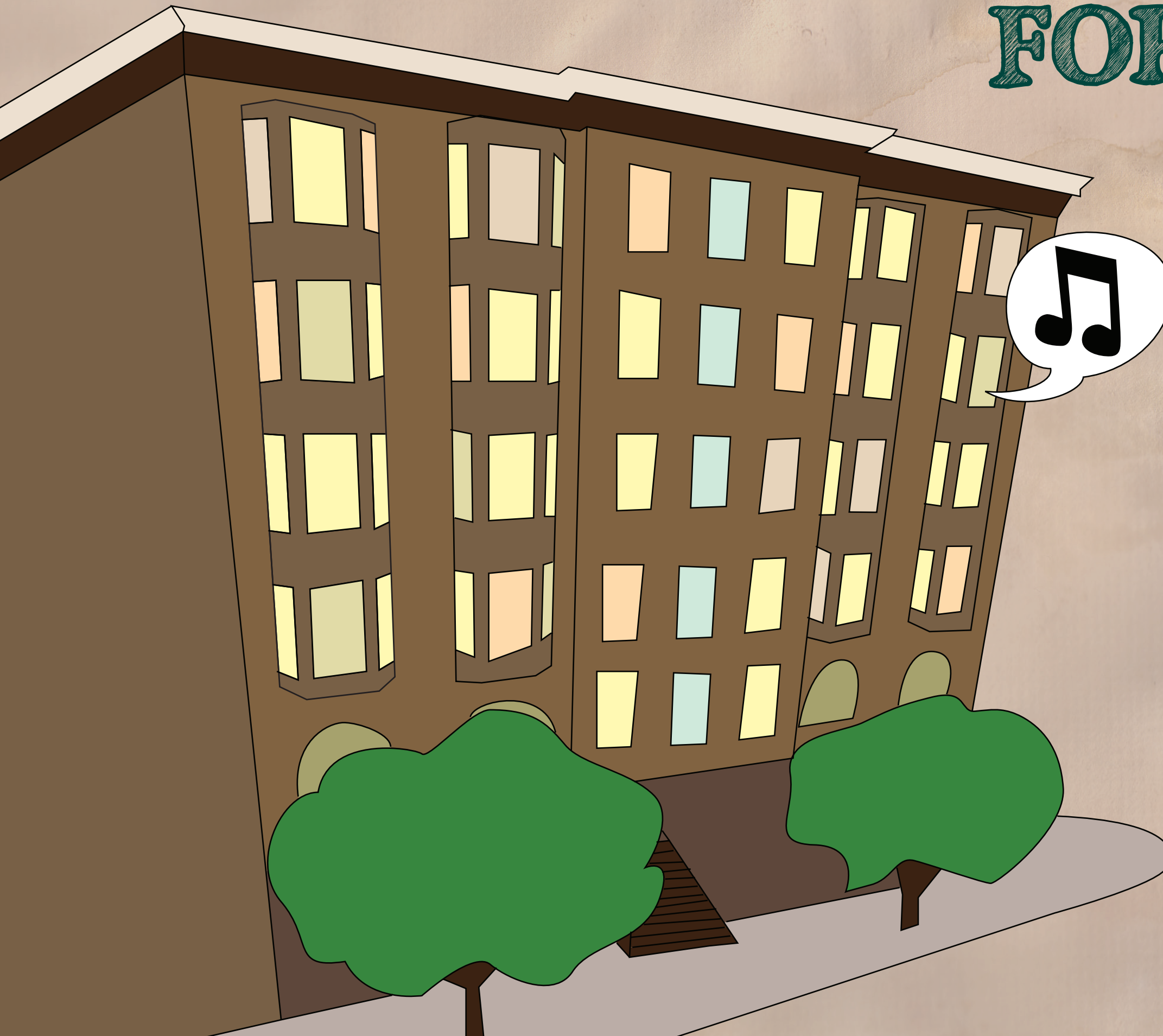


STOP TAKING THINGS FOR GRANTED

BY HEATHER NORVALL

STOP TAKING THINGS FOR GRANTED



WHAT IS IT that makes it so easy to take things for granted? It's something that's looked on with a lot of shame, but everyone does it. It seems that everyone is too busy focusing on shaming others for taking things for granted, when what they should really be doing is figuring out what they are taking for granted in their own lives and learning to appreciate it. Maybe not even all the time. I'm not saying that everyone will suddenly be perfect and appreciative and will never take anything for granted again if they spend some time thinking about what really matters. I'm just speaking from experience.

I've gotten much better at really appreciating the little things in life and finding joy in them. I know it sounds cheesy, but these little thrills I find are what keeps me going. My favorite books, a long bath, or the way everyone that works in the deli down the street waves to me when I walk by. The way light comes through the treetops and skims over the dashboard of my car. The way a brand new sweatshirt feels the first time I wear it. My oldest, most worn-in pair of jeans.

One of the greatest things I have ever learned to appreciate is The Opera Singer. I've lived in the same building at the corner of Bush and Mason for about a year and a half now, and about six months ago I moved from my tiny studio to a larger apartment on a higher floor with an amazing view. A few weeks after I'd moved into my first apartment, I heard singing. More specifically, *opera* singing. I am not an opera fan. I was pissed. Then it happened a second night. And a third. And every night for several weeks.

Then, one night, I was alone in the apartment. It was a quiet night. I was laying in bed, in the dark, with the windows open—and then, she sang. It was another language, and it was muddled by the echoes in the street, and it was impossible to tell where it was coming from. It was the most beautiful thing I had ever heard.

Every day since then, when I hear her warming up, this mysterious Opera Singer, I stop everything. I mute my music, I pause my movie, I put down my work (for as long as I can) and I sit. And I listen. And this one, single, solitary moment is one of the most beautiful I've been able to experience.

This is a very long-winded way of introducing this book. What follows is a sort of breakdown of what I've learned to really appreciate. Being a designer. Reading. My family. My music.

So, please, enjoy, and above all else, try to stop taking things for granted.

I CHANGE MY SHIRT
FIVE TIMES
BEFORE I LEAVE THE HOUSE.
HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO
DEFINE WHAT I HOPE TO DO
AS A DESIGNER IN
THREE HUNDRED
WORDS?

SMALL VICTORIES, BIG FRUSTRATIONS

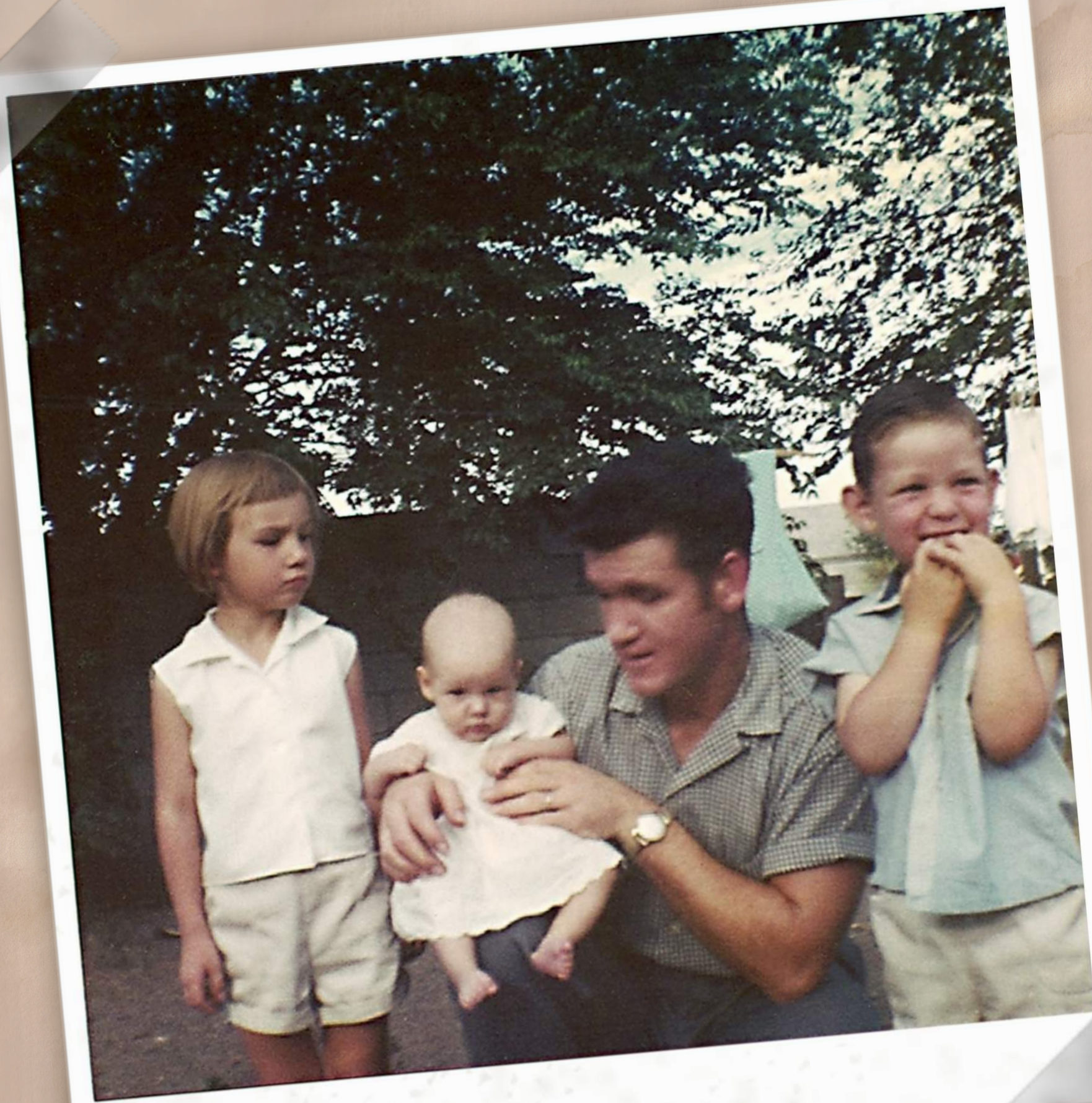
WHAT IS AN ARTIST'S STATEMENT, anyway? Am I supposed to talk about my constant doubt in myself and my sub-conscious procrastination habits? Am I supposed to lie, and say it's all sunshine and puppies and golden section? Or am I supposed to gloss over all of the bad and get sappy and talk about how the small victories make the big frustrations worthwhile?

And is an artist's statement a permanent thing, like a manifesto? Or should it change all the time, like I do? I hope for the latter, but something about the words **artist's statement** sound so lasting. Endless. Perpetual. Everlasting, eternal, constant, irreparable, undying. **Indestructible**. I don't like that one bit. I could never write something all-encompassing that could apply to me for the rest of my designing days. I am far too fickle. I change my shirt five times before I leave the house—how am I supposed to define what I hope to do as a designer in 300 words? And what do I do, a week from now, when I change my mind again?

As scattered and evolving as my ideas may be, I only ever come up with good ones at the eleventh hour. Why is that? Is there something in my DNA that prevents me from starting a project early enough to not be rushed? It's like **I'm incapable of not procrastinating**. Even when I try to start a project early, to do the right, responsible thing, I spend all week sitting dejectedly on my couch, staring at my notebook. Then, at 9 PM the night before the project is due, I become almost fiendish in my note-taking—scribbling, filling up page after page, coming up with more ideas than I will ever know what to do with.

I suppose I shouldn't complain. I mean, it's better than the alternative—no ideas, ever. It's just frustrating spending an entire week brainstorming and slowly building up to something I don't even use, only to be possessed by some sort of concept when it's nearly too late. And I think it's this sort of sub-conscious self sabotage that fuels me to work, but its also the cause of a lot of my design-related insecurities. I mean, how am I supposed to feel confident in something that I wasn't able to come up with until the night before I have to present it?

But that's the great thing about design, for me: I can spend weeks agonizing over a project—staying up all night, being angry, being sad, hating my work, loving my work, wondering if I'm even cut out for what I'm doing—but if when all is said and done I am left with something I am really proud of, **it was worth every minute of the agony it caused me**.



EVERYONE
TAKES
THEIR
FAMILY
FOR
GRANTED

THE TIME CAPSULE

THREE YEARS AGO, my grandparents were unfairly forced to move out of the home they'd lived in for more than forty years into another home on the other side of town. It was heartbreaking, frustrating, and couldn't have happened at a worse time—my grandfather had been diagnosed with cancer a few months before, and was scheduled to go into surgery about two weeks after the day the had to be finished moving. They had this back room they used for storage. You wouldn't believe the things we found—my Grandma's **old jewelry**, my Grandpa's **bowling shirts**, letters, Christmas ornaments, newspaper clippings, and craft supplies. Oh boy, the **craft supplies**.

The back room of that **old house** was this incredible **time capsule** of everything I loved, and for me, the best of all of these things were the shoeboxes and ziploc bags and albums and envelopes stuffed to the brim with pictures stretching back more than 60 years. There were **baby pictures of my parents**, pictures of my Grandparents right after they started dating, pictures of camping trips and Christmases and birthdays and pictures of just regular **old days**. There's even a picture of my Great Uncle Fred feeding potato chips to a deer. And the best part of all of these photos is that they were all things that I wasn't around for, or that I was far too young to remember. It was so exciting for me, probably largely due to the condition my Grandpa was in. Watching his health decline really drove home how immature I had been, and how much I had taken my family for granted.

The pictures are beautiful. The colors are either muted or way too bright. Sometimes they are out of focus. There is one picture in particular that really had an impact on me. As far as I can tell, it's a picture of my parents' **first house**, in Crestline, California. It almost seems like it was a misfire—it's aimed at a corner of the house, most of it is out of focus, and there is nothing of consequence in it. And somehow, it is one of the greatest photos I have ever seen.

After we found all the photos and dug them out, my mom began to scan and save all of them, to preserve them and prevent any more damage from being done. There are quite a few that are **wrinkled**, ripped, and damaged from **water stains**, which broke my heart. To find something that spans more than sixty years of family history, only to have parts of it washed away? I offered to fix what I could after my mom scanned them, simply as a favor for her and a way to keep my photo editing skills sharp in between classes. It has become so much more to me now. These photos really do serve as an inspiration to me and my work. Not only that, but getting to **restore** something that everyone assumed to be lost has been more rewarding than I could ever describe.





THE OLD MAN AND THE SEA

WHAT IS THE APPROPRIATE WAY to refer to someone's death? Are they "dead"? I always feel insensitive when I say it. Did they "pass on"? That sounds too *Lifetime*, I think. I imagine "gone" isn't great—it could probably lead to some wacky, sitcom-style hijinks. Only, you know, not funny.

This is where my brain ends up when I start thinking about my grandpa's death (passing?). I could tell you a hundred stories about his life, right up until he went into the hospital that last time. But the instant it moves into that territory, that dead, passed on, gone territory, my memories all come to a screeching halt and I'm stuck on terminology.

So I guess, then, I should talk about his life. He was a great man. Does that sound too cliché? He was. That is not to say he was without flaws and vices—he certainly had his fair share.

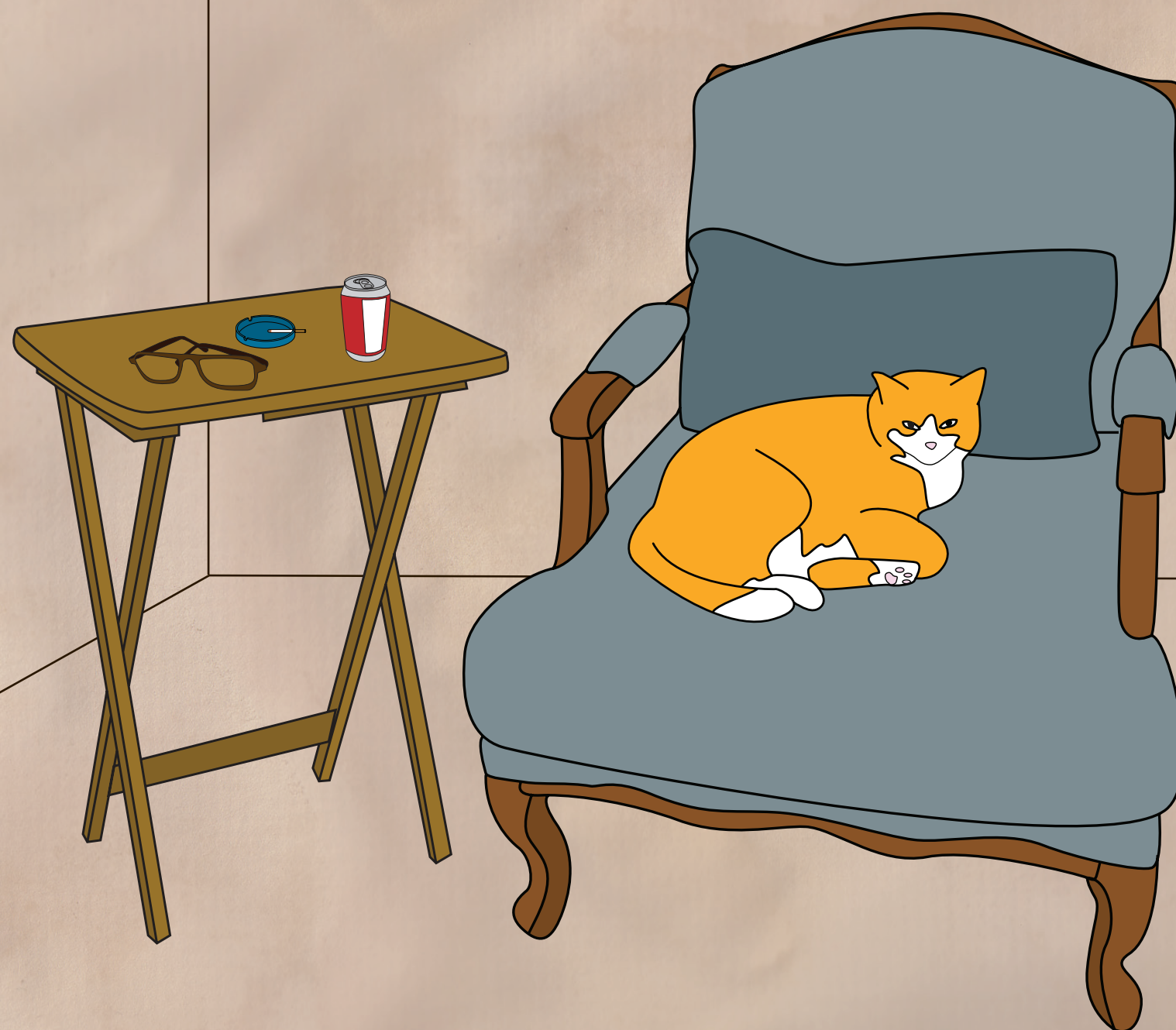
He tried to give me his jacket, once. We were helping my grandparents move. He was scheduled for surgery after the weekend, but said that he absolutely would not go until my grandma was completely moved and settled in. He kept doing that, too—saying that he wanted grandma moved in, not that he wanted them both to be moved in. It's like he knew, you know?

Anyway, I told him that I liked the patches that were sewn onto his windbreaker. He immediately asked if I wanted it. I was baffled. I told him, "no, what are you talking about?" He's got to have a jacket to wear. He said to me "honey, don't worry about it." It was mine for the taking. He wanted me to have it.

He was so determined for me to take that jacket with me then. I didn't understand it then, but it really upset me. A few days later, when my mom called from the hospital to tell us that things hadn't worked out, I knew. I knew that HE knew.

My grandpa taught me how to fish. He gave me my first haircut. He would sneak Butterfingers to me when my mom was out of the room before dinner. He showed me my first Bond movie. He drank beer. He gardened. He smoked. He housed homeless cats. He defended us. He loved us. When I close my eyes, I can see him the way I always did: sitting in his favorite chair, stuffed fish mounted on the wall behind him, and a big fat orange cat on his lap.

So I guess that's why I get stuck on the death terminology—associating those words with that man doesn't make sense to me. I mean, I'm not in denial. I know he's gone, or whatever, but when someone mentions him, I see all of those things. I see him in his chair, with his tray and a beer next to him. I see my grandpa.



“AND NOW, THOSE FRIENDS OF MINE, THE ZOMBIES!”

THE FIRST TIME I heard [The Zombies](#), I was a sophomore in high school. I was having a late night conversation with a friend of mine about my most recent heartbreak when he said that he had just the thing to fix it. That thing was the song “[The Way I Feel Inside](#)” by [The Zombies](#).

I had goosebumps. I had a lump in my throat. I very nearly had tears in my eyes. It was the most incredible thing I’d ever heard. The first time I heard that song, even at the tender age of fifteen, I was convinced that this song would be able to pretty accurately represent every heartbreak I would face in my lifetime: “[But till I can see/That you’d really care for me/I’ll keep trying to hide/The way I feel inside.](#)”

I started sending frantic messages to my friend. I needed more! Over the rest of the night, he sent me everything he had. I felt changed, like I had been bettered somehow by this musical discovery.

That was five years ago. I still listen to [The Zombies](#), constantly. My heart pounds when I’m out somewhere and one of their songs comes on. They make me feel all of the good parts about being fifteen all over again, as strong as ever. I feel like if I had to score my life, I could do the entire thing with [The Zombies’](#) library.

I have since collected all of [The Zombies’](#) music I can afford to collect, but “[The Way I Feel Inside](#)” stays my favorite. It’s under two minutes long, and somehow, it seems to have the most meaning. The most interesting part of the song, to me, is the very end: the vocals stop, then the very minimal musical accompaniment fades out, and you can hear something small, metallic, and probably round hit the floor as someone walks out of the room. It seems simple enough, but it is absolutely gut-wrenching. I’ve always been sure it was the sound of a ring hitting the floor—a [wedding ring](#), I suppose.

As I’ve mentioned before, I am fickle. Five years ago, I was listening to metal. A year later, almost nothing but Nirvana. From metal to grunge to emo, to all of the other phases I’ve been through, [The Zombies](#) have been a constant source of everything good to me.



THINK TANK

ONCE, I ASPIRED TO BE A WRITER. My favorite place to write was the bathtub. I would spend hours in there reading, writing, and occasionally hiding out and sneaking cigarettes that I'd taken from my mom's purse. (Sorry, mom.)

Now, I share a very small apartment, and that alone time is more valuable than ever. Sure, I don't have to hide out to smoke these days (in fact, I don't smoke anymore), but anytime I need to clear my head, get some work done, or just be on my own for a little while, I still retreat to the bathtub.

The only drawbacks? Well, all of my notebooks are a mess. The pages are wrinkled and water stained, the ink is smudged, my writing turns into scribbling as it gets to the bottom of the page because the notebook gets hard to hold onto.

And still, messy notebooks are a small price to pay for having my own space to think.



FRANNY & ZOOEY

BY J.D. SALINGER



THE VOICE AT the other end came through again. “I remember about the fifth time I ever went on ‘Wise Child.’ I subbed for Walt a few times when he was in a cast—remember when he was in that cast? Anyway, I started bitching one night before the broadcast. Seymour’d told me to shine my shoes just as I was going out the door with Walt. I was furious. The studio audience were all morons, the announcer was a moron, and I just damn well wasn’t going to shine my shoes for them, I told Seymour. I said they couldn’t see them *anyway*, where we sat. **He said to shine them anyway. He said to shine them for the Fat Lady.** I didn’t know what the hell he was talking about, but he had a very Seymour look on his face, and so I did it. He never did tell me who the Fat Lady was, but I shined my shoes for the Fat Lady every time I ever went on the air again—all the years you and I were on the program together, if you remember. I don’t think I missed more than just a couple of times. This terribly clear, clear picture of the Fat Lady formed in my mind. I had her sitting on this porch all day, swatting flies, with her radio going full-blast from morning till night. I figured the heat was terrible, and she probably had cancer, and—I don’t know. Anyway, it seemed goddam clear why Seymour wanted me to shine my shoes when I went on the air. It made *sense*.”

Franny was standing. She had taken her hand away from her face to hold the phone with two hands. “He told me, too,” she said into the phone. “**He told me to be funny for the Fat Lady, once.**” She released one hand from the phone and placed it, very briefly, on the crown of her head, then went back to holding the phone with both hands. “I didn’t ever picture her on a porch, but with very—you know—very thick legs, very veiny. I had her in an awful wicker chair. She had cancer, too, though, and she had the radio going full-blast all day! Mine did, too!”

“Yes. Yes. Yes. All right. Let me tell you something now, buddy.... Are you listening?”

Franny, looking extremely tense, nodded.

“I don’t care where an actor acts. It can be summer stock, it can be over a radio, it can be over television, it can be in a goddam Broadway theatre, complete with the most fashionable, most well-fed, most sunburned-looking audience you can imagine. But I’ll tell you a terrible secret—Are you listening to me? There isn’t anyone out there who isn’t Seymour’s Fat Lady. That includes your Professor Tupper, buddy. And all his goddam cousins by the dozens. There isn’t anyone anywhere that isn’t Seymour’s Fat Lady. Don’t you know that? Don’t you know that goddam secret yet? **And don’t you know—listen to me, now—don’t you know who that Fat Lady really is? . . . Ah, buddy. Ah, buddy. It’s Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy.**”

“OUT OF SORTS”



THE PHRASE “OUT OF SORTS” originated, as many phrases have: in the earliest letterpress printing shops. In letterpress, a “sort” is any individual unit of type, no matter the character. So, if you are ill-prepared for a project and run out of letters, then it is said that you are “out of sorts”—which is a feeling, as a designer *and* a procrastinator, I can absolutely relate to. Running out of ink at the last second, forgetting about a part of a project, falling asleep at the computer—I think, at some point, it’s happened to everyone, no matter how honest and devoted their worth ethic.

I took a letterpress class last semester, and it changed the way I saw *type* forever. I don’t think anyone can get a really clear idea of type until they are able to physically *handle type*. *Leading* means nothing until you hold a piece of it in your hand.

There is a whole language associated with letterpress. The drawers that hold the type are *cases*. The blocks that hold the type in place on the *press bed* (which is where the type sits and patiently waits to be inked and printed) are *furniture*. The *platen* is the piece that actually presses the paper into the letters.

Design has its own language, too. We have *vectors* and *bezier curves*. There are *points* and *picas*, *gutters* and *margins*, *CSS* and *HTML*, *guides* and *grids*. If you haven’t picked up on my heavy-handed juxtaposition, what I’m saying is that letterpress was the very first form of design. It’s beautiful, unique, and one of the greatest learning experiences I’ve been fortunate enough to experience.

