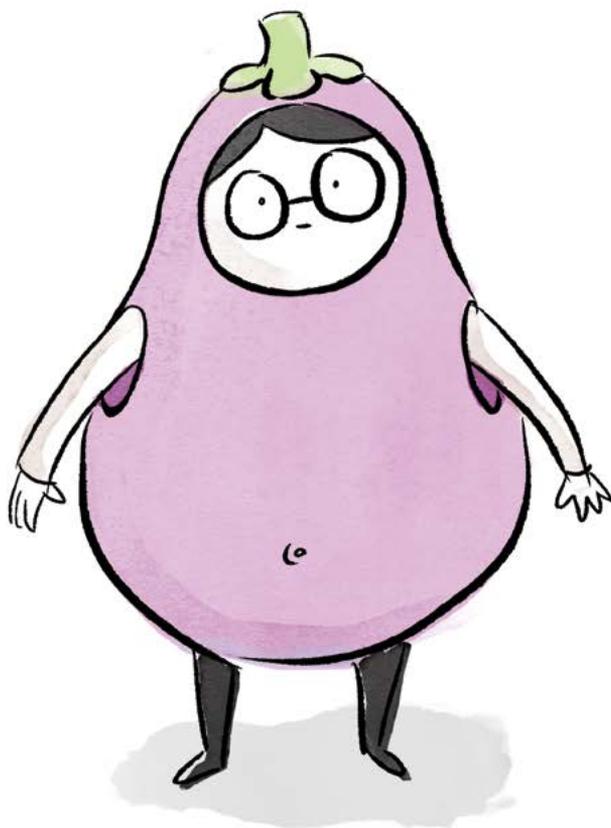


I have an eggplant.

A comic by Patricia Nguyen



Acknowledgments

Those who have shared their story with me for this comic.

You are brave. You are strong. And you inspire me.

I want to specifically thank,

MSC2022 for your constant and honest feedback.

Ryan for your artwork that I included in this comic.

Maggie for the chai tea latte that one time.

Cynthia for always being just a message away.

Eric for always being so kind, supportive, and patient.

Thank you all.

Truly.



I've always thought of myself as an introspective person.

I like to observe, reflect, and think.

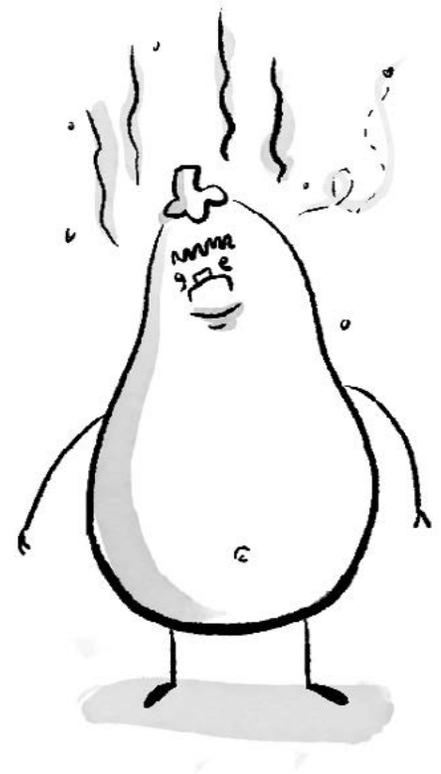
But at one point,
Observation became comparison.
Self-reflection became self-belittling.
And thinking became over-thinking every single detail ever.

It was all a jumble of thoughts and confusing emotions.

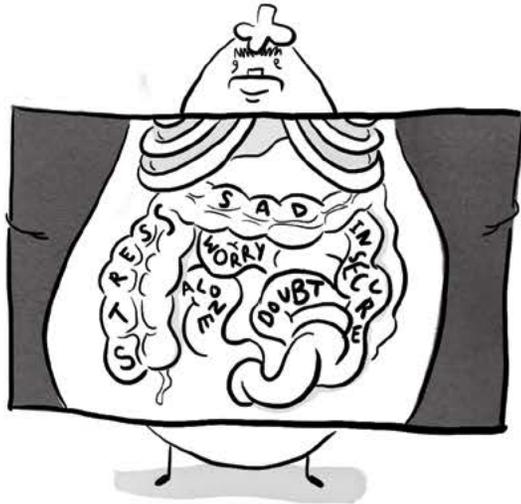
I didn't know how to make sense of all of it.

Until I made...

This.
This is what I like to call my eggplant.



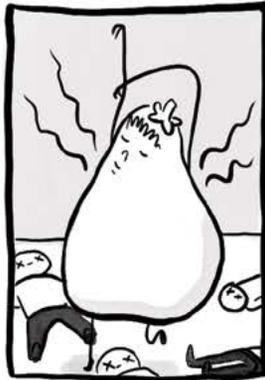
It is a character that I created to embody all my stress, anxiety, insecurities and worries.



Why an eggplant you ask? It helps that it isn't some big scary monster that would be impossible to conquer. But mostly, I don't like anxiety. And I REALLY don't like eggplants.



It's fat



It's stinky



and it's gross.

The eggplant represents all forms of my anxiety.

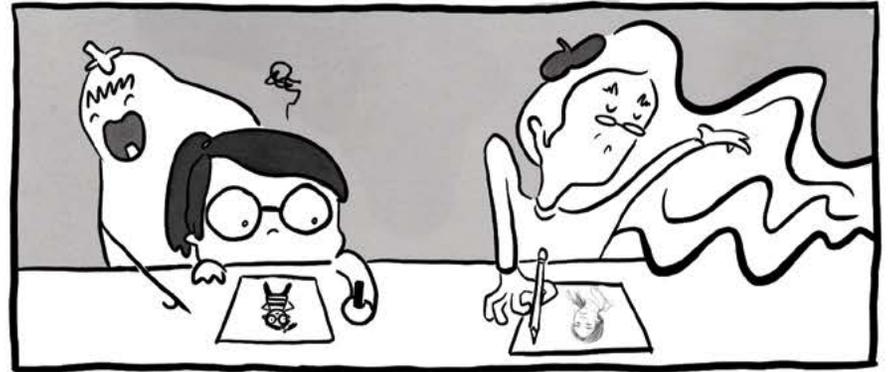
It is the thoughts that keep me up at night,



the feeling of doom in loud crowded situations,



and the constant feeling of inadequacy.



I felt alone in all of it.

But it wasn't easy getting to this point.

I kept convincing myself that I should deal with things alone. I could feel myself falling.

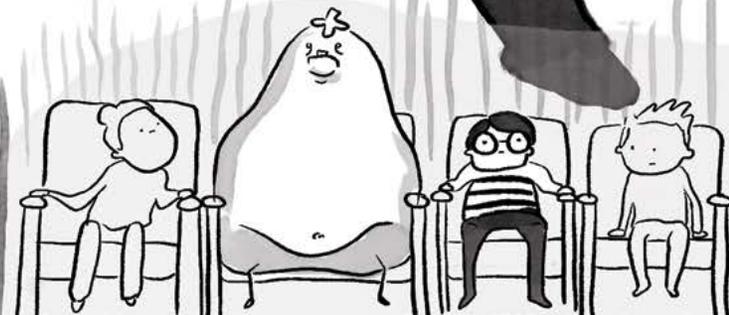
The eggplant loomed over me like a dark force convincing me that something was fundamentally wrong inside.

I felt broken.



I tried to hide it too. I thought this was a "me" problem so I should deal with it. If I couldn't, it would mean I lacked the willpower.

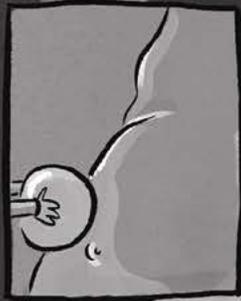
It would mean I was weak.



I never really liked talking about my problems.



The eggplant gave me the perfect outlet to bottle up everything.



LONGTERM SOLUTION

FANTASTIC WOMAN!

WOW!!

WOW!!

In hindsight, it wasn't the best coping method.

At the time, it felt like the only thing I could do. I felt like I should be able to deal with these things by myself.

After all, they were MY problems. Why should I burden others?



But that only worked at first.

The eggplant kept growing and became so massive that I had to do something before it ate me whole.

Something I've never done before...



SO THERE'S THIS EGGPLANT.



0.5m

IT TELLS ME THINGS

you're the worst
FAILURE
BURDEN
DISAPPOINTMENT

I FEEL BROKEN

SOMETHING IS WRONG



?? WHO AM I?

WHERE DO I BELONG??



AM I CRAZY?



I'M STRUGGLING ALONE

(even if I'm surrounded)



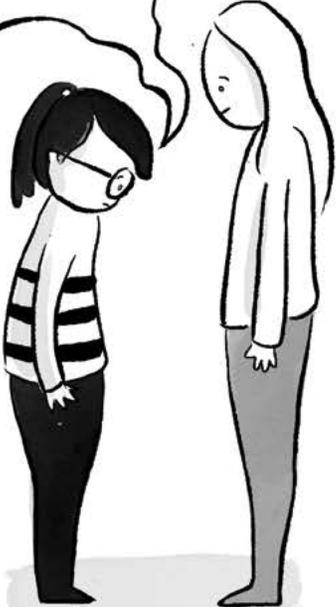
NOPE.

NOPE NOPE
NOPE NOT OK.
NOPE



WHAT IS "NORMAL" ???

EVERYTHING IS FINE (hehehe)



I told you this was a terrible idea.
They are not coming back. Way to
scare them off...



I'll be right back.



...

356. You're crazy.

357. You are weak.

358. You are a burden to others.

You really shouldn't be dropping bombs like that on people

359. You have no reason to feel this way.

360. You are such a wreck.

361. Gee, another freak-out what a surprise.

I mean seriously, who's going to want to deal with you now.

362. Why can't you take care of yourself?

363. Get over it.

364. It's not that big of a deal. First world problem much?

365. You're broken.

366. Wow. Extra baggage.

367. You are THAT friend.

You should have listened to me.

369. You totally scared them off.

370. You're a bad friend.

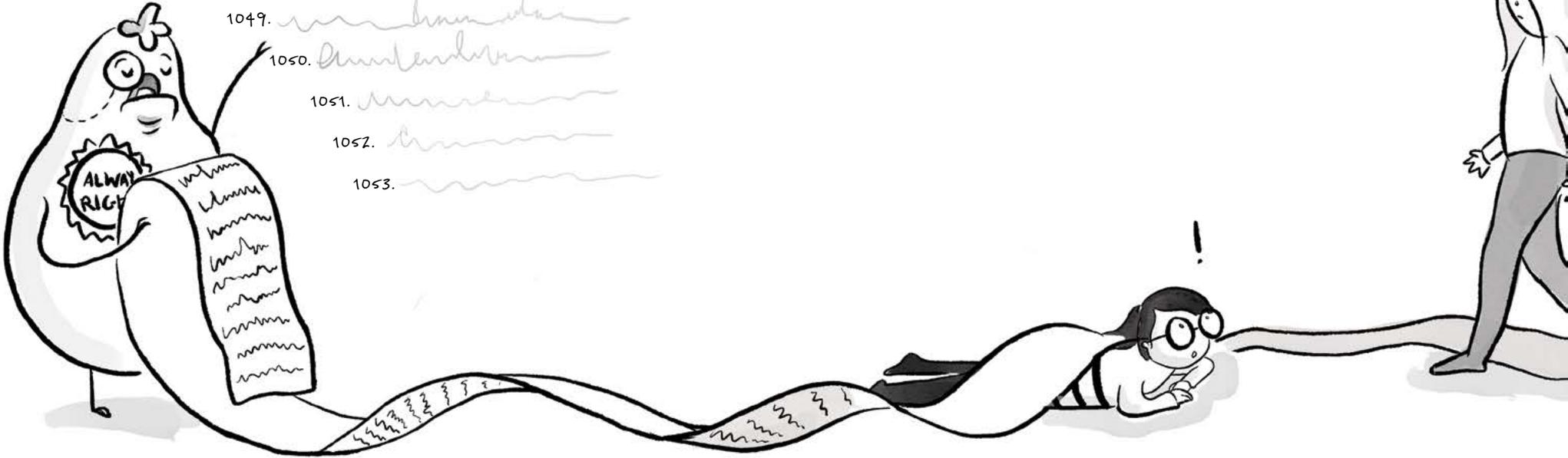
371. Selfish.

372. Worthless.



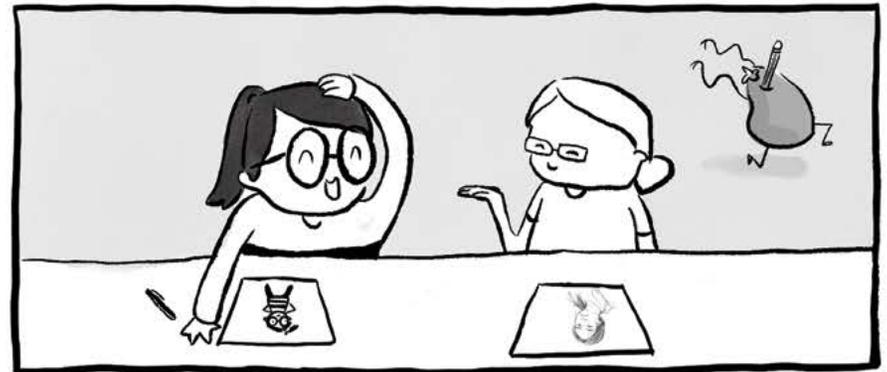
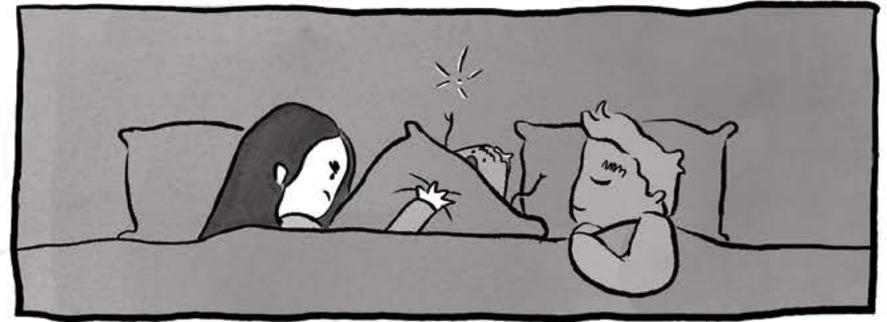
- 1034. You are pathetic.
- 1035. It's all in your head.
- 1036. Bla bla blabla
- 1037. Blablablabla bla bla bla
- 1038. Blabla bla bla
- 1039. More irrational nonsense.
- 1040. Totally unfair argument.
- 1041. Something about me being not good enough.
- 1042. Blablabla bla bla
- 1043. Blabla bla bla blabla
- 1044. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*
- 1045. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*
- 1046. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*
- 1047. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*

- 1048. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*
- 1049. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*
- 1050. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*
- 1051. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*
- 1052. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*
- 1053. *blabla blabla blabla blabla*



Anxiety is a shapeless beast. Somehow, with the eggplant, I've learned to set it aside.

Turns out, not so alone after all.



I bet they're talking about us.

Pft, I mean get a life.. Am I right?



And here we are.

I don't think I'll ever be able to get "rid" of my eggplant. I don't think I necessarily have to either. We're able to co-exist now.

I've come to learn that the eggplant, these feelings, don't define me as a person. I've also learned that I am not alone. The secrecy that I held onto for dear life just ate me from the inside out.

The worst part was that it was totally unnecessary.

We're all in this together.



Comic by Patricia Nguyen

Patricia Nguyen is a medical
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