

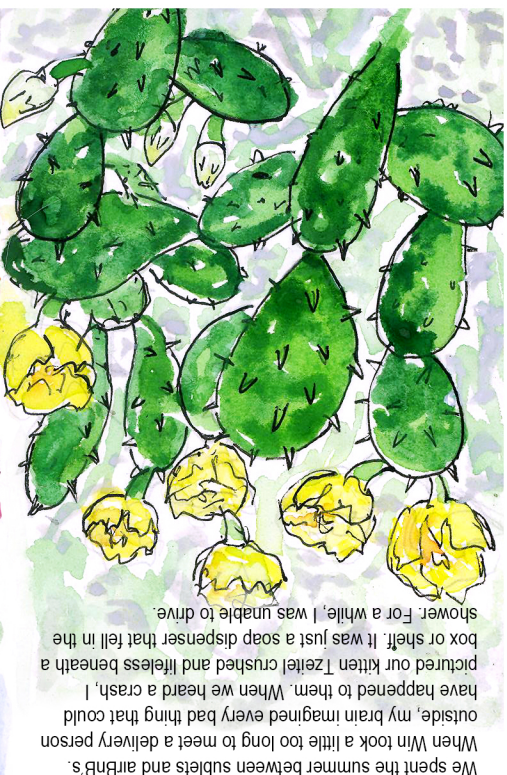
Eventually, we signed a lease; we laid down our restored rugs; Win made us fancy dinners and we ate them on a fold up picnic table. The cats returned to the foot of our new bed and I returned to the studio, to the driver's seat. I returned emails and showed up when I could. At home, passionflowers wrapped around the light post, the fence, the handrail, the balusters.



I worried that people might start to expect things from me again. I wanted to be someone people could expect things from—or at least, I wanted to want to be.



The giant windows in the loft building didn't open, and the landscapers buried the young trees' root flares, killing them one by one. When Finn wouldn't come out of the closet, we called an animal communicator who told us that Finn missed the garden, too, that he wanted to go home but he was scared, that there wasn't much to see outside the windows here.



We spent the summer between sublets and airBNB's. When Win took a little too long to meet a delivery person outside, my brain imagined every bad thing that could have happened to them. When we heard a crash, I pictured our kitten Tzeitel crushed and lifeless beneath a box or shelf. It was just a soap dispenser that fell in the shower. For a while, I was unable to drive.



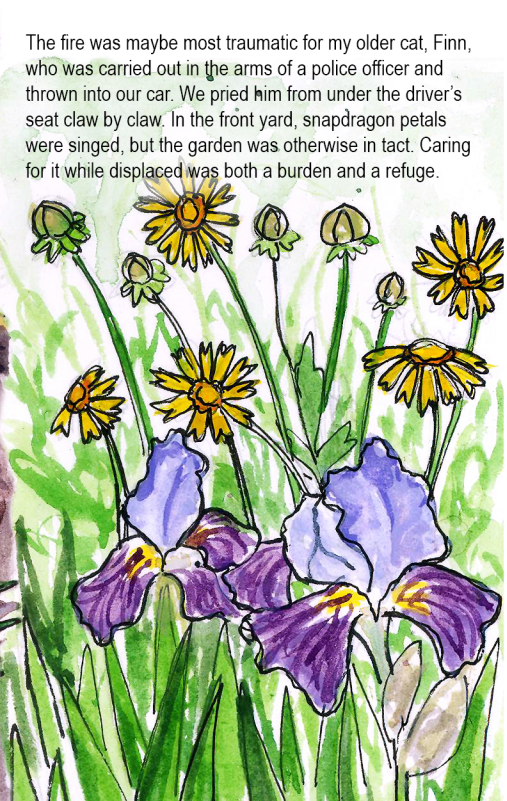
AMY COUSINS SEPT. '21



GARDEN JOURNAL



We stood outside seven hours waiting for our first vaccination shot, stomping our feet to stay warm. The world around us began to reopen; the early, delicate blooms of spring appeared, and I started to feel like a creative, ambitious person again.



The fire was maybe most traumatic for my older cat, Finn, who was carried out in the arms of a police officer and thrown into our car. We pried him from under the driver's seat claw by claw. In the front yard, snapdragon petals were singed, but the garden was otherwise in tact. Caring for it while displaced was both a burden and a refuge.