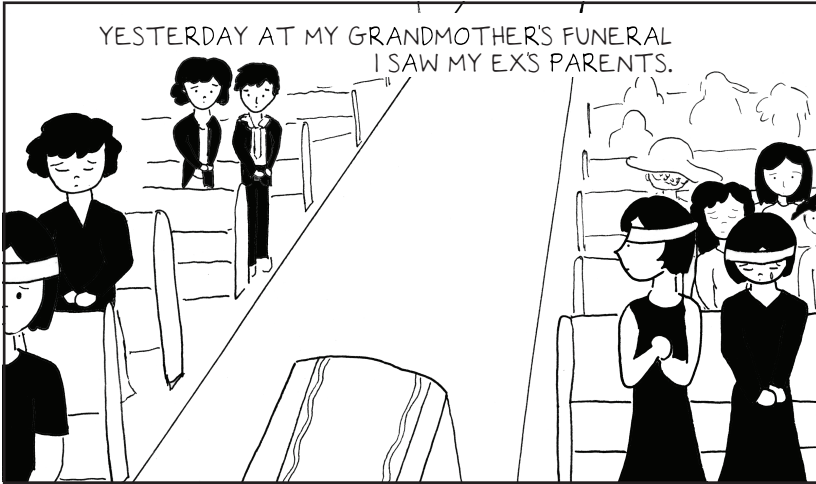


ALL THE FORGETTING

BY
VYVY WONDER

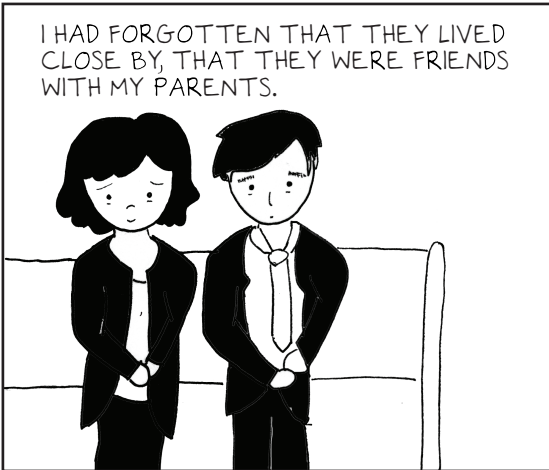
YESTERDAY AT MY GRANDMOTHER'S FUNERAL
I SAW MY EXS PARENTS.



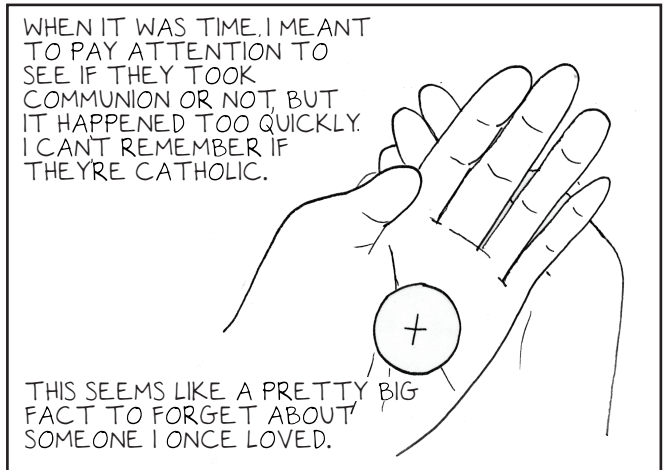
I WAS ALREADY WEEPING.
SEEING THEM, MY SORROW
BURROWED EVEN DEEPER.



I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT THEY LIVED
CLOSE BY, THAT THEY WERE FRIENDS
WITH MY PARENTS.



WHEN IT WAS TIME, I MEANT
TO PAY ATTENTION TO
SEE IF THEY TOOK
COMMUNION OR NOT, BUT
IT HAPPENED TOO QUICKLY.
I CAN'T REMEMBER IF
THEY'RE CATHOLIC.

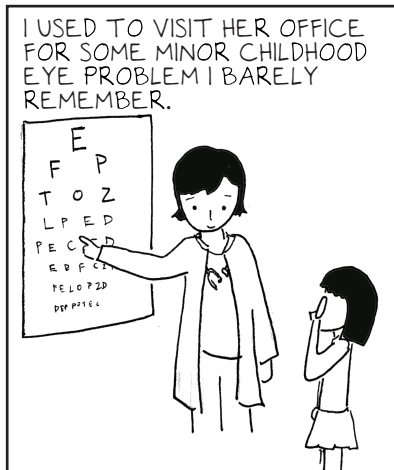


THIS SEEMS LIKE A PRETTY BIG
FACT TO FORGET ABOUT
SOMEONE I ONCE LOVED.

I SAW DR. NGOC, ONE OF MY
PARENTS' OLDEST FRIENDS IN
SAN JOSE.



I USED TO VISIT HER OFFICE
FOR SOME MINOR CHILDHOOD
EYE PROBLEM I BARELY
REMEMBER.



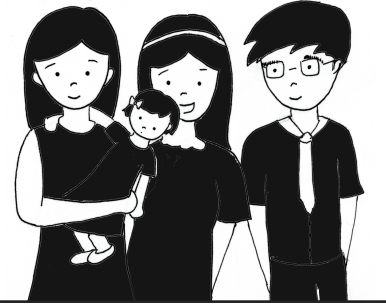
E
F P
T O Z
L P E D
P E C F D
E D F C Z P
P E L O P Z D
D E F P O T E C

I USED TO CALL HER
DR. EYEBALL AND I LOVED HER.
I HAD FORGOTTEN ABOUT HER.



E
F P
T O Z
L P E D
P E C F D
E D F C Z P
P E L O P Z D
D E F P O T E C

I SAW MỸ, HOA, AND NAM THREE OF THE SIX SIBLINGS I WAS RAISED ALONGSIDE, UNDER THE WATCHFUL EYE OF THEIR GRANDMOTHER, WHOM WE CALLED, SIMPLY, BÀ.



BÀ WAS A TINY AND FIERCE WOMAN WHO LIVED TO OVER 100 YEARS OLD AND SPENT HER LIFE RAISING CHILDREN—FIRST AS A NANNY TO MY MOM'S GENERATION, THEN TO MINE, ALONGSIDE HER OWN KIDS AND GRANDKIDS.



I HADN'T SEEN NAM OR HOA IN DECADES.

THERE'S A STORY IN MY FAMILY ABOUT BÀ'S SON JUMPING INTO THE OCEAN TO RESCUE MY UNCLE, THEN FOUR YEARS OLD, AS THEY ALL FLED VIETNAM BY BOAT AT THE END OF THE WAR.



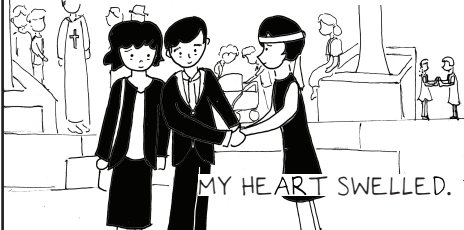
I GUESS I HAD FORGOTTEN THAT STORY, TOO, UNTIL I SAW HIM AND REMEMBERED.



HOW COULD I HAVE FORGOTTEN SO MUCH?

AFTER THE SERVICE I SOUGHT OUT MY EX'S PARENTS. THEY LOOKED GOOD, WHICH IS TO SAY THEY LOOKED THE SAME.

THEIR SECOND DAUGHTER, MY EX'S YOUNGER SISTER, WAS EXPECTING HER SECOND CHILD.



MY HEART SWELLED.

I DON'T KNOW IF THEY EVER KNEW ABOUT OUR RELATIONSHIP. IT WAS QUEER AND TOOK ON A SECRECY THAT ASSURED ITS DOOM.

I ASSUME THEY KNEW ON SOME LEVEL.

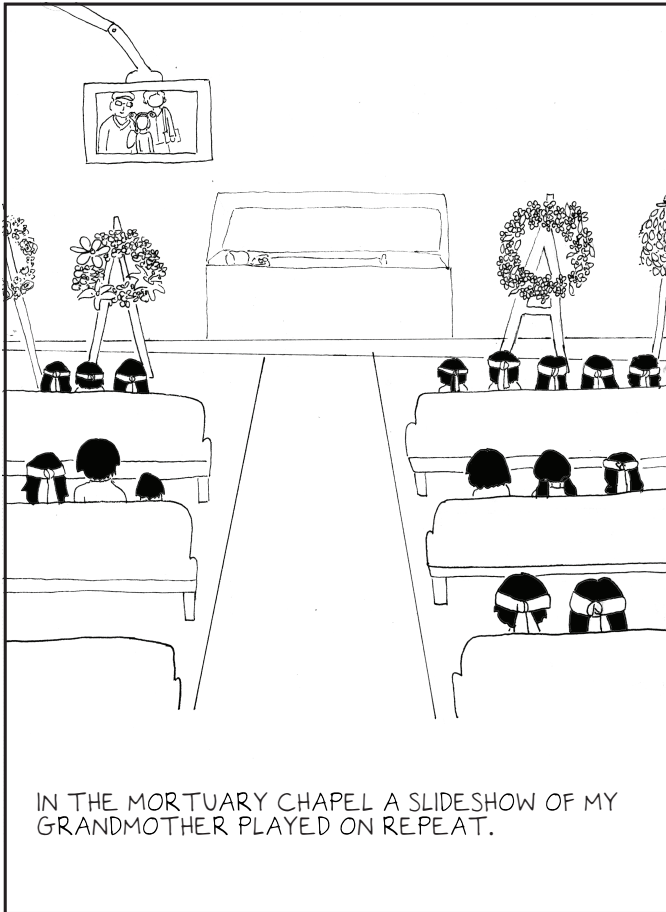


AS I HUGGED THEM GOODBYE THERE WAS SO MUCH I DIDN'T SAY.

THANK YOU FOR CARING ABOUT MY FAMILY.



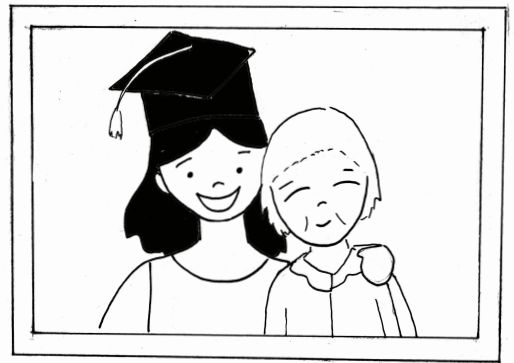
I'M SORRY FOR EVERYTHING. I HOPE SHE'S HAPPY.



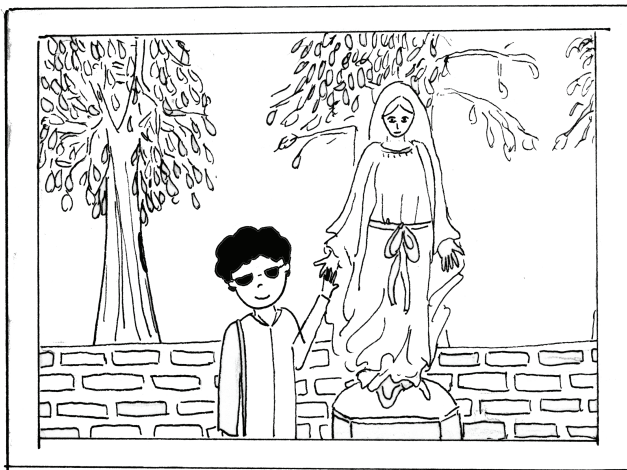
IN THE MORTUARY CHAPEL A SLIDESHOW OF MY GRANDMOTHER PLAYED ON REPEAT.



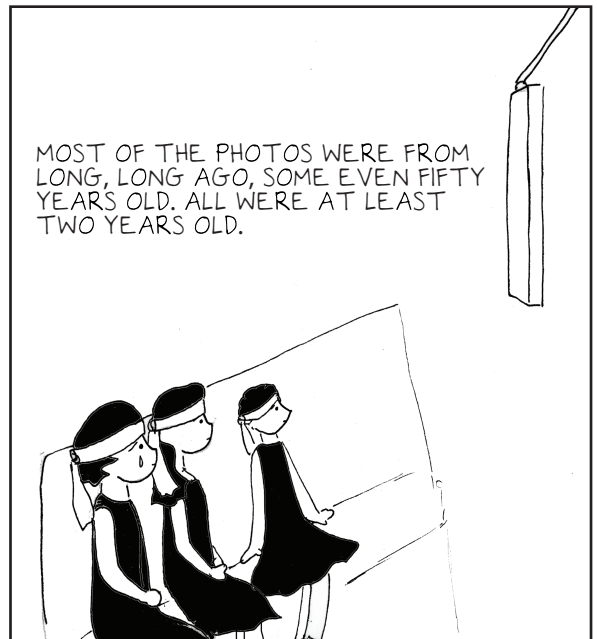
SO MANY BIRTHDAY CAKES (WHICH MY GRAMPA LET BE HALF-BIRTHDAY CAKES FOR MY LITTLE SISTER).



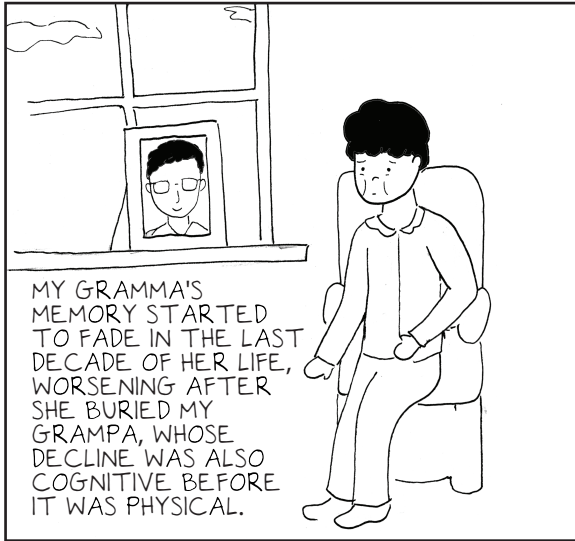
SO MANY GRADUATIONS



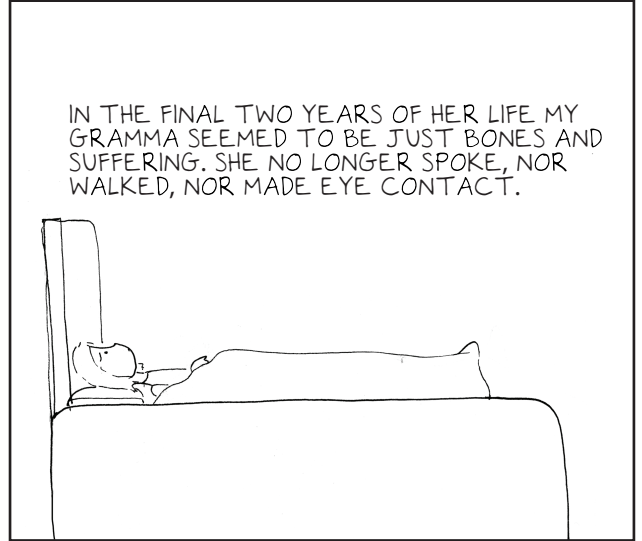
SO MANY PORTRAITS WITH THE VIRGIN MARY, MY GRAMMA'S LIFELONG COMPANION.



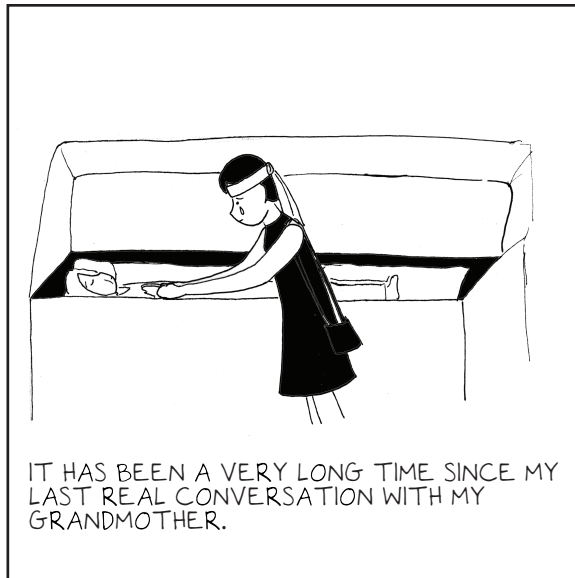
MOST OF THE PHOTOS WERE FROM LONG, LONG AGO, SOME EVEN FIFTY YEARS OLD. ALL WERE AT LEAST TWO YEARS OLD.



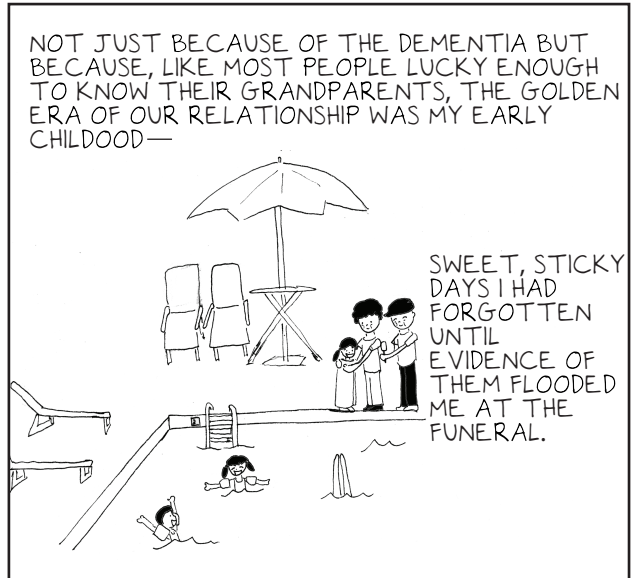
MY GRAMMA'S MEMORY STARTED TO FADE IN THE LAST DECADE OF HER LIFE, WORSENING AFTER SHE BURIED MY GRAMPA, WHOSE DECLINE WAS ALSO COGNITIVE BEFORE IT WAS PHYSICAL.



IN THE FINAL TWO YEARS OF HER LIFE MY GRAMMA SEEMED TO BE JUST BONES AND SUFFERING. SHE NO LONGER SPOKE, NOR WALKED, NOR MADE EYE CONTACT.



IT HAS BEEN A VERY LONG TIME SINCE MY LAST REAL CONVERSATION WITH MY GRANDMOTHER.



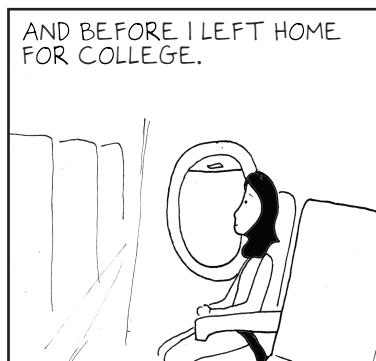
NOT JUST BECAUSE OF THE DEMENTIA BUT BECAUSE, LIKE MOST PEOPLE LUCKY ENOUGH TO KNOW THEIR GRANDPARENTS, THE GOLDEN ERA OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WAS MY EARLY CHILDHOOD—

SWEET, STICKY DAYS I HAD FORGOTTEN UNTIL EVIDENCE OF THEM FLOODED ME AT THE FUNERAL.

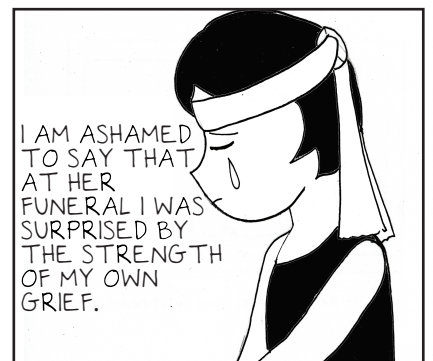


DAYS BEFORE THE SELF ABSORPTION OF ADOLESCENCE

A/S/L?

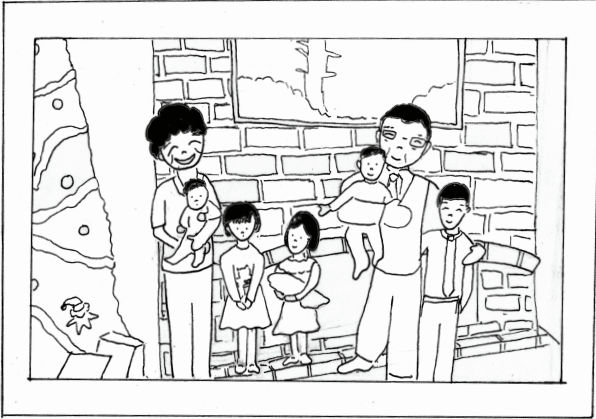


AND BEFORE I LEFT HOME FOR COLLEGE.

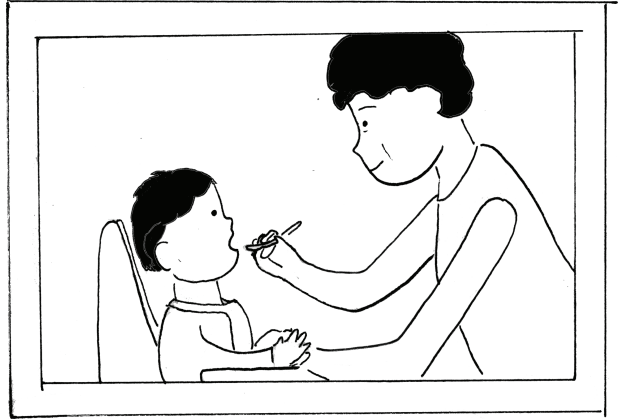


I AM ASHAMED TO SAY THAT AT HER FUNERAL I WAS SURPRISED BY THE STRENGTH OF MY OWN GRIEF.

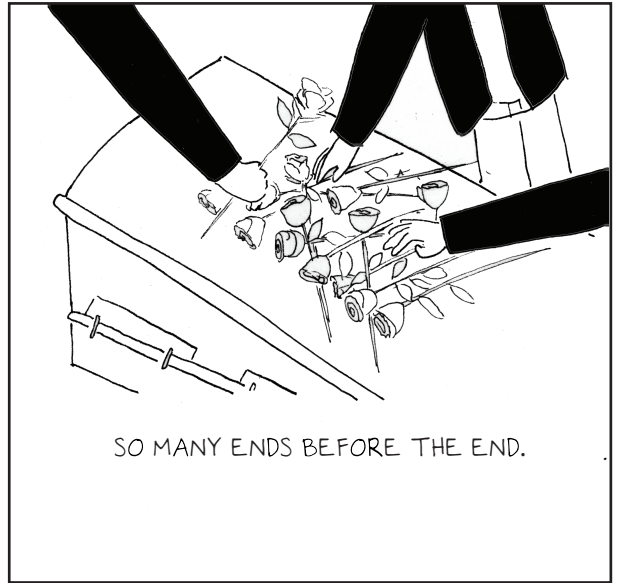
I HAD FORGOTTEN HOW I HAD LOVED HER.

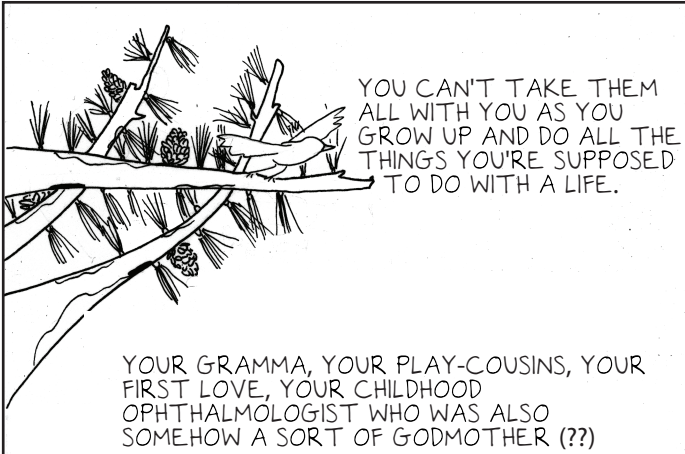


I HAD FORGOTTEN HOW SHE HAD LOVED ME.



HOW CAN THERE BE SO MUCH FORGETTING
IN A LIFE?





YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM ALL WITH YOU AS YOU GROW UP AND DO ALL THE THINGS YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO DO WITH A LIFE.

YOUR GRAMMA, YOUR PLAY-COUSINS, YOUR FIRST LOVE, YOUR CHILDHOOD OPHTHALMOLOGIST WHO WAS ALSO SOMEHOW A SORT OF GODMOTHER (??)



SO MANY PEOPLE MAKE YOU, BUT YOU CAN'T TAKE THEM WITH YOU, YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO.



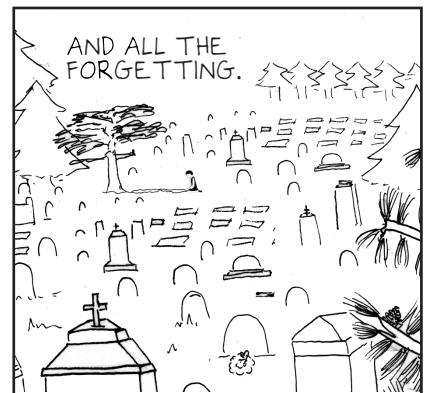
IT'S NOT WRONG, IT'S NO ONE'S FAULT, IT IS ONLY THE CIRCLE OF LIFE, THE CONDITION OF BEING ALIVE.



AND STILL - I DON'T KNOW HOW ANY OF US BEAR IT, THE MARCHING-ON OF TIME.



ALL THE MEMORIES



AND ALL THE FORGETTING.