



*Brontosaurus*  
illustrated

by *Leanne Grabel*

# **Brontosaurus Illustrated**

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**Cover and book design:**  
Robin Chilstrom & Leanne Gabel  
Illustrations by Leanne Gabel

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First Edition



## Chapter 10

### Saying Rape

"I feel like, if there's an elephant in the room, I'd really like to start off by introducing the elephant in the room. And sometimes it's funny."

- Louis Theroux

Daniel and I flew to San Francisco that evening. Daniel's parents picked us up as planned at the airport. We drove the half hour to Redwood City in silence. Once Daniel's mother asked us if we were hungry, but we both said no.

Then we were sitting in his parents' den waiting for dinner. We were once again together in large, soft chairs. I was staring at my arms and the arms of the chair. The inside of my skull was grinding and churning. The load was too big.



"My parents won't be able to handle it if they know what really happened. Don't say anything. They really can't handle it," Daniel said.

"I get it! Jesus. Don't worry about it. You're pissing me off."



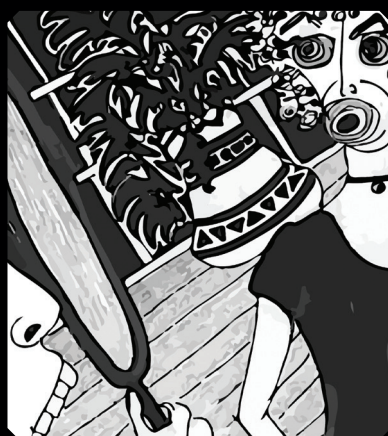
Not being allowed to talk about it made me feel like I was wearing a chinstrap. That gag. Like I was swimming underwater wearing nose plugs, a chinstrap and a gag. And a full-body ThunderShirt.

I was worried about having to say that word “rape” the next day. Out loud. I’d have to say it to the receptionist. I’d have to say it to the nurse. I’d have to say it to the doctor. I wasn’t sure I could say it. I still hadn’t said it out loud.

Daniel dropped me off at the campus health center at eight the next morning. I walked up to the receptionist and whispered,

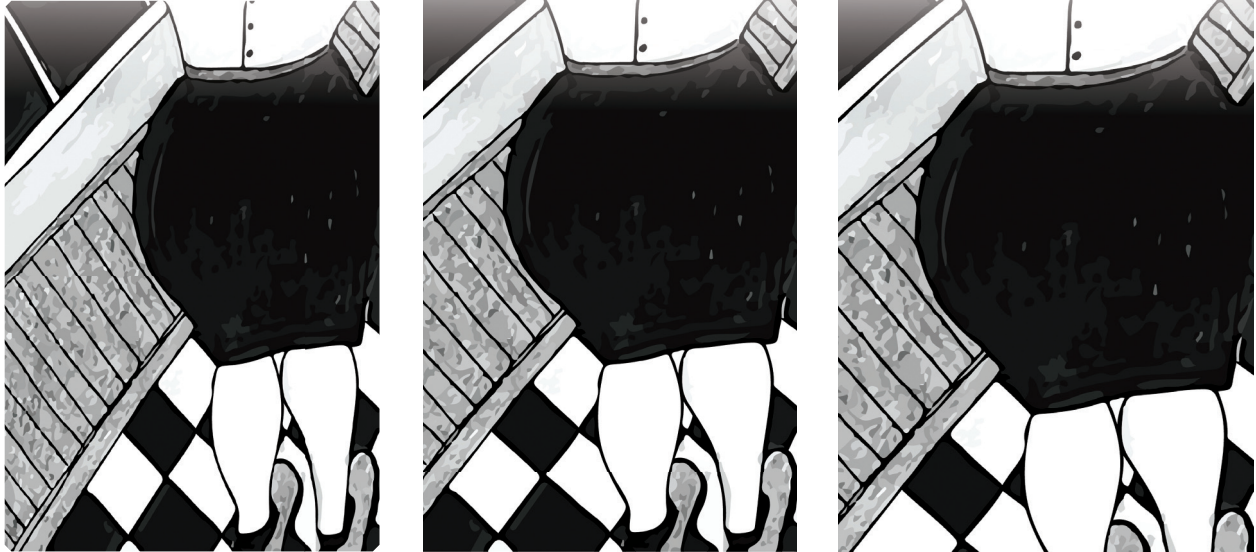
“I was just raped in Mexico. I need to get checked out.  
I don’t know what I’m supposed to do.”

“WHAT?????”



The receptionist raised both eyebrows and pleated her forehead. Her face turned into a rugged landscape of canyons. She squinted at me. She held her squint.

“WHAT?????”



I sank down into a lobby chair, seeped in shame. I felt exhausted. I saw a girl I sort of knew from my Literature of the Revolution class. She came over.

“Good to see you. I thought I was the only one left on campus,” she said.

I nodded, sighed deeply. I caricatured a shrug and walked into the bathroom.

I came out and the receptionist told me to follow a nurse back into one of the examining rooms. The nurse had an enormous round ass. And her tight black skirt pulled tightly across it. It was distracting. Her bottom was hard to ignore.

Then the doctor slunk in. He was skinny and stink-faced. He started staring at the nurse’s round ass too, completely ignoring me.

**“I got raped the day before yesterday in Baja on spring break,” I whispered.**

**“WHAT???”**

**“I got raped two days ago.”**

He pulled on his latex gloves, snapping and shaping each finger, over and over, like an asshole.

I lay on the table with my legs in the stirrups. My legs began to shake and slap together. I started girding my ass, clicking my tongue, trying to get my legs back under control. They wouldn't stop shaking.

The doctor said nothing. He just screwed in the cold metal speculum. Then he dug in me with a Q-tip the size of his forearm. In fact it looked like his forearm.



“Get dressed,” he said slowly peeling off his gloves. He walked toward the door, turned around and said, “What were you doing there anyway?”

The nurse brought in two bottles of pills—antibiotics and morning-after pills. Then she nudged me out the door. There was no information sharing. No referrals. No pats. No hugs. No songs of reassurance. And no analysis.

“You’re lucky to be alive,” the nurse hissed. Then she round-assed out the door.

*I felt like a fungus.*

## Chapter 11

# Please Pass the Analgesic

"Dissociation takes a variety of forms, one of which is analgesia, becoming numb, both physically and emotionally. Analgesia can be experienced as a physical or emotional numbing. The body may feel frozen or weightless."

- Dusty Miller,  
*Women Who Hurt Themselves*







I walked back to my trailer and sat on the couch. It was an ugly, itchy burnt orange tweed. I sat in a strange square stance—and trance. It was quiet. There were probably thirteen people on the entire campus. And that's how it was going to be for days. Everyone was off skiing in Switzerland or snorkeling in Maui or Belize or home in the bosom of Mother and Father in their big white houses with big white columns and stairways and swimming pools and tennis courts.

The next day, my mother and brother came to Palo Alto to have lunch with me. We went to a woodsy tavern in the foothills, a few miles out of town. I could tell by the slightly awkward twist of my mother's pretty lips that she didn't have a clue about how to act or what to say. Neither did my brother. Neither did I.

We sat outside and all ordered the same thing—chef salad with blue cheese dressing. It came with a beverage and a roll. I got coffee, my mother got tea and my brother got a Coke.



We were all trying as hard as we could to find the right things to say. There was clinking. My mother and brother stared at me. They were waiting for direction. I was waiting for direction.

I started doing a sort of warped stand-up routine, like Richard Lewis. Self-deprecating. Off balance.

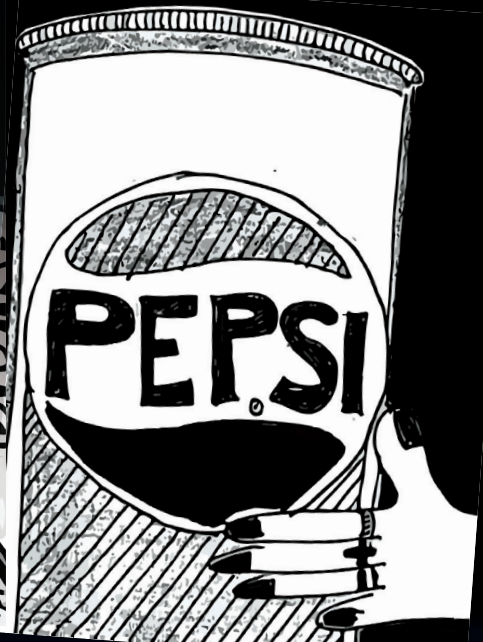
"You know during the whole thing," I said, "I couldn't stop farting. And every time I farted, I said, 'Excuse me.' Over and over. It was ridiculous."

"And, Mom, at one point they handed me a regular Pepsi and I didn't drink it because it wasn't diet and I was worried about the calories." That was joke number two.

"You know the . . . (*shrug*) part was actually the best part of the whole thing," I said. "Comparatively. Because that's when they put the weapons down. The weapons were the worst part. The knife in my guts, the rifle in my face. That was the worst."



I was waiting to die.





My voice cracked. But I quickly cleared my throat as if I had something tangible stuck in it—some stray shred of red cabbage or carrot. We all took multiple bites of our salads. We clinked our bowls and silverware. We wiped our faces and hands on our napkins. No one spoke. We just chewed and clinked.

I kept laughing on and off. And I kept reassuring my mother and brother I was fine. My legs shivered a couple times. But I hid them under the tablecloth. And then looked under the table as if there were actually something under there.

After lunch the three of us hugged stiffly with flat hands as if that final curling inward of the fingertips was just too hard, too tender. We were a family uncomfortable with touching. Then they drove back to Stockton.

I walked back to the trailer and sat on the couch. I felt like a flat-faced figurine in the vault of the dead.



In  
the vault  
of the  
dead.

I sat on the couch for six days. The campus was deserted. I was waiting for my friend Thea to come back. I figured Thea would know what I was supposed to do. Thea could suggest how I should think and feel.



Jill and Daniel stated emphatically they did not want anyone knowing the truth about Baja. Ever. Instead, my instinctual inclination was to tell everybody. The story poured out of me as if operated by my autonomic nervous system—like the farting and shaking. The story seeped like a secretion through the checkpoints set up by so-called social propriety.

I thought the telling and retelling of the story relieved things. It diluted the trauma. It was an optimistic theory. I felt like my words were my dependable workers. They were sturdy, with impressive arms and thighs. They excavated my huge canyon of terror with each telling. They carted off the rocks of my terror with each telling. They hauled it all away.

## Chapter 12

# More Shaking

"Shaking is a result of an activated fight or flight system—an evolutionary tool that's meant to keep you safe in times of danger. During intense anxiety, your body is flooded with adrenaline. Adrenaline is pure energy and your body as a result."

[calmclinic.com](http://calmclinic.com)





“I wonder when this is going to go away,” I said to Phil. We were lying on his bed in Ecology House. We were about to make out. It was two weeks after the rape. School had started again. Phil and I had just begun dating right before spring break. This was our first time together since spring break. Phil was about to kiss me, but my entire body started shaking. My teeth began to chatter. Then my legs again started flapping together like the hide wings of a bellows.

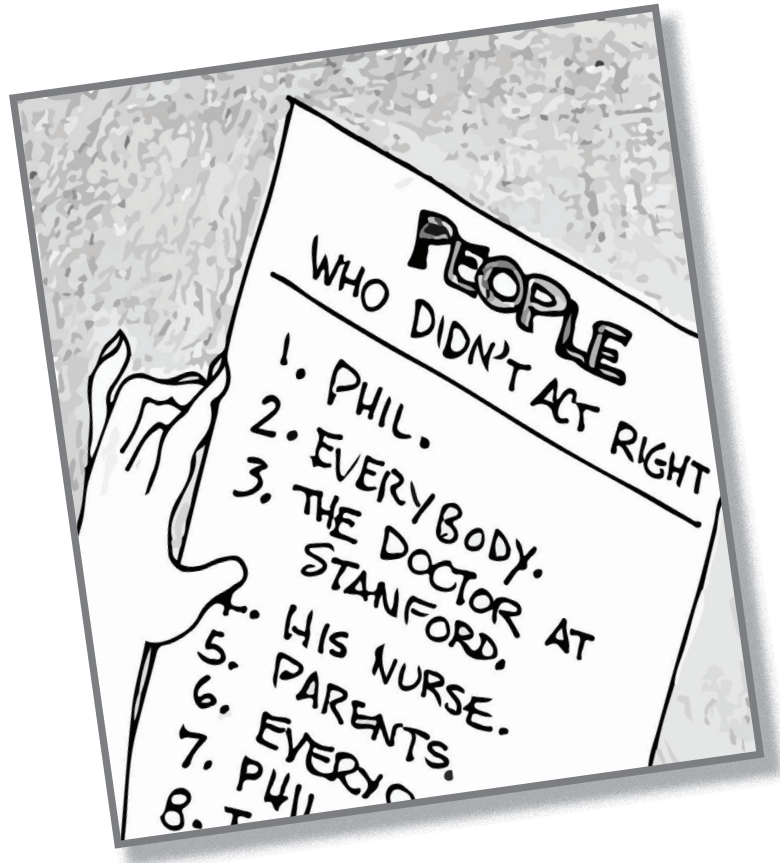
I could tell that Phil, the son of two psychologists, was horrified.

“Jesus Christ!” Phil spat. “What’s wrong with your legs? What’s wrong with you? Stop shaking!” Phil had beautiful lime-green eyes rimmed by thick black lashes. But his eyes were aflame with judgment.

I told Phil a two-minute version of the rape. The two-minute version had become the official version. I used the same words I always used. Made the same jokes.



Then I put all my energy into willing my legs to stop shaking. I gritted, clenched and girded. But my legs just kept flapping together. They sounded exactly as if they were applauding, which, of course was the last thing they were doing.



Phil jumped off the bed and stared at me as if I were a plumbing leak. “You need professional help.” He started buttoning up his cardigan. Then he left. I was glad. In fact, Phil was now at the top of the list of people I hated because they didn’t act right when I told them I got raped. I don’t know how I wanted people to act. But it definitely wasn’t like Phil.

## Chapter 13

# Details

*"My religion consists of a humble admiration of the unlimitable superior who reveals himself in the slight details."*

*- Albert Einstein*



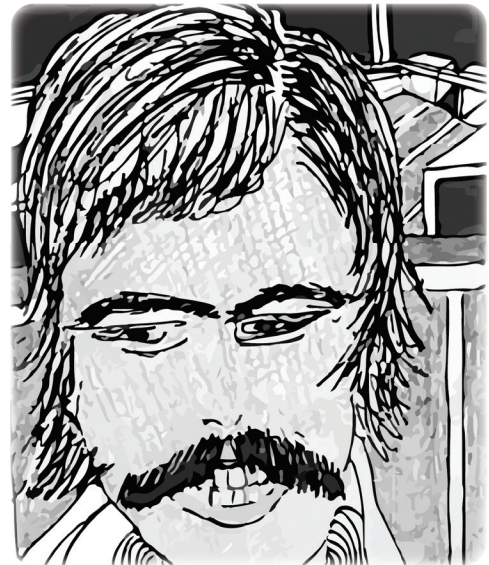




I got raped fifty years ago. It was so long ago, people who weren't even born then are already dead. And they have been for years. Richard Nixon was President when I got raped. The Vietnam War was breaking our hearts onscreen in real time. This was new for war. There was hot animosity between decades. And races. And sexes. And philosophies.

Sometimes it seemed like everything was changing. But not much actually changed. There was progress for women. But sometimes, especially now, it seems like the so-called Sixties Revolution was just a style statement, a college prank.

Gas cost thirty-five cents per gallon fifty years ago. Stamps cost eight cents. Minimum wage was \$1.45. Median household income was \$9,012.38. Technology was just beginning to crown. Prozac and the first cell phones came on the market. Pong came out. Mark Spitz was a small-town Jewish girl's American hero. Angela Davis was heroic with her articulation, her fabulous hairdo and her ethical stance that put her in jail.





Pablo Neruda won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1972. Jim Morrison and Igor Stravinsky died. John Lennon and Yoko Ono hosted *The Mike Douglas Show* for a week. *A Clockwork Orange* came out. Elvis, grown greasy and gaudy like the fry upon which he gorged, played Madison Square Garden. His sideburns looked like pork chops. Eminem was born. The Watergate scandal exploded. You've heard these details a million times by now.

In 1972, I was a naïve rube. I was a funny naïve rube. I was sour, dour, chubby, shiny-faced and explosive. Looks and personality were not my strong suits at that point in my life. Puberty had slapped me silly and it took me years to get over it. I grew bloated, literally and figuratively. I was blurry about just about almost everything. But I was excellent at disgruntlement. And judgment. I was loaded with it. And I was good at jokes.

But I had no vision. And I couldn't hold on to an aesthetic. It was discouraging. There were shadows in my sight and puddles at my feet. It was the brine of my disappointments. I was slipping in the brine. The grace of my childhood was long gone. I was leading with smudge. My jokes were only funny to me.

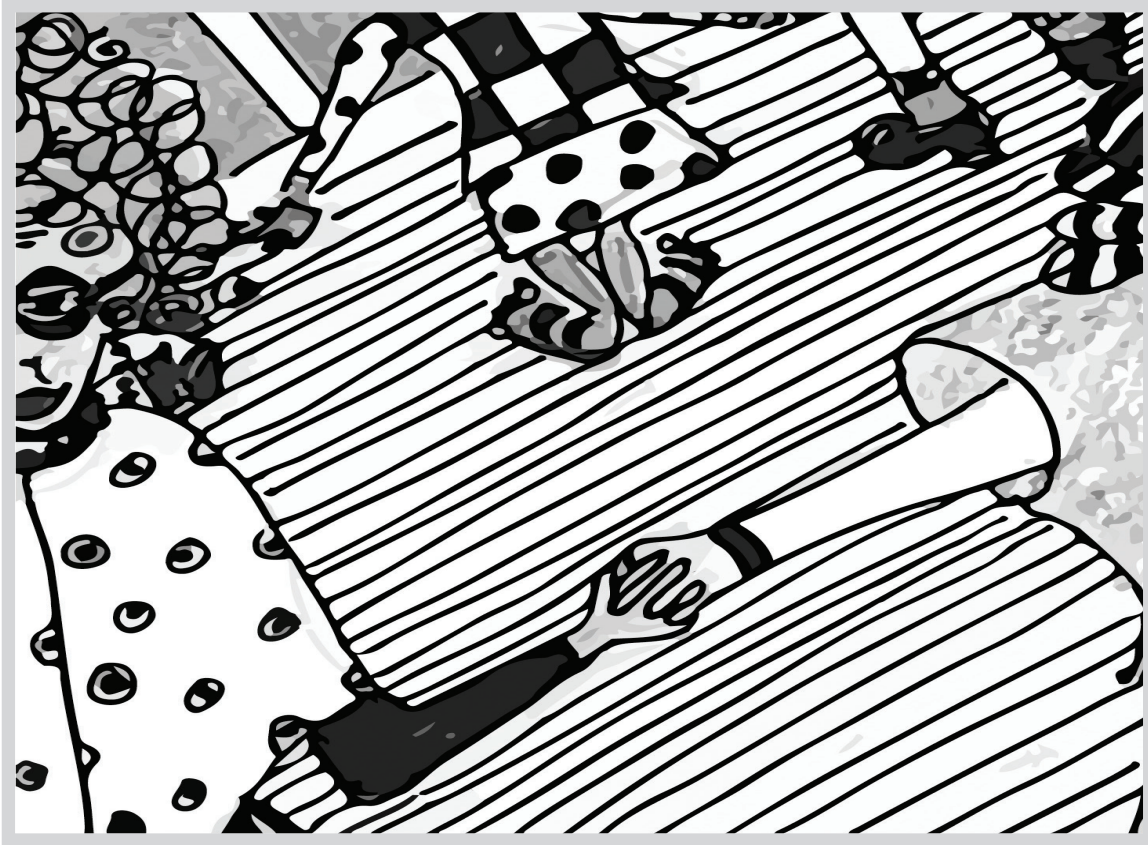


MARVIN  
GAYE

Chapter 14  
**Therapy**

"Darling,  
I know you'll be there  
to relieve me  
The love you give will free me  
And if you don't know  
the things you're dealing  
oh, I can tell you, darling,  
oh, it's sexual healing."

- Marvin Gaye



As I mentioned earlier, fifty years ago there were no kind, braless, feminist clinicians in Birkenstocks and Guatemalan ponchos offering their soft hands to generously lead me onto the road to recovery after rape. No cushioning. No talk of trauma. No talk of healing. No talk of wounds. Nobody really looked me in the eye and said they were sorry (except Thea). Nobody acknowledged the ugliness. Nobody gave me advice. I'd never known anyone who got raped. I'd never even heard of anyone.



No one suggested therapy to me. People didn't really say *therapy* out loud back then, except as in *physical therapy*. People barely said *breast*. I still can't say it without feeling embarrassed. And anyway, I was pretty sure I didn't need therapy. I was fine. I just needed to start having regular sex, as soon as possible. I figured that way, things would balance out. It

was a mathematical theory, really. An abundance of regular sex ASAP—the kind I'd been hearing about and thinking about and fantasizing about and planning for years—would start evening out my sexual graph. Of course I was starting out very low on the negative scale, halfway to Hell.

But I thought it was a good and obvious plan.  
And it was homeopathic.