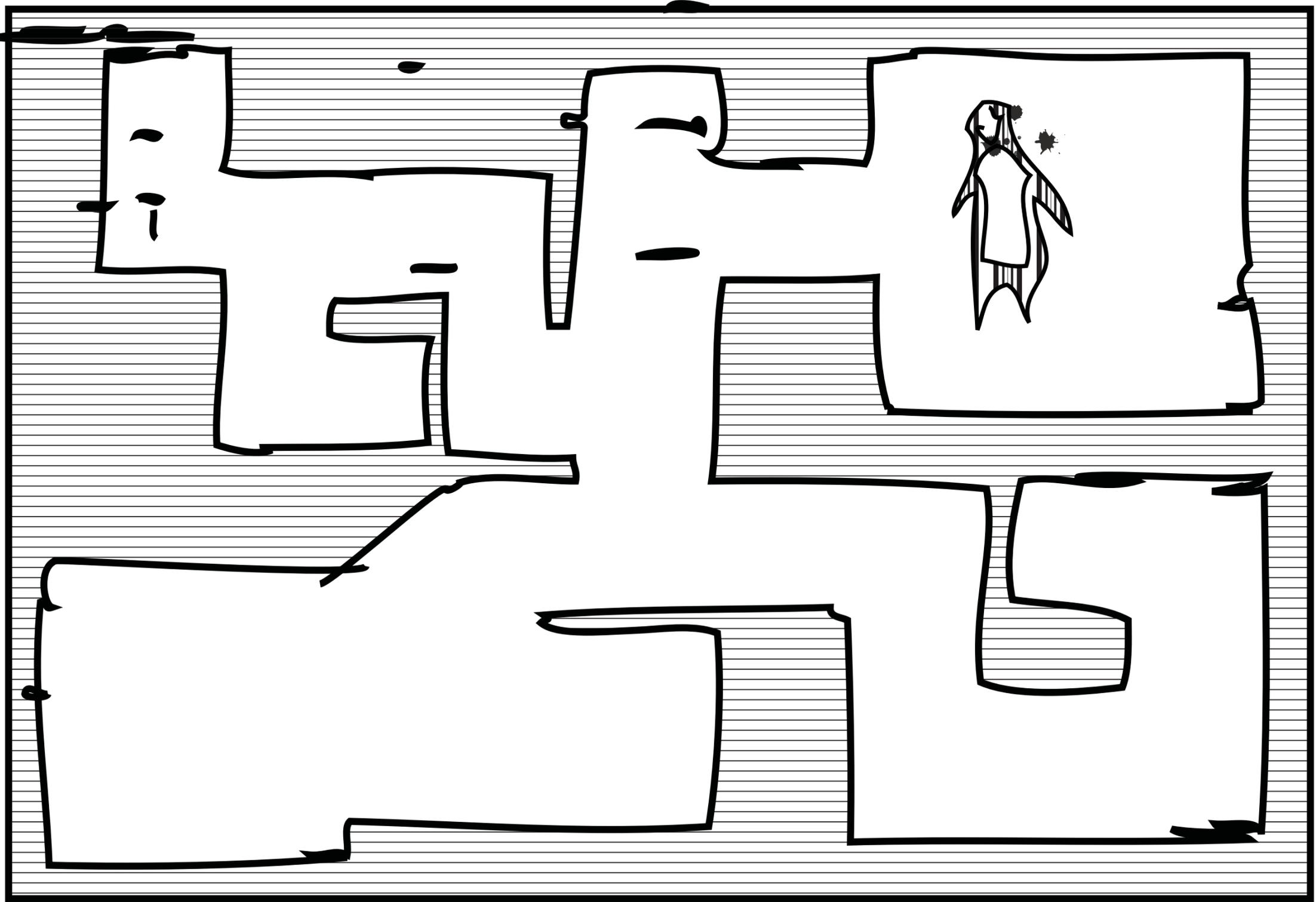


# REDUCTION IN FORCE

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1.

I lost something. It came off my body. It dripped. It was force. There was a hollow organ in my animal body. There was a cavity in my brain. I could not move from one place to another. The voice inside my head which translates all of the other voices inside my head refused to function. I was screaming with no voice. I know myself because the voice that translates my other voices knows me. I do not know the appropriate voice to use when speaking to myself. It causes problems for us. There is a need for love and a need for evidence. There is a need for evidence that there is a need for love. I asked an authoritative body what I should do now that my force has been reduced, and he said he needed evidence to reevaluate the justification for my reduction. What evidence? Slips of paper with signatures from other authoritative bodies? The reductions started with a word. Lose. We must lose things. But what can we lose when we are already lost? A voice said: I believe in the ability of carcasses to inspire economic certainty in these times that leave us feeling so insecure. A reduction, a leakage, the emptying of a receptacle. Dear Sir, I have received your memoranda regarding the reductions in force that will take place during the next few months. I agree with the mission, but it is my understanding that the reductions will actually need to take place over a much longer period of time. Reduction must happen over a prolonged period of time otherwise the reinvention of our bodies will inevitably and most certainly be an irreversible failure. We must adapt to certain realities we cannot control. Actually, we can control these realities. But please don't let anyone know this. Most bodies are willing to believe in the mystical power of markets and bureaucracies. And as no illusion can be destroyed directly, then let us wound the bodies from behind and this way they won't be aware of their decomposition. I heard these voices through the floorboards. They were in the sea of mud that was in my mouth and my ears. They sang: reduction is an infinite process. Forever and always we reduce.

2.

The administrators requested a reevaluation of the bodies slotted for reduction. The bodies were wet and fertile. The bodies showed slight signs of decay but there was potential for growth in targeted areas of the organisms. Their murmurs were healthy. The capacity for their mouths to hold mud was well above market average. The bodies were moaning. The accrediting agencies were curious about the frames that housed the reducing bodies. How long would they survive given the direction of the bureaucratic mission? If the bodies inside the walls are reduced, is there a contractual agreement to facilitate their relocation to a cage or a holding tank? There are children already in cages. They have had their homes reduced and as part of the terms of the foreclosure, the children, through the use of certain prodding devices, will eventually transform into beings who celebrate the transactionality of their existence. The beginning of a reduction determines the shape of future reductions. Have you heard the one about the knife that went deeper and deeper into the body without actually penetrating the skin? Certain bodies were asked to keep light sweet crude in their mouths to prepare for the next time the assets go rotten. The feasibility impact studies have shown that if the bodies are reduced then there will be more liquidity in certain sectors of the rotten carcass economy. Cage production will increase as the housing market plummets. Frame manufacturers are exuberant. How many children can be held in empty swimming pools? How many children can be put in display cases at the zoo? Reductions, say the economists, inevitably lead to innovations. We need substantive physical indicators to confirm that we actually exist.

3.

Now that my force has been reduced, I can no longer push or pull upon another body that is responsible for pushing and pulling upon me. The force exerted by a surface as an object moves across it is the force of one body trying to declare that it does not want to separate from the bodies it needs or loves. When I came to administrative headquarters, I was shown a Powerpoint presentation that provided guidance for what I should do with my body now that it is no longer needed. A voice said: we do not reduce force unless we see irrefutable signs that the body is not necessary. A voice said: "How should you assess your reduction? How do you know your reduction was necessary? I said: Do I need my flesh? Do I need my body fat? Do I need the hair on my head and skin? I was told these were the wrong questions. They wrote the word "Non sequitur" on the board and put my name underneath it just in case I could not see the connection between myself and the language they used to describe me. I was shown a video of myself as a child, prior to my parents' reductions. On screen I was lying on the ground and a boot was stepping on my neck. What do you feel when you watch yourself being crushed, the voice asked. What do you feel when you see your neck being split open by the boot of this faceless, bodiless being? I remembered the unspeakable pain of being crushed and I thought of a song sung to me afterwards by my mother and father as they prepared to send me away in the cage. It was a silent song. They sang it by wrapping tape over my mouth. They sang it by wrapping tape over my eyes. They told me I needed to learn how to be a silent immigrant who had no voice. I hissed. I tried to scream. They taped my legs together. They taped my hands together. They wheeled me away and put me on a bus where I was taken to administrative headquarters. I wondered now about the body that had been commanded to crush my neck. Had its force also been reduced? I wondered about gravity. About what my hair looked like when as a child it was ripped off my head and thrown toward the center of the earth. I wondered about resistance in the air. Was there a frictional force that acted upon my skin as it traveled through the atmosphere? I was trying to look on the bright side of the reduction. But I had shrunk so small I could barely see the sun.

4.

Communication is key when a body is reduced in force. The body whose force is reduced cares not about the communicator. The body whose force is reduced cares only about the communication. When the boot crushed my neck, there were words that crept out of its leather. The authoritative voice that spoke as my neck broke placed illusion at the origin and the center of the world. It said: from here until your inevitable reduction you will live in a system that will perpetuate new systems that in turn will support a unified structure of systems that will define the bureaucratic value of the inflationary sleep of the bodies subjected to our new, cohesive economics. What will happen after I'm reduced, I asked. But this was not the right question. The right question was what will happen to the collective body when my body is redefined. So I asked this question. In response I was shown a Powerpoint presentation with several graphs and tables with positive projections for the future. On the screen a film appeared and in it the cages were opened and the famished, beaten children were set free to roam the desiccated plots of earth. They planted crops and developed systems of labor and architecture and in a matter of months they were well-fed, powerful creatures who were reincorporated into the civilization they had been forced to abandon when their bodies had been reduced. At the end of the presentation, I was wheeled off to a dormitory and asked to imagine a future use for my body. A voice said: spread your face on the mountains and let the wind and the ocean love you. I sank back into the tomb of my sheets.