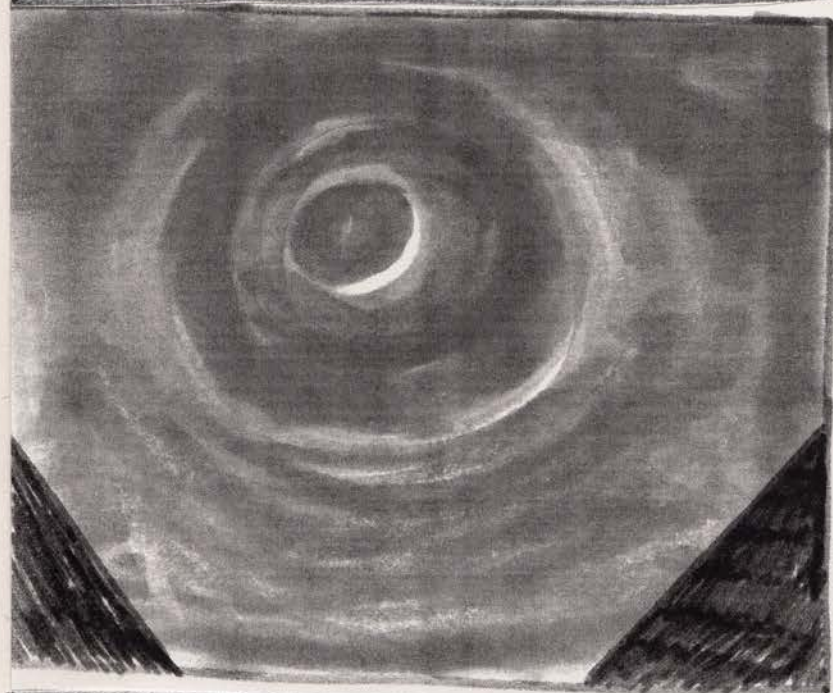
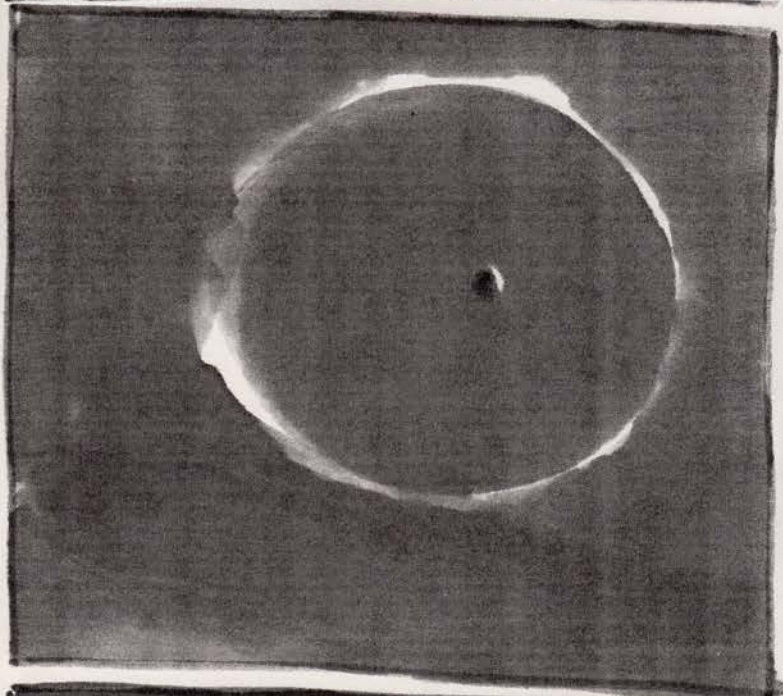
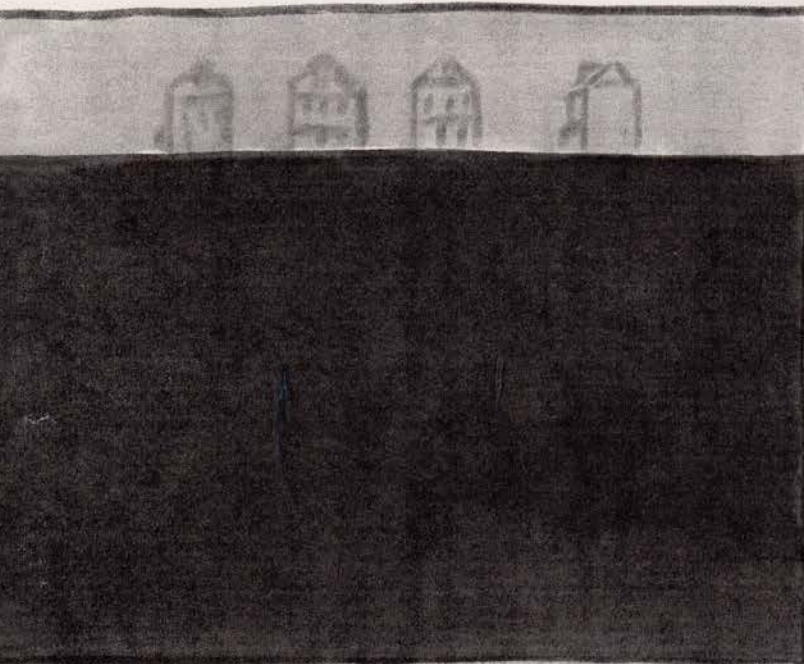
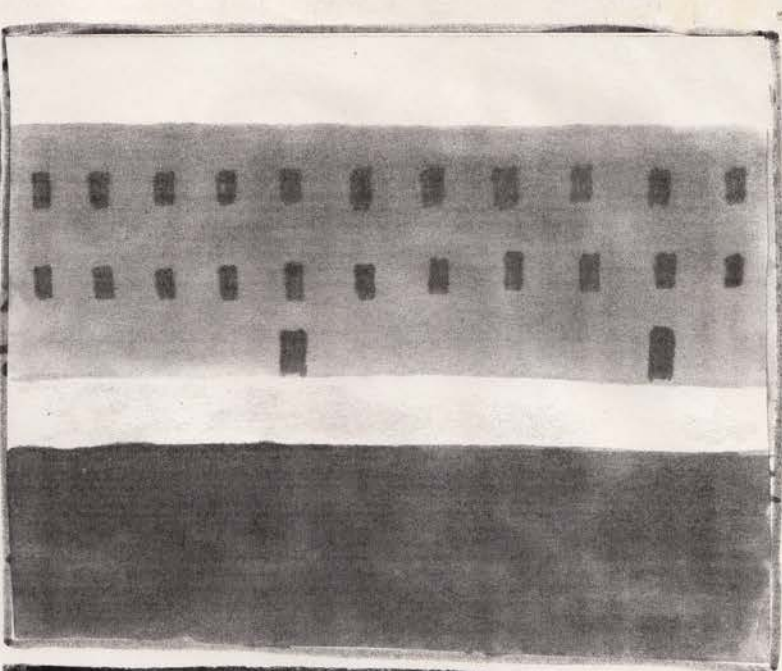
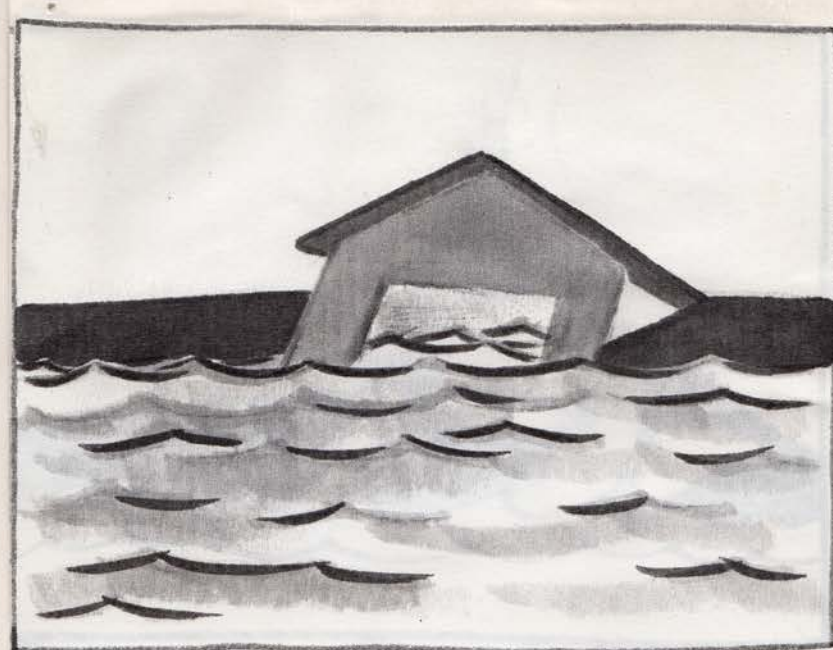
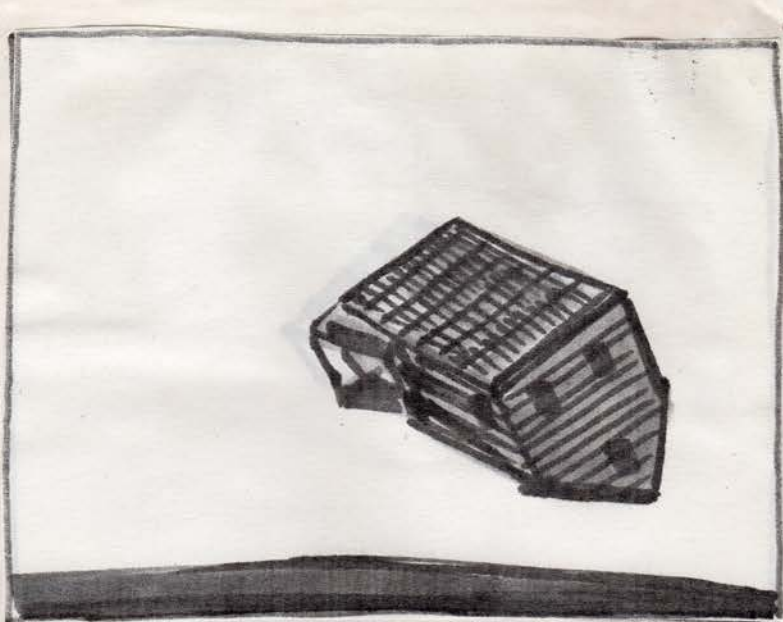
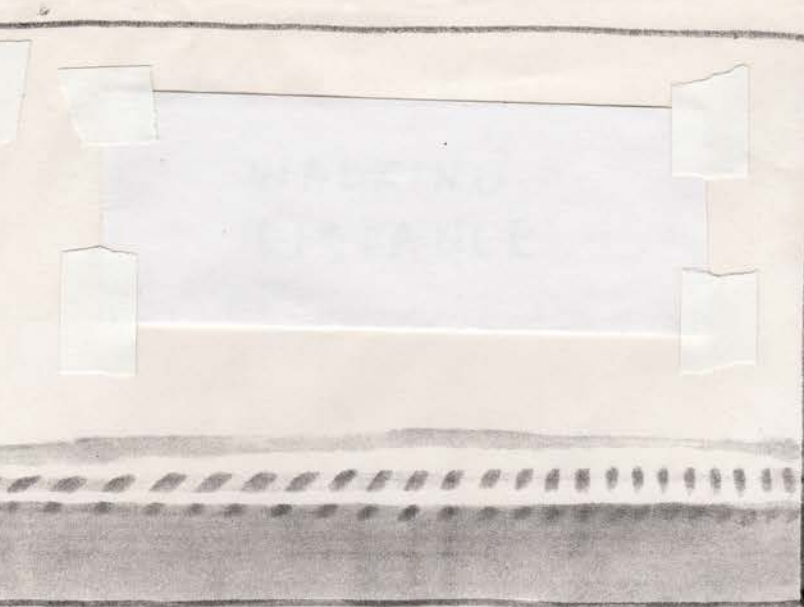
MY PARENTS
WHO HAVE BARELY SPOKEN
TO EACH OTHER
IN 20 YEARS,
DIVORCED FOR 20 YEARS —
NOW BOTH WORK FOR THE
SAME HOSPITAL
IN PITTSBURGH —
THE NEW FACTORY IN TOWN

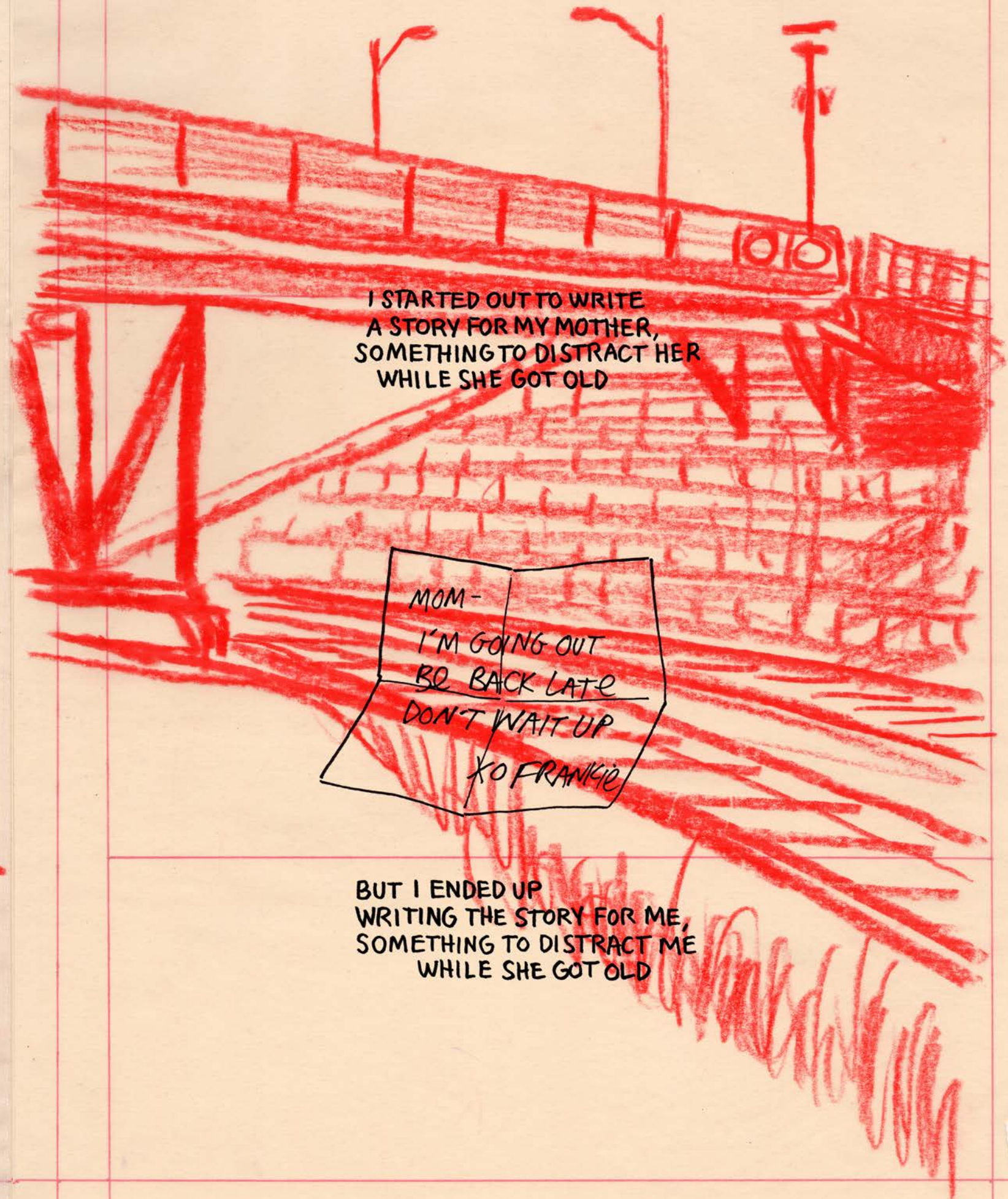


SO, AFTER 20 YEARS
THEY OCCASIONALLY
RUN INTO EACH OTHER
AT WORK,
AND PRETEND NOT TO SEE
EACH OTHER



THE ONLY CONNECTING THREAD
BETWEEN THEM IS ME





I STARTED OUT TO WRITE
A STORY FOR MY MOTHER,
SOMETHING TO DISTRACT HER
WHILE SHE GOT OLD

MOM -
I'M GOING OUT
BE BACK LATE
DON'T WAIT UP
XO FRANKIE

BUT I ENDED UP
WRITING THE STORY FOR ME,
SOMETHING TO DISTRACT ME
WHILE SHE GOT OLD

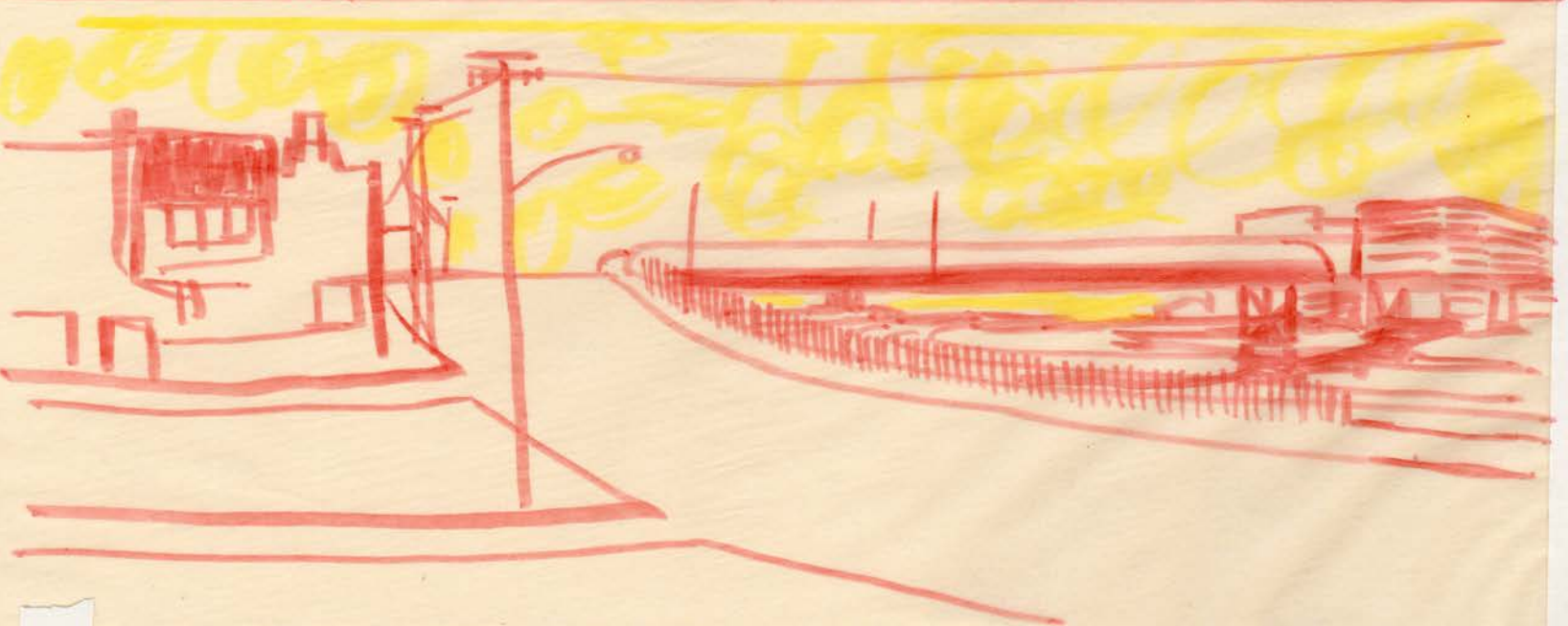


SOMETIMES
I WISH MY PARENTS WERE
STILL TOGETHER

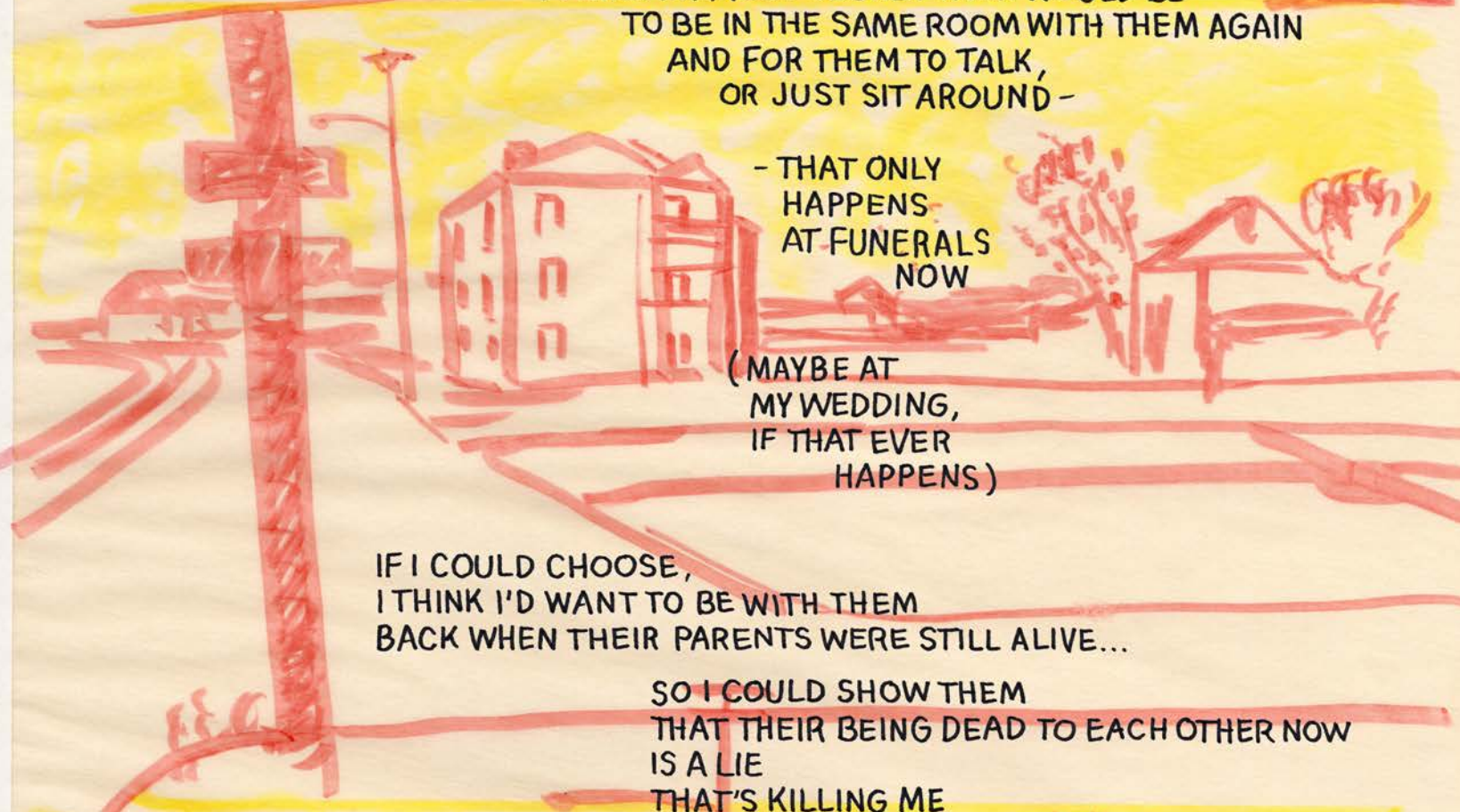


OR THAT I HAD
A BROTHER
OR A SISTER

SOMEONE TO SHARE IN
ALL THIS FENCE JUMPING



I THINK MY MOST SECRET WISH WOULD BE
TO BE IN THE SAME ROOM WITH THEM AGAIN
AND FOR THEM TO TALK,
OR JUST SIT AROUND -



- THAT ONLY
HAPPENS
AT FUNERALS
NOW

(MAYBE AT
MY WEDDING,
IF THAT EVER
HAPPENS)

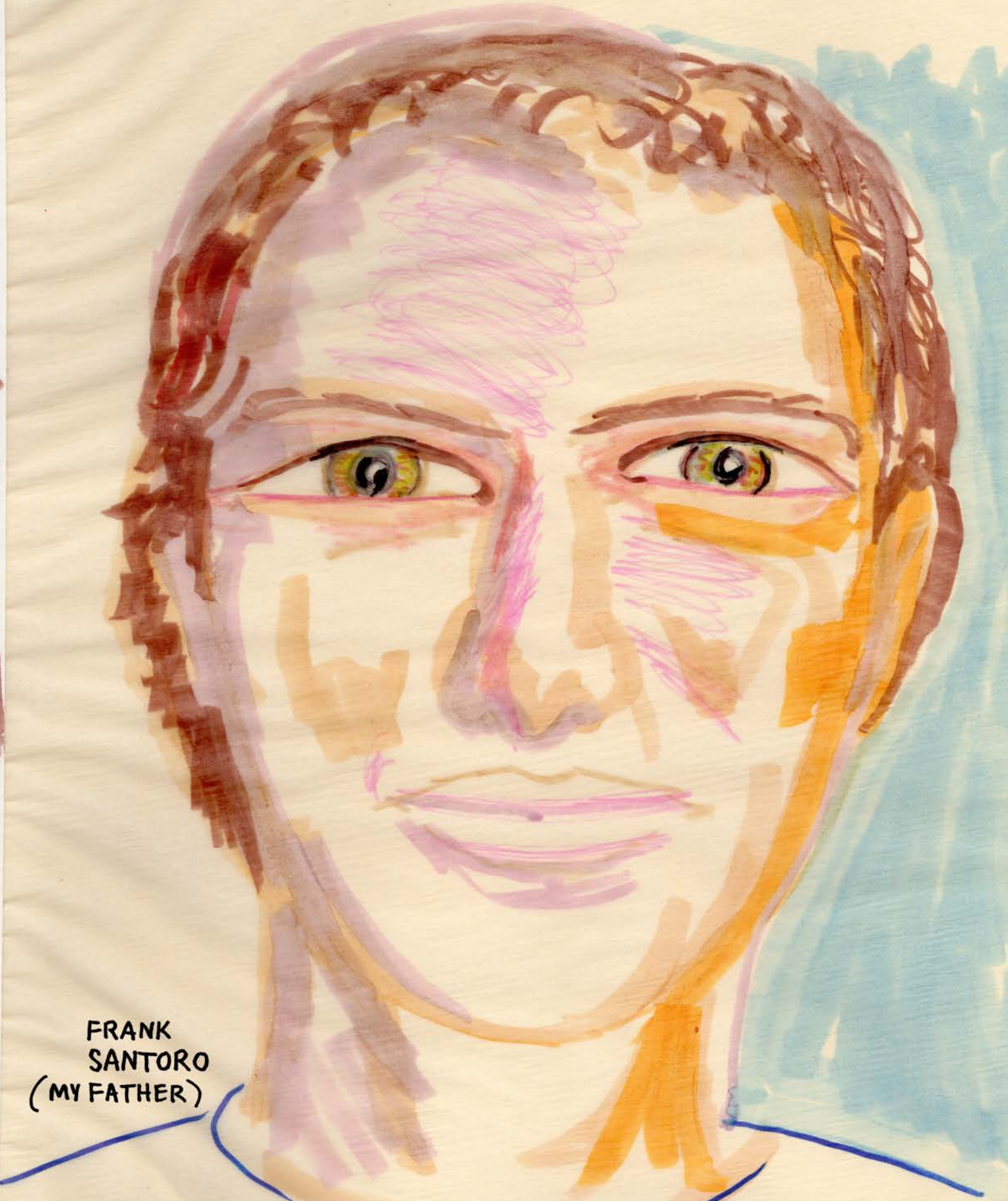
IF I COULD CHOOSE,
I THINK I'D WANT TO BE WITH THEM
BACK WHEN THEIR PARENTS WERE STILL ALIVE...

SO I COULD SHOW THEM
THAT THEIR BEING DEAD TO EACH OTHER NOW
IS A LIE
THAT'S KILLING ME



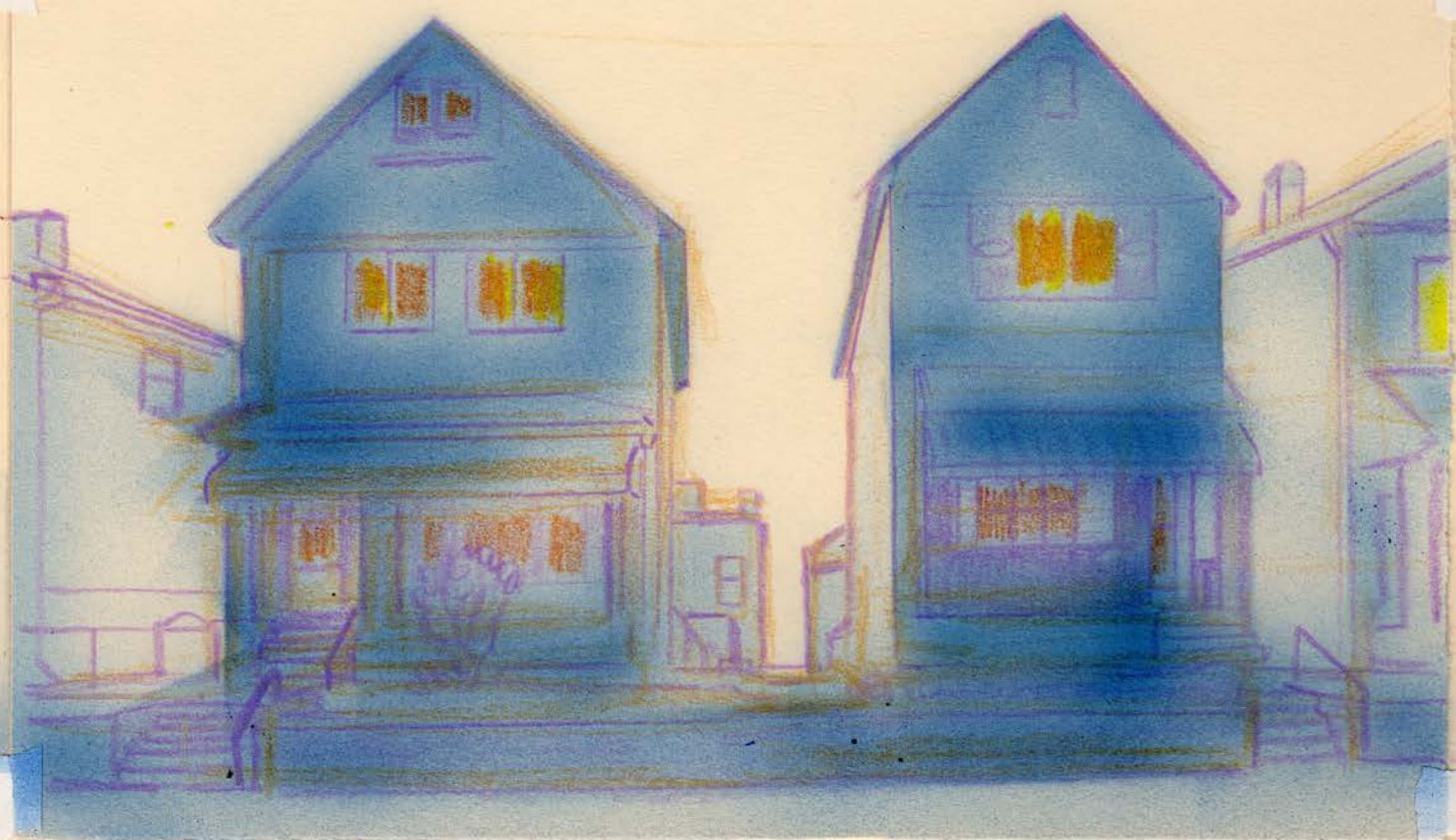


ANNE MARIE
McQUADE
(MY MOTHER)



FRANK
SANTORO
(MY FATHER)

I STARTED WRITING THIS FOR DAD, TOO
SO I COULD TRANSMIT THESE LOVING MEMORIES TO HIM,
RECALLING COLD LONG DRIVES TO HOCKEY PRACTICE,
EARLY MORNING SUNDAY PURPLE BLACKNESS
WITH BRIGHT AND SUNNY MOTOWN MUSIC PLAYING



DAD DRIVING INTENTLY, SILENTLY LISTENING
TO HIS MOTOWN TAPES ON THE CAR STEREO,
I ASKED TO CHANGE IT ONCE, HE WAS ANNOYED
AND SAID NO



LATER I'D CONNECT DAD'S MOTOWN MOODS
WITH HIM GETTING A PORTABLE RECORD PLAYER
FROM HIS MOM WHILE HE WAS IN VIETNAM



MY DAD, WHO WAS 19 AT THE TIME,
HAD TO LIVE IN A HOLE IN THE GROUND, A BUNKER,
FOR 76 DAYS WITH HIS SQUAD, GO ON PATROL, IN THE DAY,
AND THEN WOULD HUNKER DOWN LISTENING
TO MOTOWN RECORDS AT NIGHT
TRYING TO FORGET VIETNAM
AND REMEMBER
HOME



ON THE 77TH DAY
HE WENT ON R+R, ON LEAVE
TO HONG KONG, HE WAS AWAY
WHEN THE BUNKER WHERE HE LIVED
WITH HIS BUDDIES WAS WIPED OUT,
SHELLED TO A MOTOWN SOUNDTRACK





♪ All the Things You Are ♪