

But nope! It was a two-foot-long silvery gar! And Eric was cheering—because we never had to go to Texas, and we never needed all that gear, and we never needed Captain Kirk to get ourselves a gar.

And I was jumping up and down. Because Eric was me, losing my garginity. I mean, that's what I was seeing, that's what I was feeling: I was reeling in that gar!

And when he pulled it up on the sand, I grabbed it, just like any fish. And held it up—all two whopping pounds of it.

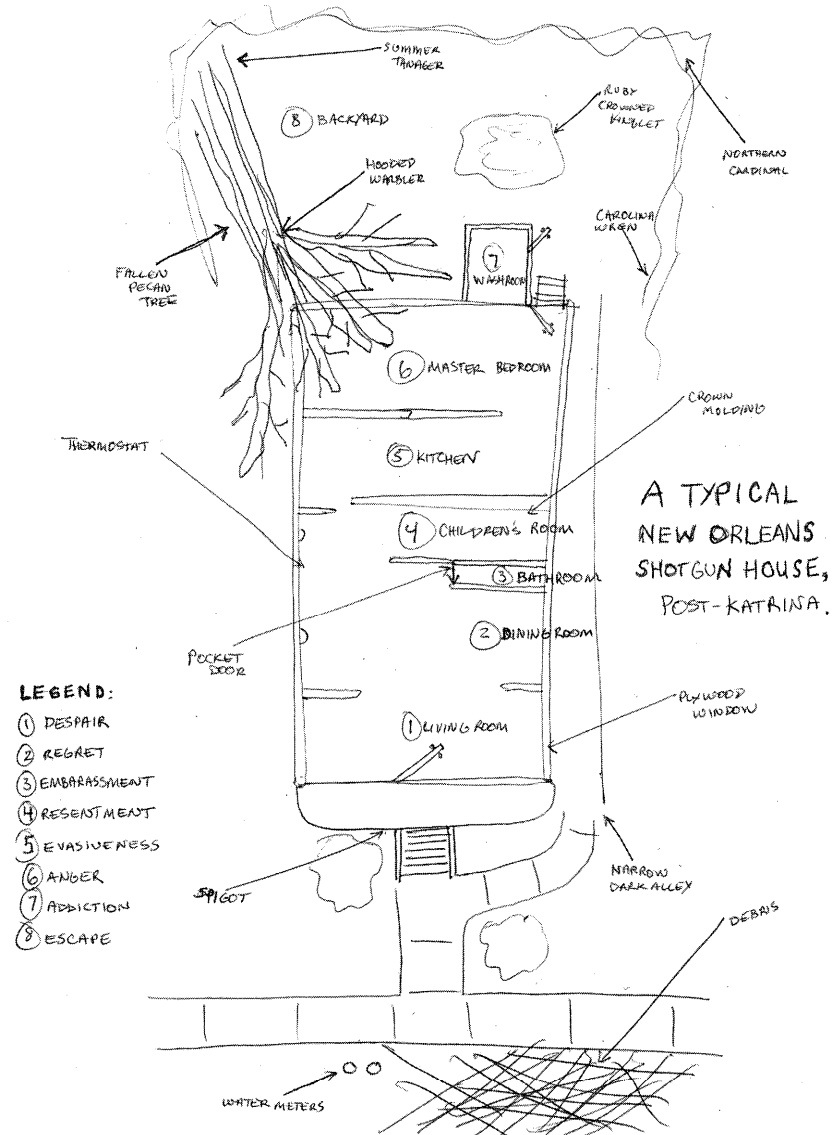
It had black spots down by the tail, which meant it was still in adolescence. And it was serpentine and tubular with hard enamelly diamond-shaped scales. And it was snapping its needly teeth at us.

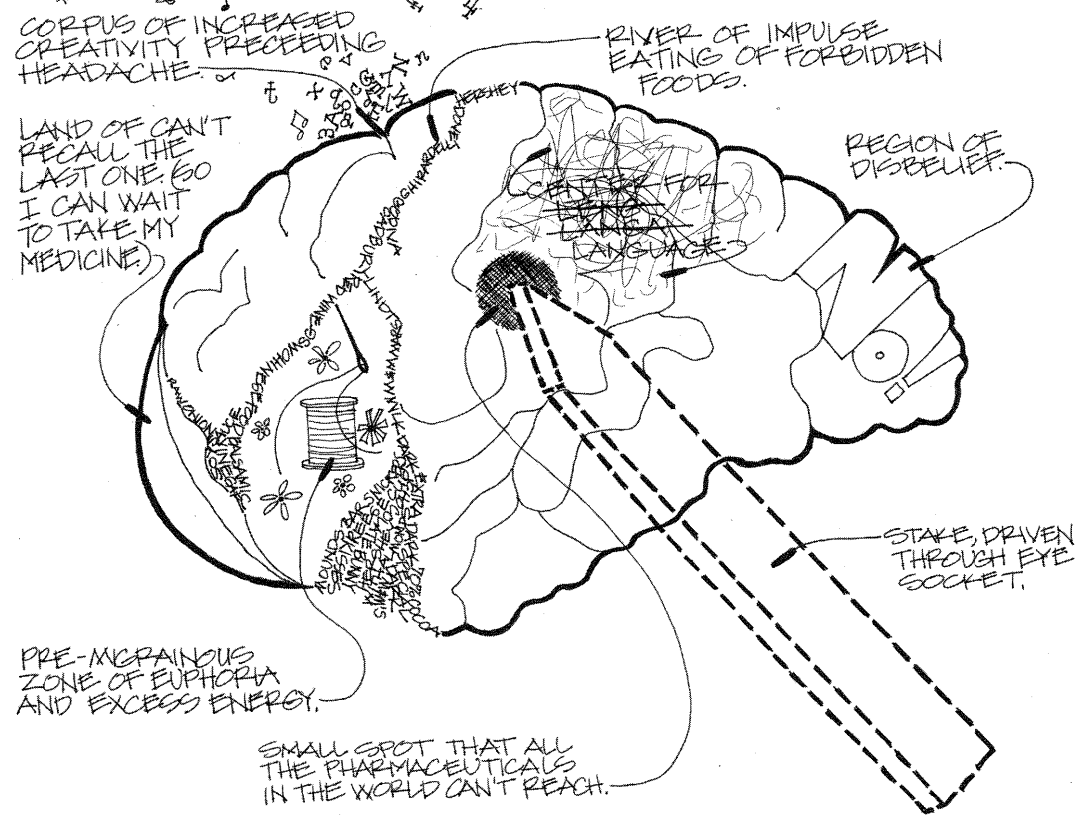
Granted, it hadn't been lurking in the murk for over eighty years—but that didn't matter. What mattered was that this simple little short-nose was as jumbo to us as any three-hundred-pound duck-munching gator gar and enough to make it all worthwhile.

And so we let it go. So it could make its way through the tributaries of America and propagate its species so that gar could take back the rivers and streams they used to rule before dams and development became the lay of the land.

It was unlikely, though, that this skinny gar could make a difference, but I like to think it could. And I also like to think that when it porpoised a few seconds later and slapped the river with its tail, it was waving goodbye—rather than giving us the finger.

## Shotgun House MATT ROBERTS





MIGRAINE BRAIN MAP



# The Writers' Retreat

DEBORAH FRIES



When using any driving directions or map, it's a good idea to do a reality check and make sure the road still exists....

# Tiny Man

SYDNEY LEA

for CSB and JWJL

## i. Homing to Vermont: Lines Written in Early Spring

The world stays scared to death even here in Zurich, where I wait for hours to clear security, and note in a parallel line the tiny man, scale model, as it were: suspicious tan and business suit and requisite attaché. He worries his watch, then furtively adjusts—as if no one might notice—his male equipment. *The child is father of the man.* Our mighty giant baby son is twenty-two. Once that baby and one of his cousins walked our woods-road with us and sang a strange nonce ditty:

*Trees have eyes.* What did they mean? They grew, the kids. Grew up. Back then as they chanted their chant, we all tramped on to the measure of its strains. The speed of the decades puts my plane's to shame. Skunk cabbages shocked that spring along a freshet, the sighted trees' pent leaves would burst wide open within the week. I imagine some crazy person who dreams just now of my jet burst into flames. I try to imagine that for the tiny man all time stopped dead. Ideal—or rather illusion, frail as warblers among that old spring's limbs.

What is it, life? For me. For him. For them.

## ii. Late Summer, Cedar Waxwings, Northern New Hampshire

I slither the kayak gingerly into the eddy, snub it against the cutbank, drop an anchor.