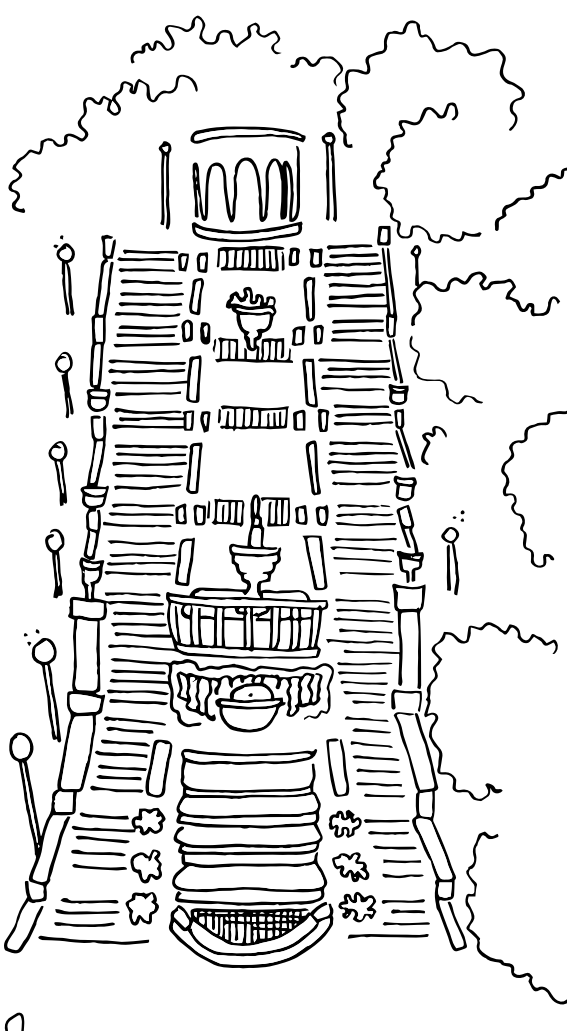
# In Valea Morilor

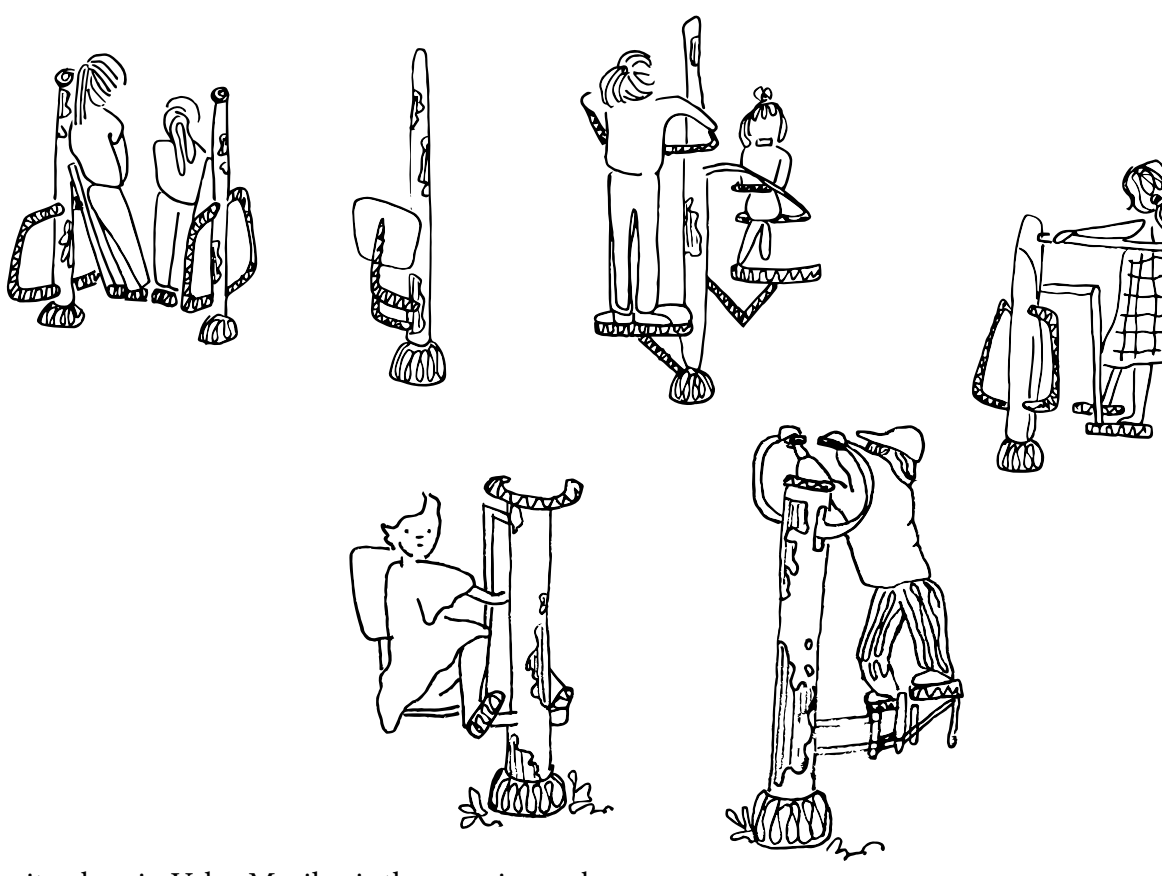
Claire Gallagher



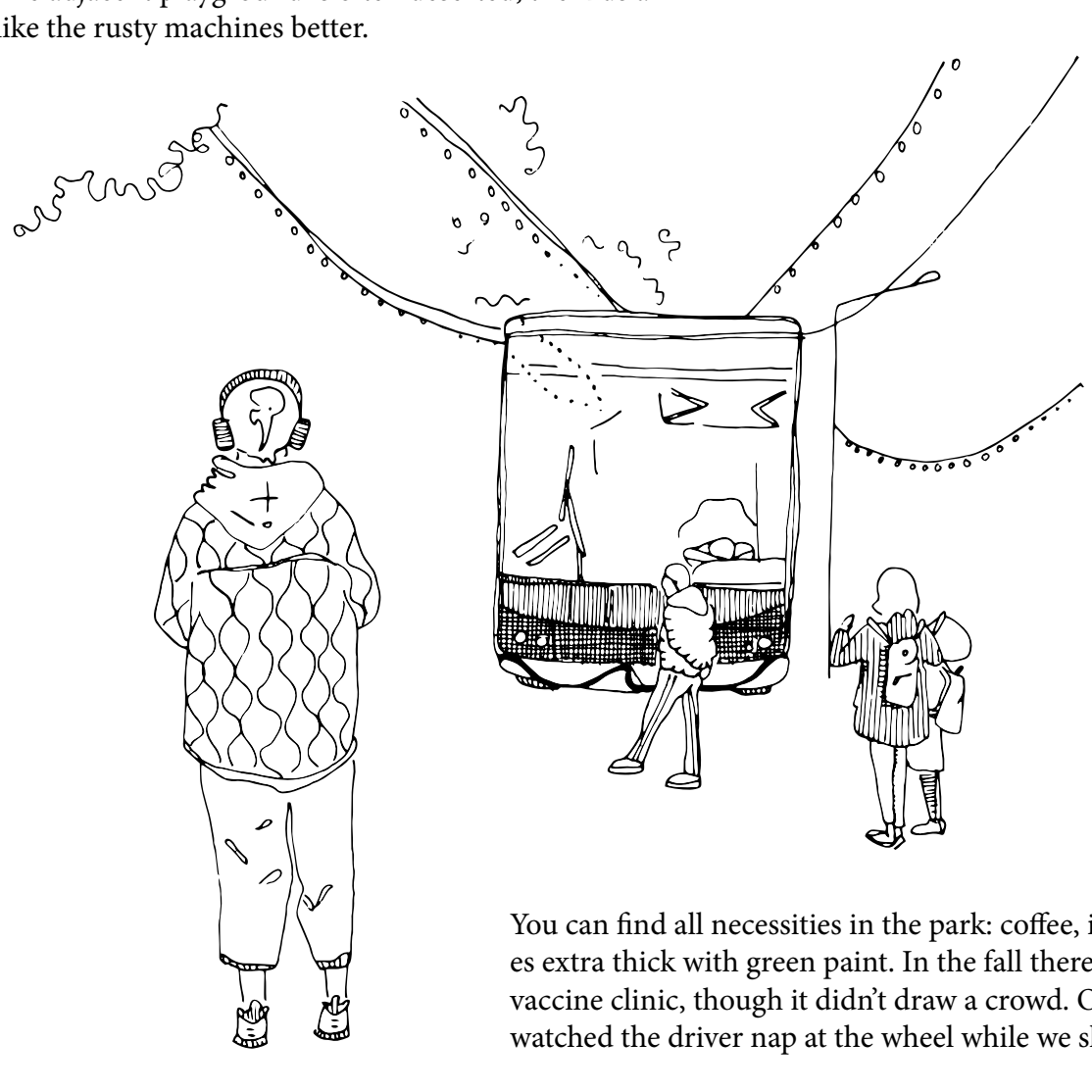
I want to tell you about Valea Morilor.

Originally the Central Park of Culture and Leisure of the Leninist Komsomol, the park was built by Brezhnev in the early 1950's. There is a video on TikTok of hundreds of workers digging the lake out whole while he looks on in a three piece suit.

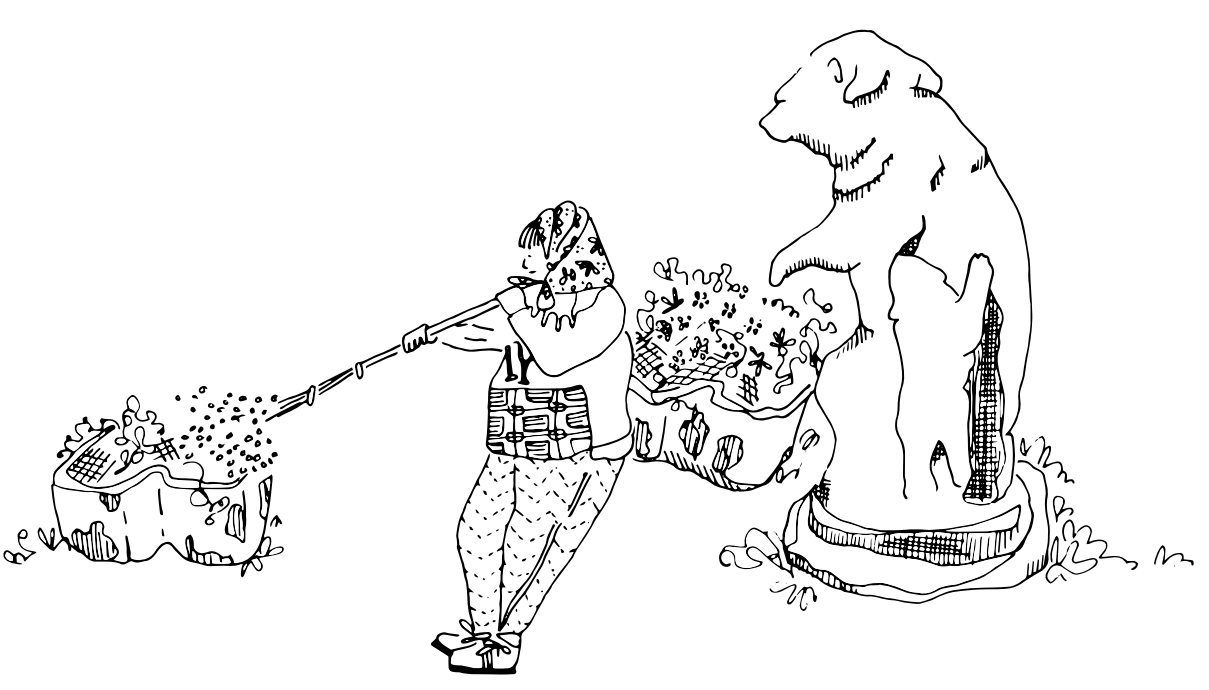
When we first moved to Chișinău, I lived in an apartment above the park and walked across the width of it to take my son, Omid to school. Now I live in a house on the opposite side, further from the waterfall staircase, but closer to the Teatrul Verde and the coffee kiosks.



Our favorite place in Valea Morilor is the exercise park. The adjacent playground is often deserted; the kids all like the rusty machines better.



You can find all necessities in the park: coffee, ice cream, benches extra thick with green paint. In the fall there was a mobile vaccine clinic, though it didn't draw a crowd. Omid and I watched the driver nap at the wheel while we shared a plăcintă.



Valea Morilor is kept pristine by a large staff of groundskeepers. They trim and prune and sweep with brooms made from cuttings.




In October, the baby and I followed two girls and their grandmother through the hillside trails as they made crowns from dry leaves. It reminded me of the corn husk dolls my grandmother taught me to make.





By December, the only green left was on the willow trees covering the lake paths. The trunks were black and velvet with snow melt.

I let the baby eat from the branches.

Now Ukranian voices have arrived with signs of spring. I wonder if they are as glad to find Valea Morilor as we were when we were new and far from home.