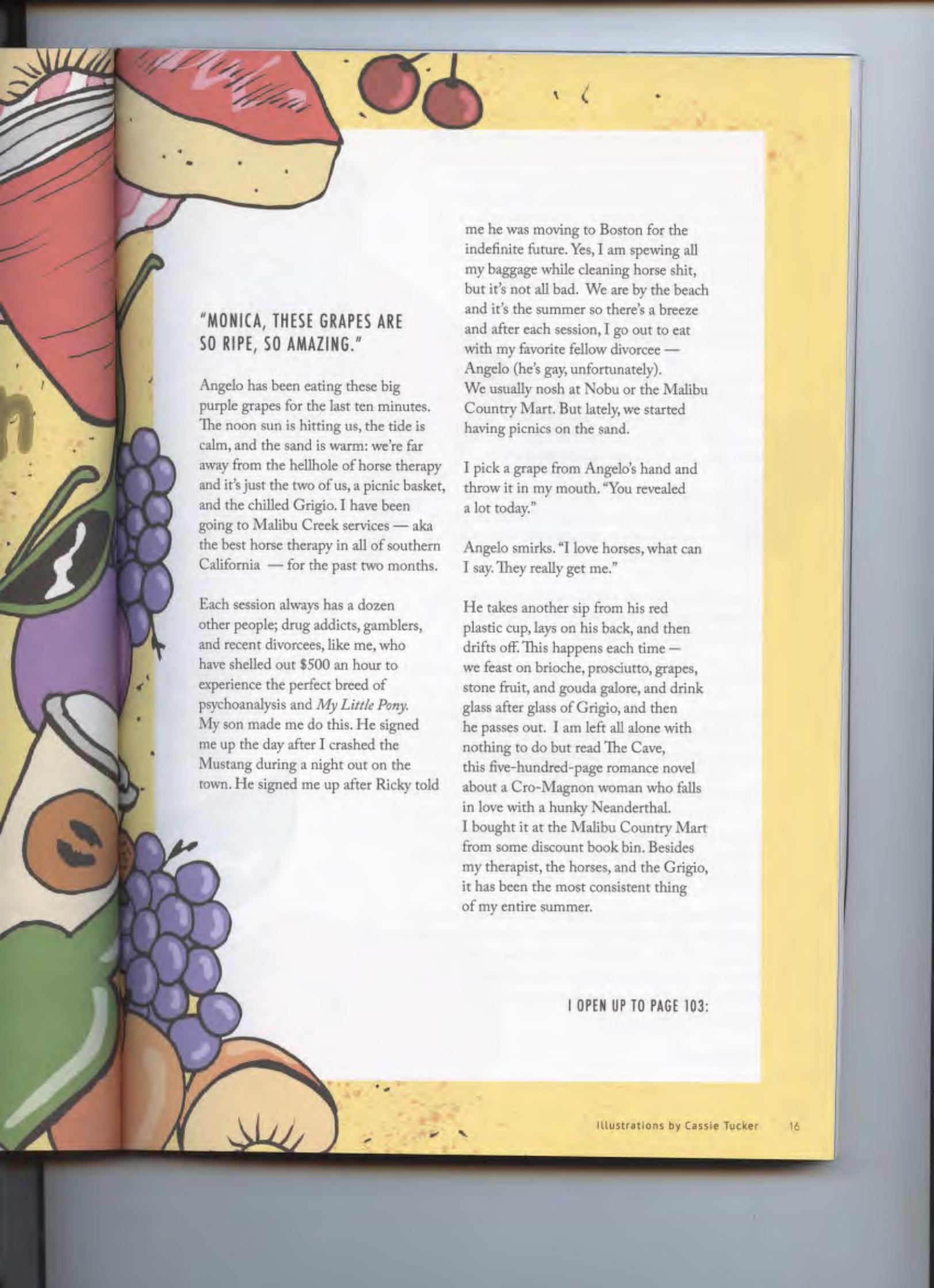


Cro-Magnon Masibu

BY: DANIEL
SPIELBERGER

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"MONICA, THESE GRAPES ARE SO RIPE, SO AMAZING."

Angelo has been eating these big purple grapes for the last ten minutes. The noon sun is hitting us, the tide is calm, and the sand is warm: we're far away from the hellhole of horse therapy and it's just the two of us, a picnic basket, and the chilled Grigio. I have been going to Malibu Creek services — aka the best horse therapy in all of southern California — for the past two months.

Each session always has a dozen other people; drug addicts, gamblers, and recent divorcees, like me, who have shelled out \$500 an hour to experience the perfect breed of psychoanalysis and *My Little Pony*. My son made me do this. He signed me up the day after I crashed the Mustang during a night out on the town. He signed me up after Ricky told

me he was moving to Boston for the indefinite future. Yes, I am spewing all my baggage while cleaning horse shit, but it's not all bad. We are by the beach and it's the summer so there's a breeze and after each session, I go out to eat with my favorite fellow divorcee — Angelo (he's gay, unfortunately). We usually nosh at Nobu or the Malibu Country Mart. But lately, we started having picnics on the sand.

I pick a grape from Angelo's hand and throw it in my mouth. "You revealed a lot today."

Angelo smirks. "I love horses, what can I say. They really get me."

He takes another sip from his red plastic cup, lays on his back, and then drifts off. This happens each time — we feast on brioche, prosciutto, grapes, stone fruit, and gouda galore, and drink glass after glass of Grigio, and then he passes out. I am left all alone with nothing to do but read *The Cave*, this five-hundred-page romance novel about a Cro-Magnon woman who falls in love with a hunky Neanderthal. I bought it at the Malibu Country Mart from some discount book bin. Besides my therapist, the horses, and the Grigio, it has been the most consistent thing of my entire summer.

I OPEN UP TO PAGE 103:

Grotta bent over and started skinning the fur off of the squirrel. The sun had begun to set. After peeling off the fur from the legs, she gathered some logs and started making her own fire. Minutes later, she was watching the squirrel roast on a spit, eagerly awaiting her dinner. Grotta didn't mind being alone. She would rather be in the cave than the village, where she'd be expected to gather berries or bake bread for the hunters.

*From the distance, she heard a growl.
"GRRRRRRRRRRRRRRR!"*

Grotta turned around and there he was — Uluzzi, the hairy, brawny beast, was entering the cave. It had been five days since she had seen him last. Since he had helped her skin the fur off a squirrel. Since they almost kissed. Since they almost ignited another kind of fire.

Grotta whimpered. "Oh Uluzzi, I told you the hunters were on to you! I told you that after Cavallo caught his wife with one of yours, he threatened to destroy the last remnants of your kind."

Uluzzi ignored Grotta and started walking over to her. The embers of flame reflected off his thick brown fur, illuminating his uncanny aura.

"Oh Uluzzi."

He was tall and he was magnificent. He picked up the stick over the fire, took a bite of the finely burnt squirrel and then growled as blood dripped down his hairy neck.

"Oh Uluzzi!"

*Grotta placed one hand on his shoulder and told him.
"Uluzzi, let's just sit and have a meal. I want to give you pleasure. I want to give you my own feast."*

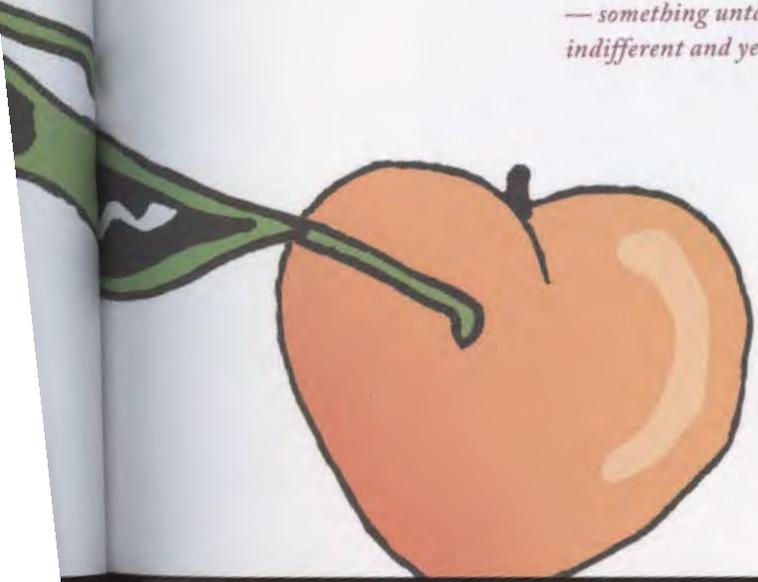
Uluzzi made a barking sound and then followed Grotta's commands. She sat down after Uluzzi, slowly scooting towards him. The closer she got, the stronger his scent of sweat and soil. He took another bite of the squirrel — a burst of blood sprayed on her face, landing on her breasts and eager thighs.

"Oh Uluzzi!"





Grotta couldn't help it anymore. Moving with confidence, she bit into the squirrel. With the crisp meat hanging between her teeth and blood coating her lips, she leaned in and waited for Uluzzi to make the next move. He grasped the meat with his long, wet tongue, quickly masticating it before kissing her. She wrapped her arms around his trunk-like neck and passion overcame them. For she was his beauty and he was her ultimate fantasy — something untamable and yet eager to be desired, indifferent and yet complicit in mutual bliss.



I watch Angelo as he sleeps. His long black hair is draped over his tanned forehead; a dollop of drool runs down his neck.

"Oh Angelo."

I put down The Cave and place my cup of Grigio on the sand. I walk towards the water, leaving Angelo and the picnic behind. Earlier that day at the stables, when I was cleaning shit while talking to my therapist about me cheating on Ricky at the lake house and him leaving and the night at Bootsy Bellows that ended with a totaled Mustang, the horse made the softest growl - the first time in weeks I got any kind of response from any of them.

My therapist then turned to me and said.

"CONGRATS. YOU'RE BOTH MAKING PROGRESS."

