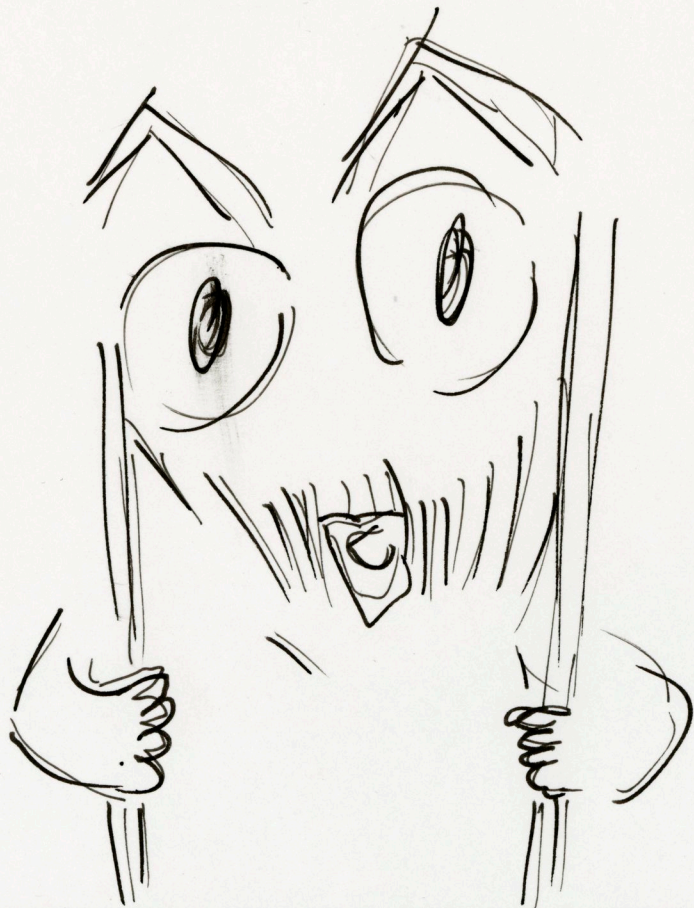


To Liberate

a F.L.F.



Cast (in order of appearance)

Zippy Lady Zeus (painting)

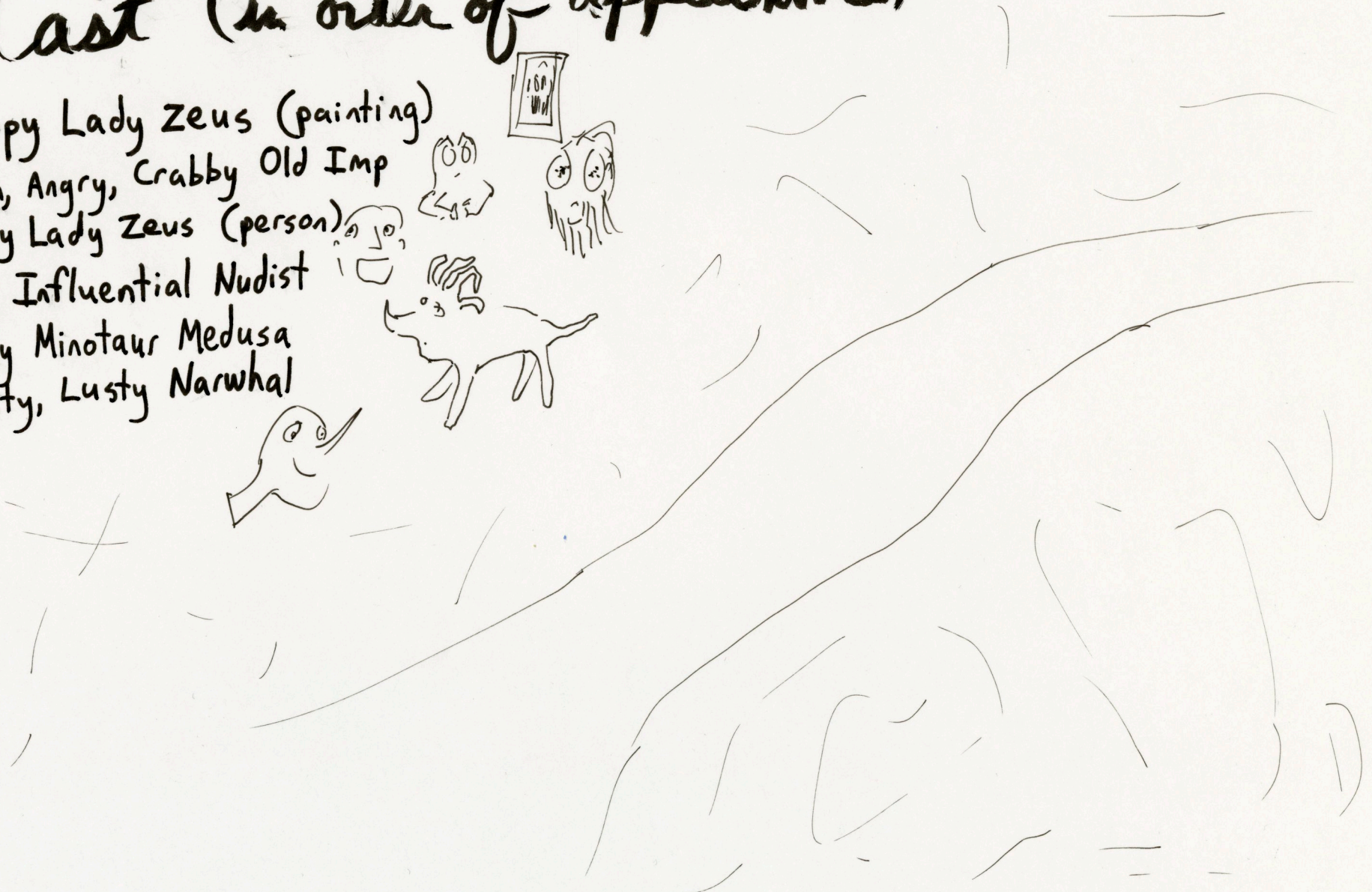
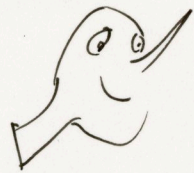
Mean, Angry, Crabby Old Imp

Zippy Lady Zeus (person)

Most Influential Nudist

Manly Minotaur

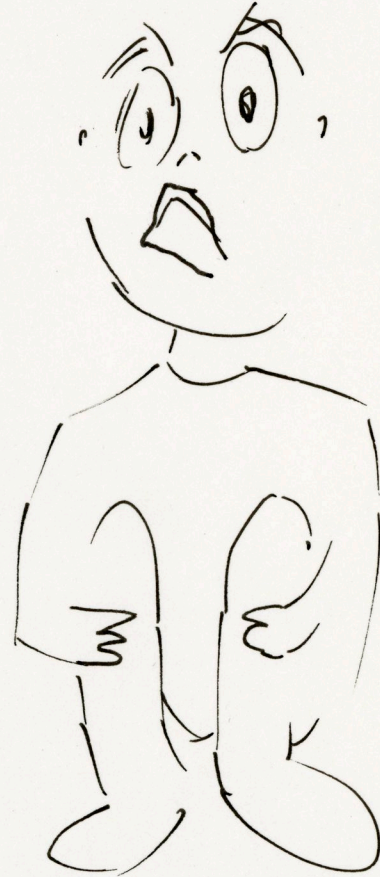
Medusa
Trusty, Lusty Narwhal



In a traveling art exhibit there was a Z.L.Z., which for those who take a leisurely approach to conversation stands for Zippy Lady Zeus. Rather, there was a painting of a Z.L.Z. In impressionistic swaths it depicted an angry female face with a resplendent beard. Beady eyes betrayed a scheming mind, a calculating machine with designs for death widespread and repugnance.



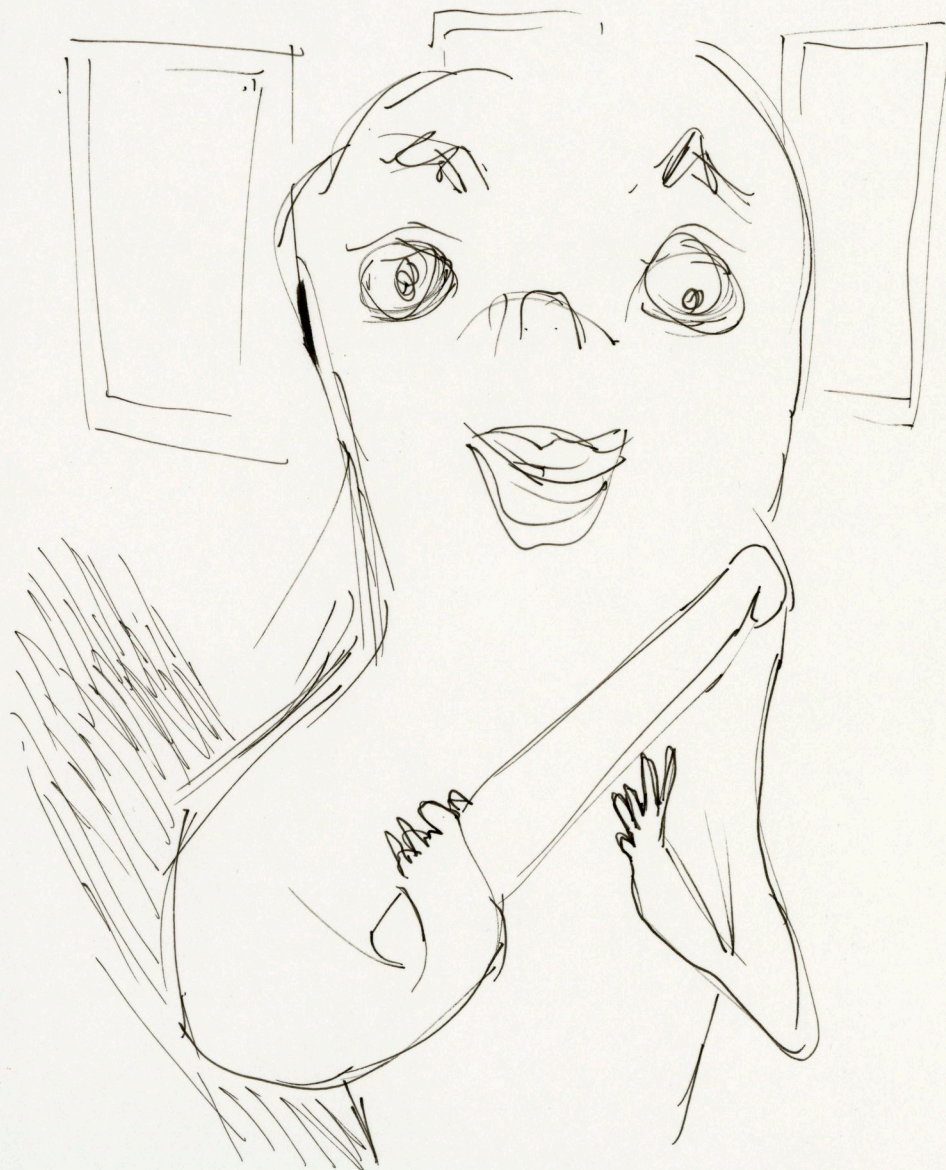
No art exhibit is complete without the hard arm of the law, or at least the insinuation of legal recourse should the institution have its way with wrong doers. These were not agents of the government; nay, these were private citizens enforcing the social contract one enters into tacitly upon patronage of a museum. In the case of the traveling art exhibit, as with its more stationary counterparts, this role was filled by a security guard.



The security guard in question was called the M.A.C.O.I. The Mean, Angry, Crabby, Old Imp, as he was known to any patron reading his name tag, had a nasty temper. Perhaps it was by nature; perhaps this disposition was latent ever since his parents named him such.



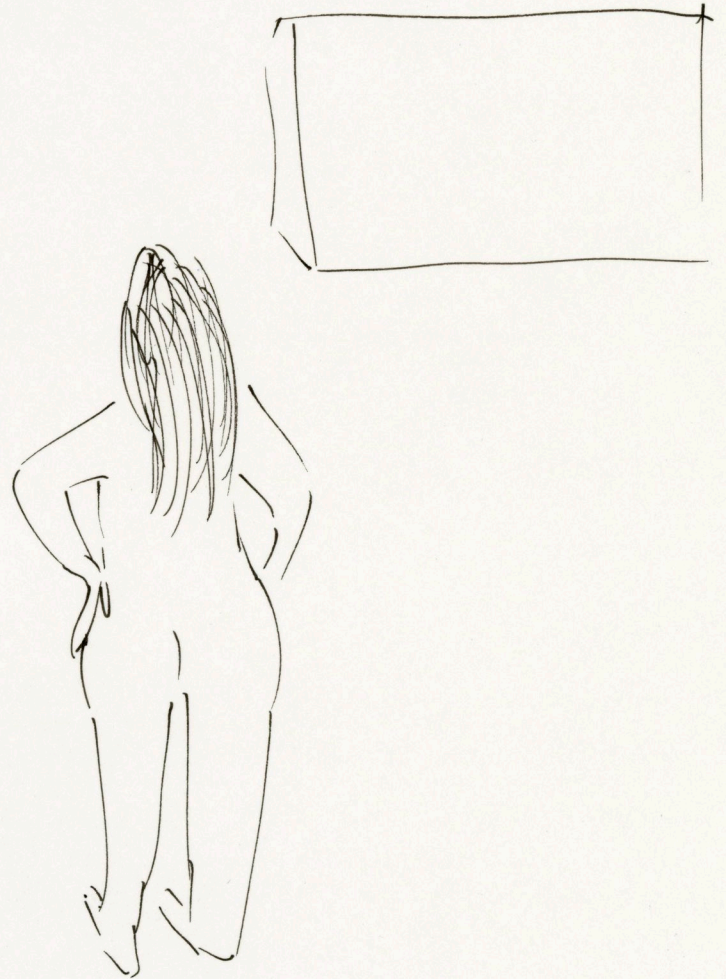
It was a great comfort to the museum's curator that the security guard was the embodiment of quiet rage, two degrees from becoming unhinged at any moment. Only the Z.L.Z. could match the M.A.C.O.I. in bloody, murderous potential.



Of course, a painting is an artist's rendering of her subject and may bear no resemblance to it. Word got to the Zippy Lady Zeus that a painting of her had become the favorite of the cultural intelligentsia. This was a shock to the Z.L.Z. because she was too shy to sit for an artist, let alone be photographed or even be seen by anybody other than her closest friends.



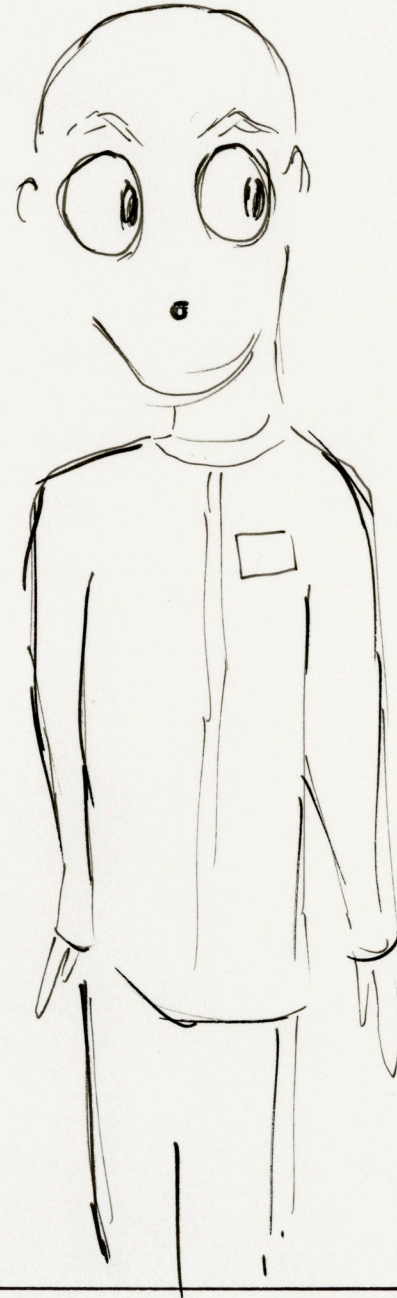
The Z.L.Z. lived in a nudist colony out in the country. As fate would have it, the T.A.E. (traveling art exhibit) would find its next home just down the road from the entrance to the nudist colony.



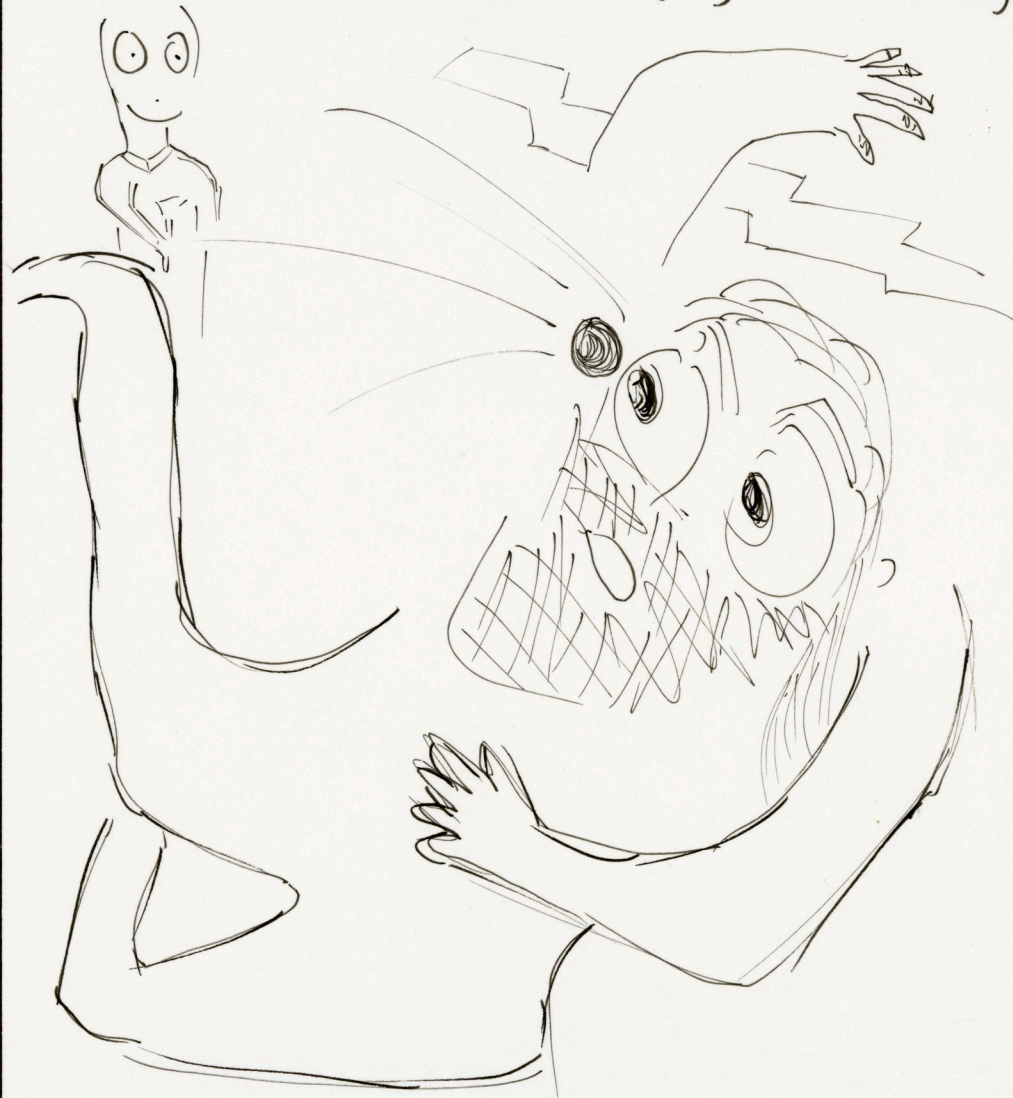
Wondering what the uproar was, on an afternoon during which the nudists were practicing their annual hibernation, Zippy Lady Zeus went to see the traveling art exhibit. A cursory glance at each of the other paintings, then she walked up to the painting she had heard so much about. Perfect execution, she noted in spite of her desire to dismiss the painting outright. It was as dull as it was realistic, a tiresome exercise in technical proficiency. But who was she to judge the merits of a work of art that coincidentally shared her name and everything else about her?



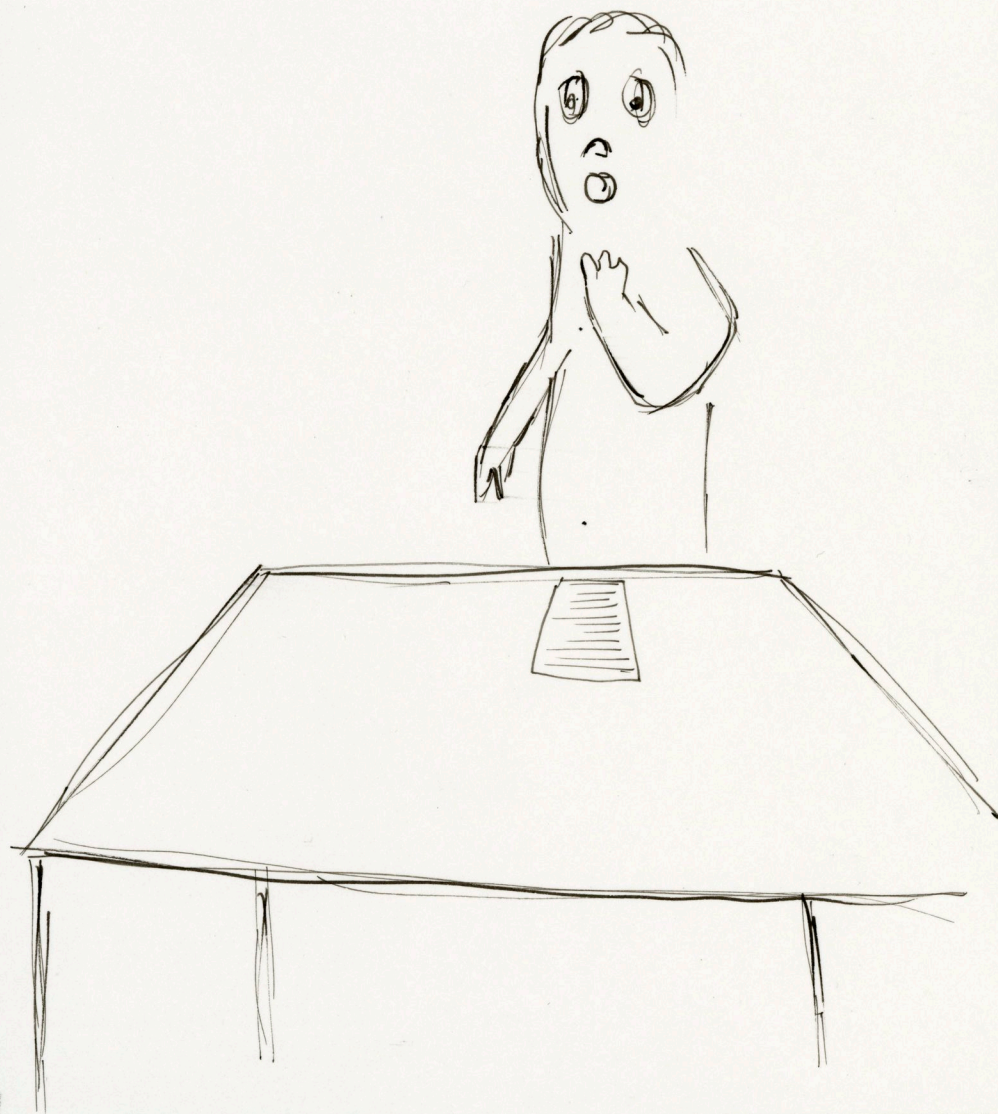
The Z.L.Z. moved toward the egress and the MACUZ eyed her with suspicion.



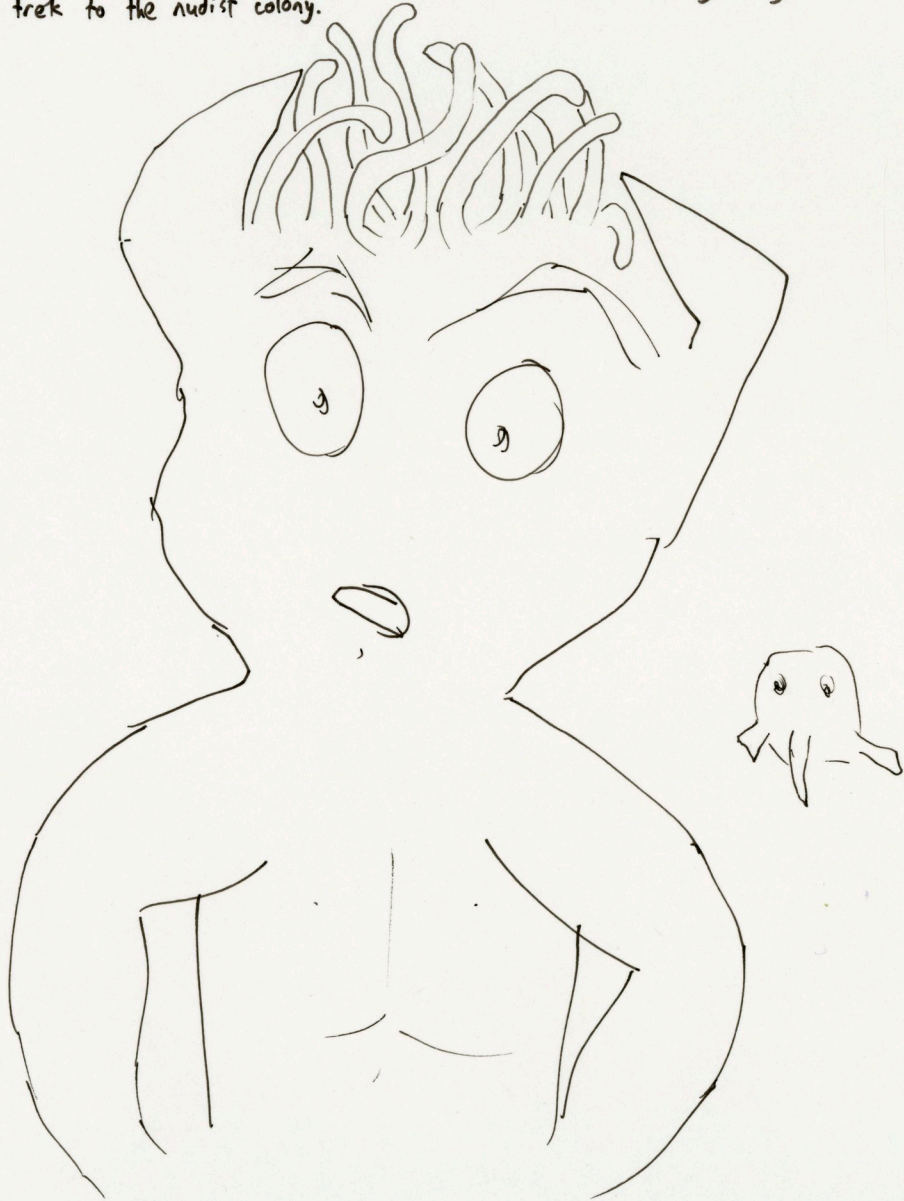
When she exited the exhibit and left the premises, the M.A.C.O.I. raced outside with a slingshot. He thought it was the painting that had just escaped. Zippy Lady Zeus got scared and shot lightning at the M.A.C.O.I. It was too late though. The slingshot had been double-loaded. The first projectile, a rock, deflected the Z.L.Z.'s lightning, and the second projectile, a marble, banged her in the head. She lost consciousness, a common occurrence after she unleashed a bolt of lightning, marbles notwithstanding.



Word got to the elders at the elders ~~at the~~ nudist colony that the Z.L.Z. had been captured. "We must save her!" said the M.I.N. (Most Influential Nudist). So they wrote a letter to the M.M.M., who was the Manly Minotaur Medusa, renowned the world over for his craftiness and unimpeachable track record with rescue missions.



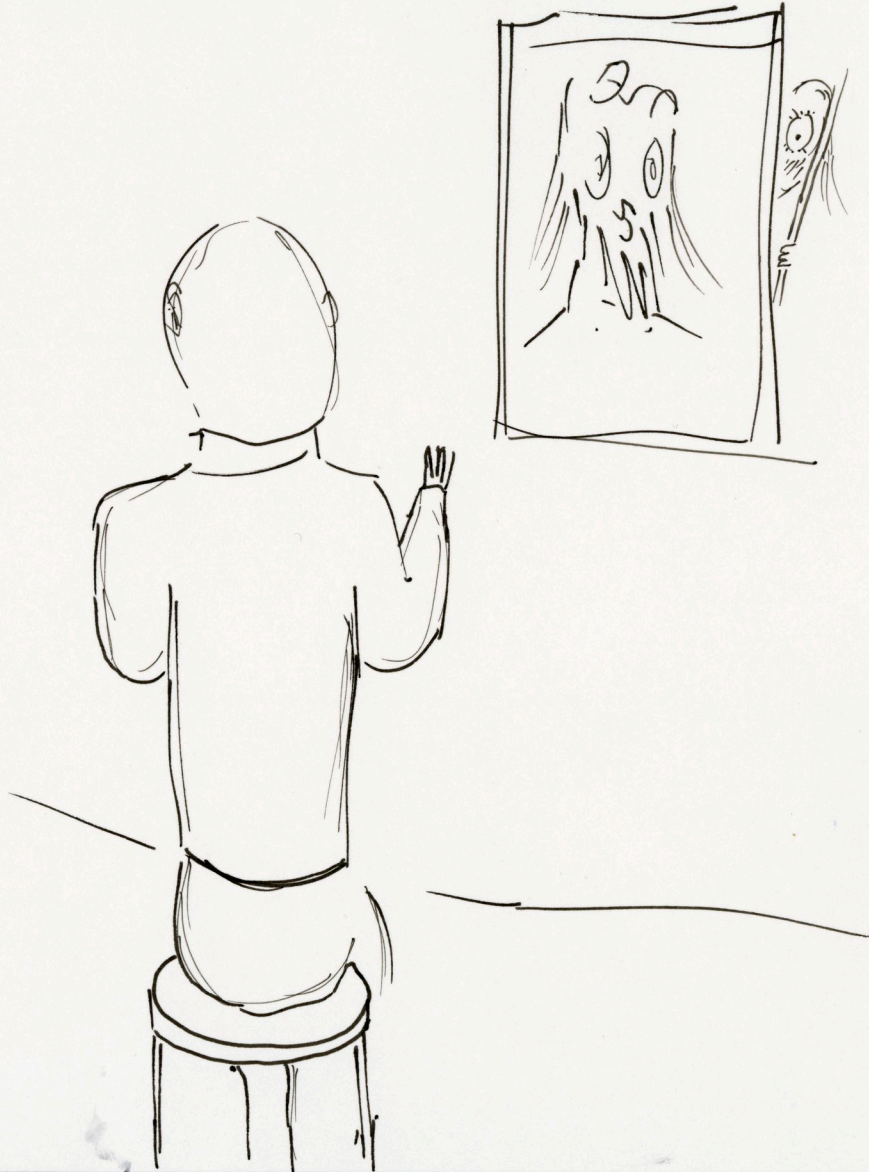
M.M.M. was a fearsome beast, half bull, half who knows what, with hair made of snakes. Anyone he looked at turned into a drippy sack of bones, then hardened into stone. Following negotiations over payment, the M.M.M. and his trusty, lusty narwhal made the trek to the nudist colony.



M.I.N. had told M.M.M. about the Z.L.Z. and the operation sounded simple. But M.I.N. left out the part about the M.A.C.O.I., who was the only obstacle to getting the Z.L.Z. back to safety.

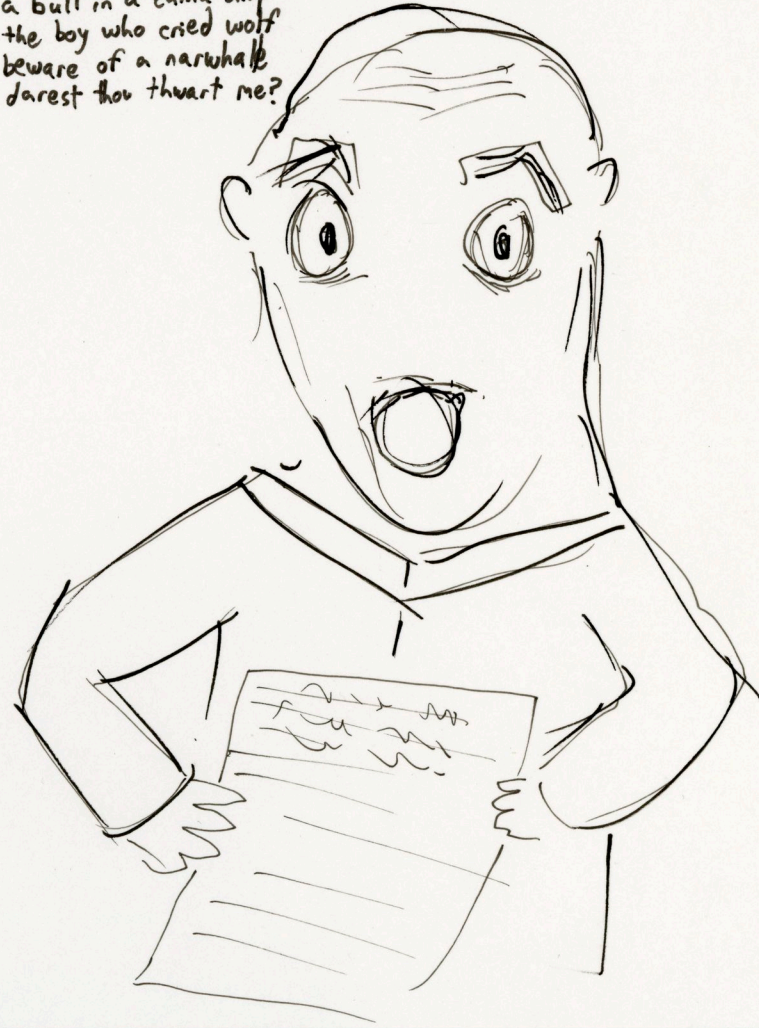


By this time the exhibit had left the countryside and set up in the county seat, halfway between the nudist colony and the capital; not far for a seasoned traveler by any stretch. Covetously the M.A.C.O.I. admired the greatest work in the art collection: that curious painting of the Z.L.Z., which obscured the Z.L.Z. in the flesh, imprisoned behind it.



A routine reconnaissance mission had brought the adversary to the M.M.M.'s attention; he had written a letter to the M.A.C.O.I. which the latter read presently: "Dear Sir, I am the Manly Minotaur Medusa. If I look at you you will turn to drippy bones then harden to a stone. Kindly release my charge the Z.L.Z. and you will be free to live your life as an animate object." on the back of the letter was a poem:

In like a lion
out like a lamb
a wolf in sheep's clothing
mouse to a man
a bull in a china shop
the boy who cried wolf
beware of a narwhale
darest thou thwart me?



The M.A.C.O.I. was flabbergasted upon reading the note. But it was early yet, museum hours had not begun. The M.A.C.O.I. was as cunning as he was crabby and told the Z.L.Z. that a minotaur was soon to arrive at the T.A.E. and that she must zap him with lightning, otherwise this M.M.M. would crush her, were he to deliver on his (nonexistent) threat.



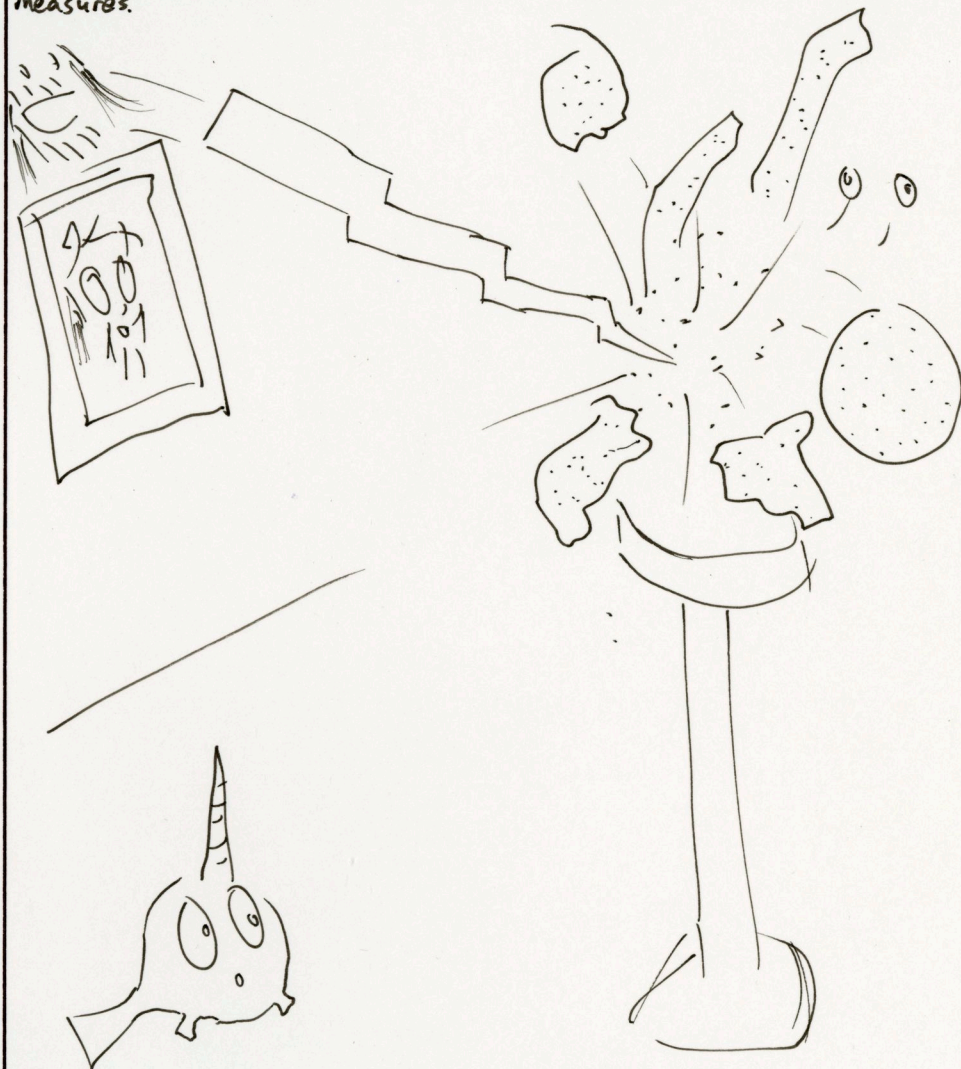
M.M.M. knew that his vision would turn the Z.L.Z. to bones so he put his blindfold on. This was simple common sense, as without his snaky gaze he could not destroy anyone. He was a pacifist, after all.



Manly Minotaur Medusa was a minotaur in an art exhibit. The M.A.C.O.I. hid behind an oversize sculpture of a sphinx. What a sight to behold - a minotaur wearing a blindfold wrapped around snaky hair as a M.A.C.O.I. crouched, shivering.



Per the rescue plan, if Z.L.Z. were tricked into taking an offensive stance, the narwhal was to draw lightning fire using expert methods of distraction. The Z.L.Z. zapped lightning toward the M.M.M. It bounced off a bust of Sisyphus. The bust crumbled to crumbs and was busted! The M.A.C.O.I. knew how livid the museum curator would be and decided he needed to consider more drastic measures.



Now it was the trusty, lusty narwhal's turn to act: it flopped moistly over to the M.A.C.O.I., who was presently blocking the exhibit's sole escape route, and began dry-humping his leg. A spiky narwhal tooth punctured the Mean, Angry, Crabby Old Imp's kneecap, revealing the fish's true intentions amidst the lustiness. This left the villain reeling, plotting his next move through throbbing pain.



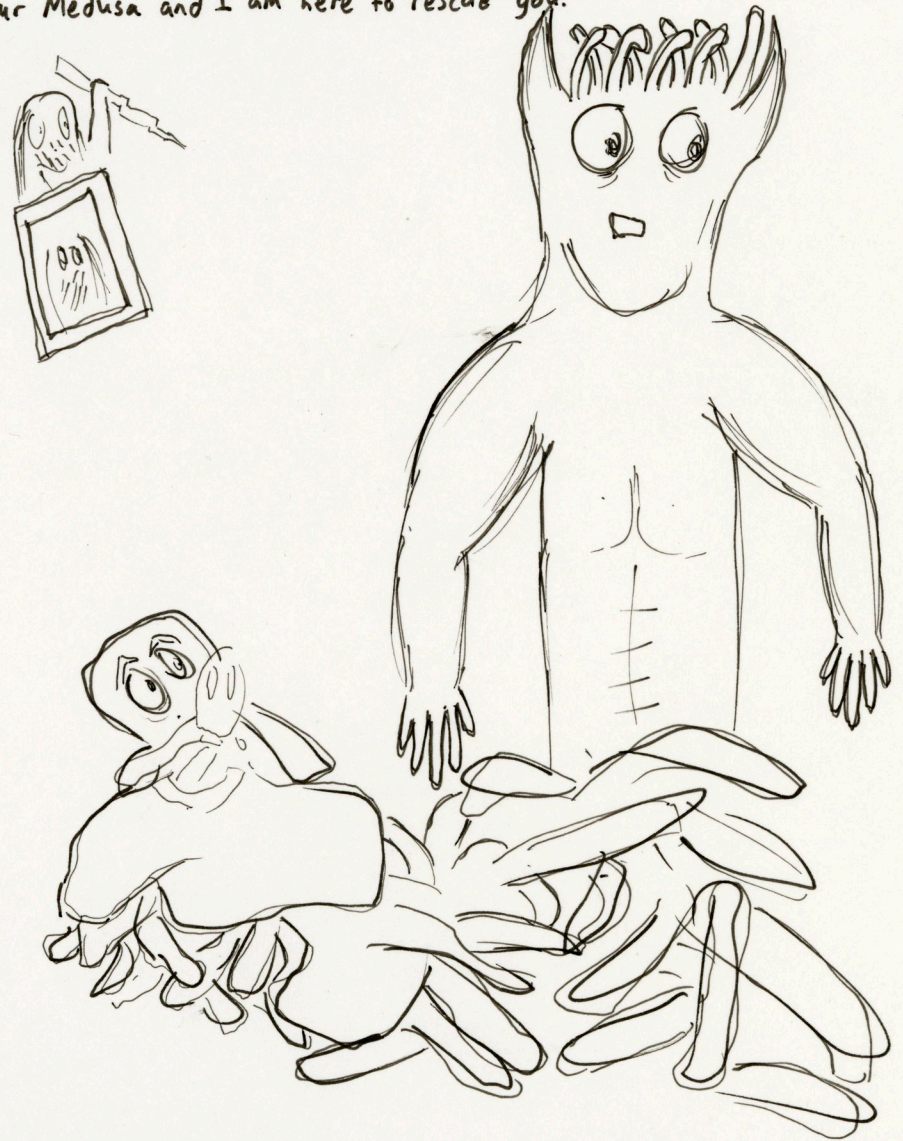
Thinking fast, the M.A.C.O.I. grabbed the T.L.V. and loaded it into his slingshot like a cannonball from antiquity. At that moment he understood the violence of the ancientest seas. Throbbing kneecaps were not enough to diminish the Mean, Angry, Crabby Old Imp's fury.



Sailing head-on into Manly Minotaur Medusa, with a burst of soldierly inspiration, the T.L.N. spun upside-down, backwards and grinning. The narwhal's tooth missed M.M.M. but pulled M.M.M.'s blindfold off.



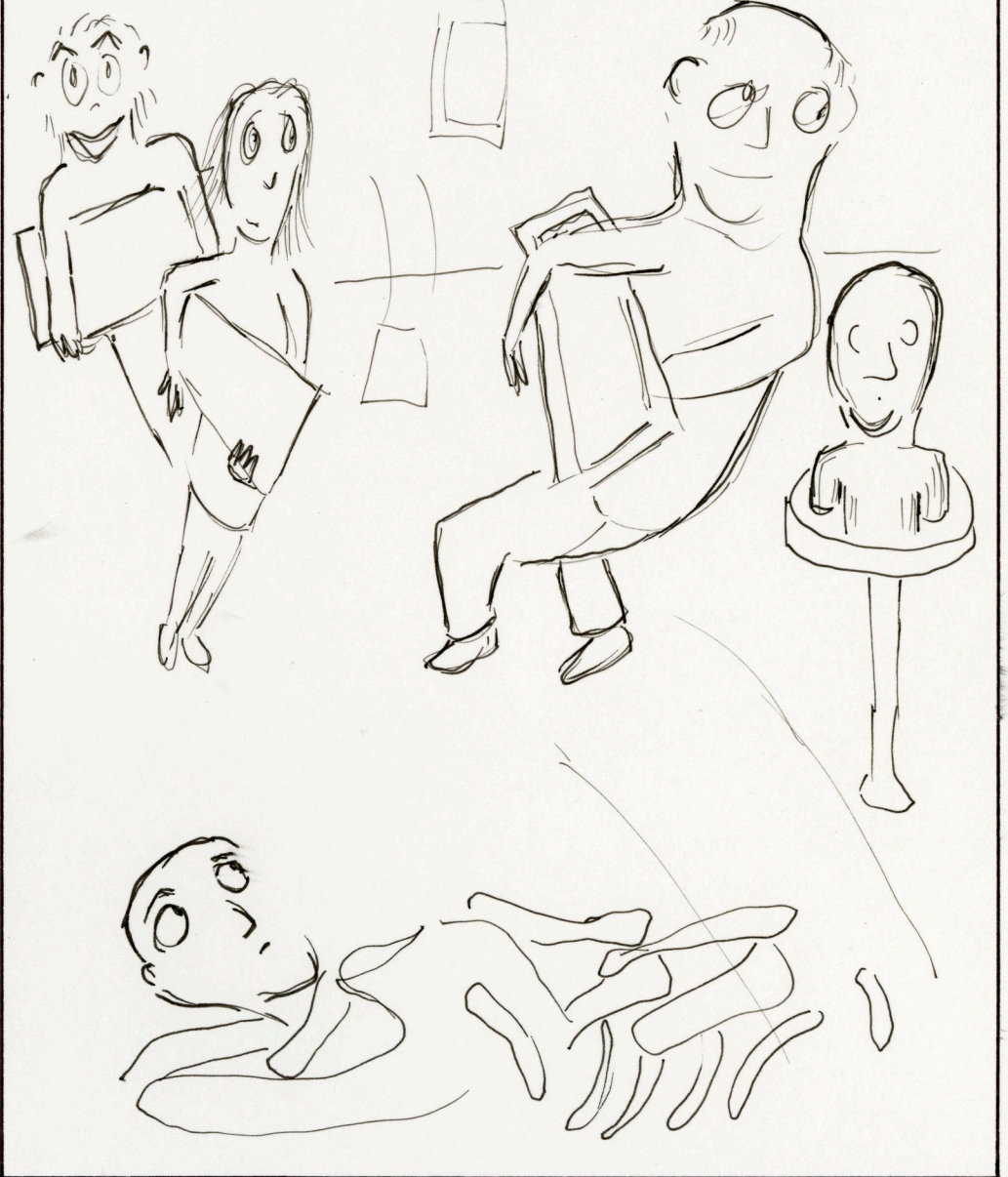
Owing to the snakes and eyeballs the M.A.C.O.I. turned to drippy bones. The Manly Minotaur Medusa began to turn his gaze toward the Z.L.Z. but thought better of it. "Hold your fire, Zippy Lady Zeus. I am the Manly Minotaur Medusa and I am here to rescue you."



The M.M.M. (sans blindfold but eyes closed), the T.L.N. and the Z.L.Z. left the T.A.E. to find the M.I.N. who waited for them at the nudist colony.



There was life yet in the M.A.C.O.I., however he felt his self-worth dwindling as he watched looting ensue throughout the traveling art exhibit. The finest artworks to ever be were ransacked; he was helpless as the pillaging took on proportions characteristic of pillaging by the victors of war.



In the nudist colony the Manly Minotaur Medusa collected his fee and took his trusty, lusty narwhal back to the island of their birth.



And who would believe: after the healing of his knee, his hardening from drippy bones into stone and then a fortuitous reversal thanks to the intervention of a minor god, the M.A.C.O.I. took up a new profession, creating an oeuvre for the ages! As for the Zippy Lady Zeus, she learned to think twice before shooting her lightning, and saved her electrical talents for celebrations and parades; indeed, she even overcame her shyness. And one day she would found a nudist colony ~~over~~ of her own...

