

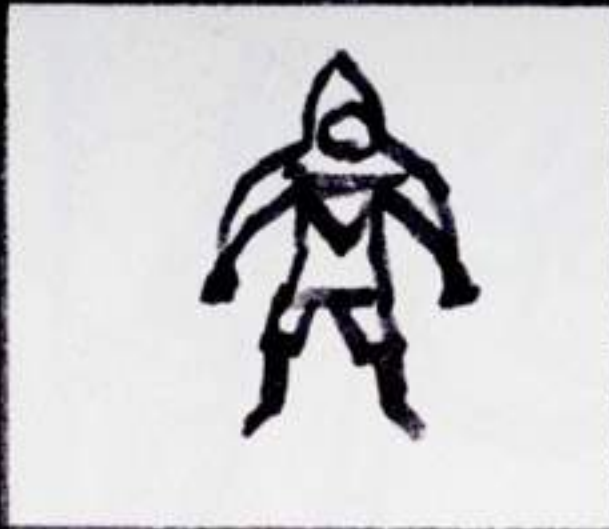
SOLAR WIND

by Sean Ruecroft





Deep inside the sun



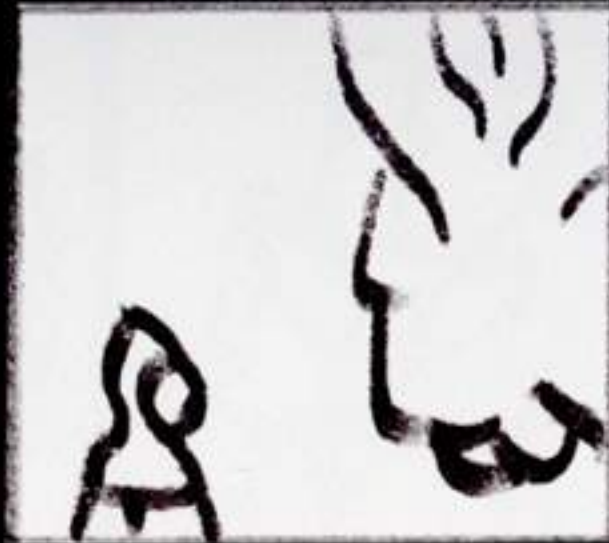
A hero awakens



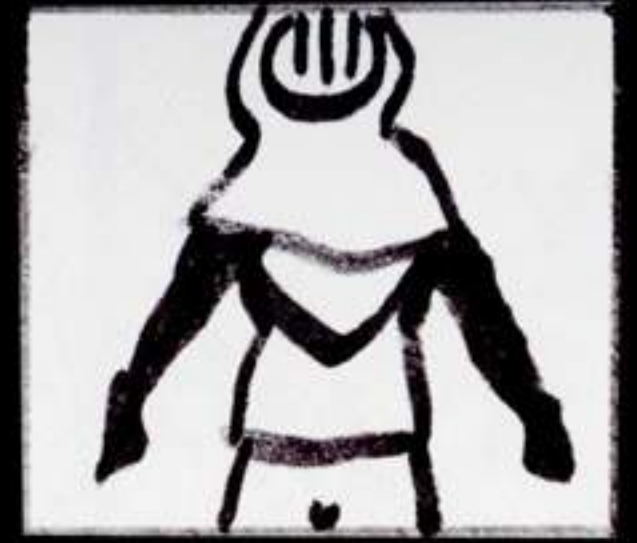
You are greeted by the voice
of a flaming lion



"I am Leo" it says,
"And you are my creation"



"Your armor is made to
absorb all energies"



"so that you can serve
your divine purpose."



"A red giant star will soon destroy our solar system"



"unless you carry my light to each of the planets"



"and unleash the power of the Zodiac."



You ask, "Why don't you do it if you're so powerful?"



"As guardian of the Sun I cannot leave here!" he says



"I will send you now to the first of the planets"



"For I am weakend by every moment you linger"



"Use my light to awaken the Zodiac!"



You are pushed by a solar flare



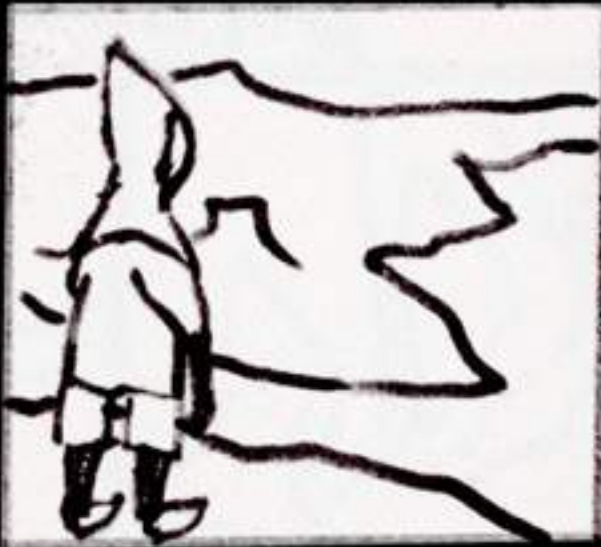
And shot out into space



Toward the first planet



You crash land on Mercury



And seek out the Zodiac



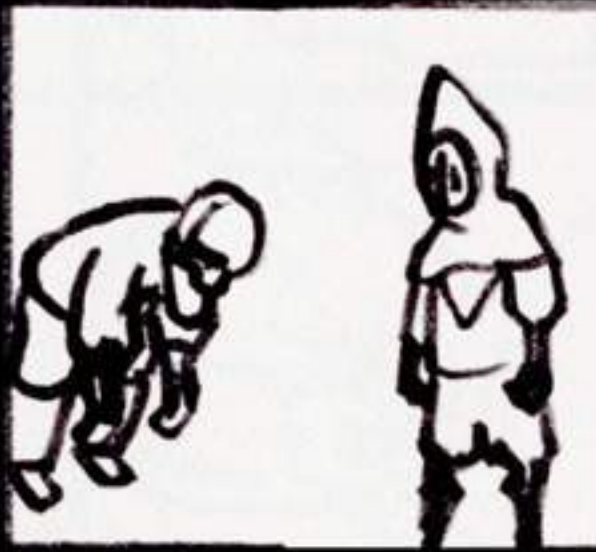
Instead you discover earthquakes



And hear someone call for help



You pull a man from the rock slide



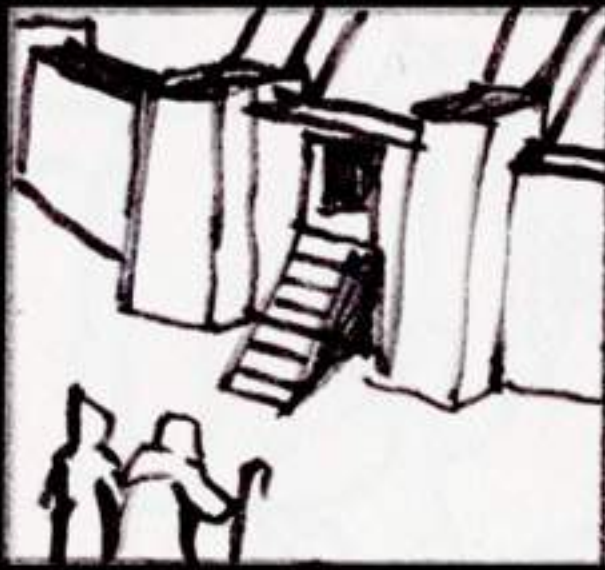
Who invites you to his home



He asks for your name, but you have none



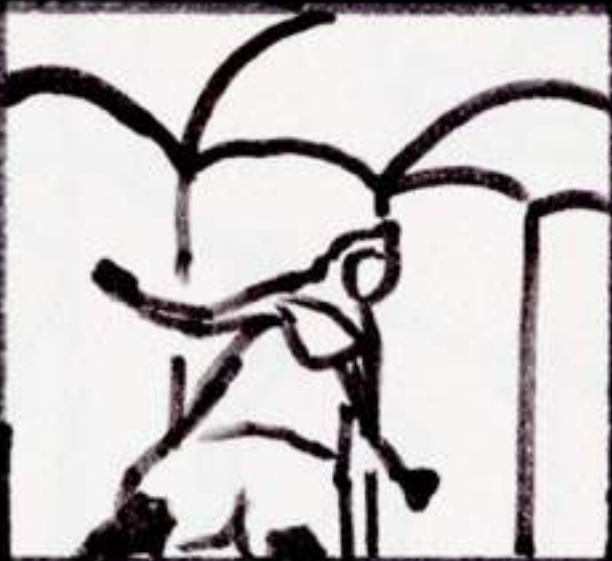
In honor of your "clean slate"
he decides to call you "Shale"



He says the earthquakes start
at the temple of Gemini



Where underground magnets
strongly repel each other



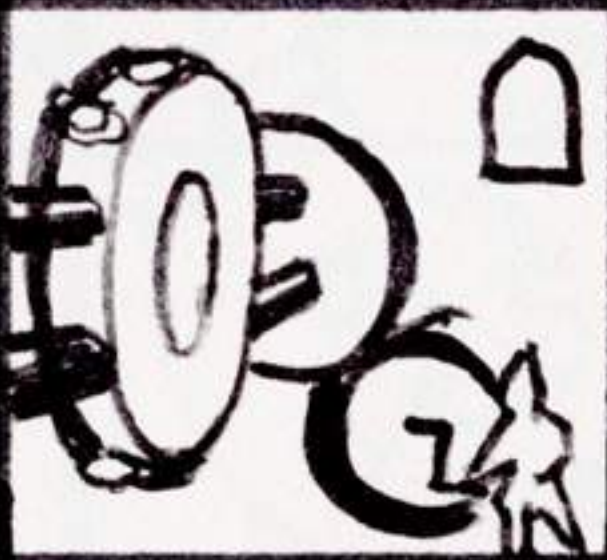
So you investigate
the corridors



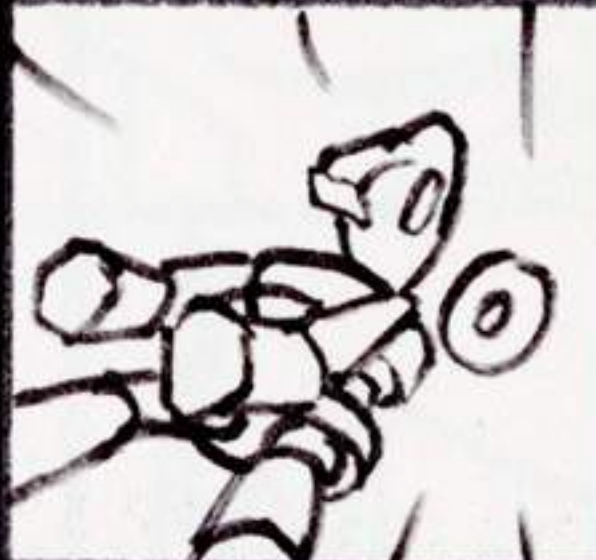
And discover living statues



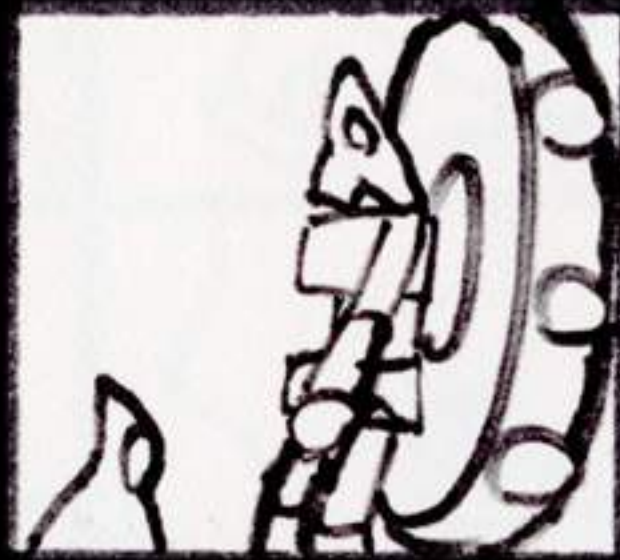
That are pressed against
the walls by huge magnets



So you reverse the magnets



And the statues
fly through the air



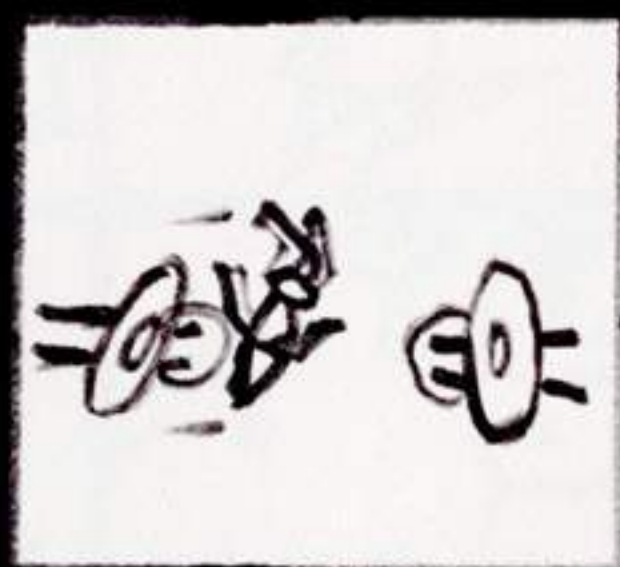
And stick to them



More turning of magnets



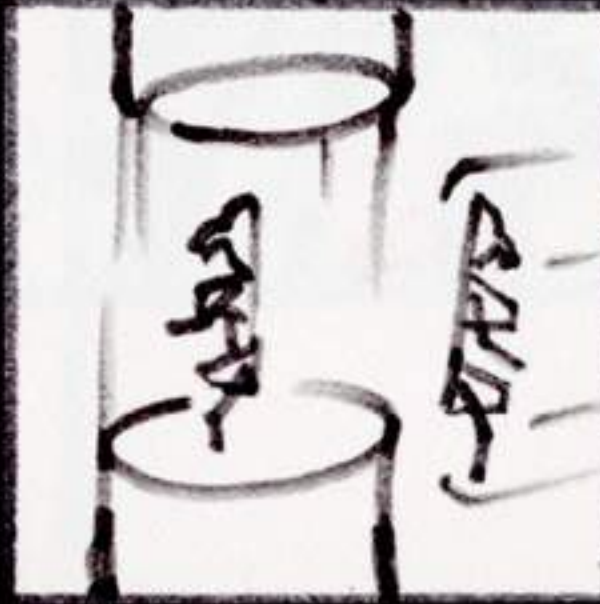
Leaves them suspended
between attractive forces



Before flying along
to the next one



At last they are pushed
into a center dock



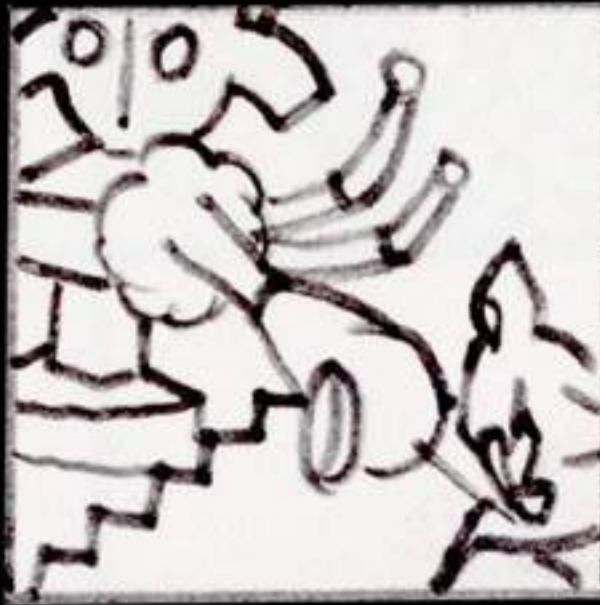
Where the two statues
come together



And combine into one



Which turns to attack you



So you lure it
in front of cannons



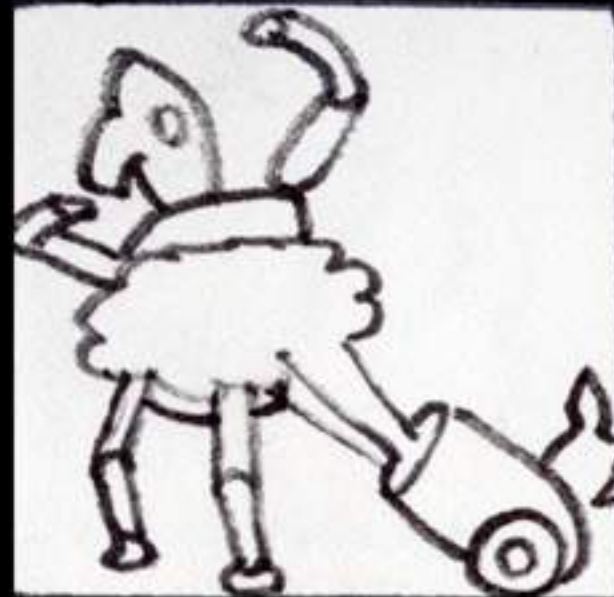
And break it apart



So the two halves
will chase you



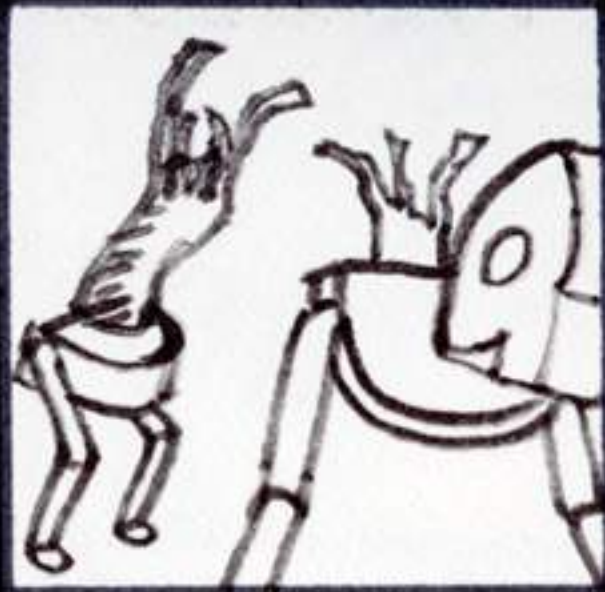
Down skinnier hallways



Where you can shoot them
with more cannons



And break them into
smaller peices



That continue to chase you



And can reach
even smaller areas



So you charge up on sunlight



And blast them with
your light beam



To destroy the
remaining pieces



Which releases
primordial energy



That becomes
the spirit of Gemini



The Gemini spirits
grant you their blessing



So you leave the land and search for more Zodiac



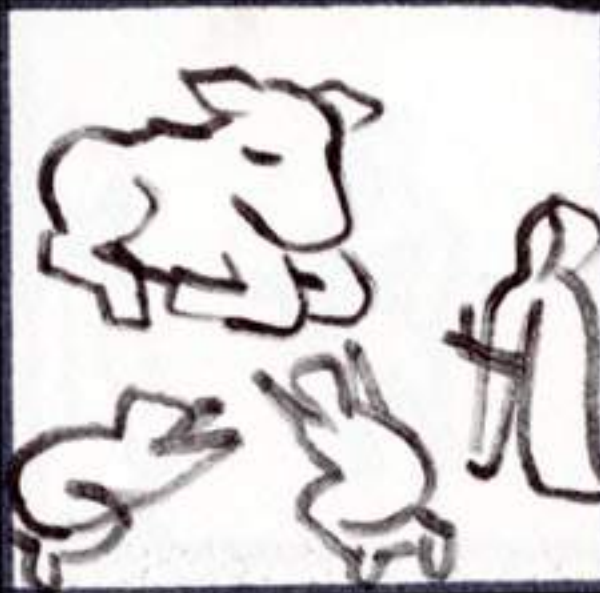
Far away you find the abandoned temple of Virgo



Virgo is weak because people stopped believing in her



So you head to the city to make things right



You find that the people are worshipping a golden calf



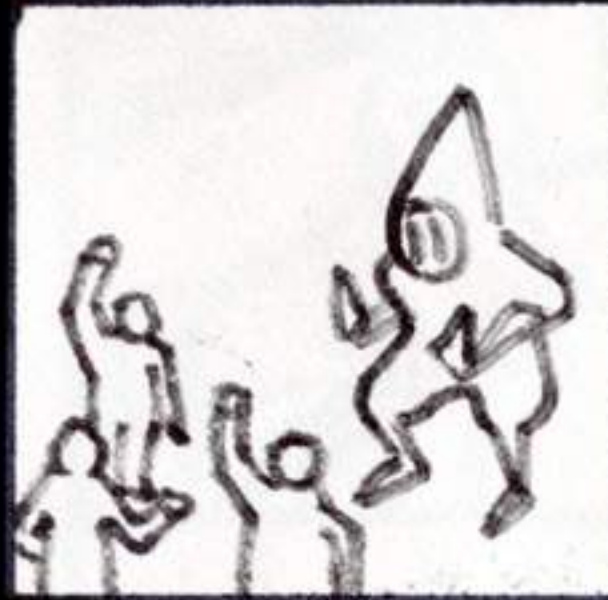
They use children as slaves



And keep them in prisons



So you sneak inside



And free them



Then you preach revolution



And tear down the false idol



So that the children can
erect a statue of Virgo



You rush back to the temple of Virgo



Where she has regained her power



So she gives you her blessing



Which gives you the power



To leap



To the next planet



Venus



Where the king sees
your arrival



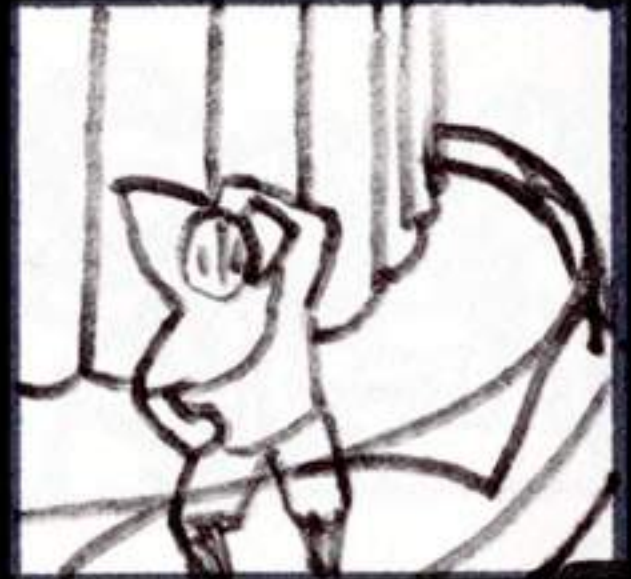
And you crash into a building



Then wake up inside



To discover your
surroundings



Then look out to see



A city of floating islands



You see where you
need to go



So you use ziplines



And monkey bars



And cable cars



To move through the city



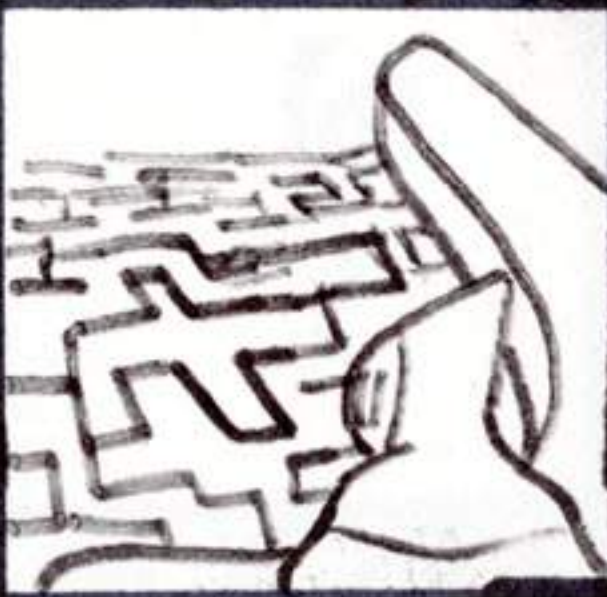
And reach your destination



Where the king greets you



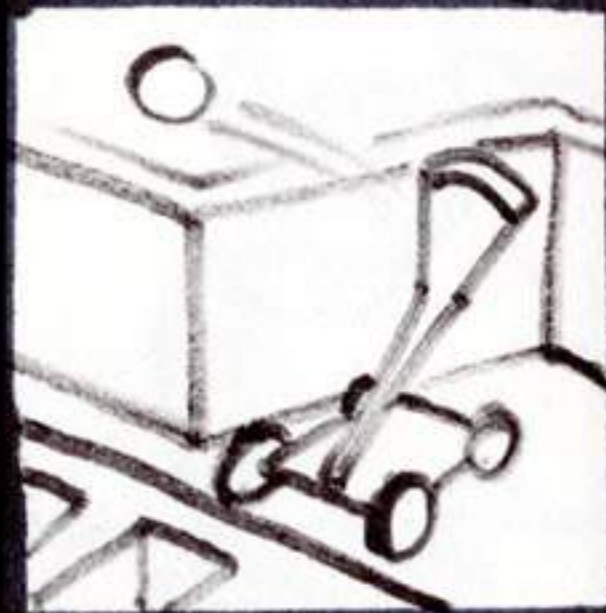
And tells you his city
is under attack



From the labyrinth builders
that live below



Because their islands
sink too low



And the builders think
they are devils



So they strike them
with bombs



And make them crash
into the labyrinth



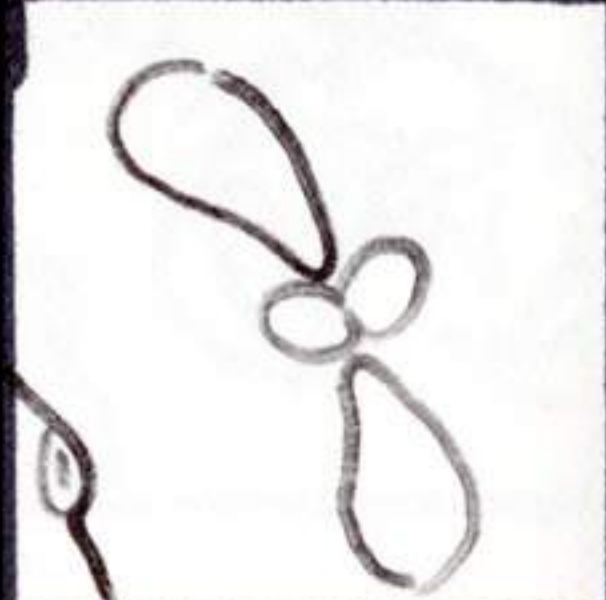
The king sends you
to find answers



At the temple of Libra



The spirit of Libra is
a mass of floating blobs



It says that you must
venture to the ground



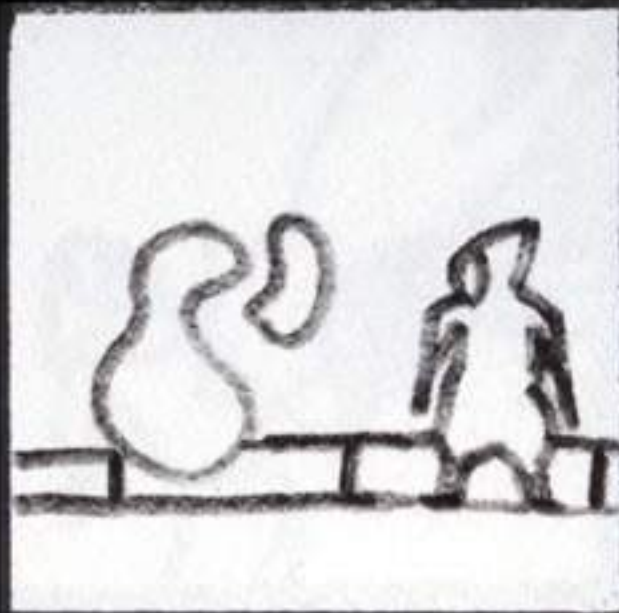
And bring back lift crystals
which are lighter than air



So the islands can
float higher again



"You're not sending me
into no labyrinth" you say



"We'll drop you at the edge
where the builders are" It says



So reluctantly you go



And glide out from
the islands



To reach the camp
of the builders



Where everyone is
working hard



But nobody seems
alarmed by you



So you try to take
some lift crystals



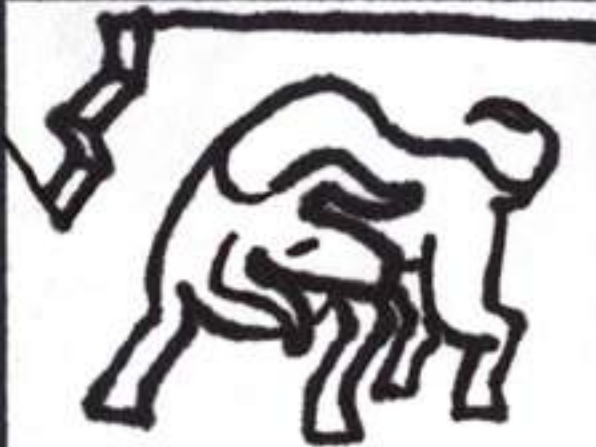
And they promptly
arrest you



Because they use it to fuel
construction equipment



So you ask why they're building stuff anyway



And they say to cage the wild Taurus



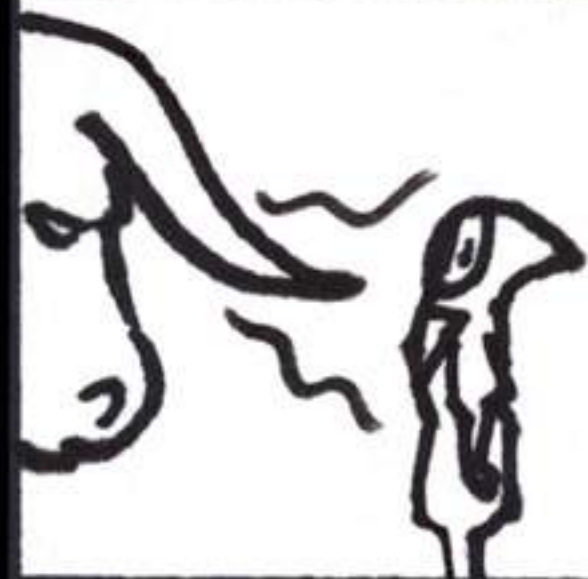
You agree to solve their problem for crystals



So you tame the mighty Taurus



And ride it free of the labyrinth



In return the Taurus gives you its blessing



And the builders give you
crystals to return to Libra



You install the crystals
on each of the islands



And then Libra
gives you its blessing



So that you can fly



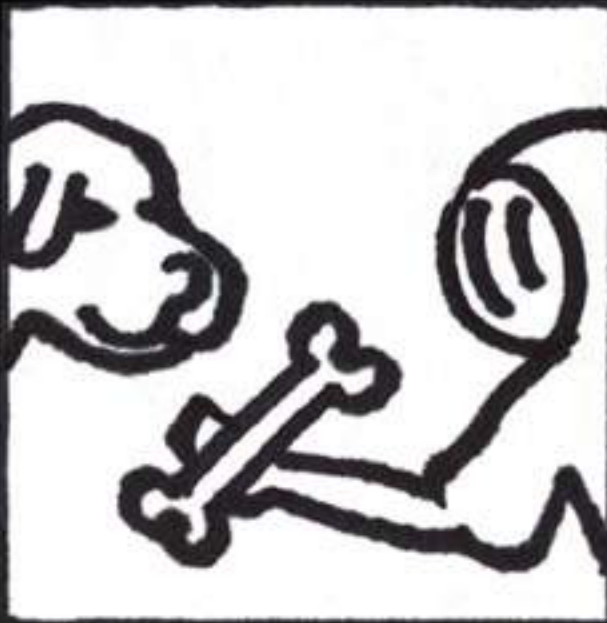
Away from Venus



And land on Earth



Which is home to the spirits
of the Chinese Zodiac



You must help them all
to live in harmony



So that the Chinese dragon
will appear



And fly you to the moon



Where Cancer needs your
help with a buoyancy problem



Then gives you her blessing
for your help



You fly on to Mars



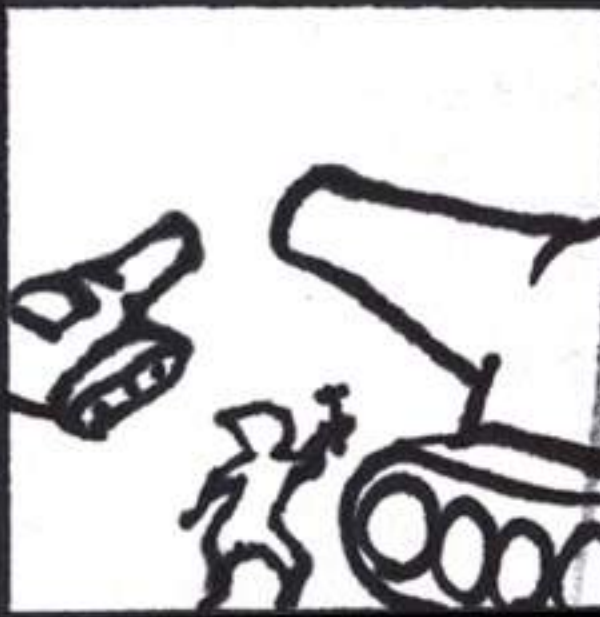
Where a war is going on



You are captured and brought before Aries



So you help him with battle strategy



And building new weapons



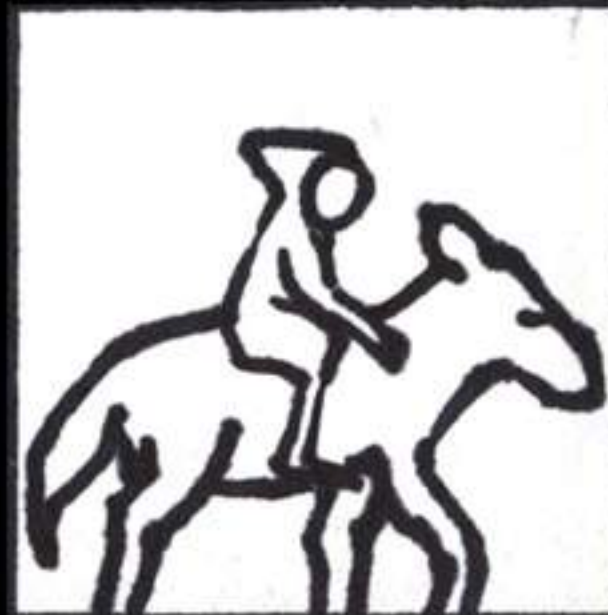
Which are powered by your energy



To emerge victorious



So Aries gives you
his blessing



And sends you on your way



You reach the temple
of Scorpio



And venture inside



Where Scorpio curses you
for destroying his army



He also mocks Leo and calls him weak and prideful



He forces you to question your creator and your origin



Then he leaves Mars without giving his blessing



For this reason you are stranded on Mars



And must return to Aries for help



Aries builds you a giant gun



And launches you
back into space



You enter the gasses of
Jupiter



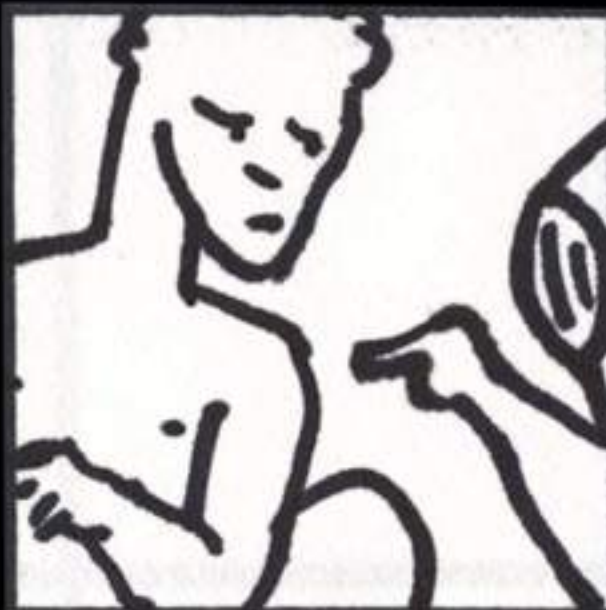
Where you must navigate a
zero gravity environment



To find the temple of
Sagittarius



Where you find him asleep



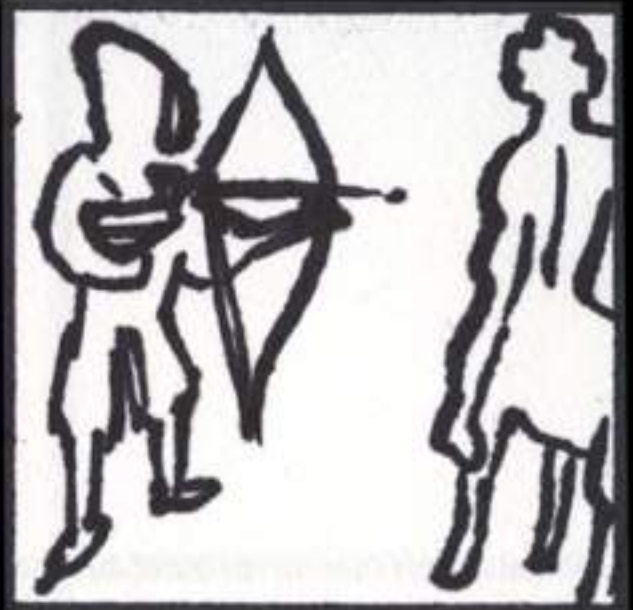
You wake him up and ask
what task he needs done



But he can't think of anything he needs



So you just play a drinking game



And then do some archery



He wins but blesses you 'cause he had fun hanging out



Refreshed, you continue to Saturn



Where Capricorn is just a weed in a cave



So you water it



And give it light



Until it grows to full size



And gives you its blessing



You fly on to Uranus



Where Aquarius is
locked in ice



You use lenses to thaw it
and it gives you its blessing



You fly on to Neptune



Which is covered in oceans



And Pisces looks like
two great whales



You free them from
some fishing nets



And then they give you
their blessing



You leave the water and
continue to Pluto



Where you crash on
rough terrain



Scorpio is lying in wait



"I knew you would come,
as all things do"



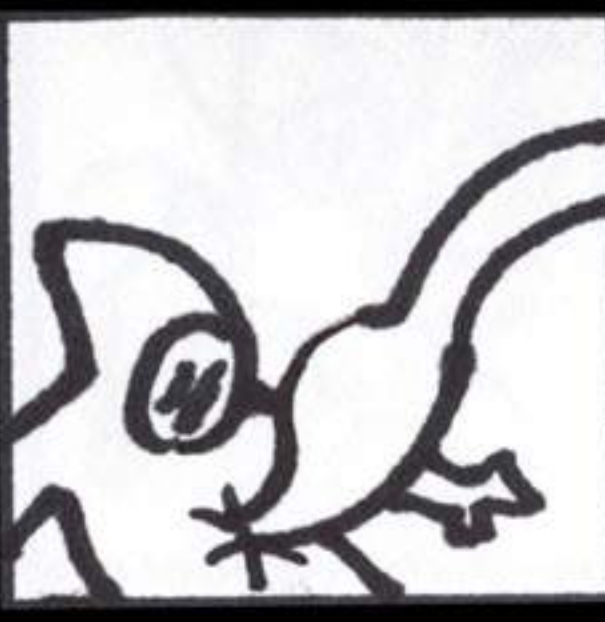
"For Pluto is the
land of the dead"



"Look on those who have
perished at your whim"



"You're no creation of
Leo the weak"



"So let's see what's
really inside"



Your chest bursts open and
sucks Scorpio inside



Then it continues to
suck up the landscape



And then the whole planet
implodes into your body



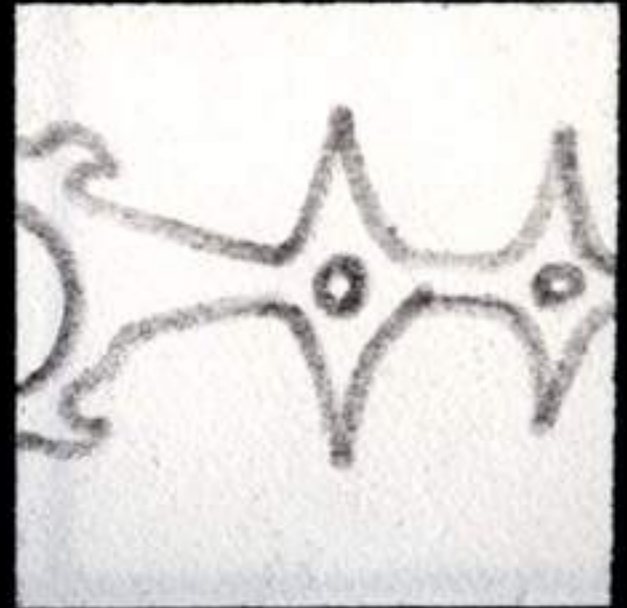
Until you're floating idly
in empty space



Leo senses you've absorbed
the last Zodiac



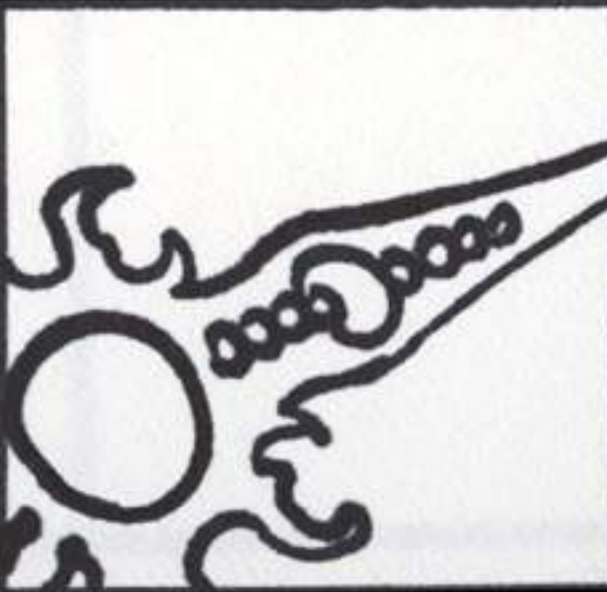
And he activates the
chain of planets



His beam is amplified by
each of the planets



Until it reaches Shale



The beam is focused
just like a gun



Pushing Shale into darkness



Shooting him like a projectile



Into the red giant star



He begins to absorb
the red giant star



And his armor crumbles
to reveal his true form



A black hole

Shale is enraged by the
trickery of Leo. He was used
for the ruthless cause of
destroying a neighboring star.

He is left to question his true
origin and how he came to be
imprisoned by Leo.

Perhaps a journey to the
constellations will yeild more
answers.

The End

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