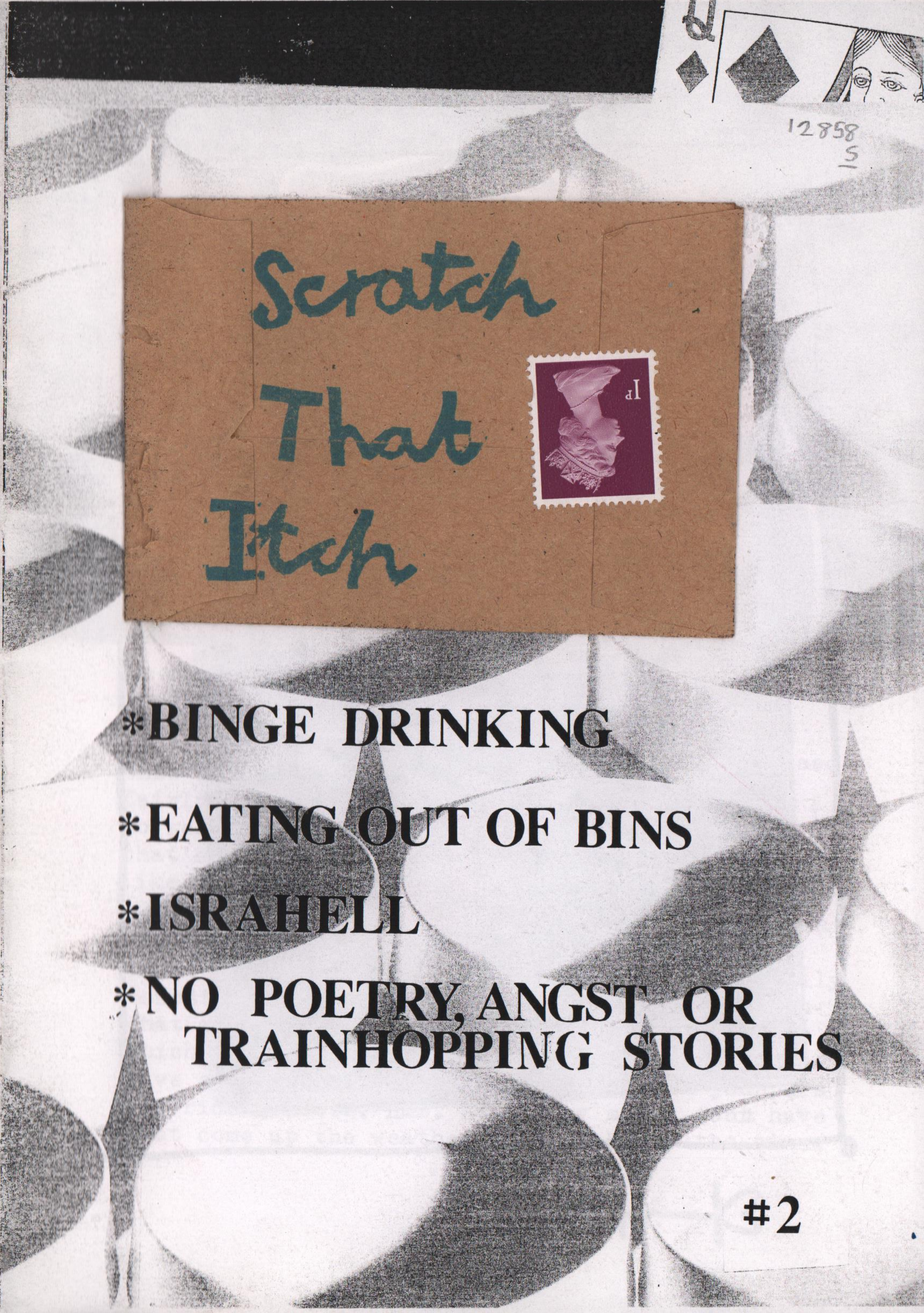




to:

S.T.I.



- *BINGE DRINKING
- *EATING OUT OF BINS
- *ISRAHELL
- *NO POETRY, ANGST OR TRAINHOPPING STORIES

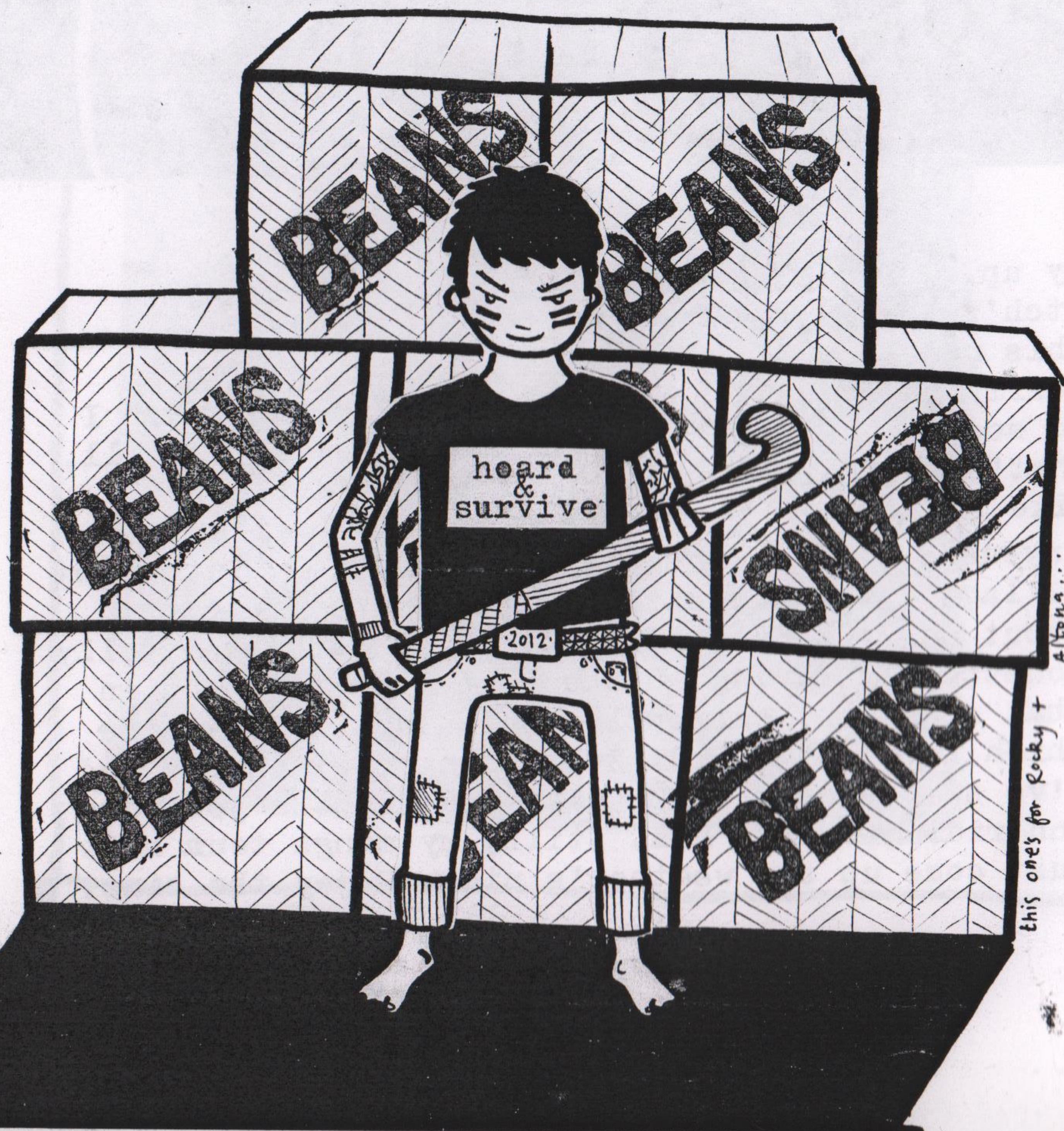
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Ey up. Well, here's issue two of 'Scratch That Itch', so long after the first one that I've used this name more as a joke than anything. I'm fairly happy with how it's shaped up, although I do seem to talk about myself rather a lot. Still, that's what zines are for, right? I'd really like to know what you thought... apologies to anyone who wrote to me about 'Same Bed, Different Village', the nauseatingly twee zine I wrote about narrowboats... I will write back eventually honest. I'm living on the boat I wrote about in that zine now, currently moored up in Berkshire which is a bit weird. Everything's expensive and I've seen people walking around town in jodhpurs and riding boots. Hmm. Still, my mange tout have just come up the weather's nice. Enjoy the zine.

FB

So we're all agreed that everything is going to shit in 2012, right? Right. No more oil except for the super-rich, wars fought for water, everyone who knows the score retreating to their preprepared cabins in the woods*. All that is left to do between now and then is seriously upskill, learn some useful shit. How to drive? Useless. 12v electricity? Potentially useful. How to make soap? **F**ucking invaluable. Learn to make soap and you don't need to sort out shit - come the Unrest, you can just turn up anywhere and - presuming you don't get taken out by a guard sniper - bargain your way to a warm bed & platen~~k~~ of hoarded baked beans.



I'm getting ahead of myself. Oil production may have peaked but as yet all is quiet. This recipe is an elaboration on a basic vegan soap recipe out of a library book. I imagined it smelling like a chocolate bar but it completely doesn't. It does look like food though, and the smell is unplaceable but not unpleasant. It's dead satisfying to make, it's a good present if your wrap it up nicely and it's fully biodegradable (the caustic soda isn't present in the finished soap) so it's eco as fuck.

The soap I've made so far has been a little on the caustic side, but this is completely to my advantage because it means it can double as laundry soap. The bunker you stumble across might be full of crusties who never wash, but they'll want to wash their sheets eventually. And if they don't, do you really want to be holed up with them for years? Exactly. Fool-proof.

16oz vegetable fat (I used 'Pura', it comes in a block like lard, they have it at big supermarkets. It's dead cheap - I think 69p)

2oz caustic soda (you can get it from hardware shops, make sure it's 100% caustic soda)

5oz mineral/rain water (actual oz, not fl oz)

lump of ginger, peeled and cut up finely

2 tsp vanilla essence

1 tsp chocolate

1 tsp cocoa

*Actually, my current plan for when Old Runs out involves a gun with two bullets - one for my old enemy that happens to be passing, one for myself. Fuck living in the wilderness with no tea or books. Bring me the gun with two bullets!

1. Find yourself a soap mould. Any plastic packaging tray (without holes) will do, or you can line a tray with carrier bag plastic. Grease the mould with a bit of oil.

2. Boil the water and pour over the ginger in a dish. Leave for an hour or so, then strain off.

3. Melt the fat and chocolate over a low heat in a non-aluminium pan. Turn off the heat & leave to cool for half an hour, stirring occasionally.

4. Weigh out the caustic soda and water (separately, sueka)

5. Pour the caustic soda into the water (not the other way around) - wear goggles, a bandana over your mouth and washing up gloves. It's called caustic soda for a reason. Leave the fizzing mix to cool down a bit for about half an hour. And don't inhale.

6. After they've both cooled a bit, add the caustic soda mix to the fats, stirring carefully. Keep stirring until the mixture 'traces' - thickens enough that lifting your spoon out leaves a trail.

7. Once the mix has traced (this can take up to half an hour so be patient), take out a spoonful into another bowl, mix with the cocoa and vanilla, then re-add to the main mix.

8. Now pour the mix into your moulds. It's fully alkali now so don't get it on you (if you do, wash off with cider vinegar). Cover your soap with a blanket or towel and leave for 24 hours.

9. After 24 it should be mostly solid. Turn the soap out of the moulds & cut into bars if needed. Again, do all this in rubber gloves because it's still ALKALI DEATH SOAP.

10. Stack the soap and cover with a towel, then leave for a month. In this time it will become non-alkali (if yr lucky). I let mine be too exposed to the air and it got a white crust on it - if this happens you can just shave it off with a vegetable peeler, then use the shavings as laundry soap. Score.

11. Waited a month? There you go. Now go and have a bath with it you dirty crusty. And sleep more soundly as 2012 creeps ever nearer.



The temping agency rang during my break at another job on Friday afternoon to tell me to turn up at a bar in Newbury at 8 on Saturday night, to work til 3. It's better paid than this one, they said, and closer too. Well, you can't argue with £6/hr, but the prospect of working in a straight bar on a Saturday night was fairly daunting. I tried to think what I know about this chain of bars (which I'm far too discreet to name, except that it begins with 'V' and rhymes with 'arse city'. Hmm.). All I come up with is that they have a discount card and nothing in the world would entice me to drink there (as if I'd get in anyway). Other than that, I draw a blank.

I turn up at 8 feeling relatively smart. My shoes are fucked but they're black so it's not too obvious, and my trousers are brand new. I've ~~xxxxxx~~ taken my septum ring out and put a fussy little hairclip in to try and thrash my kitchen scissor haircut into something employable. I couldn't find any eyeliner so I used black felt tip pen, but I reckon I'm pulling it off. And I necked a cafetiere of black coffee before leaving the boat, so all in all I'm wired and ready to work.

The bar is already heaving although at this hour it's literally 80 or 90% men. I have no idea why this is, not having drunk in a bar like this since I was 17 in Blackburn. Actually, that's a lie - I went to Wetherspoon's along with everyone else after the Anarchist Bookfair in London last year. Anarcho-chain-pub-patrons of the world unite! But back to Newbury. I find the manager ~~and~~ who takes me and 3 other temp staff into the back to get uniform shirts (which is my first ever properly fitting job uniform, seriously) and show us the fire

MY · BINGE · D

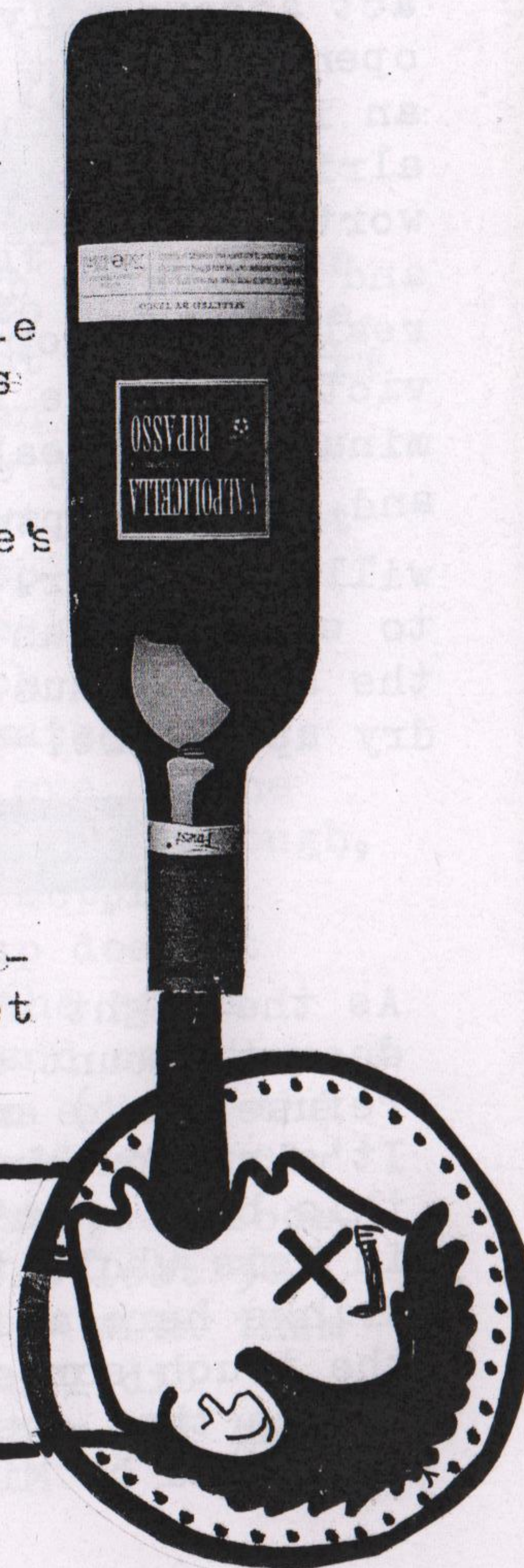
(or more accurately, I Worked In Varsity For one

escapes and beer cellar. Then I'm taken to shadow a permanent member of staff who makes it obvious that she's unhappy about Jesus, I'm just going to ^{be} stand-
-ing behind you like a halfwit for 20 minutes, not humping your fuckigg leg. I try to be friendly but conversation soon stalls so I think about 2012 for a bit instead. I spend 15 minutes watching her ~~serve~~ pull pints before serving my first customer. I fuck it up. I apologise and serve my second customer. I fuck it up. It's 8.20. Only 6 hours and 40 minutes left.

Eventually I manage to pour a round of drinks without error and from then on I don't screw up too much. I'm glad I've done bar work before though, so I don't have to ask what lager is (I've never really moved on from cider myself). They're not actually selling too many pints tonight, it's mostly mixers, especially double vodka & Red Bull. Plenty of people buy pitchers - 4 shots of vodka & 2 cans Red Bull-with just one glass. It's all pretty much the Daily Mail's idea of Britain's Binge Drinking Epidemic. There's a fridge full of plastic test tubes of bright coloured spirits which nearly everyone buys along with their proper drinks, adding an extra shot of alcohol to every round. It's dead cheap too - shots are mostly £1 and the discount cards give 1/3 off. It's all set up to shift as much booze as possible, and no-one is here for a quick pint. Don't get me wrong, I don't particularly care or

RINK · HELL!!!

Night + It Was A Bit Like Visiting Another Planet).



anything. It's kind of shit

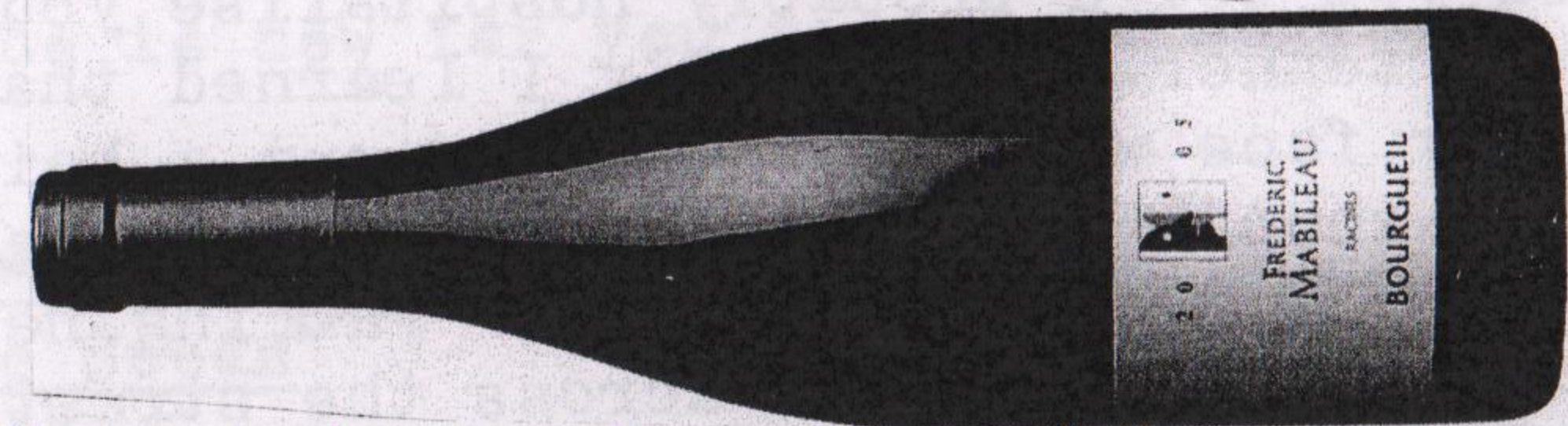
realising how much money the beer companies must be making, and seeing how much of their pay packets people will spend in one night, but it's not like me and my friends are much different. We just drink Xibeca instead of Sambucas, and get pissed at gigs or in squat bars rather than chain pubs with big TVs on the wall.

Until Saturday I'd kind of forgotten what normal men are like, being complacently used to fellas who think about feminism and sexism and (generally) act accordingly. By which I mean that they don't openly gawp at your breasts or tell any woman without an idiotic grin on her face to cheer up. I do alright for tips though - all from men - which is worth the leers, being asked my name all the time and the super drunk guy who slurs "I know this ish really inappropriate but your hair ish great". Ha ha, victory to the kitchen scissor haircut! I get a 10 minute fag break at 12 (for which I take up smoking) and put my septum piercing back in, worried that it will heal over. I keep it in when I go back to work, to see if I can get away with it and succeed, with the added bonus that the lecherous comments nearly dry up. Score.



As the night stumbles drunkenly on, I pocket a decent amount of tips (which you're supposed to refuse! Ha!) and start to weigh up the scams. It's ridiculously easy to give away drinks when it's this busy - it's a shame that the only person I know in this whole town is straight edge. I throw in free drinks here and there because I can't find them on the touch screen or because I feel like it, and ignore that one credit card receipt is returned to me signed by Mickey Mouse. There's a discount card

by the till so I run it through for everyone except a) anyone in fancy dress, b) any bloke who winks at me before ordering, or indeed at any point in our interaction, or c) anyone who has shouted to get my attention while I'm trying to make up a round of mixers from memory. I serve one fella who's been waiting for ages and the woman next to him shrieks "You fucking bitch! I've been here hours and he's only just fucking got here!" I ignore her and keep serving, halfhoping she will throw something at me so I have an excuse to leap over the bar and deck her, a fantasy I finetuned every shift of my last bartending job. Unfortunately she just grabs her metallic pink clutch bag and storms out.



Before I know it the bar is emptying out except for a few couples drunkenly dirty dancing to 70s cheese. The music has progressed from Kanye West and ~~Flo.Rida~~ Flo.Rida to The Village People and Queen over the course of the night. Basically everyone just wants to dance to 'It's Raining Men' deep down, they just need a few pitchers of vodka Red Bull to realise. It's 2am now and I spend my 2nd fag break watching people stagger around and fall into each other. Back inside I try to look busy whilst watching the Calzaghe fight out of the corner of my eye on the big screens behind the bar. I'm soon spotted though, and spend half an hour bottling up and mopping. There's that many staff that clearing up doesn't

take long, and with the music off all the staff and taking the piss out of each other and cashing in drinks bought for them. None of them except the manager even know my name but they're all friendly and apologise for walking on my fresh mopped floor.

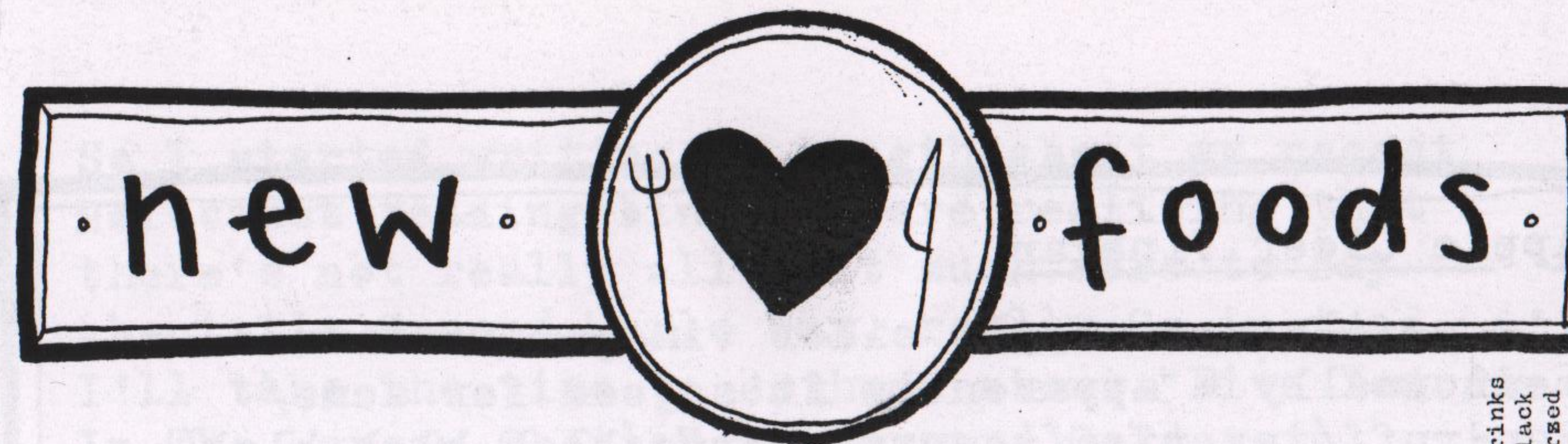
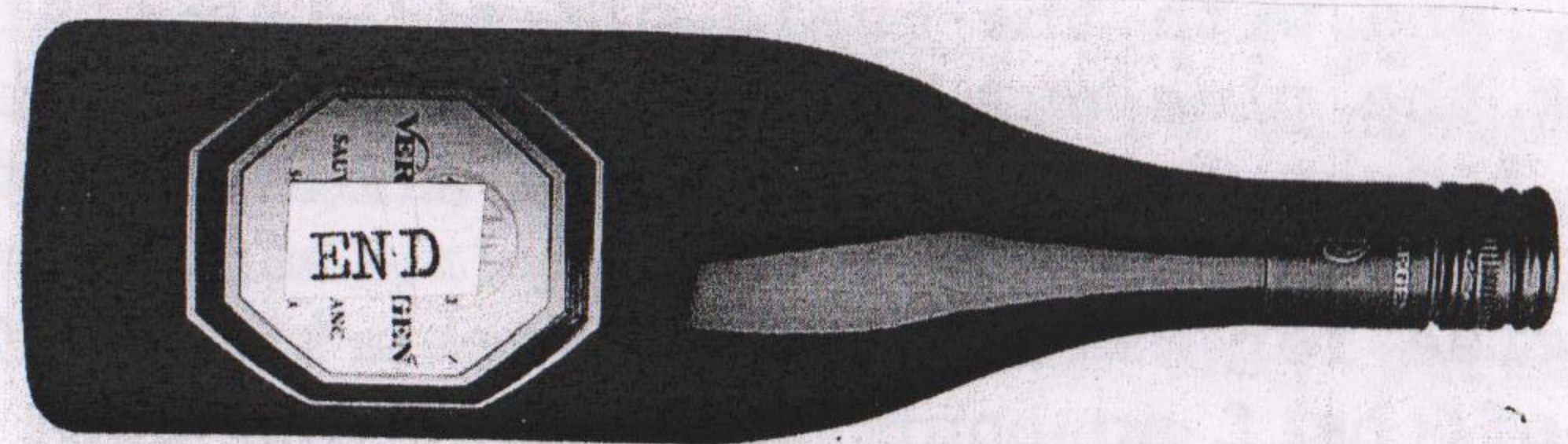
I clock off half an hour early, but the lost 30 minutes pay is easily made up by tips - with them counted in I actually earned more than I did temping in an office. That said, the bar will have

paid the agency at least £12/hr which sticks in the throat a bit. Still, not a bad night's work all things considered.

~~So what did I learn from my night undercover in a bar for normal people? It was truly an unfamiliar world, populated by~~

So what did I learn from my night undercover in a bar for straight people with jobs? Firstly that men do actually chat up women by buying them drinks and talking loudly about their jobs. Secondly, if you stick to neon coloured shots in test tubes you could probably hospitalise yourself for under a tenner. And thirdly I learned that if I draw on my face with felt tip and put a hair clip in, men who shop at Topshop chat me up instead of shouting "Are you a boy or a girl? Fucking hell, look at the state of that!" across the street. All these things are good to know.

By 3 I'm tucked up in bed with my tips laid out in the kitchen and my timesheet filled in. I'd hate to work at that place for more than one night, but as a one-off excursion into a world I've pretty successfully ghettoised myself off from by only hanging out with vegan anarchopunk queers, it was kind of an adventure. And the £9 of tips helped.



So after I started liking coffee* and olives**, I thought I'd made my last new food discoveries. How sure I was, and how wrong. I keep coming across pretty common foods that I haven't eaten before and wondering how I got by without them. Here's a few recent discoveries - I hope at least one is new for you too. Send me yours as well!

*I had a temping job with arfree hot drinks machine and realised that necking 4 black coffees in a row was like company endorsed drug taking.

**I pretended to like them to impress a boy, then found that I actually did.

Sesame Seeds

These seem really dull until... you roast them. Then they become tastyass flavourbombs, making everything they touch taste really fucking good. Heat a dry frying pan on a high heat then drop a handful in. When they start popping, turn off the heat and cover them so they don't all jump out of the pan. Then sprinkle them on salads/over hot dishes/in sandwiches. You can do the same with pumpkin seeds/sunflower seeds/pine nuts in the same way and they're dead good for you too, but I'm starting to sound like a hippy so I'll shut up.

Capers

Capers seem to be served with anchovies quite a bit so for ages I thought they were some animal body part. Then my dad cooked me something with them in and I found out that they're just the pickled buds of a plant. They have quite a sharp flavour - I mostly put them in tomatoey pasta sauces. You can also make your own fake capers by pickling nasturtium buds which is kind of cool.

Apple Cider Vinegar

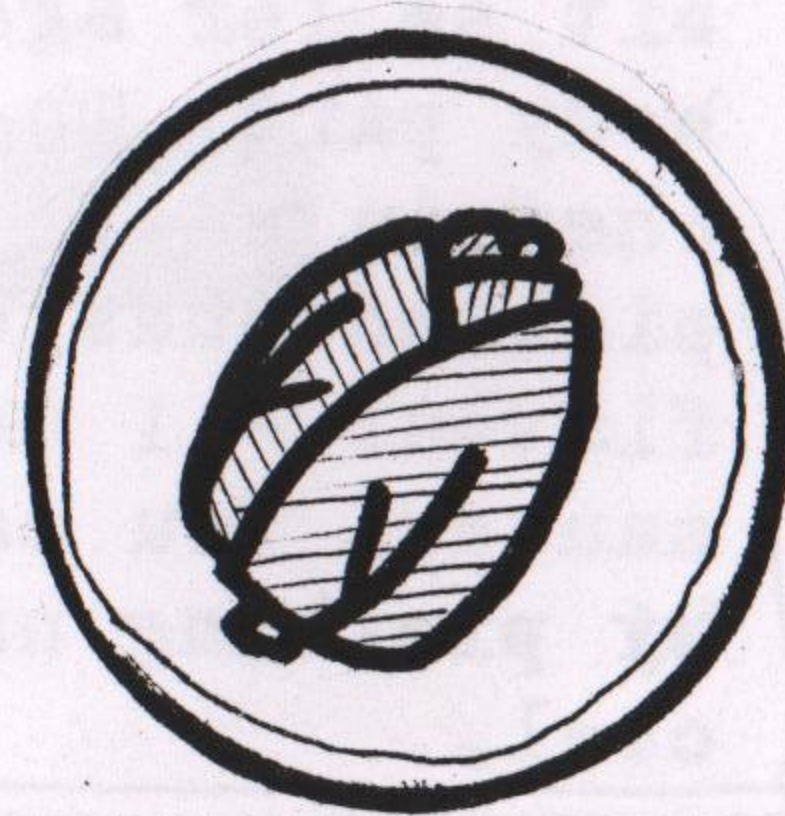
I'd mostly seen apple cider vinegar mentioned medicinally - apparently it's good for acne/dandruff/impetigo/teargas/burns/blah blah blah - but recently I've got into putting a little splash in stews and sauces. It adds a bit of bite and makes the flavour alot more complex.

Miso Paste

I used to work at a wholefoods shop that had a shelf dedicated solely to jars of Japanese food that looked foul - pickled plums, premade seitan and sludgy miso paste. It took these little sachets of just-add-water miso soup powder to get me hooked, then I moved onto the more hard-core paste which is expensive as but easy to rob from Holland & Barratts. You can straight up make soup out of it but I like stirring a spoonful into stews instead of bouillere.

Cumin

They know the score in the Middle East - they put cumin in everything. Hoummous without cumin is like sex without love, and if you're not putting it in your falafel and baba ghanoush you're making it wrong.



So I started writing at length about my recent Holocaust reading binge before realising that there's not really all that much more to say about the Second World War, really. So instead I'll take the time to enthuse about "Five Years In The Warsaw Ghetto" by Bernard Goldstein which was one of the books I read.

By all accounts, Goldstein was already something of a folk hero for left-wing Jews even before the war, with tales told involving him calming anti-Semitic mobs, escaping arrest and leading strikes. I'd love to read a full autobiography but he doesn't appear to have written one - "5 Years..." only covers the Second World War, although earlier and later events are referred to. I borrowed this book specifically to read about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, although it

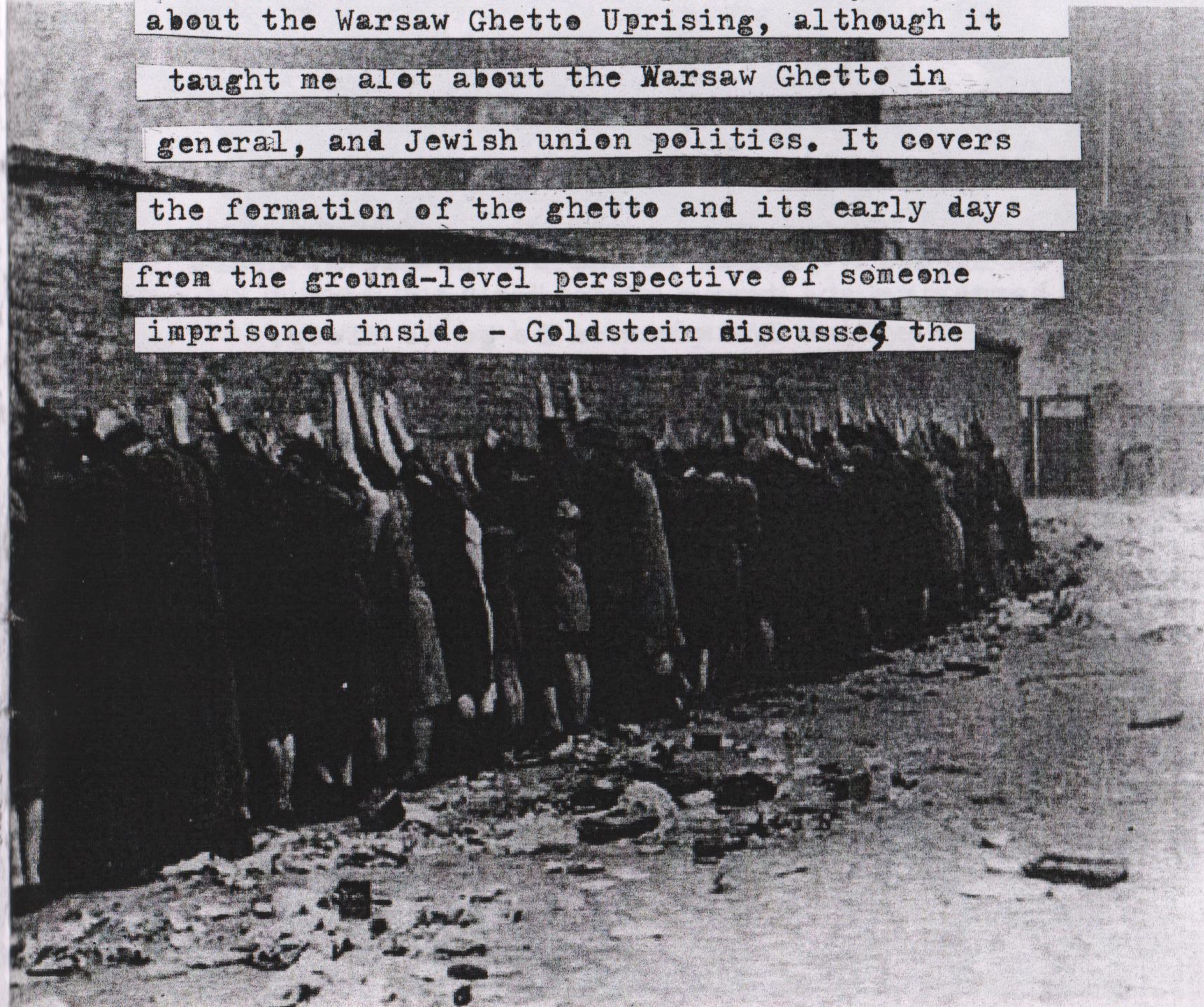
taught me alot about the Warsaw Ghetto in

general, and Jewish union politics. It covers

the formation of the ghetto and its early days

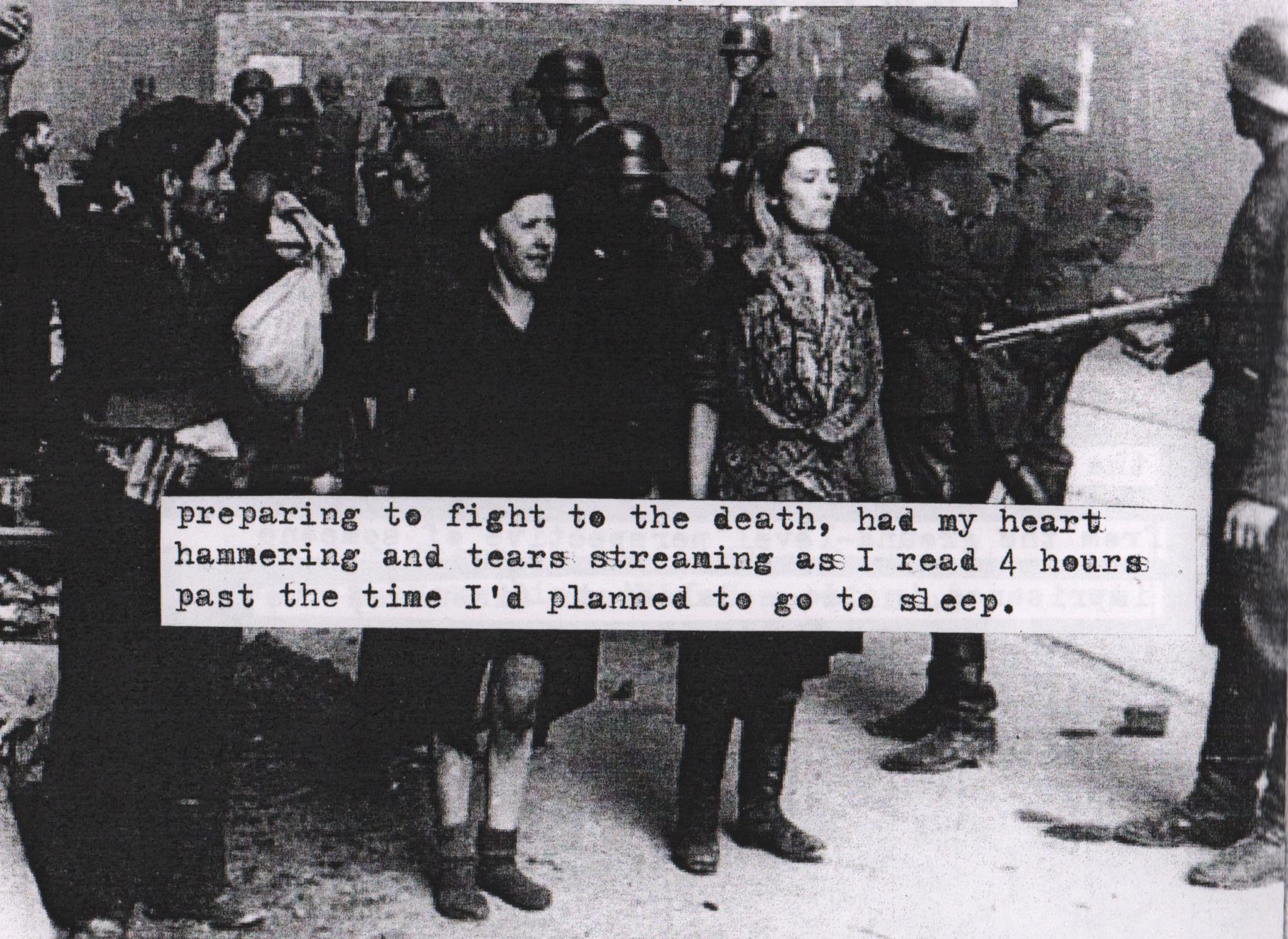
from the ground-level perspective of someone

imprisoned inside - Goldstein discussed the



diversity of people's reactions to ghettoisation. I suppose as a left-wing agitator he was particularly perceptive here, because he desperately hoped that people would resist & fight. In the end, it took the vast majority of the ghetto's inhabitants to be transported to their deaths before those remaining resolved to fight. Once that decision is made the book

is electrifying - his descriptions of the near-empty ghetto in ruins, all those left



preparing to fight to the death, had my heart hammering and tears streaming as I read 4 hours past the time I'd planned to go to sleep.

The descriptions of the first fighting are incredible - Gestapo squads met with gunfire for the first time, traitors found and executed, ambushed laid and arms smuggled in, the grim determination to wreak as much damage and revenge as possible before the inevitable defeat.

An Underground Life: Memoirs Of A Gay Jew In Berlin - Gad Beck

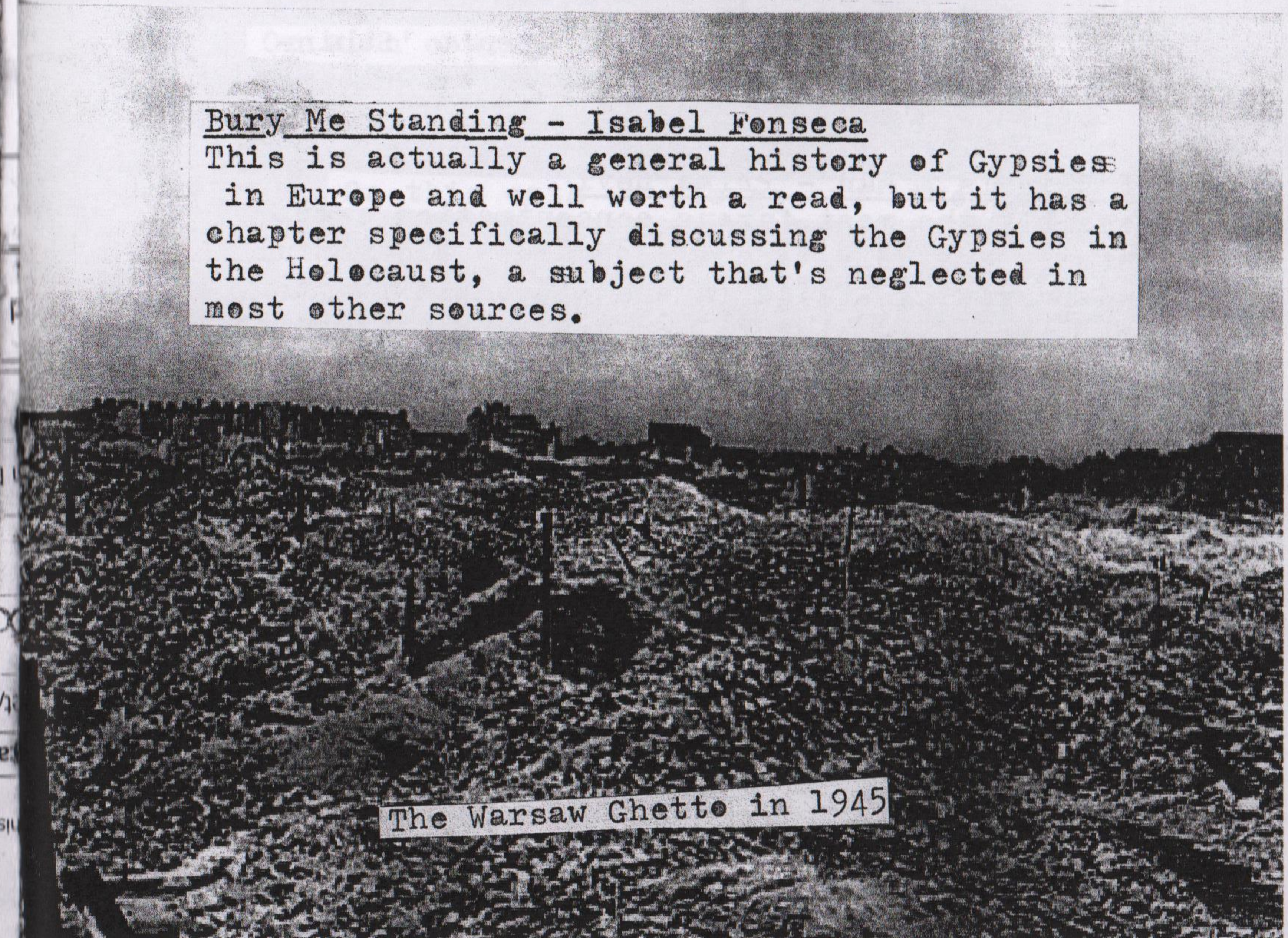
Lots of sex, more jokes than you would expect and extra helpings of Zionism. Interesting from a queer perspective, otherwise I wouldn't go out my way to find a copy.

This Way To The Gas, Ladies & Gentlemen

A collection of short stories - classed as fiction but strongly influenced by the author's time spent working as a prisoner-guard in a concentration camp. Raises some pretty complex questions about complicity, obedience and what humans will do to survive, and the stories don't leave your mind afterwards.

Bury Me Standing - Isabel Fonseca

This is actually a general history of Gypsies in Europe and well worth a read, but it has a chapter specifically discussing the Gypsies in the Holocaust, a subject that's neglected in most other sources.



The Warsaw Ghetto in 1945

Goldstein fills his book with tales of the bravery of others - paragraph-long stories of courage and solidarity in the face of terror. He is always quick to heap praise on other people but talks down the amazing things he did, and writes in a straightforward way that lets the events speak for themselves.

There's so much more to say about this incredible book, but really you should just go and find a copy. It's put out by AK Press - if you get your library to order it in, then maybe one day someone will borrow it instead of some gung-ho British war book with a Spitfire on the cover.

Anyway, here's the other books I read recently, mostly memoirs. If anyone can recommend books about the experiences of queers in the Holocaust please email me because I've struggled to find any, although they must exist. Also any general recommendations (that aren't 'Schindler's List') or discussion would be welcome.

If This Is A Man - Primo Levi

Possibly the most famous concentration camp memoir, and well deserved. Honest, thoughtful and harrowing - adds layers of complexity to the simplified picture you get taught at school

The Truce - Primo Levi

This follows on from 'If This Is A Man' and tells of Levi's journey back home to Italy after the war has ended. It gives you an idea of the total fucking chaos that mainland Europe was in after the war - really interesting.

Maus - Art Spiegelman

Hasn't everyone read this already? If not it's pretty much the one graphic novel that every library has so go and borrow it now.

an extract from the Anthem of the General Jewish Labour Union of Poland - The Bund - that Bernard Goldstein helped to organise. It was effectively eliminated in the Holocaust.

"We swear we will battle for freedom & right

Against all the servants of tyrannous might

We swear we will conquer the darkness of night

Or with courage we will fall in the fight

On this oath we pledge our lives

Heaven and earth will hear us

The stars will bear witness for us

A pledge of blood, a pledge of tears

We swear, we swear, we swear."

Jewish Resistance fighters captured in the ghetto

Biffa™ Cuisine.

(skipping = recycling, bin raiding, d*****r d***ing, etc - getting stuff out of bins, innit.)

Eating out of bins is great, as long as you don't let how much supermarkets waste get to you and stay away from the meat. That said, the sheer amount of food in skips can be overwhelming, especially if its only you taking it. Specifically, occasional mother-loads of one ingredient can be a nightmare. You take the 30 loaves of bread because it's going to waste, but then what the fuck do you do with it all?

Here are some suggestions for dealing with an abundance of one kind of food, that's going to go off unless you do something with it RIGHT NOW. Mostly ~~they're methods of preserving the food - making fruit into jam, for example - so it'll last longer~~ they're methods of preserving the food so it'll last longer - making fruit into jam for example - but there are other ideas which take advantage of a glut of an ingredient to make food that's usually unaffordable, such as roasting whole bulbs of garlic.

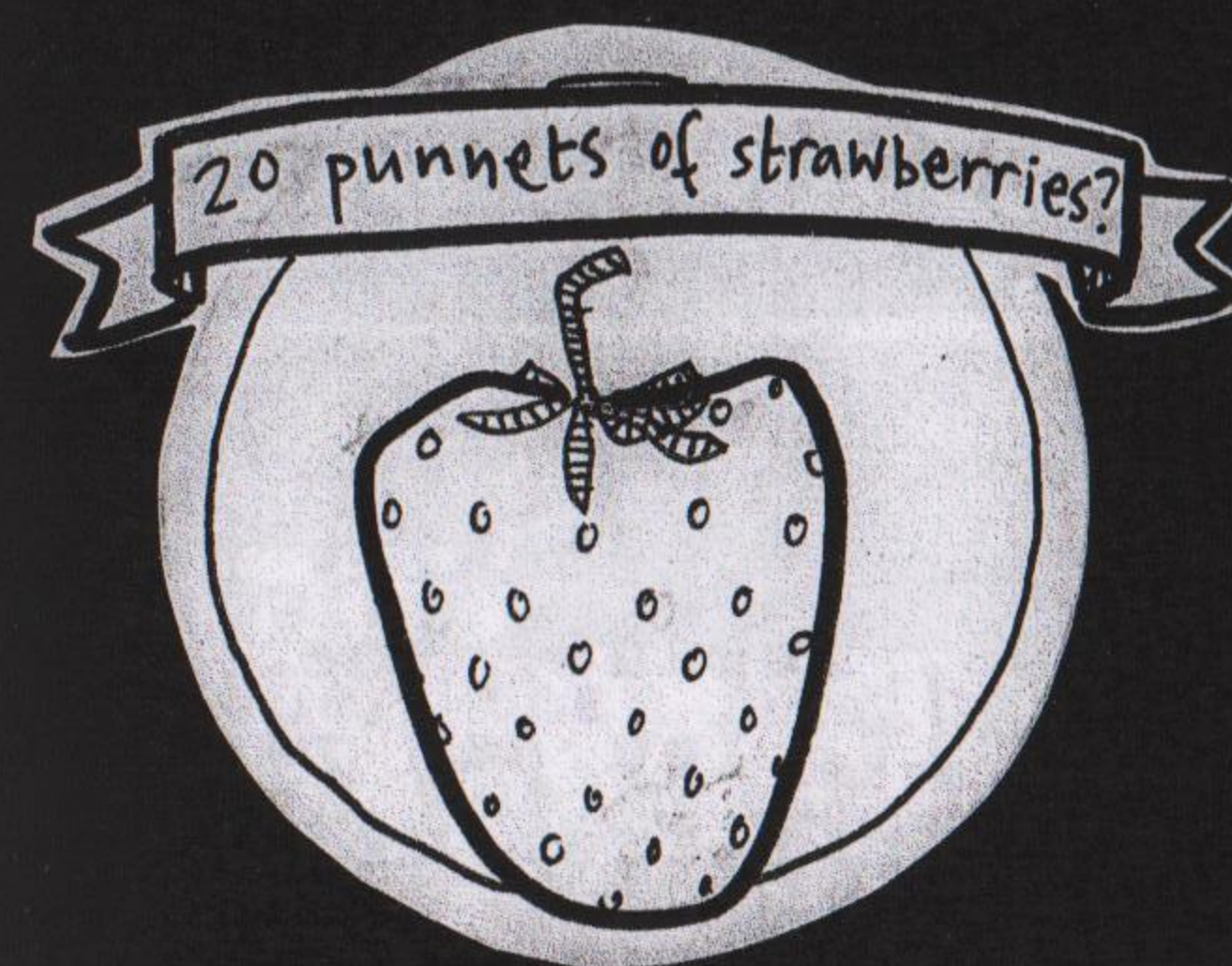
Forgive me if alot of these suggestions are really obvious - alot of them still took me ages to work out. That said, let's get started, Take that full binbag of peppers as a challenge, savour the decadence of asparagus for breakfast and whatever you do, don't just leave it all to go off in the corner of your kitchen.

FREEZING

If you have a freezer you're pretty much set - you can freeze a bin full of bread and defrost it as you need it, as long as you have the space. Same goes for most vegetables/gak/etc. If you've no freezer you can take advantage of cold snaps to skip more than usual and keep it all outside.

JAMS

You can make jam with most fruits and it keeps for ages. I've got a book with recipes for jam made with any berries, redcurrants, apricots, rhubarb, grapes, banana (which sounds horrible, let's be honest), melons, apples and more. You'll need quite a bit of sugar, so hopefully you'll skip a ripped bag of that at the same time. You can find recipes for any combination of fruits online, or if you write to me I can photocopy you stuff out of my book (out of a bin itself, satisfyingly enough.)



PICKLES

You can pickle most vegetables, with the added excitement of potential death if you fuck it up (botulisms or something). You'll need vinegar & various spices for pickling, so you'll probably have to spend a bit of money to do it, but it is a good way of preserving stuff like cauliflowers, courgettes, shallots, cucumber, rhubarb and jerusalem artichokes. Again, there's recipes online or write to me.

ROAST & OIL

Lots of vegetables that you can roast can then be covered with oil in a jar and kept. Aubergines, peppers, tomatoes and garlic are especially nice - I usually eat them all within a day anyway. Kirsty & I did manage to do this wrong with some peppers which went all weird and fizzy (sparkling olive oil, mmm...) but it was probably that the peppers were too far gone. And the jar didn't explode like we thought it might so it could have been worse.

JUICES & SMOOTHIES

These do rely on you having a juicer/blender, but they turn up enough in charity shop skips for this to be fairly likely. It's always ~~it~~ nice to make smoothies and juices out of skipped fruit & veg because they're pretty unaffordable if you have to pay for all the ingredients. Stuff that's good in juices - carrots, spinach, apples, ginger, pears. Smoothies are pretty obvious.

Garlic

I skipped a cardboard box full of garlic a couple of years ago & me and my housemates reeked for a month as we ploughed our way through it. It's actually not too hard to use in large quantities, because the flavour mellows a lot when you cook it. You can roast whole bulbs - peel off the papery stuff from around the sides and cut the top centimetre off, then stick in the oven until it's all soft and gooey. Then you can squeeze the flesh out of each clove onto bread - after roasting it's really sweet. Or if you have margarine and bread around you can knock up a load of garlic bread. When I recycled the box of garlic I had a freezer, so I froze about 20 baguettes made up with garlic margarine and wrapped in foil so you could put them straight in the oven. Quality. If your garlic is sprouting you can plant it, although you might well be sick of it and not want to grow another 200 bulbs.

Herbs

If you find these pots of growing herbs, you can usually bring them back to life by repotting them in a bigger container and watering them a bit. If they die anyway, or you skip out fresh herbs, you can dry them out by hanging them up in a bunch or laying out the leaves on some newspaper and leaving for a couple of weeks. Then just cut them up with scissors into an airtight pot. Stuff like sage & rosemary works well, but I wouldn't bother with basil or parsley.

Bread

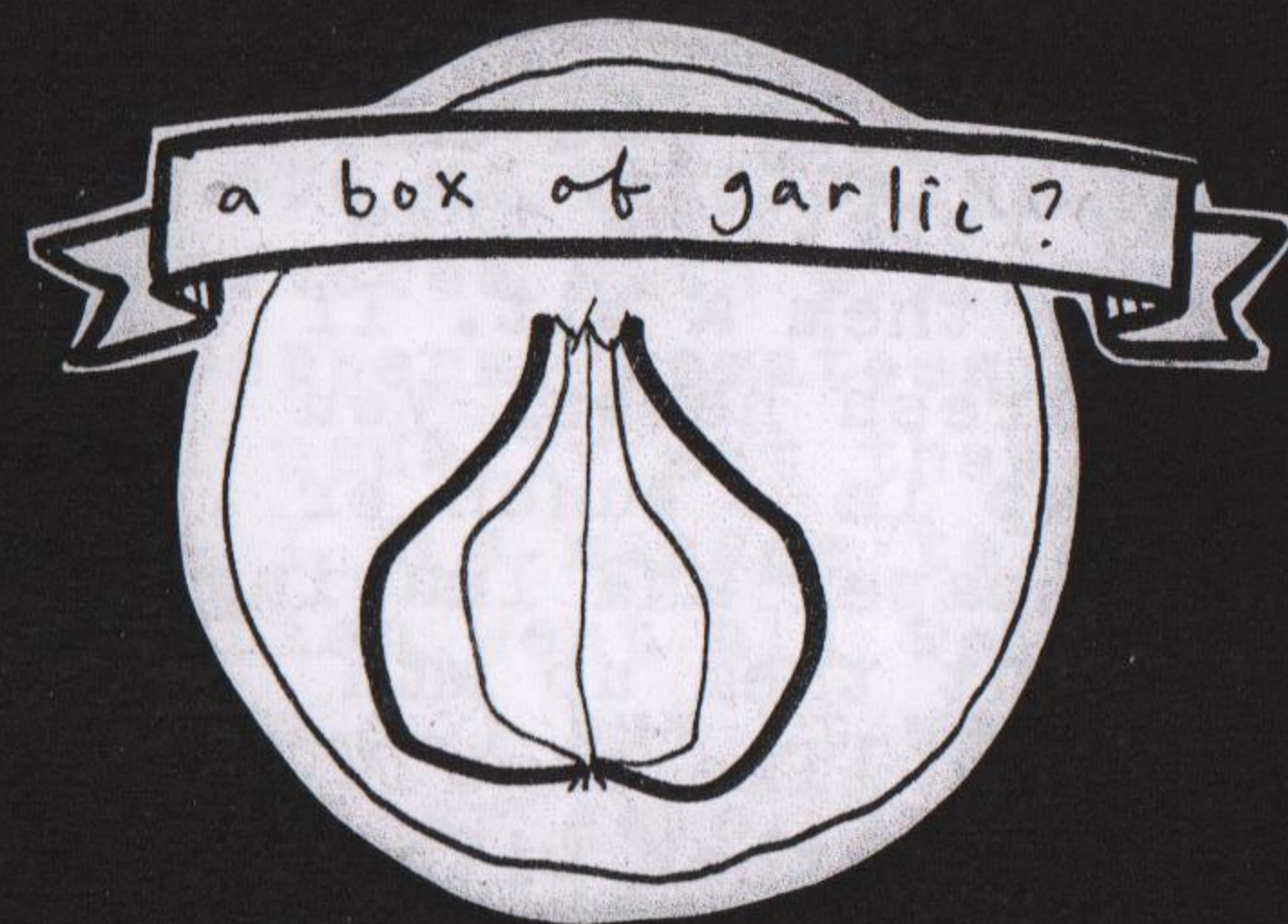
There's only so much bread and butter pudding & garlic bread you can eat before your quality of life starts to deteriorate, yet bread is probably the food most often skipped in ridiculous quantities. Kirsty & I used to do bread runs down the street we were moored up by in Hedden Bridge, leaving a loaf on every doorstep. Most people were into it but it probably depends on where you live. Otherwise, you can always feed it to the ducks.

Eggs

Find some SUVs - you know what to do.

Apples

Other than making apple pie, I can't think of a ~~whole~~ whole lot to do with a load of apples, unless you have a cider press. You can make dried apple rings without too much hassle - slice the apple as thinly as possible and sprinkle with lemon juice, then toss them around a bit. Pat them dry & spread them out on a baking tray. Sprinkle with a bit of sugar and cook at your oven's lowest setting for 2½-3 hours, turning halfway through. Leave to cool completely then store in an airtight container. These only keep for 2 weeks and are a bit too much like something that hippy parents give their kids as a treat, really, but they might be alright in a packed lunch or something.

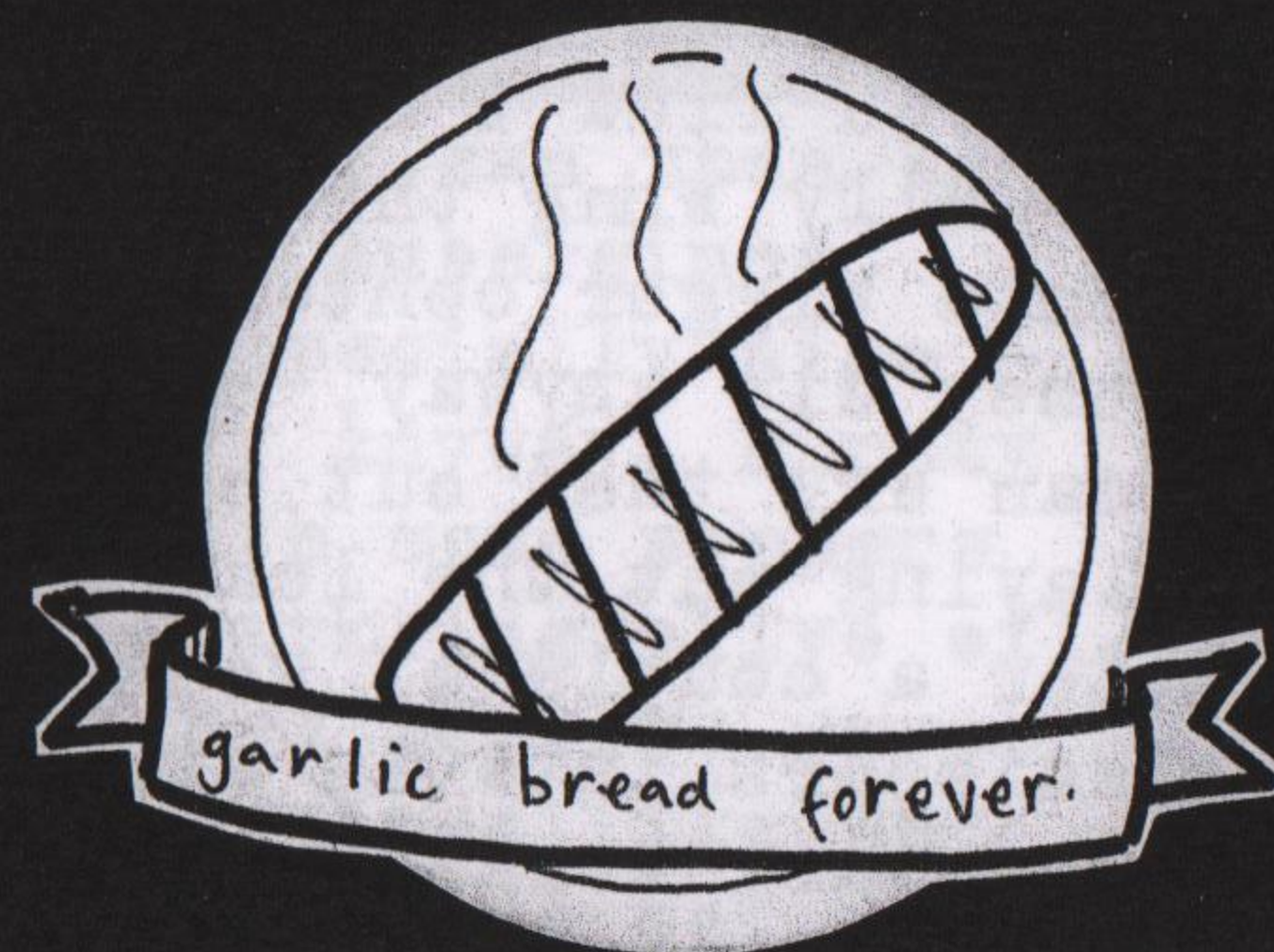


Onions

Onions keep for quite a while but if you've got a load on the turn you can make caramelised onion marmalade with it which is alot nicer than it sounds and keeps forever because it's loaded with sugar. Here's what you need to do - slice the onions quite thin & fry on a low heat with a bit of oil until they're soft (I^{was} shown how to make this when I worked in a veggie cafe and they used to use red onions. White onions work fine but it's worth throwing in a red onion if you can to stop it looking too beige). Now ~~now~~ throw in a load of sugar and white wine vinegar and let it all simmer for a while to mellow the flavours. Add more sugar and vinegar until you like it. When you're finished it should have the consistency of jam - stick it into jars and it'll keep indefinitely. It's nice with everything really, especially roasts, stuffing and fancy sandwiches.

Tomatoes

As well as roasting tomatoes and keeping them in oil, you can make tomatoe puree and seal it into jars and it'll keep for a year. Blanch 2kg tomatoes & remove their skin (cover with boiling water for 30 seconds, then put in cold water, their skins should come loose). Put them into a saucepan with 2tsp salt and cook for 30 minutes. Push through a sieve then cook for another 10 minutes. Pour into clean jars, screw their lids on & seal by boiling in a panful of water (which should completely cover them) for 20 minutes.



Ginger

You can preserve ginger in a syrup made of sugar and water which sounds pretty nice. I don't have my recipe book with the exact details, but how hard can it be?

Bric-a-Brac

Charity shops throw out a fairly offensive amount of decent stuff - kitchen utensils, toys, CDs, books, etc etc. There's usually lots of useful stuff that you don't need yourself but don't want to see thrown away. We usually take this stuff and put it out on the towpath with a sign saying 'FREE STUFF'

Most of it goes pretty quickly and people are well into it. Some people can't handle getting stuff for free though, so we put a donations pot out and can make a few quid a day which is pretty sweet.

I'll give a special mention to charity shop Books as well, my personal vice. There's always loads behind chazzas, often handily stacked in a separate paper recycling bin. There's no shortage of Mills & Boon type stuff, but there's often quality stuff too. It's a good way to build up a vast personal library, but if you don't have the inclination or space, you can donate books to the library, or you could set one up in your local social centre. There was a DIY library run from someone's house in Dublin a few years ago called 'Bad Books', and a (now evicted) squat library in ~~KXXX~~ Barcelona with books in 12 languages.



songs of

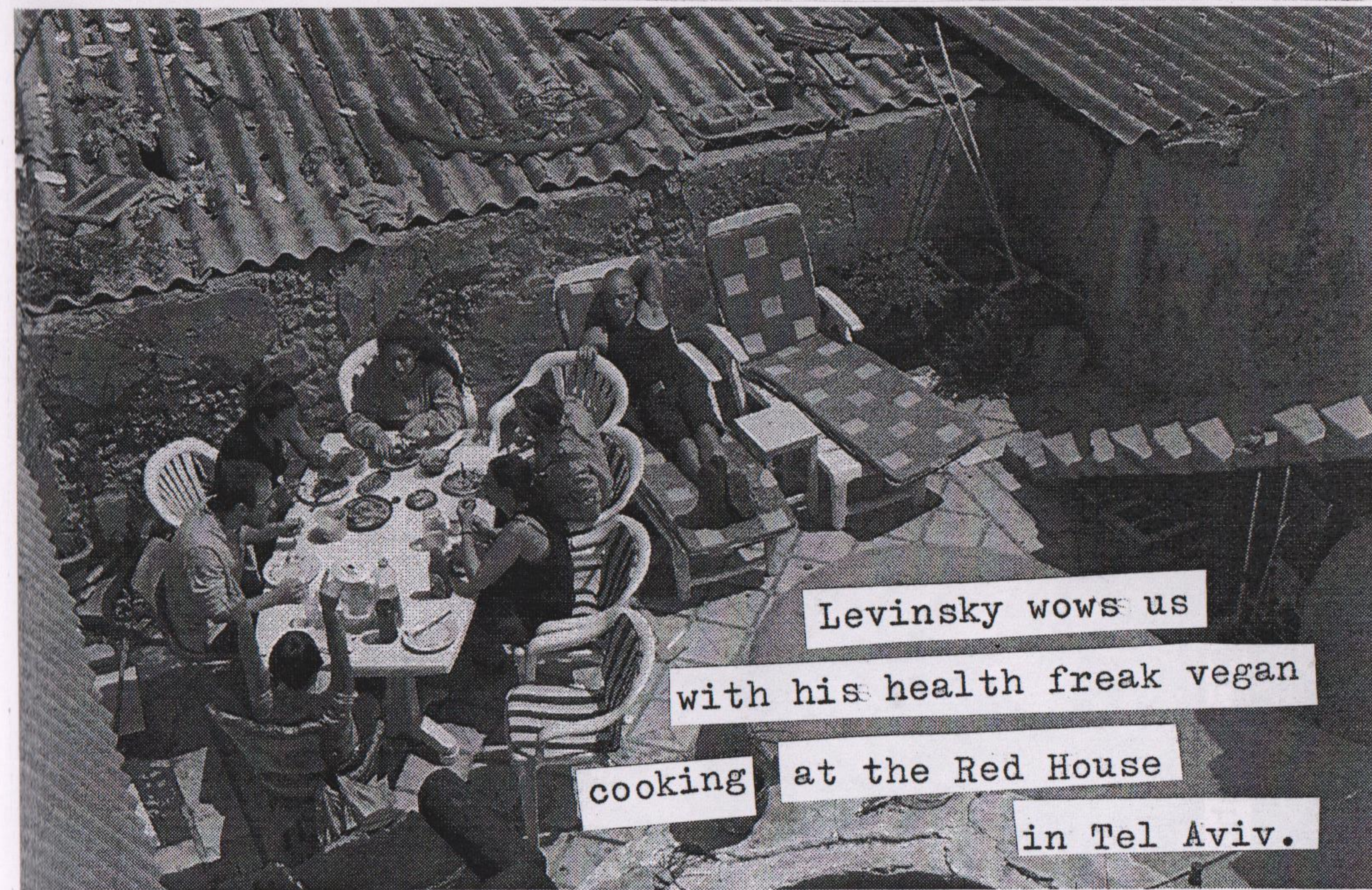
(or more accurately, I Went To The Middle East + All I Got Was This Lousy Deportation Order...)

love + hate

It wasn't all that helpful to decide to write about Israel/Palestine, because where the fuck do you begin? I changed my mind a fair few times while I was there - some times I started to plan a zine solely about my trip, other times the idea that I had anything at all to contribute to the debate seemed so stupid that I resolved not to write or draw anything about it, ever. Later on I reached some kind of compromise - I think it's irrelevant to weigh in on the politics, but I do want to write about those times, with no greater aim than just to describe it, remember it and get it out of my head a bit.

Anyone who has heard me get started with the stories after a couple of ciders will know that I can go on indefinitely, but in the interests of brevity and, um, not being boring, I decided to write about the slightly odd group of songs that have become so evocative of those times and travels. There's so much more to write, but that doesn't mean it's necessarily worth writing, or indeed reading. So for now, this is all.

I arrived in Tel Aviv with no music beyond two cassettes - "Music Of The Medicine Shows" and a Billie Holiday compilation - both taped off library CDs on a broken stereo in Barcelona. I think I had expected a Walkman to fall into my lap at some point between arriving back in the UK and leaving for Israel/Palestine, but none did, so my crappy tapes sat in my too-big backpack getting clogged up and taunting me. After two weeks singing half-remembered songs to myself I cracked and went to buy myself a tape player. In the shop I realised that an MP3 player was only a few dozen



Levinsky wows us

with his health freak vegan

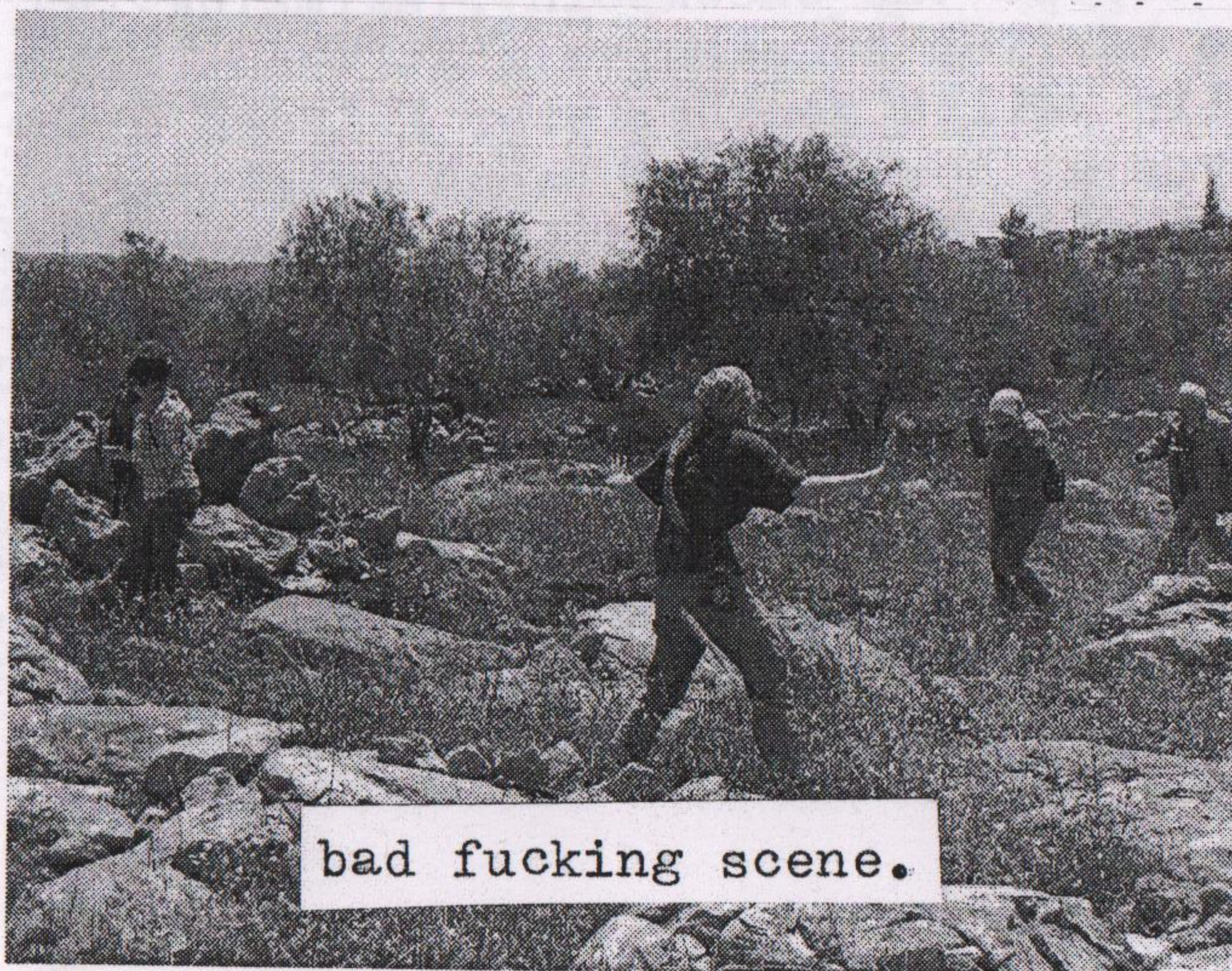
cooking at the Red House

in Tel Aviv.

shekels more so I surrendered to technology, bought myself one and set off to sweet talk anyone I met with a computer full of music.

A few days later I found myself at my second gig in T.A., in a community centre with a basketball court outside. I was away from my affinity group for the first time and trying to act more confident than I felt. The lovely Israeli punks spoke to each other in English so I could understand, and halfway through one conversation a girl almost as short as me - all queer punk patches, pink shoes and fast Hebrew - barrelled into the group with hugs and new stories, just back from weeks away. We were introduced, and so I met Noa. Inside later on, **Melachechi Ha Pinka** launched into 'Abu Dhabi' which Kerem had played me earlier on, and everyone danced and sang along. Noa was on someone's shoulder shoulders, Oren was photographing everything as usual, and I cracked a grin as Kerem dragged me in to dance.

Not long afterwards I found myself in a minibus taxi to Hebron, reeking of teargas and the alcohol we used to counteract it, turning a bullet casing over and over in my hand as I stared out of the window at the dirt road taking us away from the aftermath of a demonstration. Just another Palestinian demonstration that had kicked off; just another Friday in Bil'in of gas and gunshots and the Red Crescent medics rushing to crumpled people on the ground. I fumbled in my bag for my MP3 player, found 'Haillie Does Hebron' by Propagandhi and clicked around until it was on repeat. The slow riff felt like a comforting weight on my chest & eventually I relaxed just enough to let my brain replay the last few hours without trying to stop it or process it all. Setting off from the village in the thick of the demonstration, letting my fear be turned into adrenaline by the heat and the 'La, La, La Jedar!' ('No, No, No Wall!') chant that reminded me of a Dead Prez song. Turning that bend in the road that I still dream about, and the electric few seconds before the first tear gas canister is shot. Later on, the desperate scramble over a wall with Astrid to escape running soldiers and the total fucking dread of guns aiming right at us and then the first shots. Not knowing whether it was rubber (-coated steel) bullets or live ammo, crouching in the gorse and rosemary



bad fucking scene.

Outside afterwards, Mikhal leaned on me heavily, a near-empty bottle of arak in her hand.

"Ruthie....Ruthie. Tomorrow...."

if anything happens...I have a bad feeling., Fucking...I feel like something is going to go badly wrong tomorrow...."

I thought of the action planned for the next day - cutting the security fence around an illegal Israeli settlement whose guards had been shooting Palestinians trying to farm their adjacent land.

I remembered the meeting:

"The thing is... the security have AK47s. But it's Shabbat and we have fluoro, it'll be fine. But just so you know." and what the fuck can you really say?

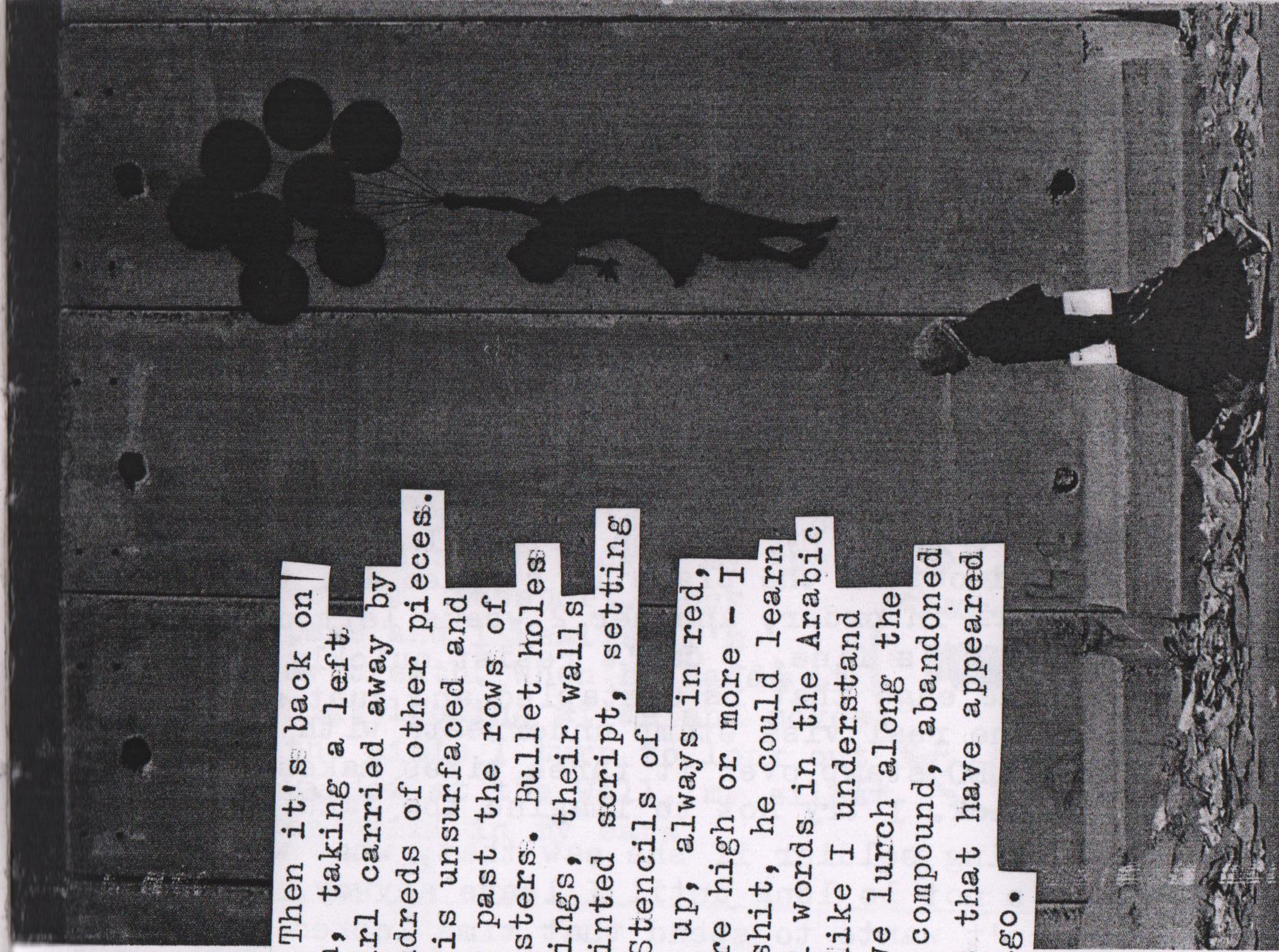
She leaned her head on my shoulder and I rested my head against hers.

"It'll be fine"

with my ~~hands~~ arms protecting my head thinking ~~just~~ nothing except 'just not the temples or eyes just not the temples or eyes' and realising that I'll always be an atheist because if I had any shred of belief left I would have been praying. Trying to retreat but the firing continuing and not being able to do a fucking thing except keep going and hope that they missed. And as we stumbled through the gas to somewhere safer, leaves from the olive trees around us were sent fluttering to the ground by the bullets whipping through their branches and the evil, delicate beauty of it shook me more than the scream of the woman behind us as she fell, hit.

I listened to nothing but that one song for the 3 hours it took to reach Hebron, and couldn't get to sleep without it for a week. It's lyrics are simplistic but there are times when you need someone shouting 'Fuck Religion!' repeatedly in your ear, and that taxi ride was one of them.

We never did decide whether Da Arabian MCs do actually rhyme 'jacuzzi' with 'Uzi' in the song I never caught the name of, but it always made me smile. This song was the soundtrack for the taxi ride from Jerusalem to Ramallah through the Qulandiya checkpoint. The road runs right alongside the Separation Wall for the last few minutes of driving before the checkpoint, skimming the massive concrete barrier so massive that when I finally see the Berlin Wall 6 months later I laugh with tears in my eyes at how tiny it seems by comparison. On the other side of the road is a wasteland where innumerable houses have been demolished to create a clearer line of fire for army snipers in the Wall's gun towers. Then we turn through an opening in the wall and the checkpoint looms like a dystopic toll booth. Everyone gets out and we queue before being herded through turnstiles to hold up our papers against inches of bombproof glass to the bored teenage soldiers behind.



Then it's back on to the taxi and we're off again, taking a left past the Banksy stencil of a girl carried away by balloons, now surrounded by hundreds of other pieces. This side of the Wall the road is unsurfaced and ridged and the taxi bumps along past the rows of shops and clusters of martyr posters. Bullet holes are sprinkled across some buildings, their walls covered in rows of tiny spraypainted script, setting forth manifestos and rhetoric. Stencils of election candidates are sprayed up, always in red, green or black, sometimes a metre high or more - I wonder if Banksy ever saw that shit, he could learn something. I pick out occasional words in the Arabic/Hebrew mix of DAM, but I feel like I understand beyond my meagre vocabulary as we lurch along the road to Ramallah, past Arafat's compound, abandoned pillboxes and the martyr posters that have appeared since we drove this way a week ago.

The last time I make that journey is in the opposite direction and I leave Ramallah knowing that I will never see it again. At the checkpoint I stay on the taxi with the other foreigners - I'm exploiting my privilege as a non-Palestinian but I'm pretty sure it's the only way to get through the checkpoint without ending up in a detention centre. I hold my passport in my lap and try to look like an apolitical tourist. I roll up my sleeves, undo a button on my shirt and pretend to listen to my MP3 player. There's no music on though, I need to concentrate. I check again the page they'll want to see. It's all in order. It's fine. My section of the Israeli entry form I filled out on the plane is stapled in, the visa stamp all in order, another 2 weeks left of my three months. It's fine. I can't resist quickly lifting up the edge that is unstapled and just a glimpse of the real visa stamp underneath with the newer CANCELLED stamp over it three times makes me feel a bit sick. I try not to imagine the face of the approaching soldier if she saw that, what would follow. It's not so long until I leave anyway, and I really don't want to spend that time locked up.

CANCELLED - מבוטל

I concentrate on acting relaxed as the soldier climbs the steps, trying not to nervously tap my foot. I'm convinced she can read my mind and watch the last week like a film in my head - arrest, jail, court, house arrest, the immigration police at the front door, the frantic packing for deportation, the layers of lies in the interview room that somehow held, the blagged two weeks before my flight home on the promise of good behaviour, no more funny business and definitely no being caught leaving the West Bank with a cancelled visa and a guilty look.

CANCELLED - מבוטל

But she's no mindreader, of course, and ~~she~~ I hand her my passport open so she doesn't need to touch that stapled on scrap at all. She glances at it, hands it back to me and I smile at her. She works her way through the rest of the passengers and then climbs back down. We wait for the Palestinians to come through the turnstiles before setting off. We're just turning the corner ~~off~~ onto the road alongside the Wall when another soldier flags us down. Everyone's papers come back out and his gun nudges my knee as he checks my passport. Long seconds pass and I realise I'm holding my breath. When he hands it back without looking at me and moves on down the aisle I turn to look out of the window at the Wall, my silent headphones still in my ears.



CANCELLED - מבוטל

CANCELLED - מבוטל

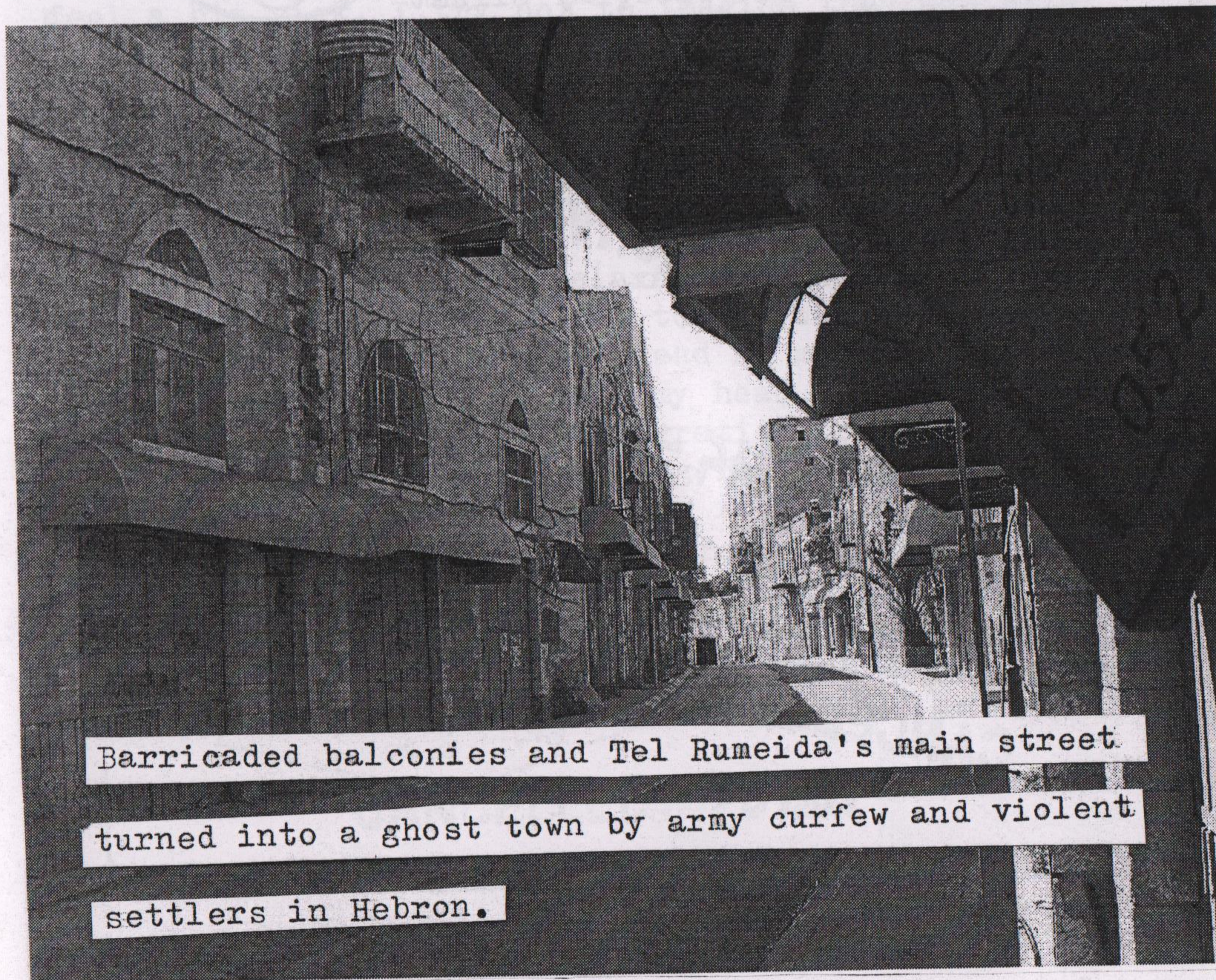
CANCELLED - מבוטל



I've jumped ahead. I prefer to remember further back, before Astrid and I got nicked - back when I was mulling over plans for my next visit instead of reeling from the finality of a 10 year deportation order. I felt full of ideas, my head full of new friends and new experiences, my ideas evolving in front of me. I held Noa close under the chugging ceiling fan in her top floor room, the sheets tangled around our legs, mosquitos revlling on our exposed skin. Her computer flicked through its MP3s at random and the opening chords of "My Hump" by the **Black Eyed Peas** cracks us both up, laughing and kissing and cocooning ourselves from the spent teargas canister under her coffee table and the off duty soldiers in the streets below, the memories we both pretend to forget for these few hours and the disputed ground beneath us.

And now forwards again, although me and Astrid still have our visas and our affinity group is still functioning. ~~We~~ The four of us are in a taxi taking us along the Jordan Valley, heading for a Bedouin camp under an army demolition order. Every few minutes we pass a pillbox covered in camo netting, an army vehicle or a checkpoint. When stopped we blag our way through, babbling about friends on a kibbutz, playing it dumb and flirtatiously catching the eyes of the young soldiers in aviator shades from the back seat while our Palestinian driver stares straight forwards, ~~sketching~~ tightly gripping the steering wheel.

The road curves around the hills and the view across the valley is staggering. The plains below us sweeps out like a sea, unbroken by walls or enclosure. Ancient clusters of white stone houses are painfully bright in the sun and in the furthest



Barricaded balconies and Tel Rumeida's main street turned into a ghost town by army curfew and violent settlers in Hebron.

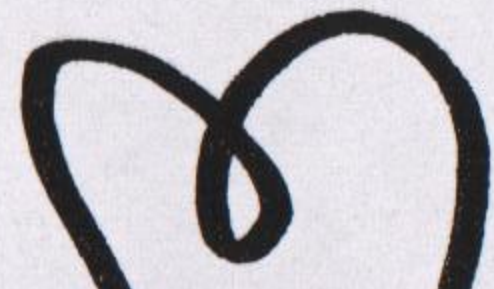


... they're not all that siked to be here, either.

But they still are.

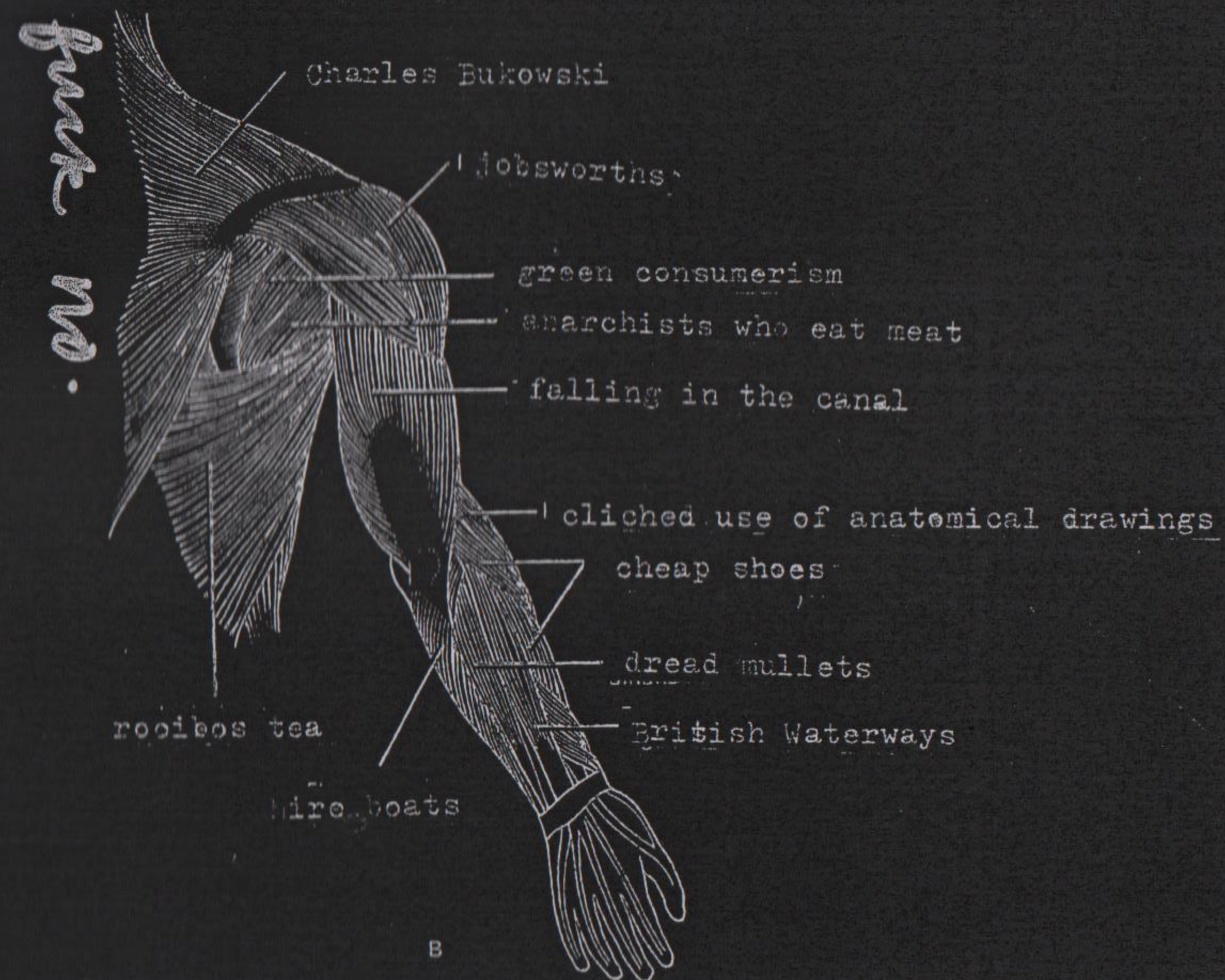
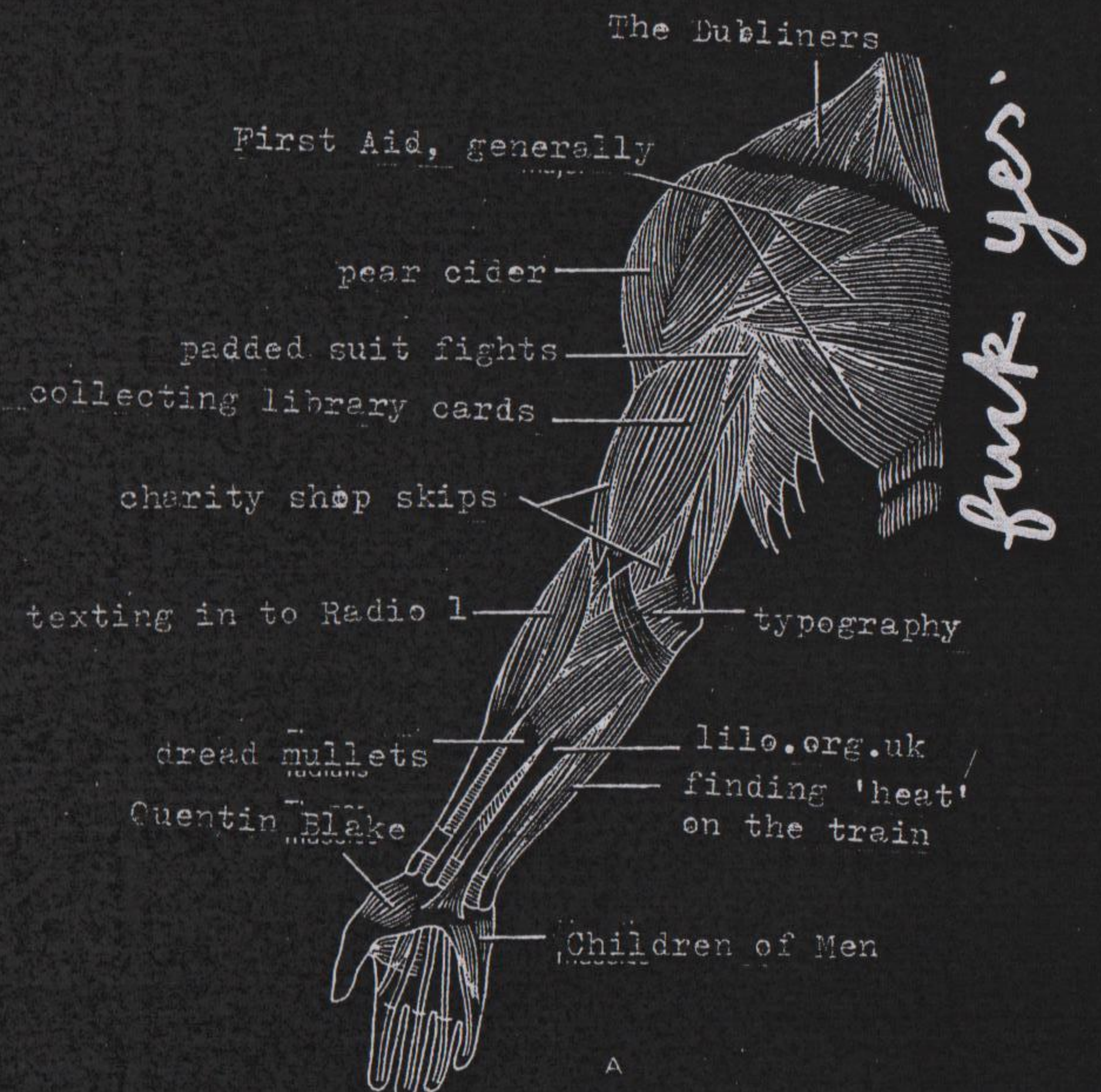
distance colossal mountains loom, visible only as grainy silhouettes. The squalling feedback of "Stones From Heaven" by **Neurosis** completes the scene as I let myself be swept up by the epic vastness of the landscape. Then we start to pass the artificial rectangular patches of settlement vineyards; battalions of polytunnels and ranks of security lights mounted on high fences. As we drive I hate humans for trying to divide up this valley into uniform plots of land, for trying to fence off and claim portions of this place that has seen humans arrive and will see them disappear.

That night I lie in our hut on the Bedouin encampment and watch the stars out of the doorway. The sheep outside shift and settle and the night's breeze rustles the plastic sheeting of the walls. Outside the gathering of huts no fence separates us from the dark valley which is as empty of humans as anywhere I have ever imagined. On a hill to one side, the perimeter lights around the settlement that has brought the D9 bulldozers to this place glow gaudily. For now though, I can only see the stars outside and the silhouettes of my sleeping friends, and in my half-sleep I fumble for my MP3 player. I find 'Stones From Heaven' again and let it carry me off to sleep.



This one's for all the Israeli punks, the Palestinian families who bemusedly catered for our vegetarianism, Jonas who got taken passing through Qulandiya and thrown out, never to return to his house in Ramallah. It's for Mousa, snatched from his bed last week and in jail right now, it's for Dawood, blindfolded & beaten in Hebron, for the little girls who threw us sweets from their ~~balconies~~ barricaded balconies in Tel Rumeida, for everyone who fed us too-sweet tea and for the Bedouin mother who showed me how to sharpen knives on the underside of a plate, whose name I was too shy to ask. It's for the Red House kids and their legendary hospitality for HOA & Danielle, Israel's only posi edge kids and it's for my affinity group. We didn't make it through as friends, but I still respect you and wish the best for you. It's for Sharyn, who inspired me to make the leap and go, and it's for everyone caught up in the constant struggle of occupation who resists against the odds, from little boys throwing stones to Jewish anarcho punks defying their society to remove illegal army roadblocks. I'll be back one day, I swear.





I'm ashamed to say that I don't actually have an address at the moment so I can't get post. Rubbish!

But you can email me at

→ iloveavocado@hotmail.com ←

if you like. Hopefully I'll have a PO Box after June-ish cos I'm moving to Leeds.

thanks for reading,
♥ Kathleen, April 2008

- this zine was brought to you by:
- music → The Dubliners, Missy Elliot, Los Crudos.
 - books → lots of geeky typography books, Primo Levi.
 - zines → Misery + Gin, Wok n Roll, Last Hours.
 - eatin' → nettle soup, chocolate apricot cake, TEA

thanks alot:

♥ NINA ♥ CRIP (little mouse), Sharyn + Kirsty, Elita, CLARE CLARE CLARE (will that do? x), The Newbury Boat Pikey Massive, Emma Cause + Effect (boo-ya!), everyone who's put me up + cooked me dinner + bought me cider... + ta to my little typewriter for holding out.

diy forever.