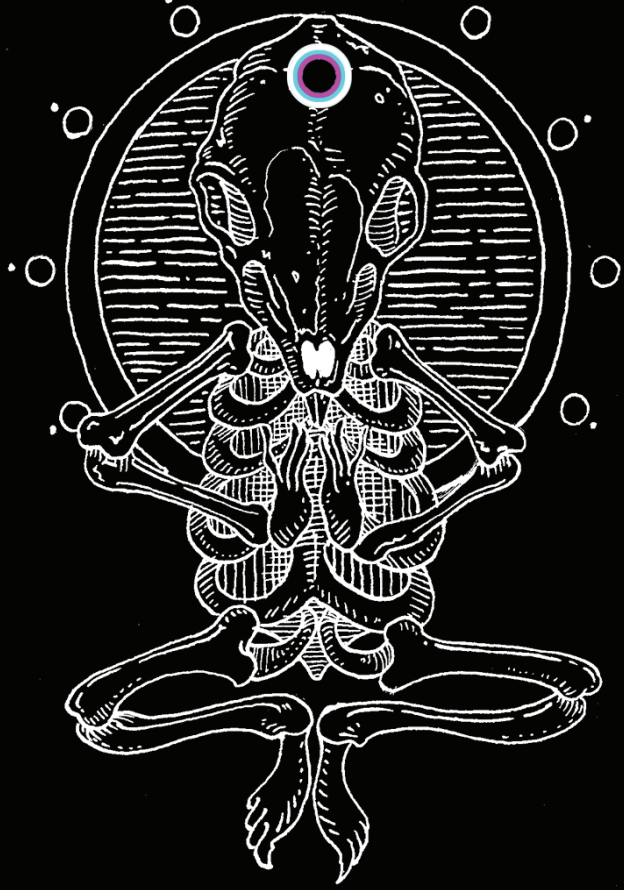
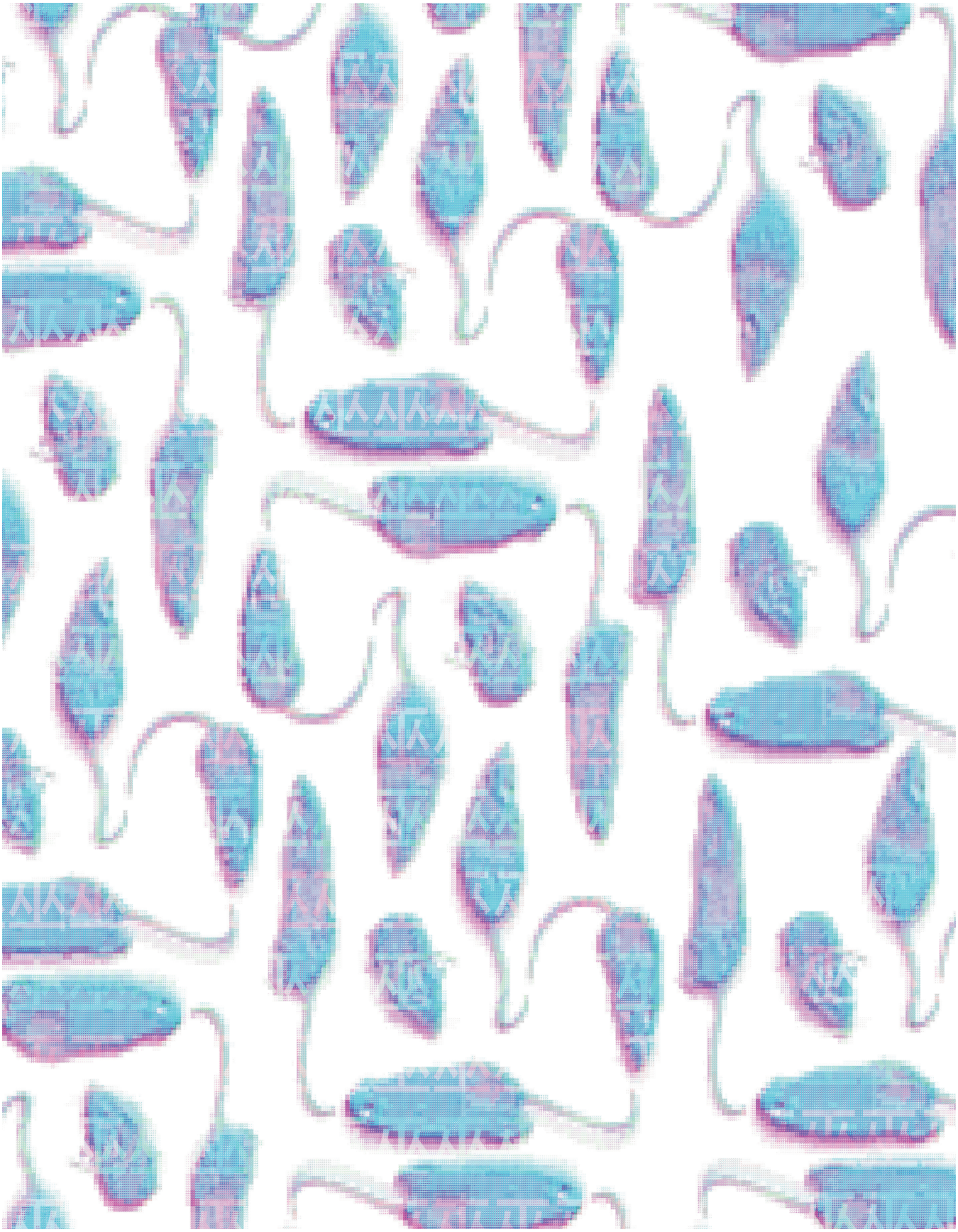
petrichor



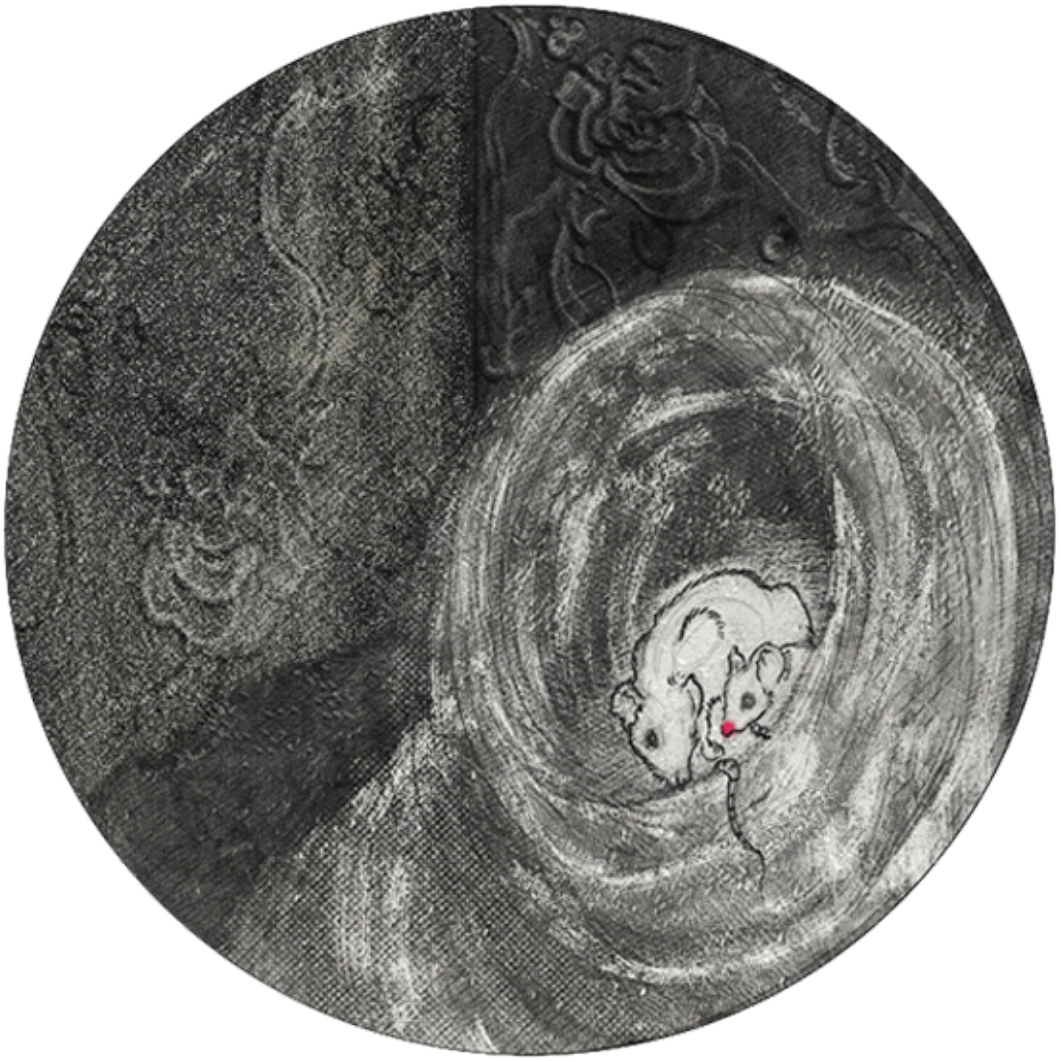
an illustrated novelette

cameron higby naquin - marcelo gallegos



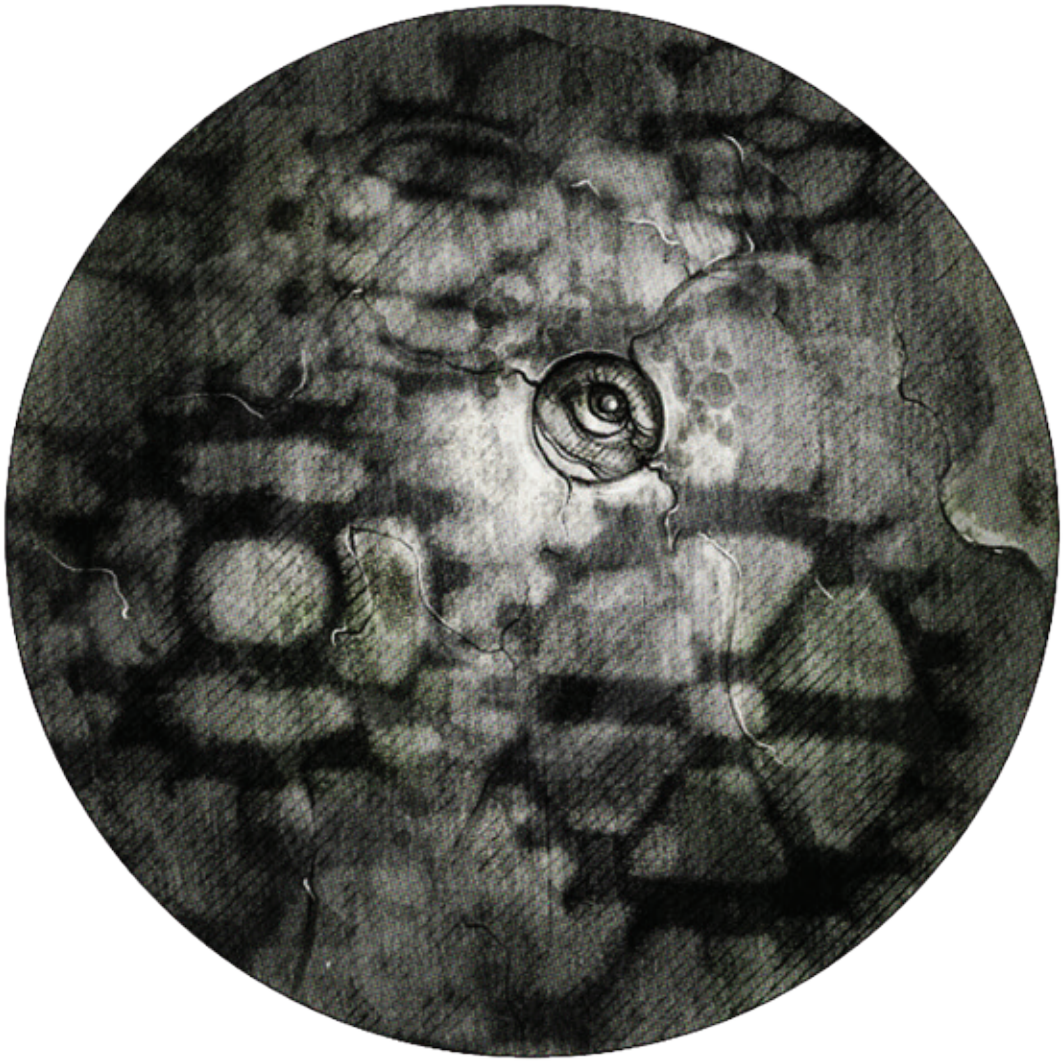
In a house on a hill, mouldering and grim, there lived a mouse and her child.

By day, the pair played in the dusty sunlight, running across spiderwebs and dripping pipes.

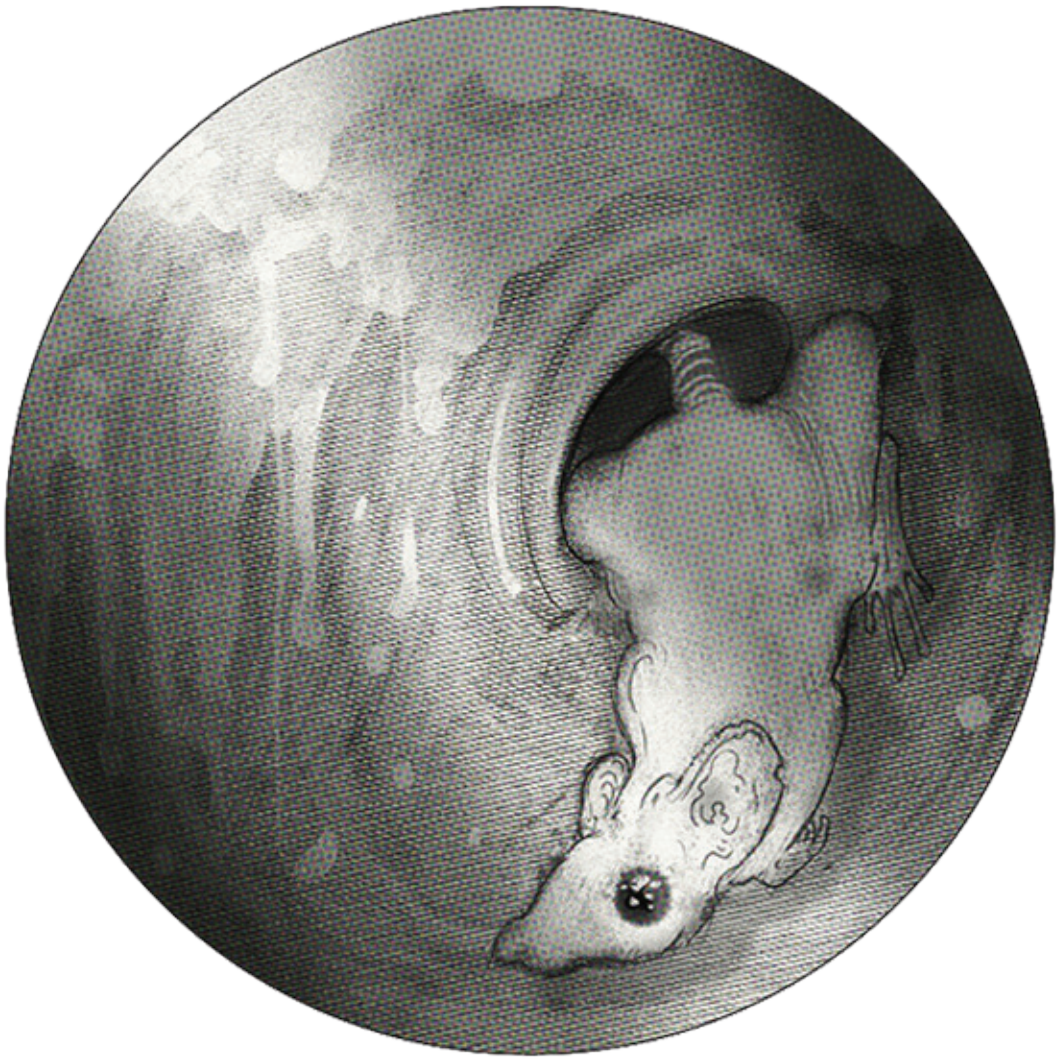


By day, the pair played in the dusty sunlight, running across spiderwebs and dripping pipes.

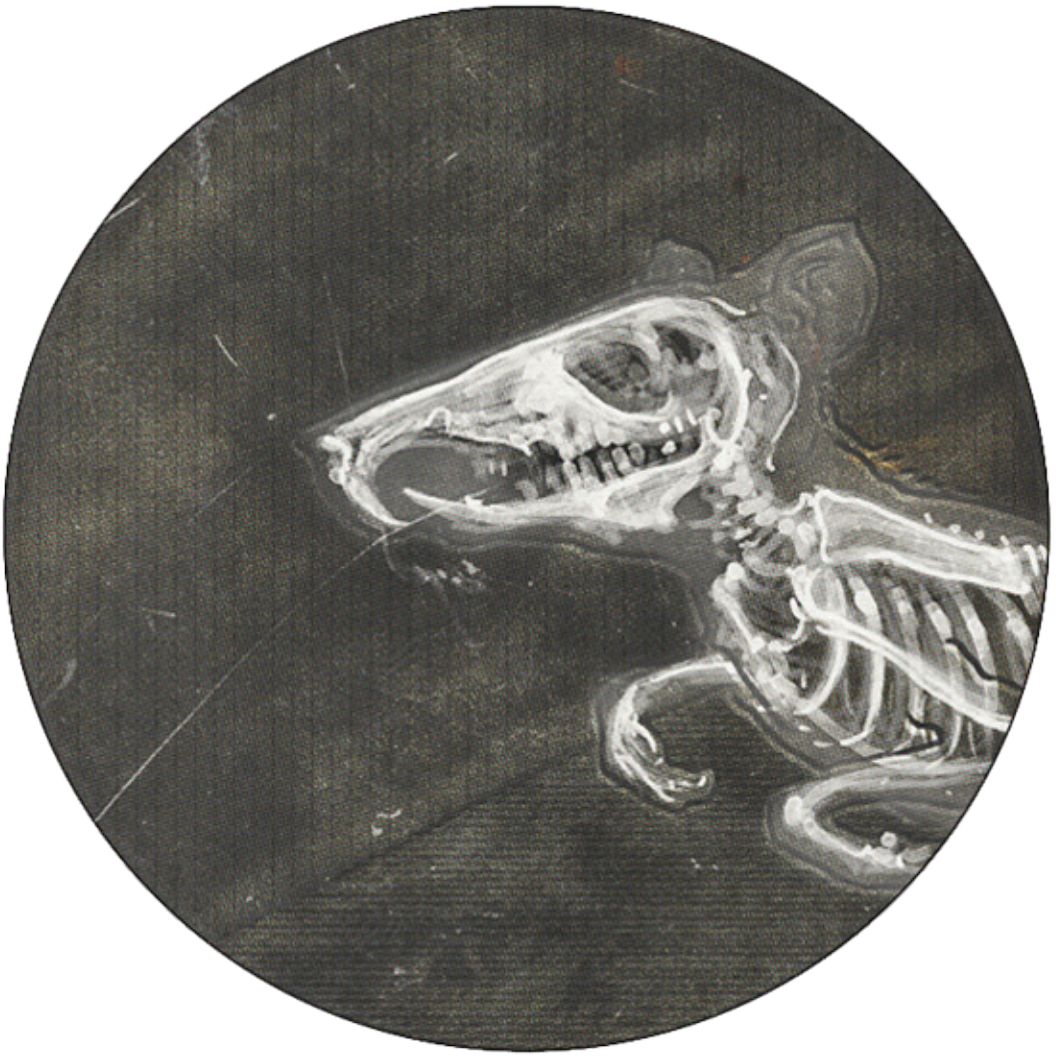
One afternoon, when the mist streaked its fingers over the windows, the mouse's child made a quizzical face and darted into a perfect, round hole in the wall she had never seen before.



Her heart beating fast, she put her good eye to the hole but saw only dim shapes: tunnels like veins, lichen -wrapped arches, and the shadows of the cogs of gears.



In great tumult, following an echo of an echo of a voice,
she wriggles through.



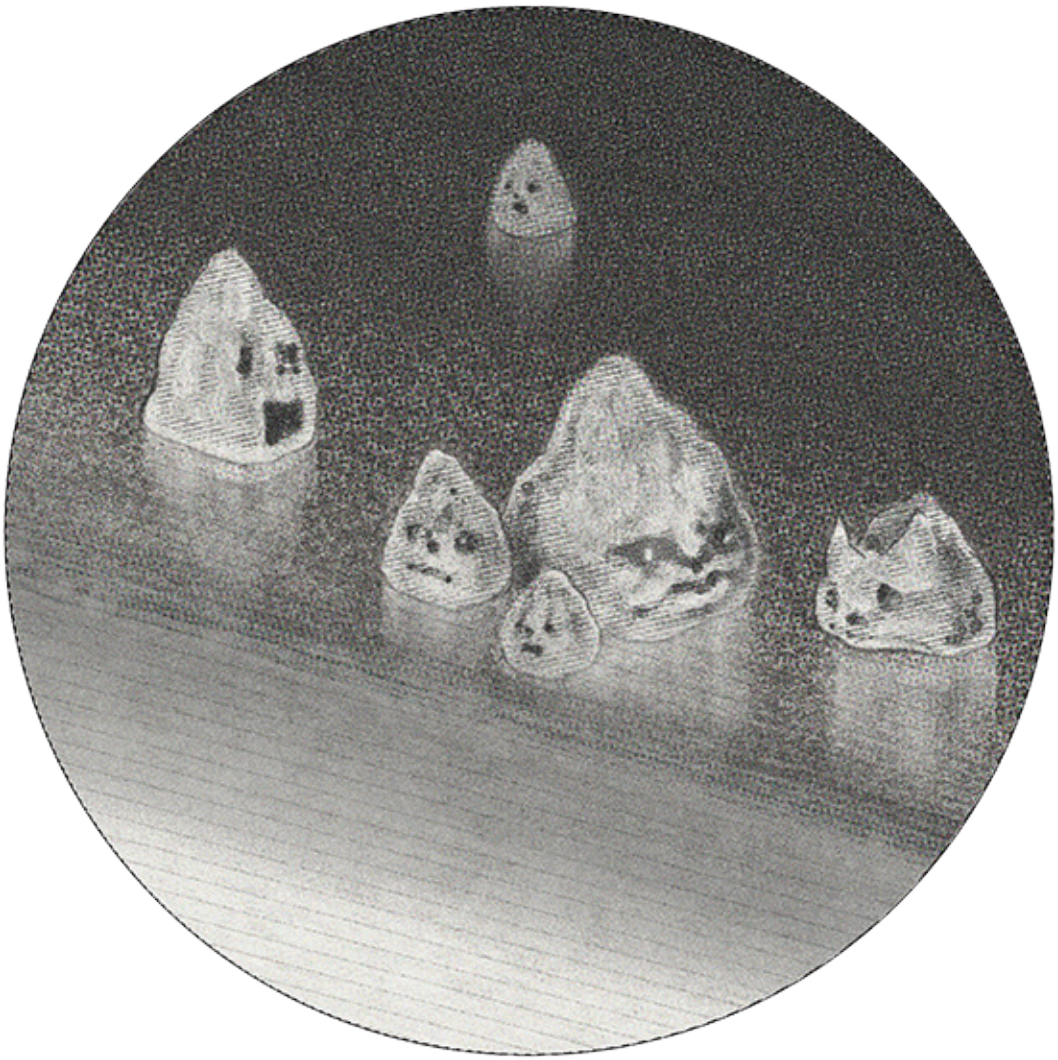
She imagined herself uncoiling from within, bones awakening like phosphore in the inky depths when sluggish yet tremendous mollusks stir in their shells.

The scent of decaying trees, and their dark dreams of mold and scarlet fire and axes of quartz, wafted through the light at the tunnel's end.

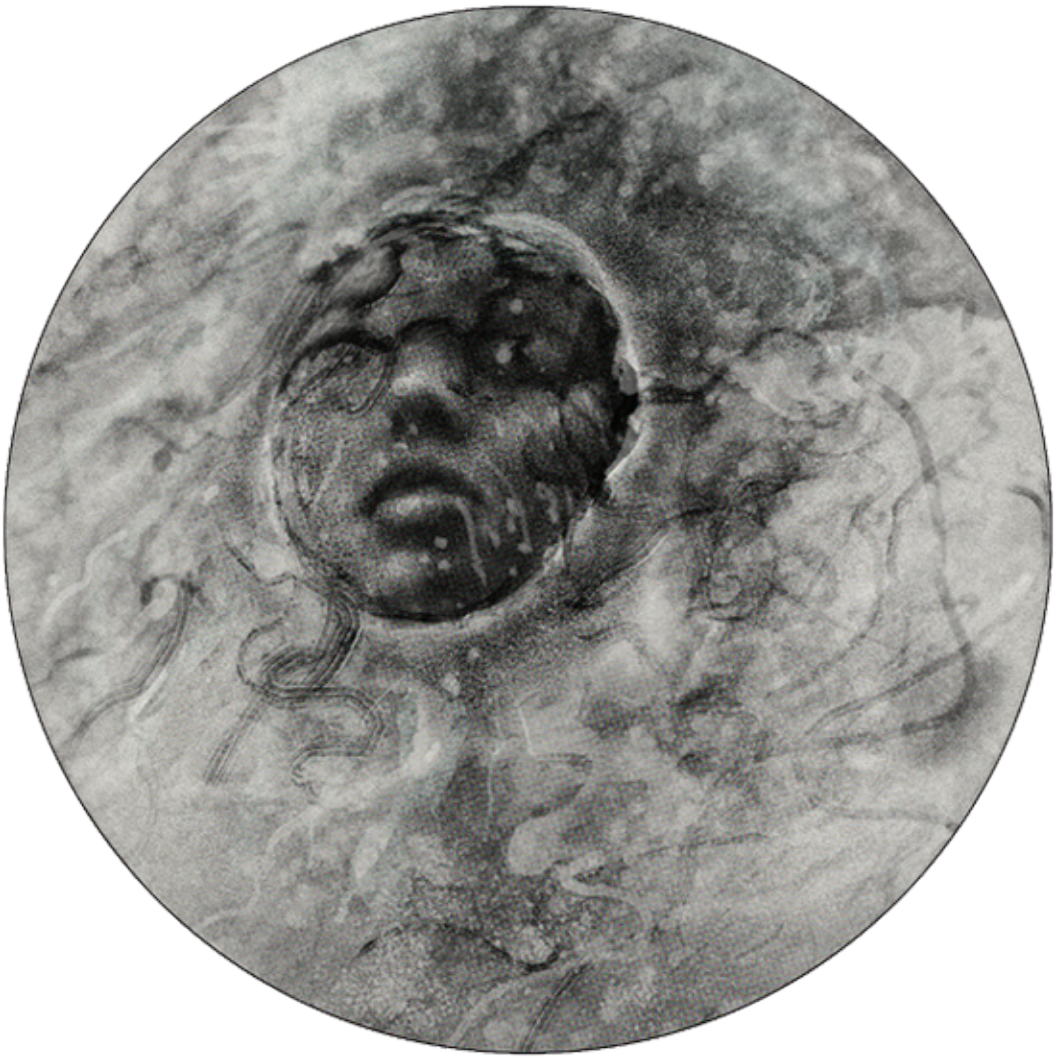
In great tumult, following an echo of an echo of a voice,
she wriggles through.

An emergence: a squirming forest, a thunder-laden sky, a familiar tail just disappearing from her view.

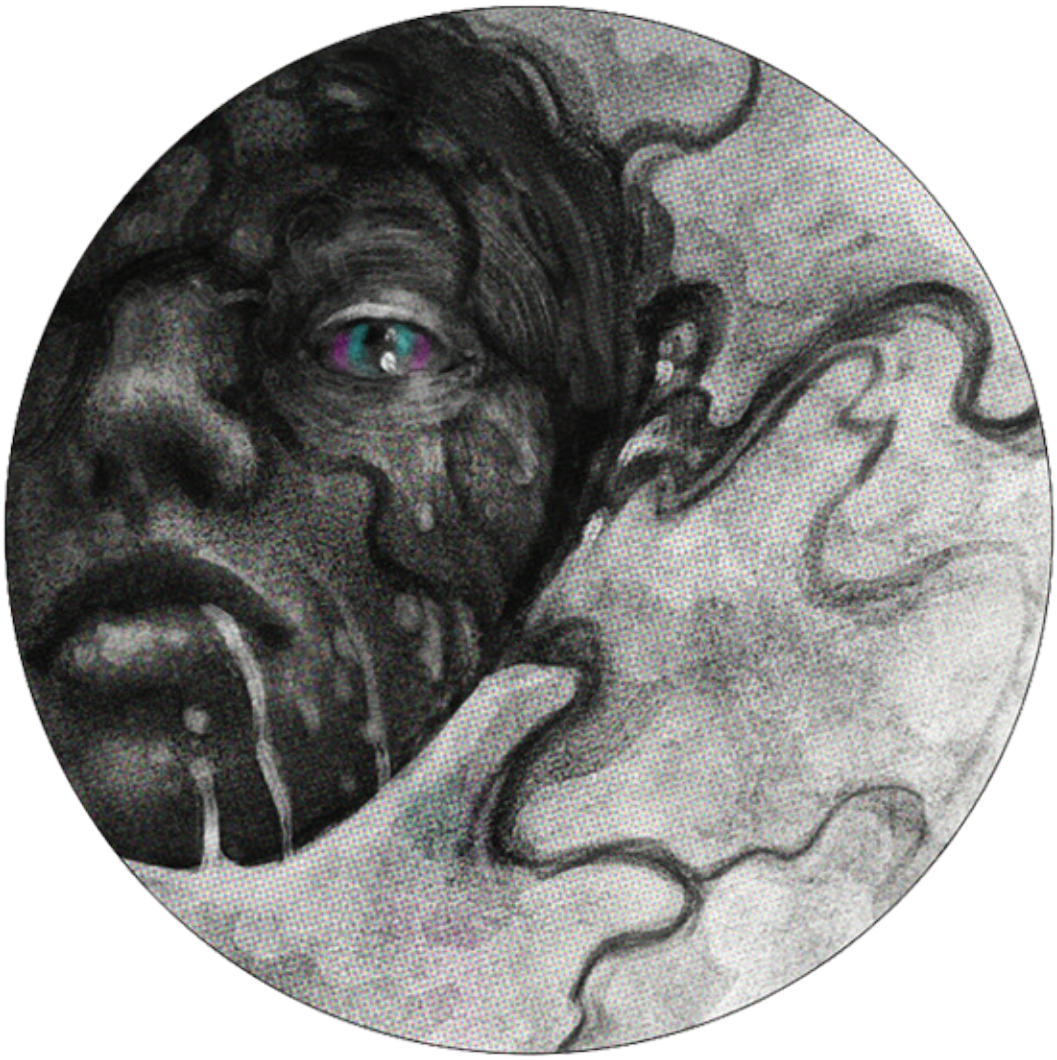
Pathways and trails converge toward a fetid sump, the dire cloaca where molten whispers leech hope from flesh.



The waves against the shore were fingers, the surface the vitreous sclera of an eye, the dark shapes in its deeps like insects crawling just beneath the skin.

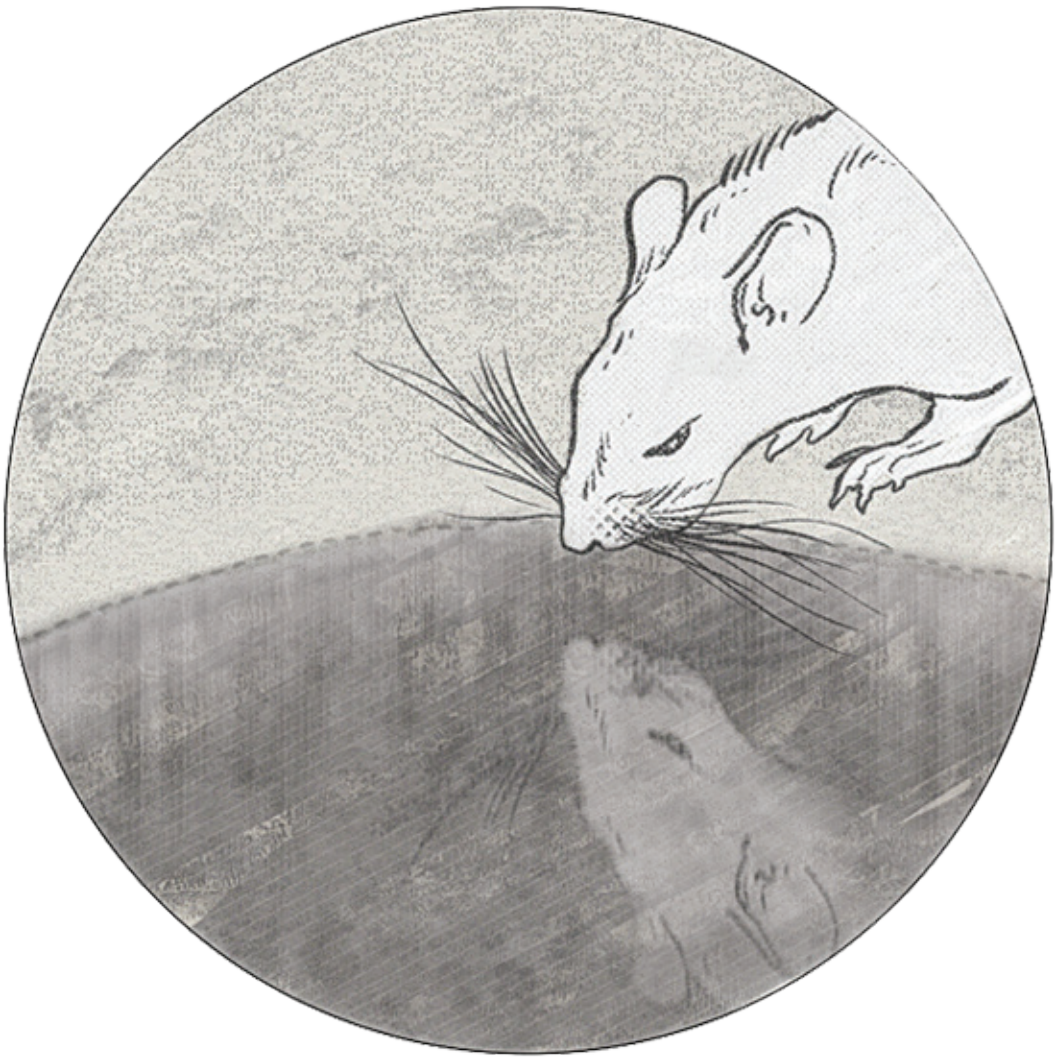


Within the lake: a face, within the face: a mouth, within the mouth: a tongue, upon the tongue: a word: “tombless.”



A mote appeared in the face, a dancing, vorticose scintilla that became the figure of a crouched hag that became the pulsing eye in the face of the witch as she rose from the water.

Scurrying like a mule down the canyons of titans, the mouse saw her child amidst the folds of the Witch's skin.

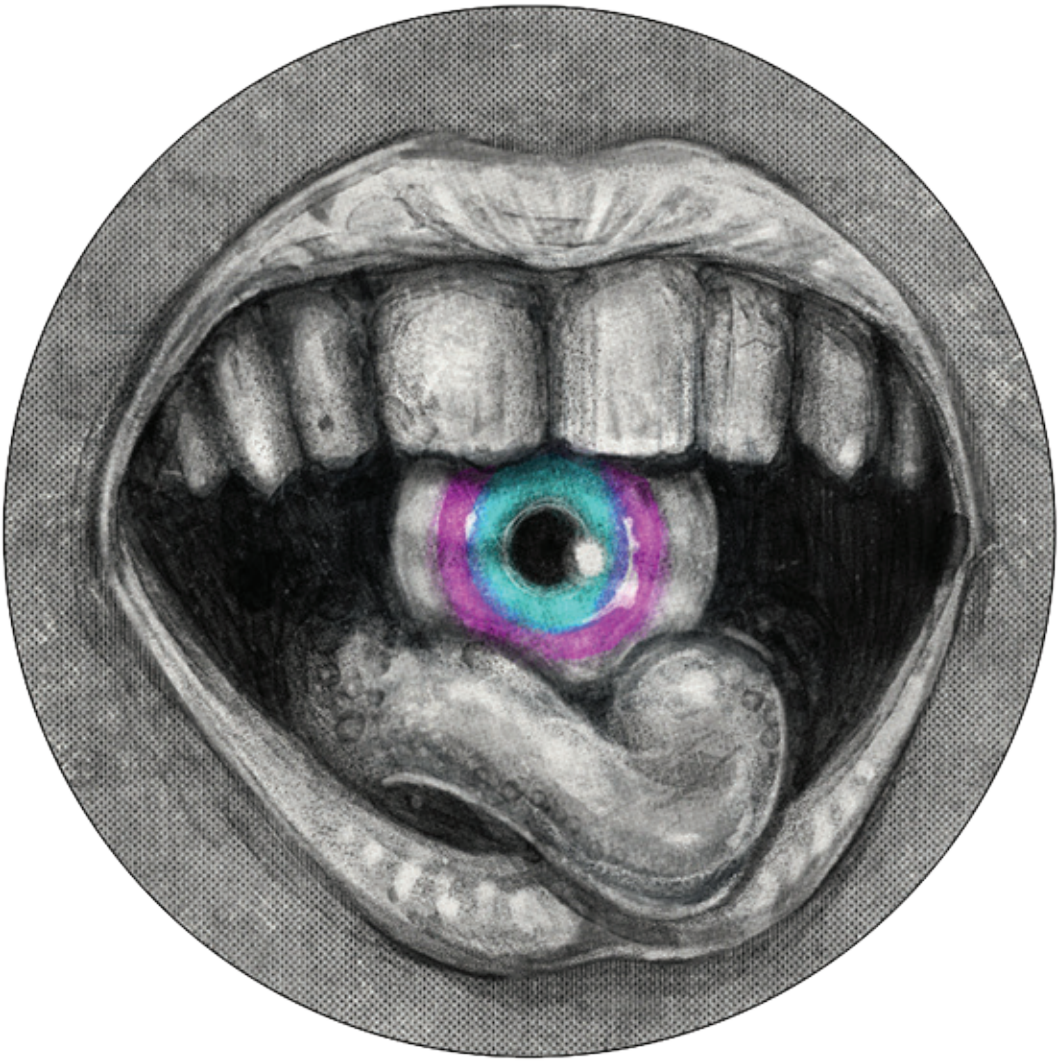


Heart pounding like the thorny legs of locusts in concert, whiskers taut like deep veins of crystal, the mouse approached the lake's edge.

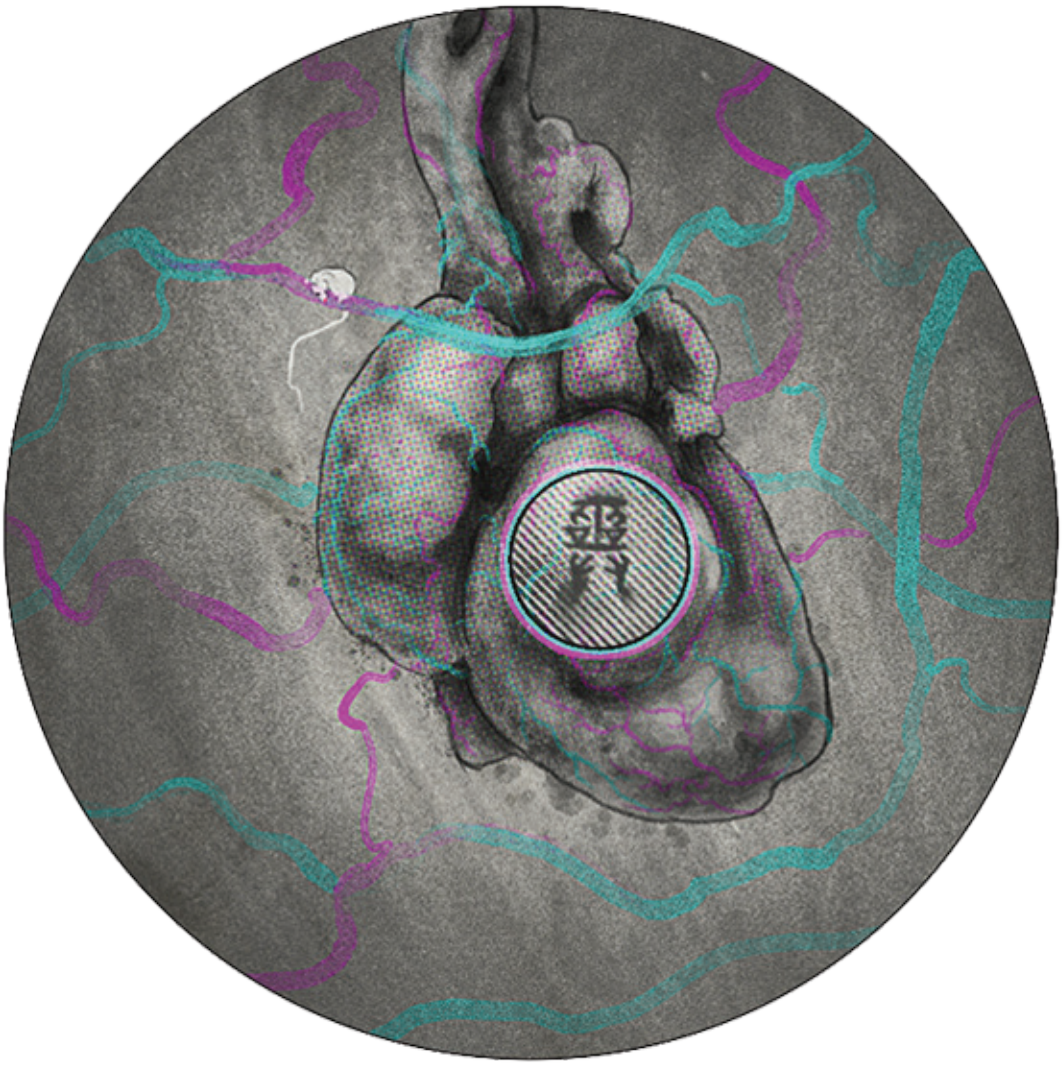
“You must return my child,” said the mouse, and the witch’s hands were webs and her fingers spiders, knuckles egg-sacks, and between them twitched the red-nose from within coils and coils of grey silk.

“Child : a renewal in the miretoil of entropy, a clock raking the sky backwards,” the Witch said, “We accelerate ourselves.”

The mouse's ears twitched, and in the lake she saw her own reflection catch fire and burn to a carbonized husk save for her eyes.



Three voids intersect — a howling vacuum, a lightless nullity, an absence of dimension & space — where the Witch's mouth opens: "Only one may become the receptacle."

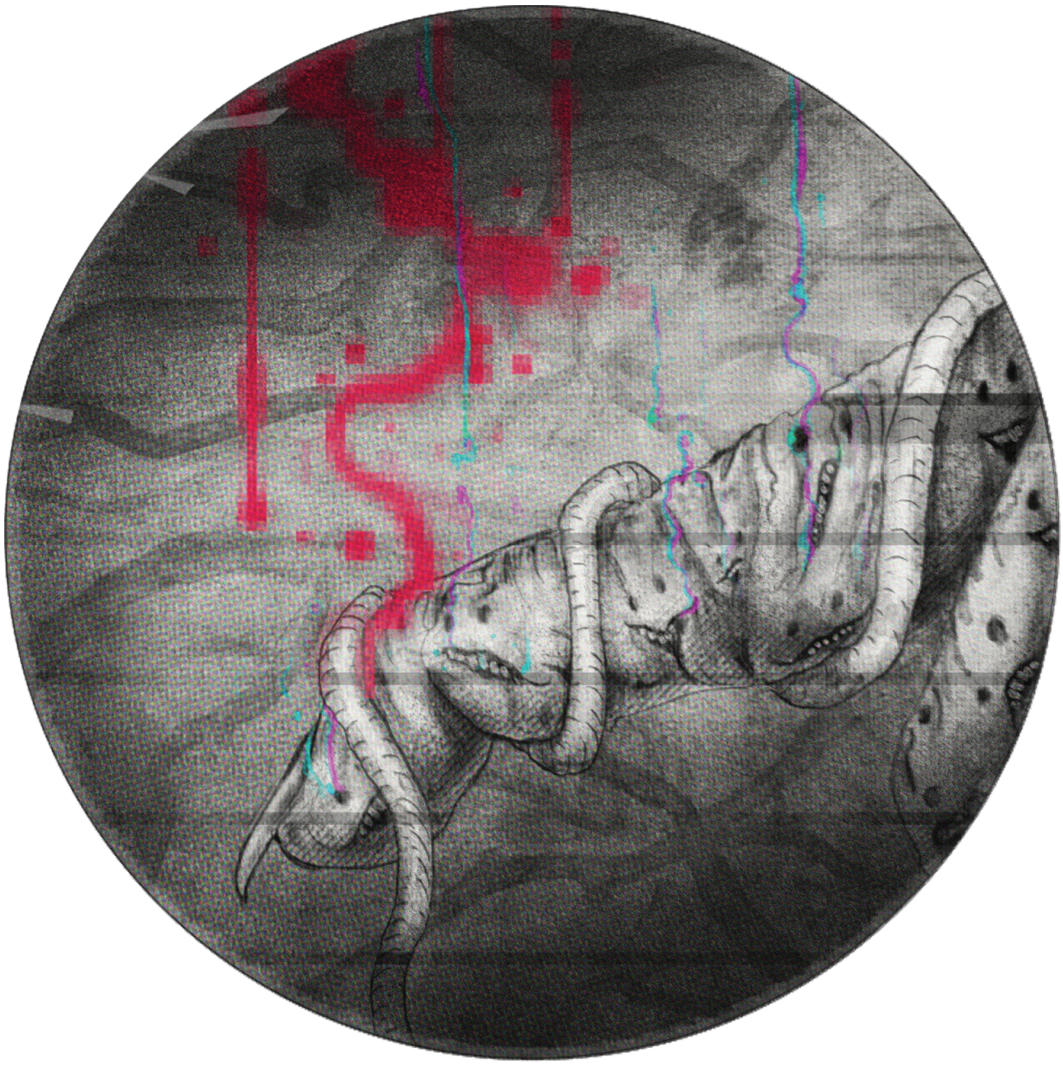


Through time, through energy, through matter, the witch-aeon tendrils stretched with annelid momentum that now gnawed at the mouse's heart.

“If only one, then I,” said the mouse, her courage and desire bolstered by the song of utmost ruin and bleak triumph that burned now in her heart like the machinegrease fire that consumes the lurching automaton.

The red nose appeared again, in the darkness of the Witch's claws, and from that darkness, a sound: "If only one, then I."

“The Eternal Bramble recycles itself upon another vine. Shall it be this one?” said the witch, whose hand had become a part of the child’s tail.



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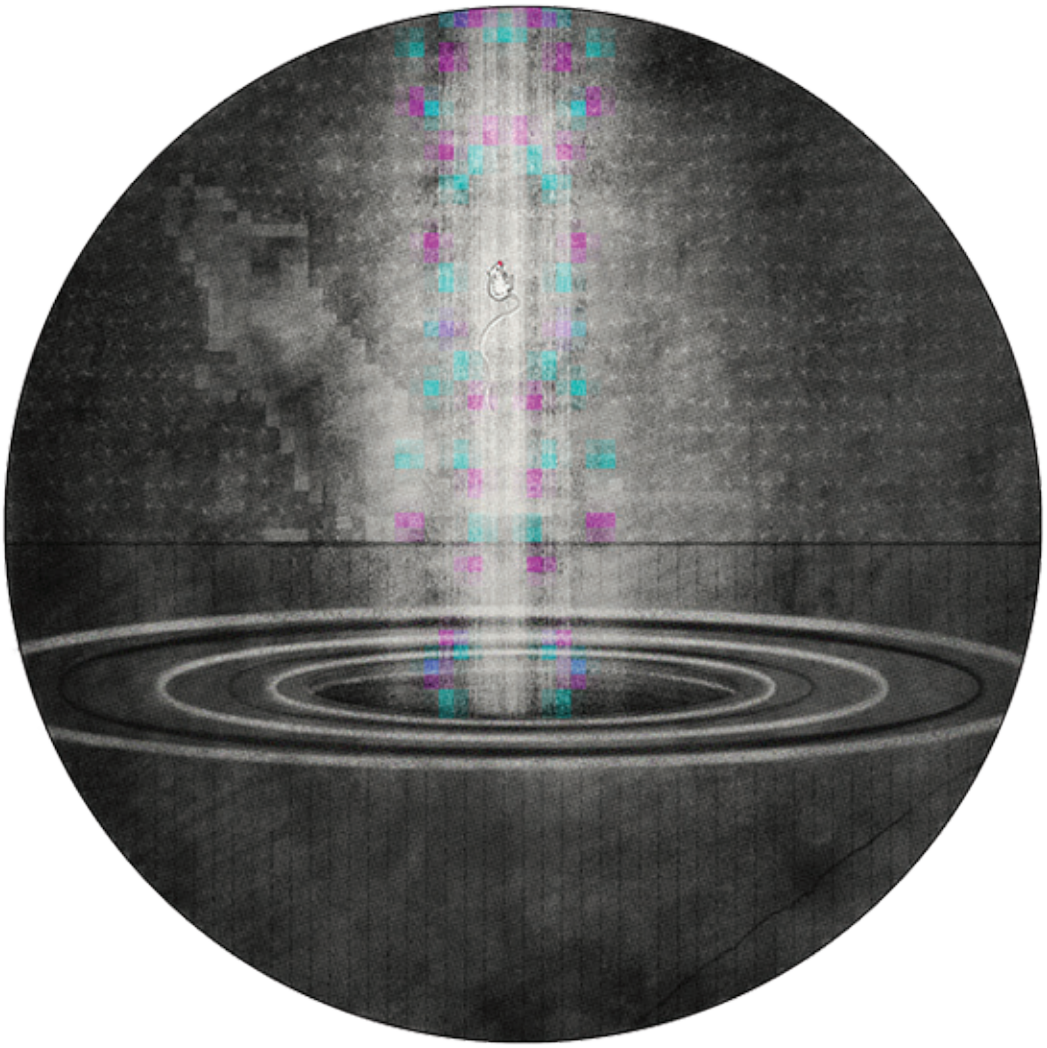
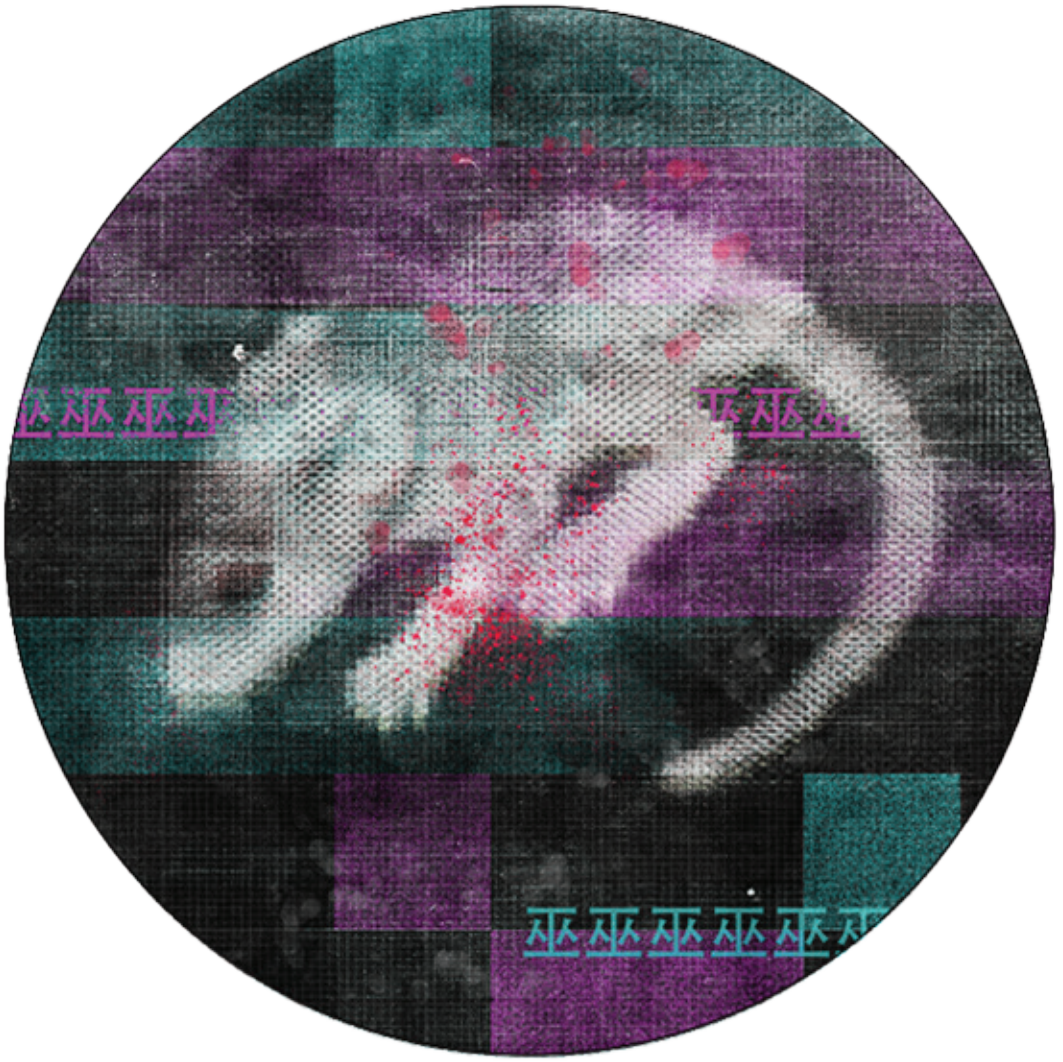


“Tombless, my child,” said the mouse, her voice the sound of slow waterfalls, and of mirrors bending, and of whirlpools digesting whales.



Constant fear constant pain constant fear constant pain constant light constant dark constant light the color of disjoint limbs and melded eyes constant dark the color of the child's last breath upon stained glass.

The Scream of the Pact unites and severs: my eyes become punctures to nebulae where cinders of gods drift on hungry currents, and in Its sinless arms I am made (replete (aberrant (mother) limpet) devoid).

In a house on a hill, mouldering and grim, a mouse and her child held each other close.

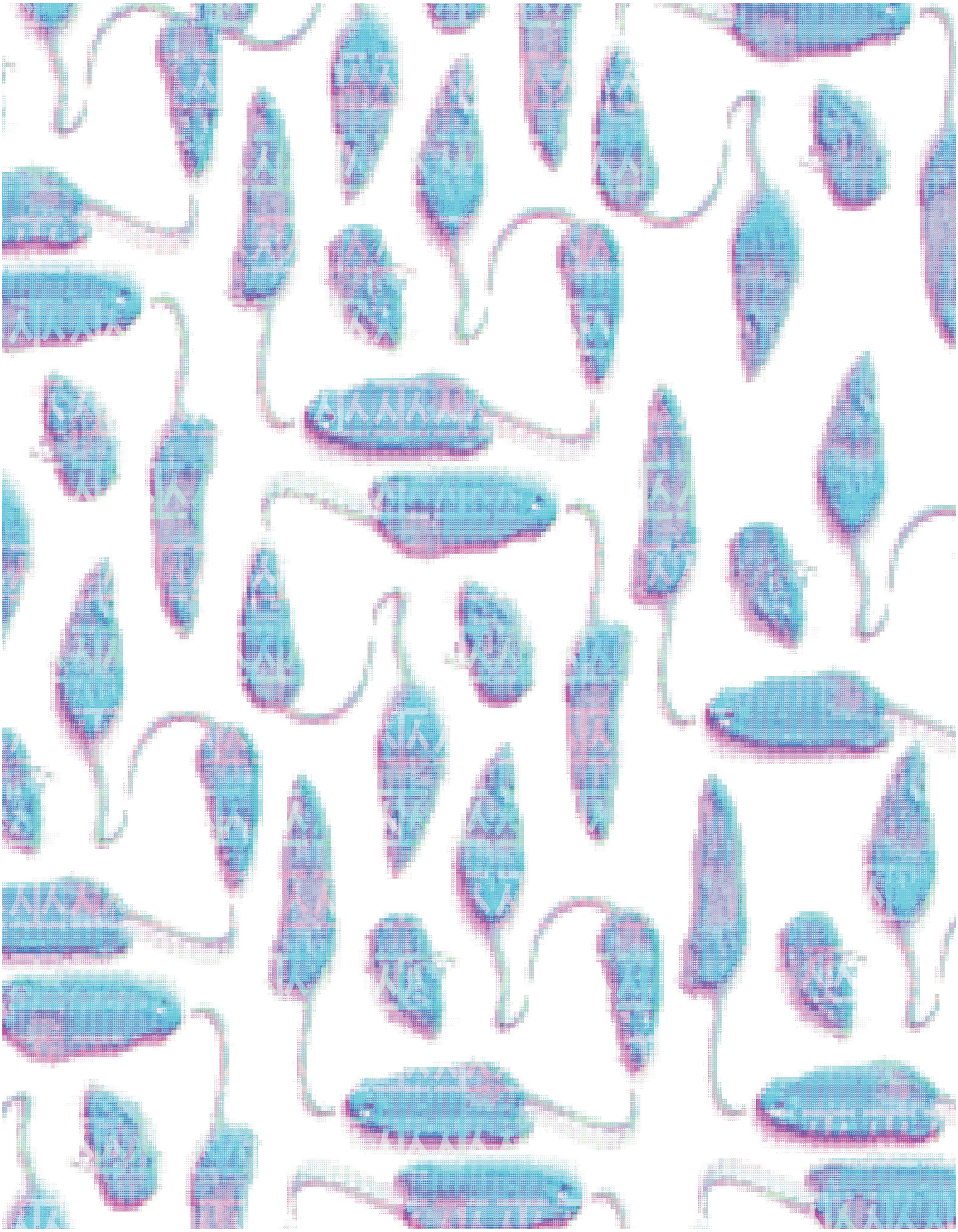
In the dusty sunlight, the mouse's eyes were black; in the mist-streaked windowpanes, they were dull red; when her child looked into them with expectation and awe, they were pink and blue.

PETRICHOR

created by marcelo gallegos and cameron higby-naquin in the spring of 2016

illustrated, designed, and hand-bound by marcelo gallegos (niceghost.org)

written by cameron higby-naquin (chigby.org)

this work can be found on the web at niceghost.org/petrichor

no animals were harmed in the creation of petrichor