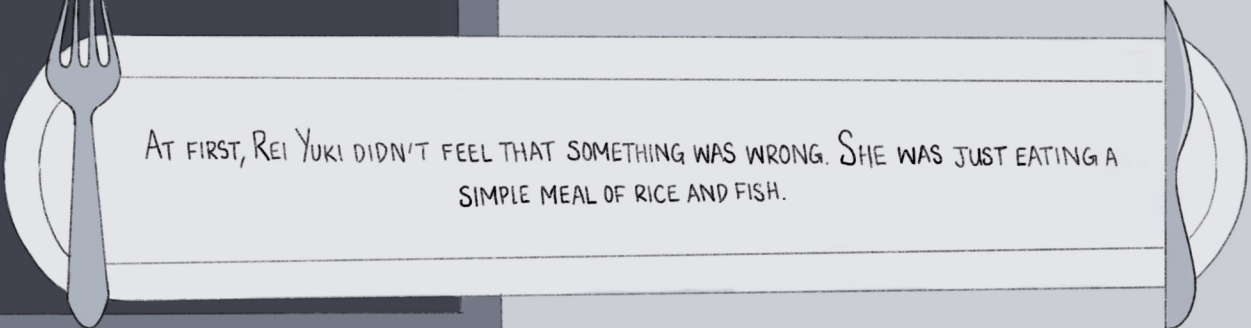


AN ENCOUNTER WITH BIOMEDICINE

A STORY ABOUT A CHOLECYSTECTOMY

NICHOLE WONG
ANTHRO 134A
FALL 2018



AT FIRST, REI YUKI DIDN'T FEEL THAT SOMETHING WAS WRONG. SHE WAS JUST EATING A SIMPLE MEAL OF RICE AND FISH.

REI YUKI
↳ 55-YEAR OLD MOTHER
↳ IMMIGRANT FROM HONG KONG



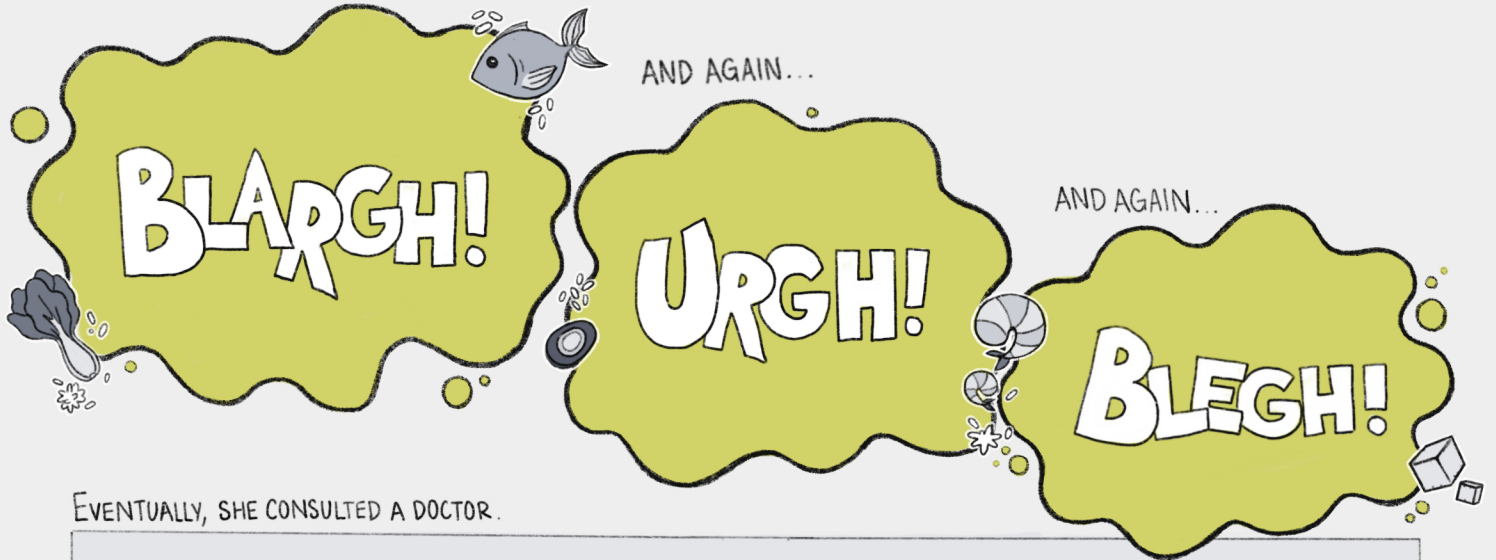
BUT AFTER DINNER, SHE SUDDENLY FELT A FILLING SENSATION IN HER CHEST THAT NEEDED TO BE RELEASED.



SHE DIDN'T FIND THE VOMITING TOO CONCERNING AT FIRST.



BUT THE VOMITING HAPPENED AGAIN...



AND AGAIN...

AND AGAIN...

EVENTUALLY, SHE CONSULTED A DOCTOR.



THE MEDICATION REI WAS INITIALLY OFFERED DIDN'T MAKE HER FEEL BETTER. INSTEAD, HER CONDITION GOT WORSE.

THE VOMITING CONTINUED.

BLARGH!

SOMETIMES, IT HAPPENED ONE HOUR AFTER EATING. OTHER TIMES, IT HAPPENED THREE TO FOUR HOURS AFTER EATING.

SHE OFTEN FOUND HERSELF WOKEN UP IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT BY THE URGE TO THROW UP.

SHE WOULD WAKE UP TIRED THE NEXT DAY.

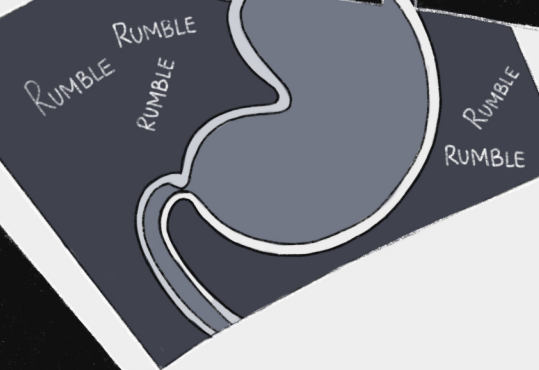


EVENTUALLY, SHE BECAME AFRAID OF LEAVING HER HOUSE.

(JUST THINK ABOUT ALL OF THE MISSED SOCIAL OPPORTUNITIES!)



THE EASIEST SOLUTION SEEMED TO BE NOT EATING.



AND REI STILL DIDN'T KNOW WHAT WAS WRONG WITH HER. SHE NEEDED SOMEONE TO GIVE HER ILLNESS A NAME TO GIVE MAKE SENSE OF THE EXPERIENCE.*

* (MEDICALIZATION)

EVENTUALLY, SHE CONSULTED A NEW DOCTOR.





FOR THE AMERICAN DOCTOR, IT WAS STRANGE THAT REI WASN'T INTERESTED IN REMOVING THE GALLSTONES IMMEDIATELY. BUT REI GREW UP WITH BRITISH BIOMEDICINE. UNLIKE AMERICAN BIOMEDICINE, BRITISH BIOMEDICINE EMPHASIZES CAUTION.

IS SURGERY THE BEST WAY TO TREAT GALLSTONES?

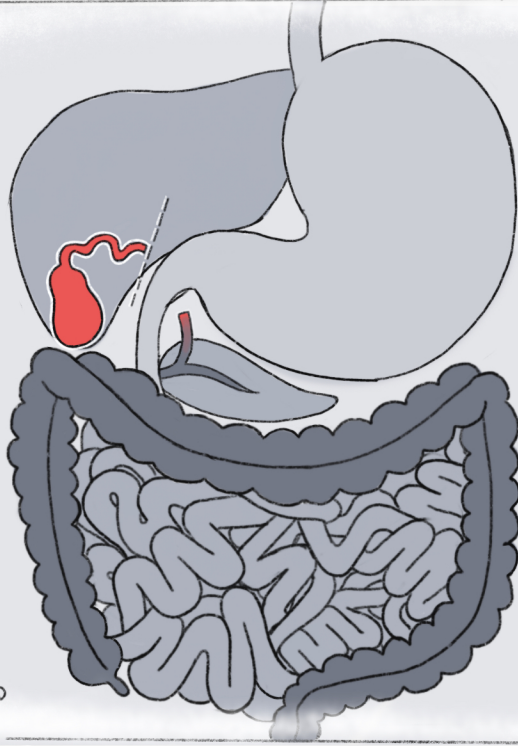
DOES MY GALLBLADDER NEED TO BE REMOVED NOW?

COULD I TRY TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM WITH SOMETHING LESS INVASIVE?

DO I REALLY HAVE TO HAVE THE SURGERY RIGHT NOW?



ON SATURDAY AT 7AM, REI HAD HER GALLBLADDER REMOVED AT THE HOSPITAL. THE SURGERY TOOK ABOUT THREE HOURS.



WHEN SHE WOKE UP, SHE WAS SO TIRED AND DIZZY THAT SHE COULDN'T EVEN SIT UP.

THE ONLY THINGS THAT HURT, THOUGH, WERE THE THREE SCARS ON HER STOMACH.



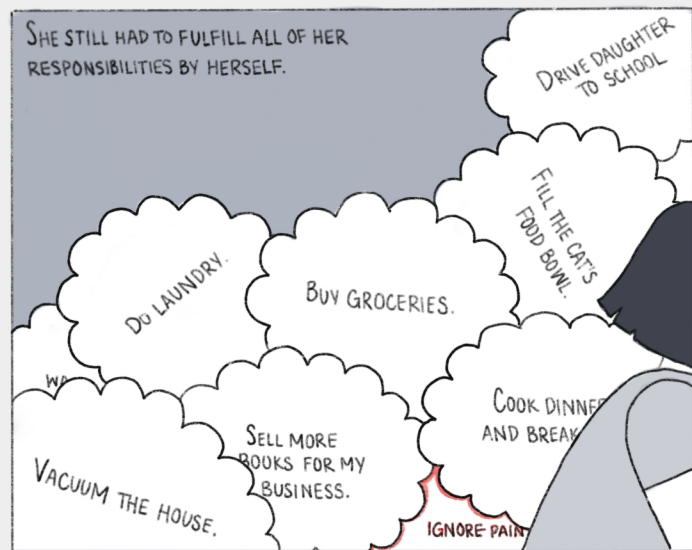
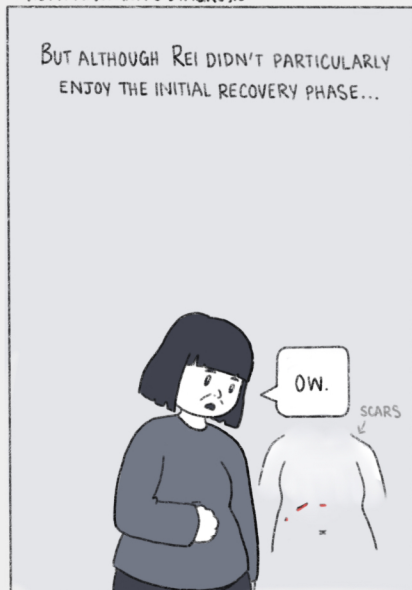
REI WAS RELEASED FROM THE HOSPITAL THE NEXT DAY WITH BOTTLES OF ANTIBIOTICS AND PAINKILLERS.



NORMALLY, WHEN YOU'RE ILL*, YOU HAVE CERTAIN RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES.



*ILLNESS DEFINED FROM A PATIENT'S SUFFERING, NOT A PHYSICIAN'S DIAGNOSIS.



WHILE THE RECOVERY COULD HAVE GONE BETTER, REI THOUGHT HER TREATMENT WAS SATISFACTORY.
UPON REFLECTION, SHE THINKS THAT MAINTAINING GOOD HEALTH MEANS...

EATING A HEALTHY DIET,

HAVING ENOUGH INFORMATION
TO MAKE
INFORMED DECISIONS,

AND
PAYING ATTENTION TO YOUR BODY.

AND SHE ALSO THANKS BIOMEDICINE FOR LETTING HER LIVE A MORE COMFORTABLE LIFE.