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"A complex but thoroughly successful graphic novel"

De Morgen

"An engaging, intimate and expressive portrait of two women, with exciting and vivid drawings".

9E Kunst

Skin

SABIEN CLEMENT & MIEKE VERSYP

Drawing is Esther's passion. While she used to make demands of herself that were far too ambitious, now she's trying to do what she enjoys most. Rita is a middle-aged woman who has just got divorced and whose daughter doesn't like visiting her. To get a new grip on her life, Rita challenges herself by becoming a nude model in drawing classes given by Esther. Both women are at a crossroads in their lives. Esther meets a man who eventually breaks her heart and Rita has to learn to deal with her new life, without her daughter.

Sabien Clement's (b. 1978) *work is characterized by spontaneity. Tenderness, vulnerability, a longing for balance and security – these are the themes running through her work. Her lines are particularly eloquent : they masterfully express emotions, from happiness to grief – often in one and the same picture. Both young and old fall for her illustrations : children especially like the humour in her lines and colours, while adults go for the poetic strength and deeper meaning in her work.* ***Mieke Versyp (b. 1965)*** *is a dramaturge and children's author. She writes imaginative, playful stories with dark undercurrents and double meanings that appeal to both young and old. Versyp debuted in 2007 with the exceptional picture book Linus, illustrated by Pieter Gaudesaboos and Sabien Clement. The book went on to win both a Boekenwelp and a Gouden Uil.*

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Goscinny young scenarist
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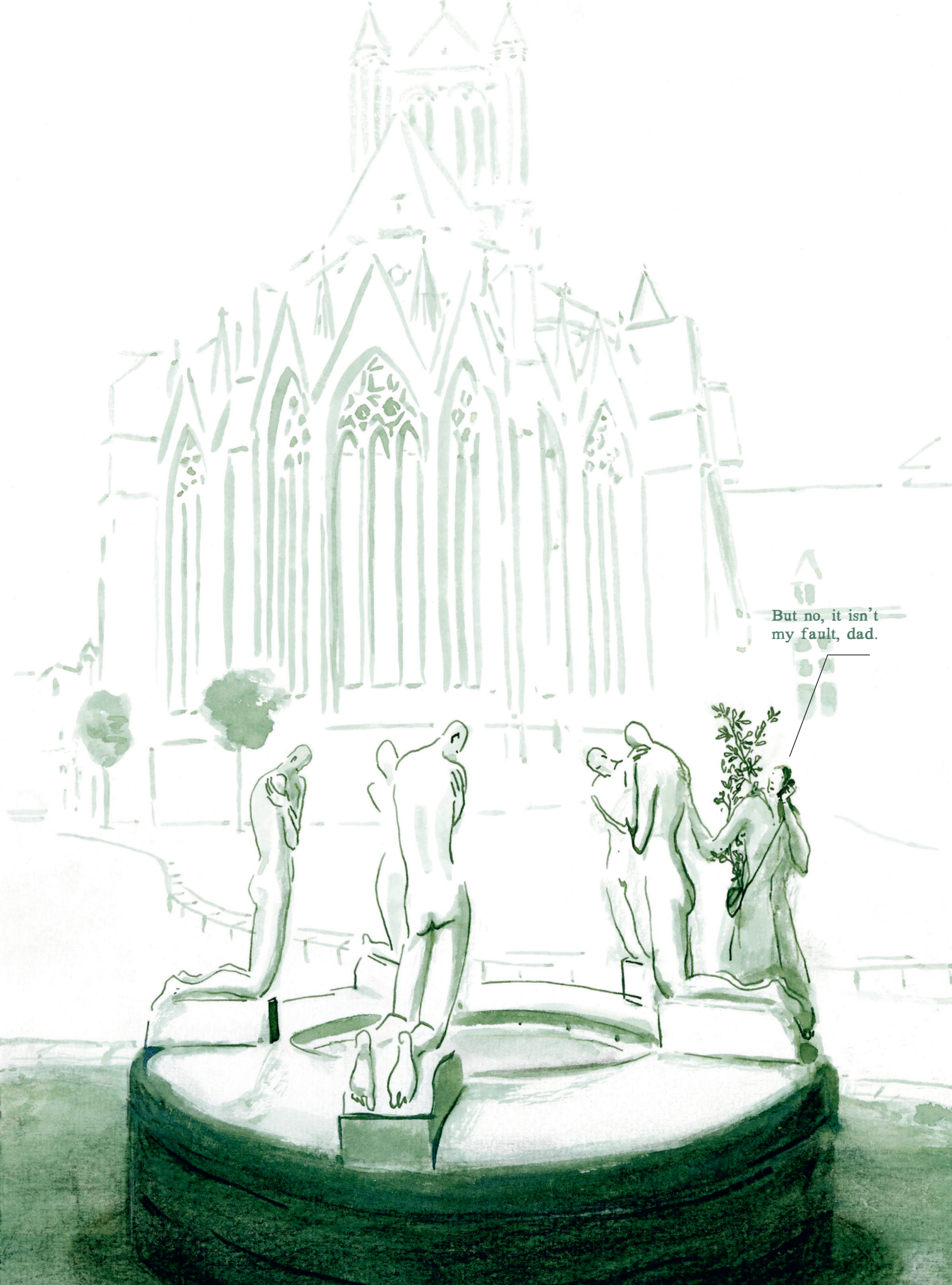
Rights sold : French (Ça et là), English (Fantagraphics)

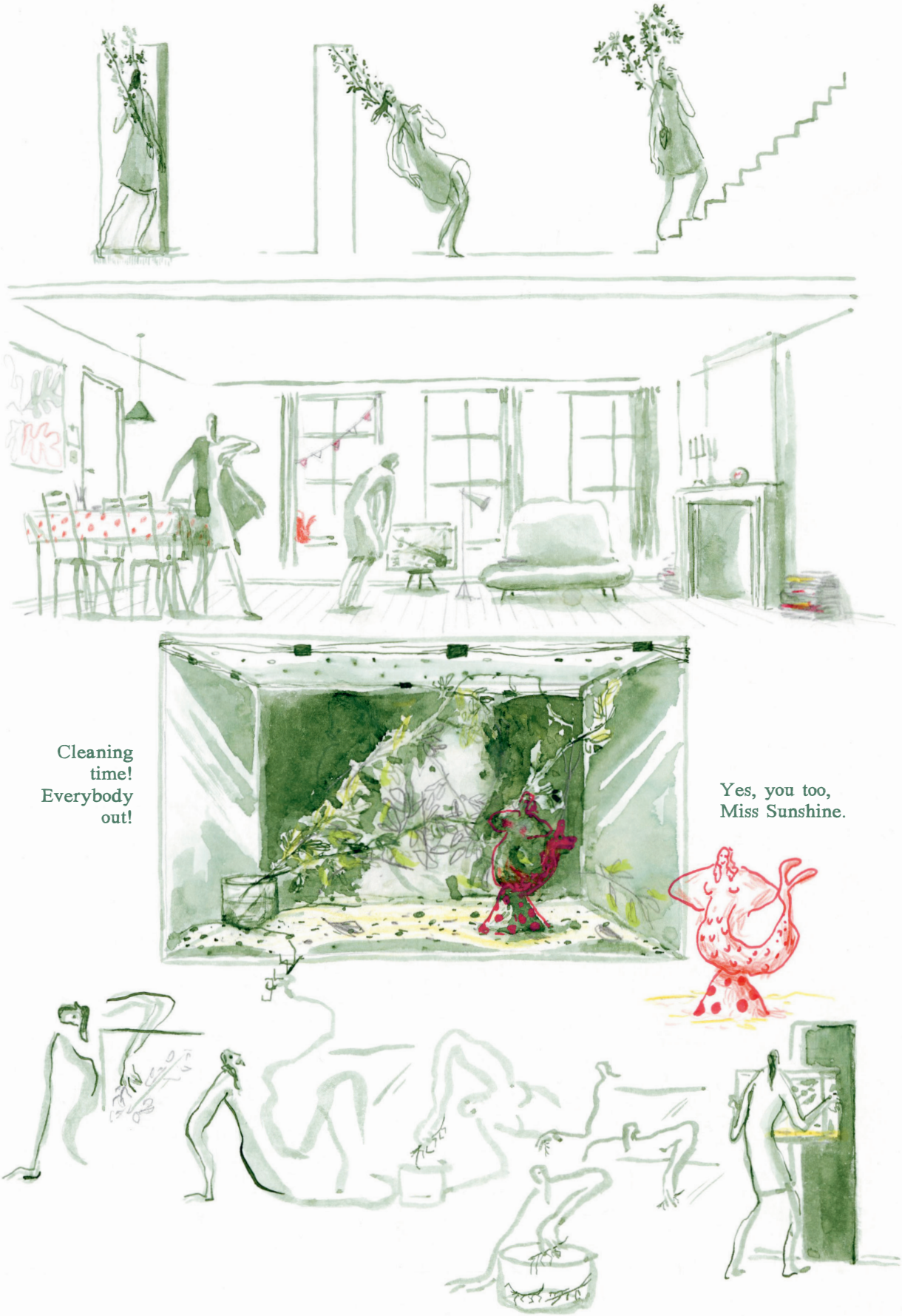
skin

Sabien Clement
Mieke Versyp

OOGACHTEND


But no, it isn't
my fault, dad.

I'd already dusted the shelves and rinsed every glass ten times over.
'What am I doing here?', I thought. So, I started drawing. That's when they threw me out.
Yeeeeees.
There is food on the table, dad. Well, not on the table, it's in the fridge.
Bought it this morning.
I've got some money left. It'll be alright. Don't worry.
I have to go now, ok? I've got things to do.
Bye daddy.


Cleaning time! Everybody out!
Yes, you too, Miss Sunshine.

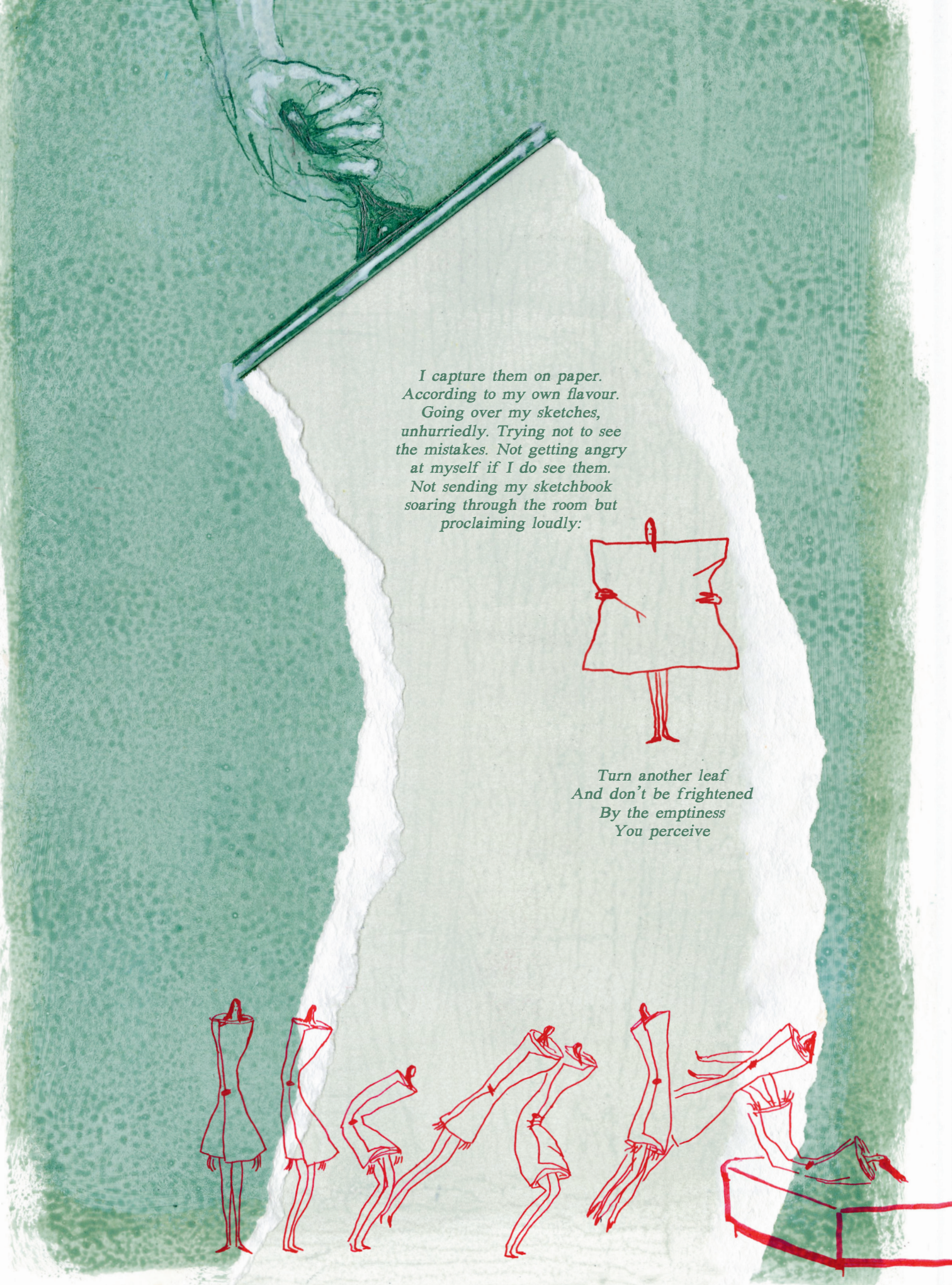
Maybe he is right.
One stupid job after the other, and they always end up kicking me out.
And so what?
Back to drawing in a little while.

My sketchbook in my lap, nothing to do, nothing on my mind. Wonderful.

Watching the people.

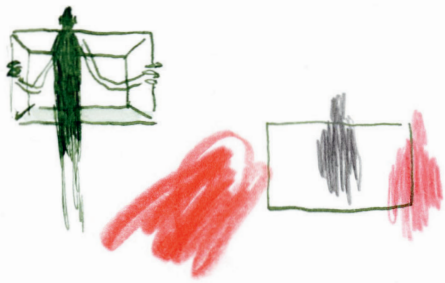
The wanderers, the ice-cream-lickers, the stumblers, the mothers with their strollers, the city-joggers...

How they walk, talk, touch one another.

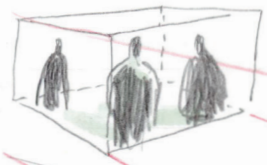


I capture them on paper.
According to my own flavour.
Going over my sketches,
unhurriedly. Trying not to see
the mistakes. Not getting angry
at myself if I do see them.
Not sending my sketchbook
soaring through the room but
proclaiming loudly:

Turn another leaf
And don't be frightened
By the emptiness
You perceive

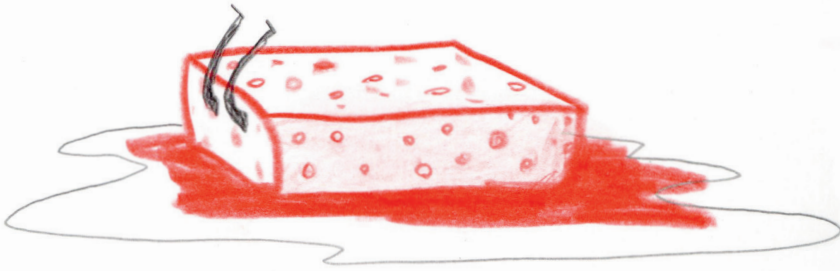


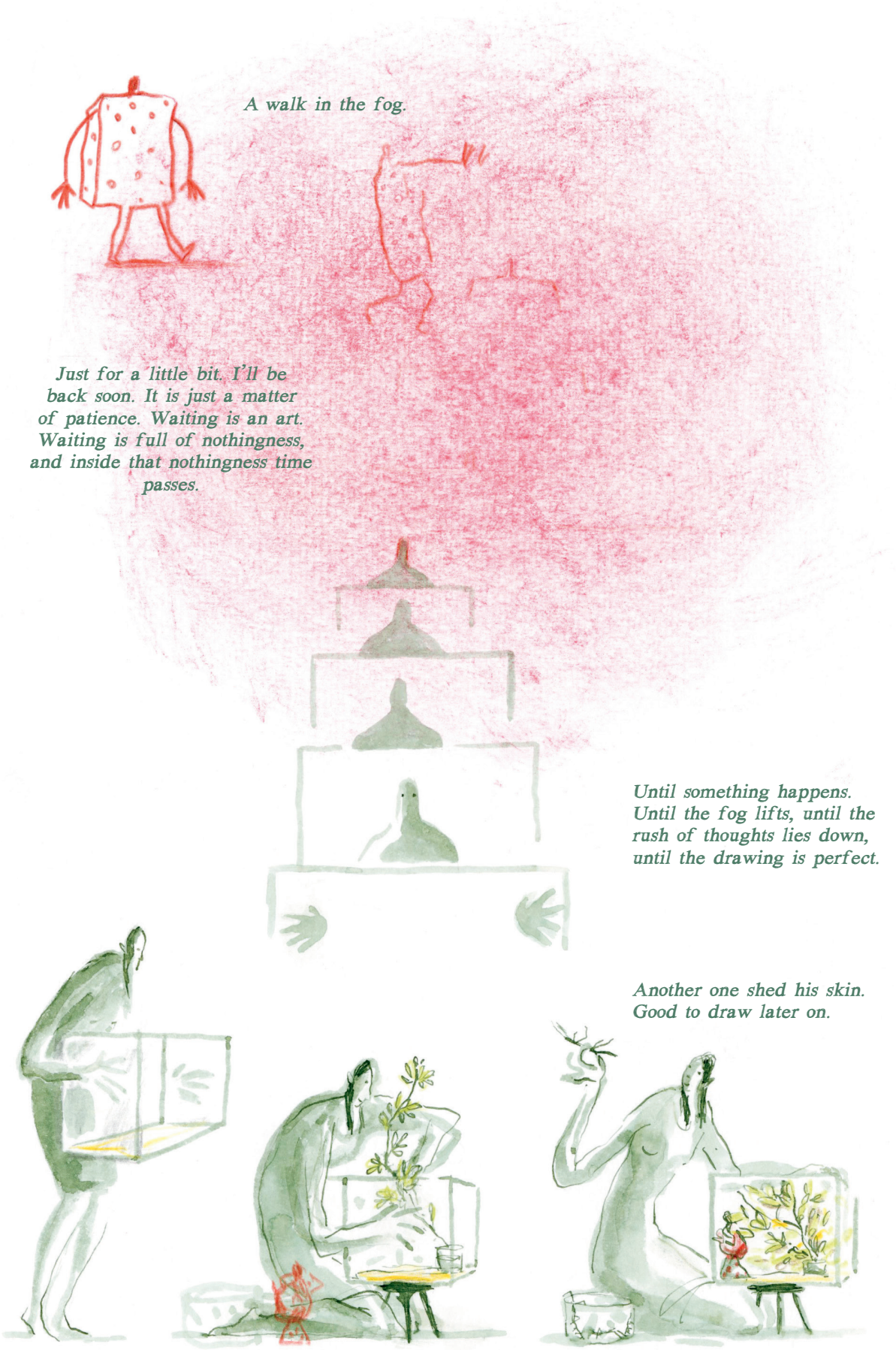
And if the next sketch fails too,
don't think:



It's nothing
I'm nothing
Redundant
Irrelevant
Ugly
flabby
Preposterous

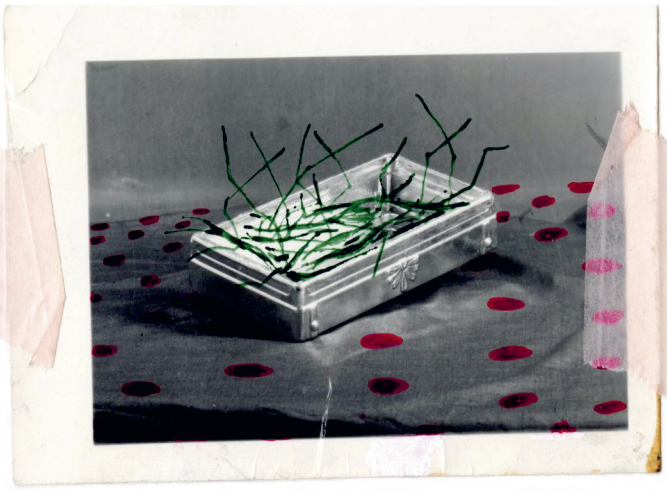
Don't end up down that street.
Don't go down that alleyway.




A walk in the fog.
Just for a little bit. I'll be back soon. It is just a matter of patience. Waiting is an art. Waiting is full of nothingness, and inside that nothingness time passes.
Until something happens. Until the fog lifts, until the rush of thoughts lies down, until the drawing is perfect.
Another one shed his skin. Good to draw later on.

A stick insect can only grow one way, Esther knew. He has to shed his old skin every month, or else he will literally burst out of it. When their skin starts to feel a little too snug, a stick insect will climb a high branch inside the terrarium, steadily, all the way to the top. He hangs himself upside down from the branch and stretches out to his full length, after which his skin, starting from the head, slowly starts to tear. Esther adored the old skins. She kept them in a little tin box on which she wrote: OLD SKIN.
Besides, they were great to draw.

Shedding skin isn't without danger. Lots of things can go wrong. If the stick insect doesn't have enough space to stretch, chances are he will crawl out of his old skin bent and deformed. One or more of his legs might get stuck in the old skin and break, causing the stick insect to live the rest of his life on 4 instead of 6 legs, for example.



There were two limping sticks in Esther's terrarium, whom she felt for deeply because she thought it was just so unfair. Why would a little stick deserve something like that? And your lost legs don't grow back, unless you're a very young stick insect – a little 'nymph' they call that. Just beautiful, Esther thought.