

A woman with long dark hair, seen from behind, stands on a balcony with a white balustrade. She is wearing an orange dress and looking out over a blue sea towards a large, ancient stone temple with a domed roof. The sky is blue with white clouds. The title 'A Quest For Home' is written in a black serif font in the upper right corner.

*A Quest
= For Home*

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Every Saturday morning for six weeks, 10 strangers with different paths came together to write away their thoughts. At first, they all believed they had nothing in common. But they all yearned for love and acceptance.

They were all on a quest for home.

They live in a country that demands they reject their South Asian roots, but in this space, they could embrace their ancestral homes and center themselves as the hero of their own narrative journey towards home.

The writers explored questions around identity, queerness, self-love, cookies, and a fantasy voyage in the mountains. And we created this zine, *A Quest for Home*.

Thank you Open Source Gallery for providing us a place to call home, and Arts & Democracy for the support and lastly, Roohi Choudhry for guiding each of our spirits.

-Fabliha Anbar,
Editor



I'm tired of white women wearing my earrings
By Ragini Srikrishna

I'm tired of white women wearing my earrings
playing with them, merely talking and not listening to my
feelings

their cackles after feigned pains at their yoga studios
their Lululemon brands, stretches and and unsightly poses

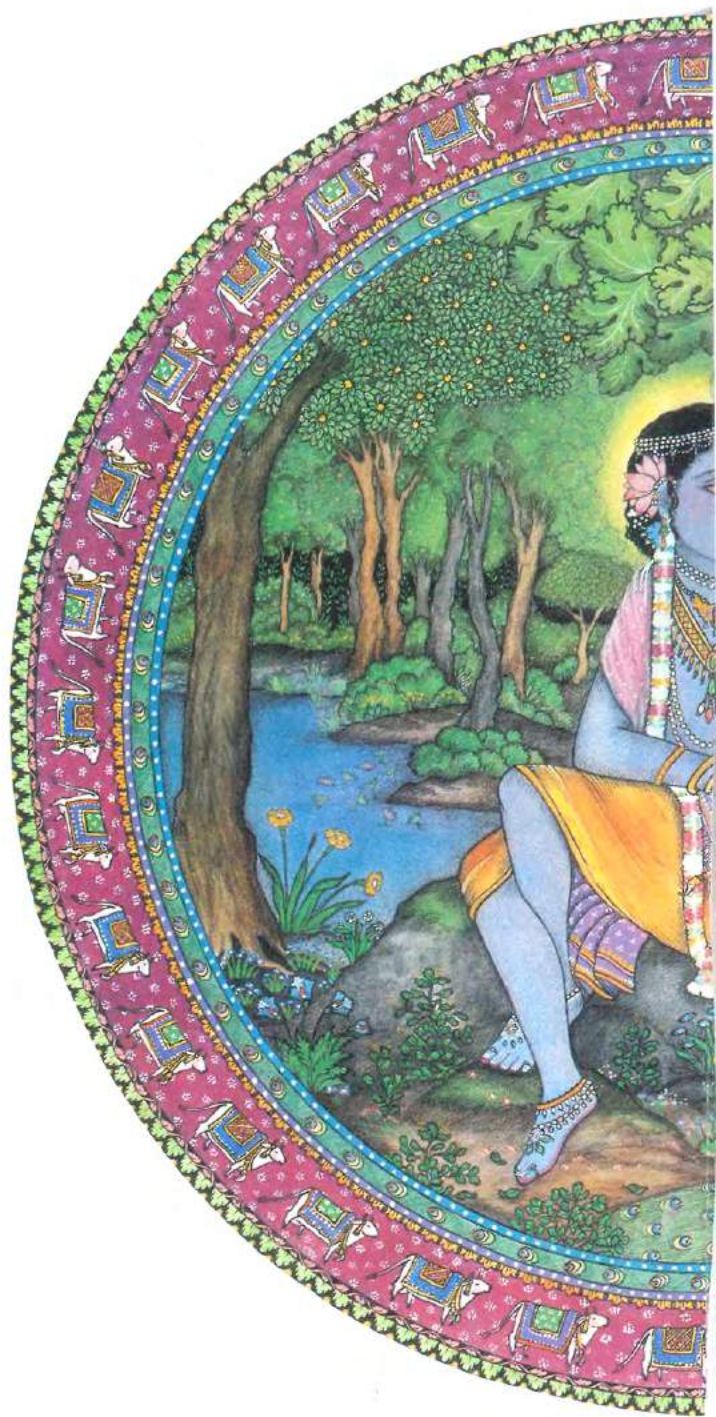
my new distant home in America where my father's dosas
and sun salutations
were recreated on white terms, tests my patience.

I'm tired of white women asking me questions
no, I don't know if I'll get married, I'll probably not invite you
or your friends

my mother's red bindi stain pierces their blatant gaze
their insidious thoughts to colonize and create their next fast
fashion craze

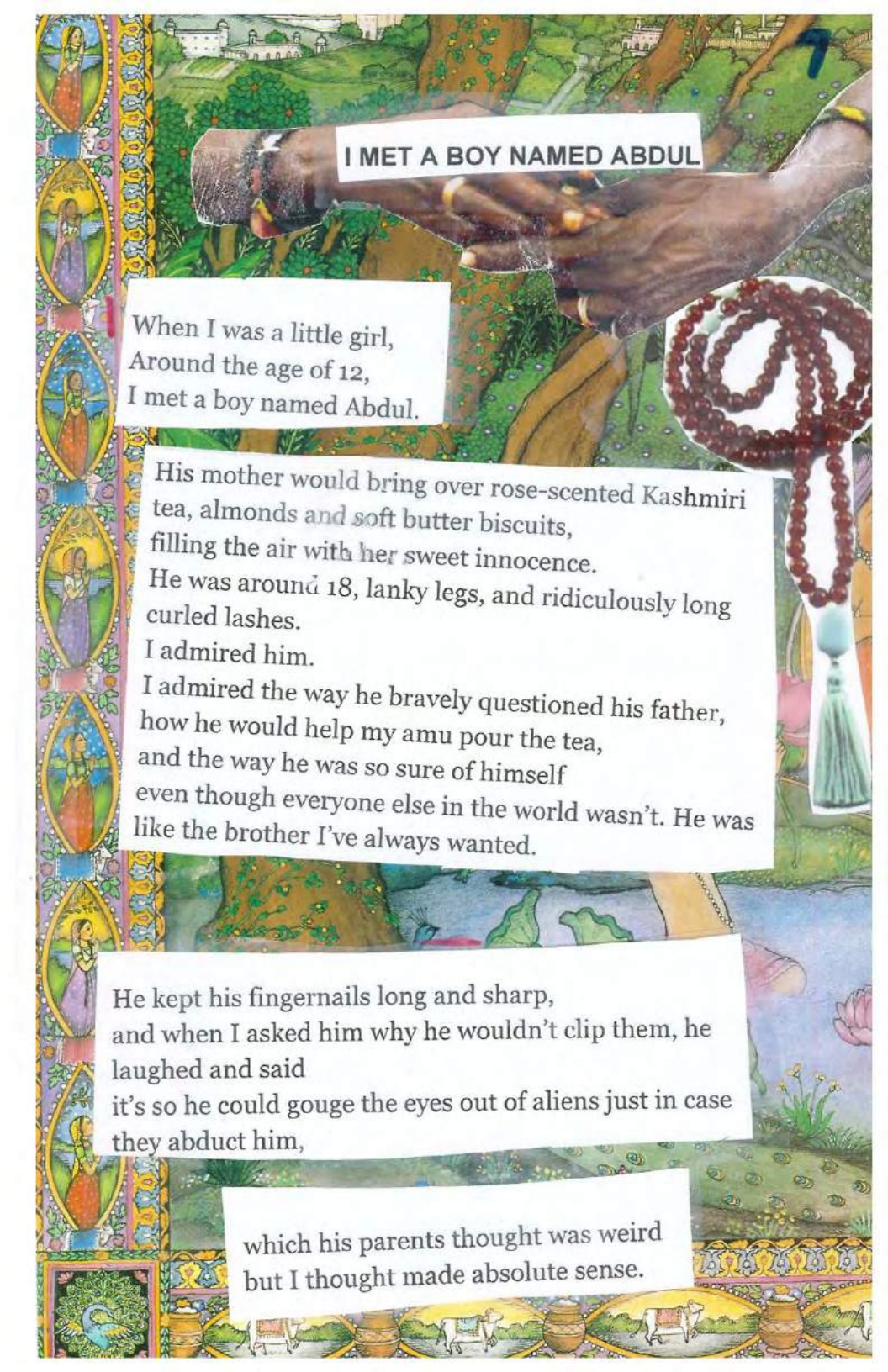
at work I lie, I smile at them, unveiling my only brown mask
one that I mould with each encumbering capitalistic task

I'm tired of white women, and the false hope they bring each
time
knowing this, I stay within my own hopes, we are simply on
their dime









I MET A BOY NAMED ABDUL

When I was a little girl,
Around the age of 12,
I met a boy named Abdul.

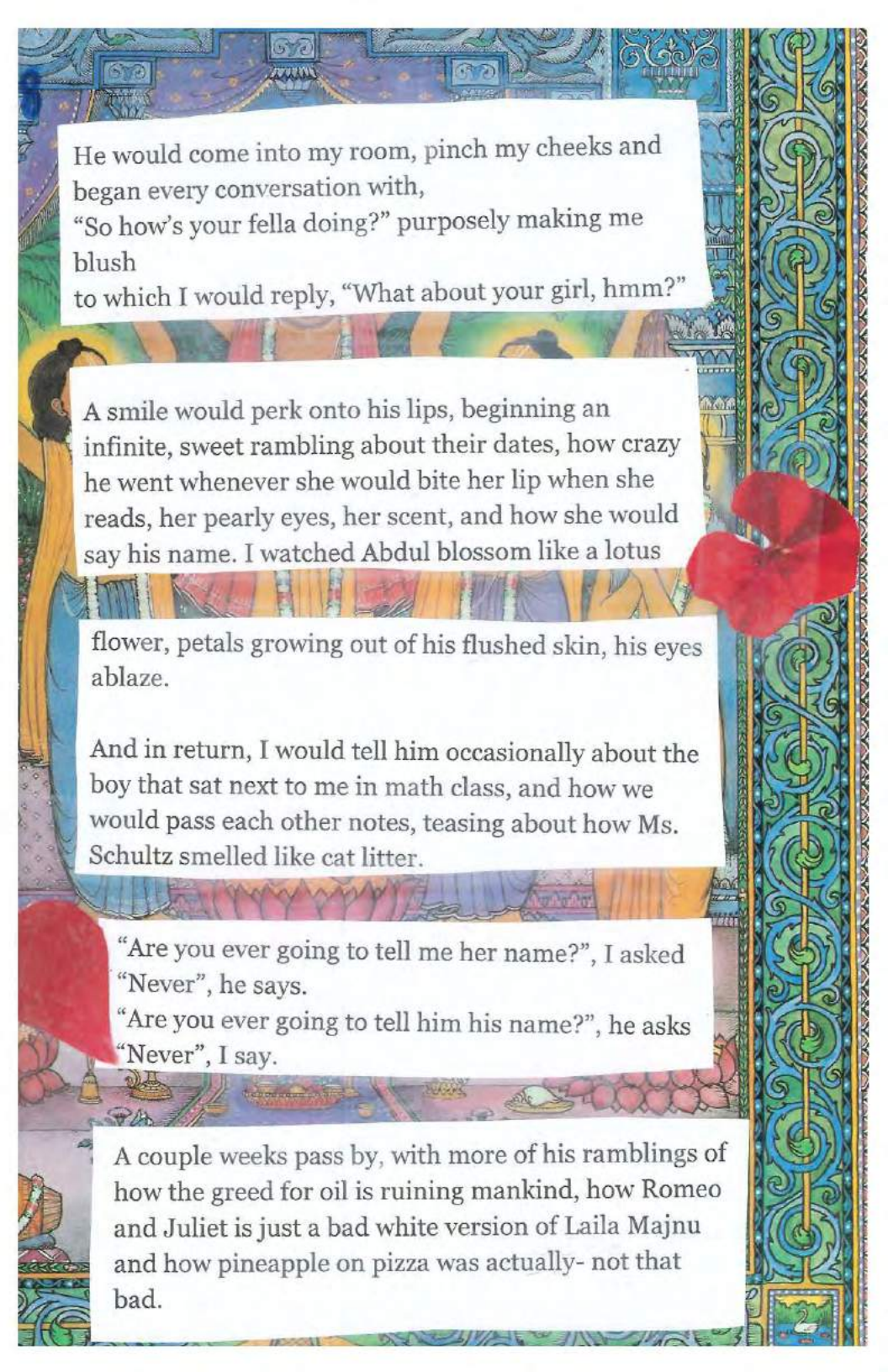
His mother would bring over rose-scented Kashmiri tea, almonds and soft butter biscuits, filling the air with her sweet innocence. He was around 18, lanky legs, and ridiculously long curled lashes.

I admired him.

I admired the way he bravely questioned his father, how he would help my amu pour the tea, and the way he was so sure of himself even though everyone else in the world wasn't. He was like the brother I've always wanted.

He kept his fingernails long and sharp, and when I asked him why he wouldn't clip them, he laughed and said it's so he could gouge the eyes out of aliens just in case they abduct him,

which his parents thought was weird but I thought made absolute sense.



He would come into my room, pinch my cheeks and began every conversation with, "So how's your fella doing?" purposely making me blush to which I would reply, "What about your girl, hmm?"

A smile would perk onto his lips, beginning an infinite, sweet rambling about their dates, how crazy he went whenever she would bite her lip when she reads, her pearly eyes, her scent, and how she would say his name. I watched Abdul blossom like a lotus

flower, petals growing out of his flushed skin, his eyes ablaze.

And in return, I would tell him occasionally about the boy that sat next to me in math class, and how we would pass each other notes, teasing about how Ms. Schultz smelled like cat litter.

"Are you ever going to tell me her name?", I asked "Never", he says.

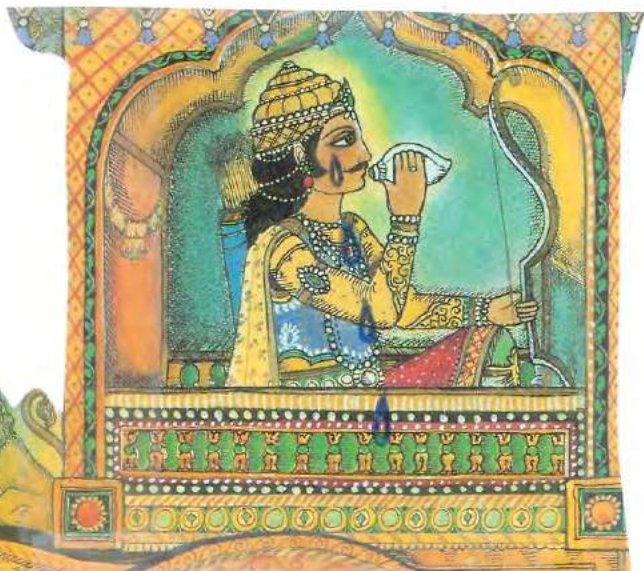
"Are you ever going to tell him his name?", he asks "Never", I say.

A couple weeks pass by, with more of his ramblings of how the greed for oil is ruining mankind, how Romeo and Juliet is just a bad white version of Laila Majnu and how pineapple on pizza was actually- not that bad.



It's sunday again, and I can't wait for the air at home to linger with the rose scented tea and Abdul's presence.

But instead, his mother comes, no tea pot in her hand, her caramel skin sunken in, her lips shriveled up and pale. She smiles lightly, covering up the obvious pain and sleepless nights her eyes whispers to me.



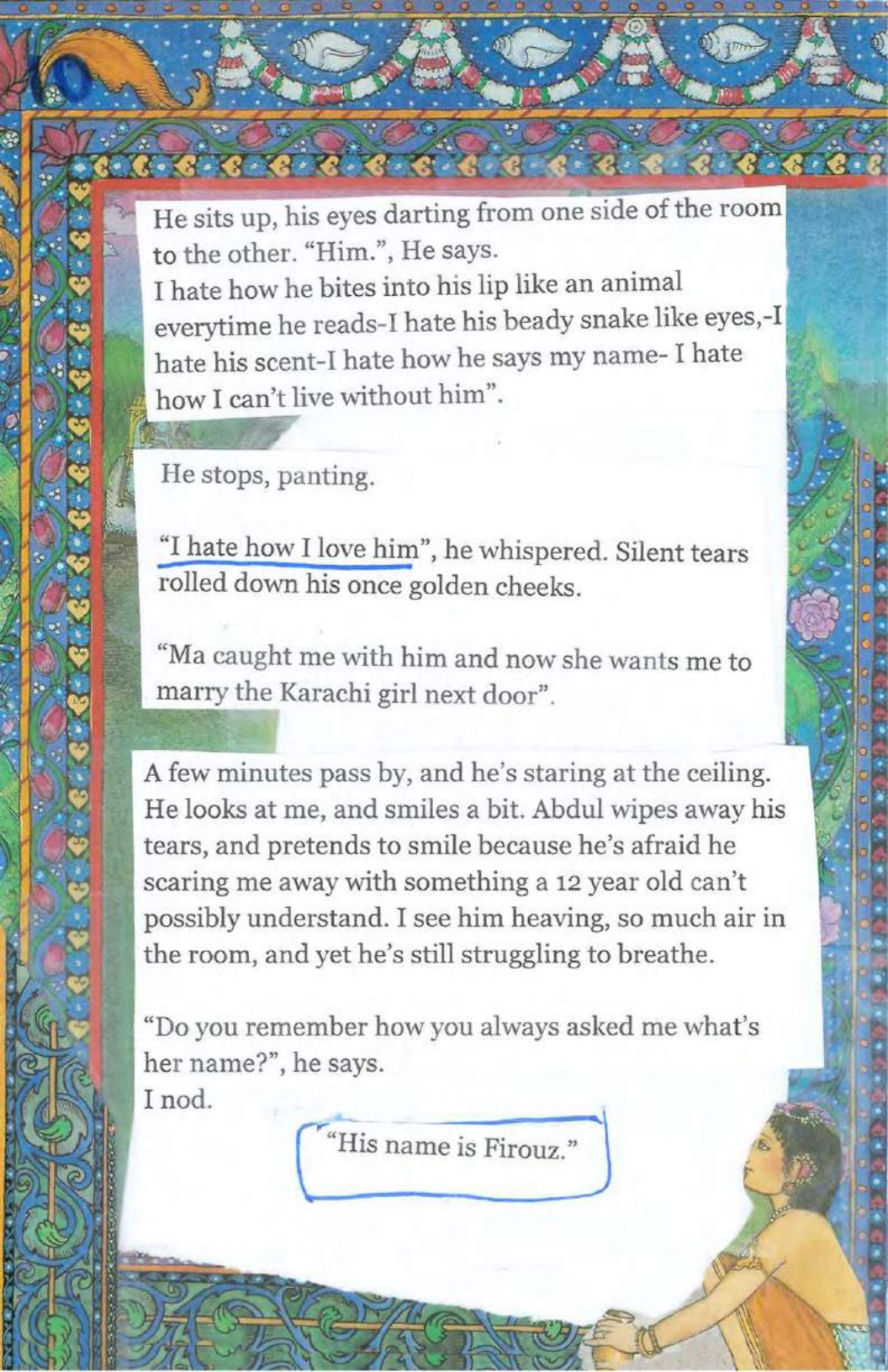
I put my head out, waiting for Abdul to pinch my cheeks, but instead he brushes past me, his body heavy, sucking all the air, making it hard to breathe.



He stomps to my bed and lays. His body collapses as if he has never felt the comfort of a warm bed before. I sat next to him, waiting for him to speak, waiting for lotus petals to flow out of his body.

"I hate him", he suddenly says.

"Him?", I ask, "him who?"



He sits up, his eyes darting from one side of the room to the other. "Him.", He says.

I hate how he bites into his lip like an animal everytime he reads-I hate his beady snake like eyes,-I hate his scent-I hate how he says my name- I hate how I can't live without him".

He stops, panting.

"I hate how I love him", he whispered. Silent tears rolled down his once golden cheeks.

"Ma caught me with him and now she wants me to marry the Karachi girl next door".

A few minutes pass by, and he's staring at the ceiling. He looks at me, and smiles a bit. Abdul wipes away his tears, and pretends to smile because he's afraid he scaring me away with something a 12 year old can't possibly understand. I see him heaving, so much air in the room, and yet he's still struggling to breathe.

"Do you remember how you always asked me what's her name?", he says.

I nod.

"His name is Firouz."

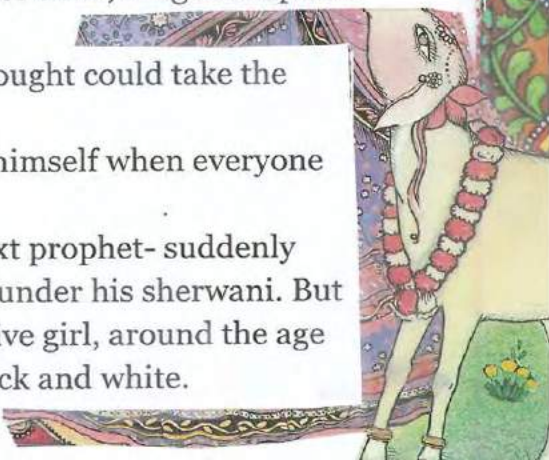
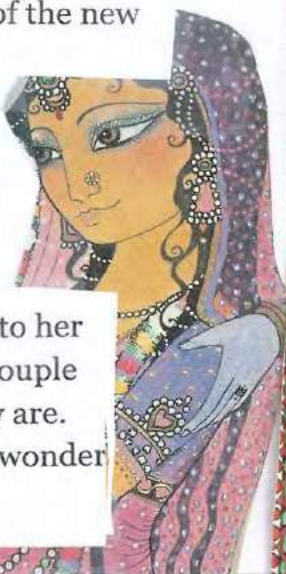
Two seasons pass by, the earth, the moon revolves around the sun without a worry. The wedding is finally here and I watch everyone in their rich glimmering dresses celebrate the beginning of the new couple.



an auntie passing by me, joyously whispering to her husband while munching on a samosa, "The couple looks so happy! What a good looking pair they are. His mother did a good job choosing a bride. I wonder why they're marrying so young... keeping the traditions alive, hei na?"

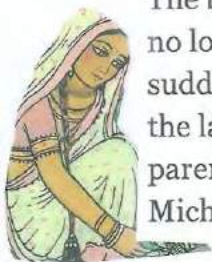
the bride's hands covered in red henna, paisleys and flowers that reminds me of lotuses covering her from top to bottom. Her cheeks flushed, her eyes ablaze with a familiar spark I once saw on a boy, everytime she looks at her soon to be husband, Abdul. But Abdul, sits there, eyes dead, lungs collapsed.

I think about the boy who I thought could take the world by storm, who I thought was so sure of himself when everyone else in the world wasn't. who I thought could be the next prophet- suddenly looked sheepish, shriveled up under his sherwani. But perhaps its because i was a naive girl, around the age of 12 who saw the world in black and white.



The wedding celebration was done, the guests stomach filled with biyrani and sheikh kehbabs while Abdul's was sore and empty.

The bride was saying tearful goodbyes to her parents, no longer a daughter but a dutiful wife. Tears suddenly swelled up my eyes, knowing that this was the last time I was ever going to see Abdul as his parents wanted to send the couple far away to Michigan, where no one knew him.



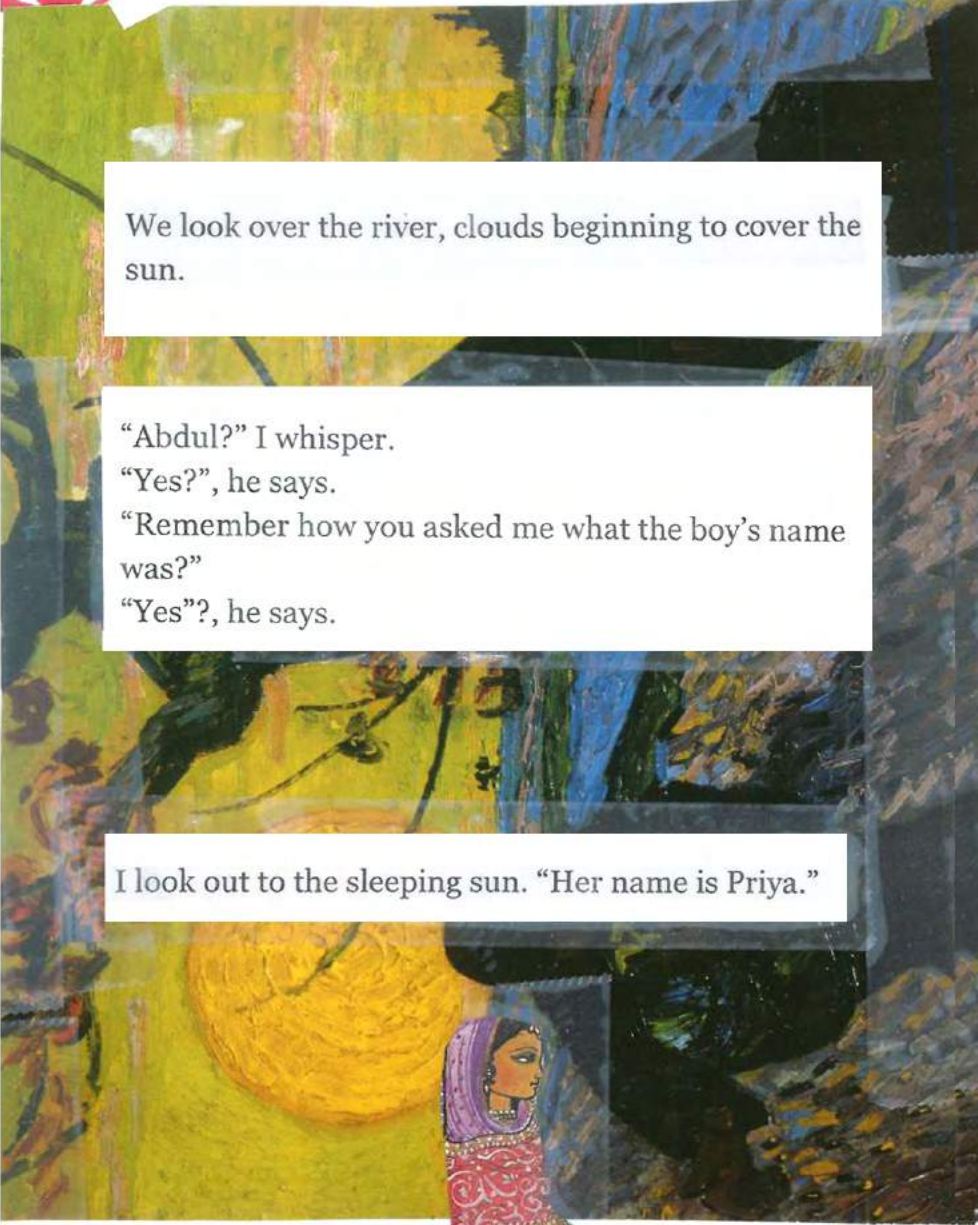
He puts his arms around my shoulders, and asks me if I want to go for a walk. A few quiet moments passes by when he suddenly asks, "you think I'm a coward don't you?"

I stare at my pointy shoes, ignoring his question.

"You think I should run away with Firouz and live the life I want to, right?" I look at him, his eyebrows furrowed, his skin pale. He takes a deep breath and says, "I'm not sure what I'm doing. But sometimes you have to do the wrong thing for the right reason." I stand there, puzzled.



"Is it really for the right reason?", I wonder. Everytime he looks into his wife's eyes, will he see Firouz? Will he feel sick with nausea every time he embraces his wife, breathing in her scent, longing for Firouz? How will he feel when he starts to forget Firouz's sweet smile, punishing himself for forgetting their memories together as the years passes by? But that doesn't matter anymore.



We look over the river, clouds beginning to cover the sun.

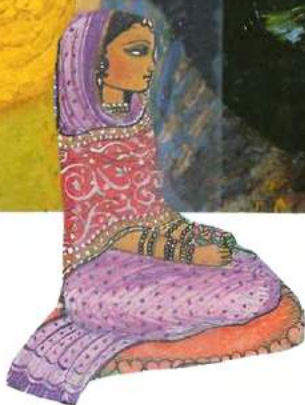
"Abdul?" I whisper.

"Yes?", he says.

"Remember how you asked me what the boy's name was?"

"Yes"?, he says.

I look out to the sleeping sun. "Her name is Priya."





like a woman in love

By Fabliha Anbar



The sun has fallen asleep, and the moon has awoken.
I'm in a park where the daytime is filled with chitter and chatter
but the night is filled with secretive couples, cuddling and coddling
in the darkness, away from judgment's eyes.

Earlier today, I was on a really bad date
They couldn't stop talking about their ex.

I sigh and look at my left, where two women are embracing each other.

It's dark but her eyes shimmer in the moonlight, emblazoned.
I wonder if I'll ever be like her -- a woman in love.

Inside my palm are crushed red petals.
My date snatched a rose from a bush, gave it to me and said:
"You are pretty as a flower".

But I remember thinking,



"Was that really necessary? Why not leave the rose to bloom as it wants to."

The night is coming to a close, but I want to sleep under the moonlight.
I don't want to face my mother, whose daughter just went on a date with a girl.

I sit back under the moonlight, letting go of the petals
I watch them flutter in the wind, circling the couple.

I wonder if I'll ever be like her,
a woman in love.



The feeling of home

By Anonymous

His eyes were closed.

There was a semi-nurtured utterance growing past the skin on the underside of his lips, never quite making it; his words turned into deep onset moans powering the electricity of the air, like honey, as she felt her ears sweeten and her eyes stay transfixed as she stared at his lids. Two of his fingers slid over her mouth and she employed her tongue to reach out for them as she passed her thigh over his waist. The moment she saw his eyes open, she felt lightheaded. Dark brown pierced through her as she struggled to speak; instead her body quivered as she felt a stuttering gesture that his hands conferred on the small of her back as he held onto her. Ecstatic motion did not seem like a concept to her anymore, but a reality. Ruminations grew past her head as she grasped for his hand. She didn't understand what it was that made holding his hand feel so good, but the moment he had done so, that day in his car, as he drove her home and he had leaned into her she could feel nothing, but high. A slow buzzing high that began every time she saw him that continued to get louder and louder every time he touched



her. Whenever she kissed him she felt white noise. Conceptualities became realities when they were together. She felt that she could feel the universe spin when she was with him. If you had asked her a year ago from now as to whether she believed in God her wholehearted answer would be yes; with no hesitation. Nowadays, her previous realities seemed distorted. She could feel new ones slowly starting to settle in like layers of oil on the glass of water she called life. He made her doubt her greatest moralities. It felt like the subtleties amazed her-- the way one strand of hair would fall onto his forehead, or the way his eyes glistened in the sun... it all seemed so surreal to her that an individual could do something so perfectly. So much so that within her universe she had started to dedicate galaxies to him. Sometimes she didn't want to. It felt like he was taking a lot but she didn't know how to stop him. At times it felt good, when he would put his hands on her, but at times it would feel like silence-- uncomfortable and inescapable. She would only feel that way when she would think about her parents. The way they had nurtured her into loving God, and all that He stood for. She believed in him with an unperturbed faith based solely on the idea that it would make her feel whole. It was what her parents told her was the right thing and what





her whole life seemed to encompass. But when she met him, it felt as if someone had knocked down the stilts she had been walking on her whole life. A once unperturbed faith seemed permeable now; she couldn't tell which idea was more unrealistic: the morals she had derived from God or the idea that he could make her whole.

God felt like silence to her. He felt like static.

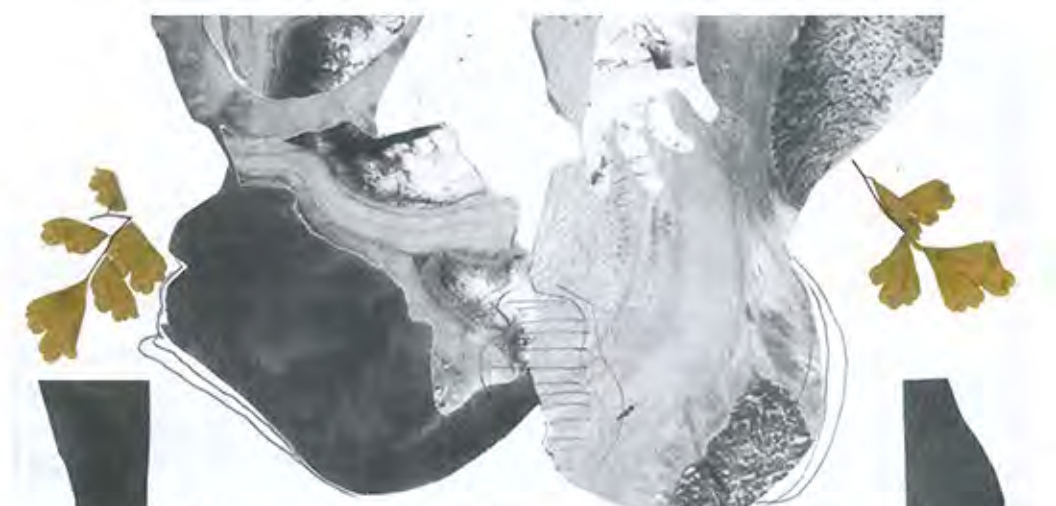
As the months passed by, she slowly became addicted to the way he would make her feel-- alive.

As she would give him pieces of her, he would give back.

As time went by she soon started feeling the incomprehensible urge to drink him in. To subsidize him and become a part of him. She had felt infatuated, and she still was even when he was touching her, now.

She knew virginity was a social construct. But as a religious being she was taught that it was real; in the utmost sense it was important and the ultimatum that would decide on whether to take her to hell.

She knew she had already committed enough sins with this man to expedite herself there; she was addicted to this ambrosia of sexuality. Spider webs seemed to be growing on her thoughts and soon she felt like she was sitting amidst only cobwebs that fogged her vision and she didn't know what to believe.



There was a certain enticement to the feeling of his skin on hers. His hands invited hers into their grasp and he looked at her. "I love you, you know that?"

She felt she couldn't speak.

She didn't know what his intentions were, so she felt became rigid as she felt him pressed on her.

This enigma that she was facing wasn't onset by self-attribution but rather something that was within her.

She had never felt such an urge to do something she was taught to be immoral. But it felt so *right*?

He was ready for her as she was ready for him. Her pulse was in her head and her heart was in her toes. She could feel his heartbeat as well. She hadn't noticed her own movement until now, when realization razed her.

The earth seemed so far away as his body seemed so close. She had never been high like this. She could feel him in a way she had never felt before. It felt unfamiliar-- a bit foreign, like he was teaching her a new language she had never thought to listen to before. She didn't know what to say and this time it was an utterance that dispelled from her lips. She could hear herself but it seemed extrinsic to her. Everything seemed to be out of magnitude and stimulated; she felt like she was lost in a circuitous state of mind

But it was happening too fast and soon she could feel that her subsistence of virginity had been plucked apart and encompassed her body like feathers; she felt like she was flying. 42

She hadn't realized the burden she was carrying around with her.

Once they were done, she looked into his eyes and smiled.

He smiled back at her. She noticed the curves at the edges of his mouth— it was one of her most favorite things about him. But this time, this time, it felt different. She noticed a quirk in the upper corner of his mouth as his lips pressed into a straight line. He wasn't looking at her. She looked down at his hands and noticed they weren't touching her. Her eyes slid to the ceiling as she searched for the meaning of *this*. It seemed like an eternity between his inhale and his exhale, as she stared at his chest rise up and down, she waited. She wanted him to make her feel *special*. She felt that everything yet wasn't complete. All she wanted was for him to say *something, something momentous*.

He awkwardly coughed and her eyes frantically ran to his face.

Dark brown stared at her, seemingly seeping; plunging into silence and void. Time seemed sharp and the moment felt



frigid; ice cold as if his eyes had caught frostbite.

The moment seemed ominous, as if the disease had originated malice within the still space within him.

As if infected, almost sporadically she felt empty.

As realization dawned upon her, she became mute.

Pink lips shrugged as they said, "Do you want to go home? It's a bit late."

Languidly she broke eye contact.

She should of known.

Even the loudest of static can turn deafeningly into utter

silence.



PHANTOMS

SHAMNAZ ZAMAN

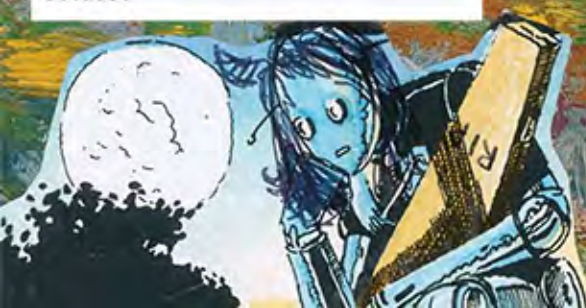
Amu
doesn't believe none of it
Abu he's the same
he's the same

he had a lot of nerve yesterday
telling me I couldn't cry on the floor for two hours
straight because
I had broken a glass
he doesn't have the right to tell me

my phantoms
don't exist

that
that girl didn't smile at me because she hated my guts
or that
getting out of my bed is important even when I have corpse limbs,
that when I go in the shower I can't differentiate
between my cesspool of tears and the clogged shower drain
trickle
trickle
like the blood in my veins
rigor mortis;

in the
pervasion of my sweet rope
writing me love notes from the sweet
boy I had refused to kiss all
because





I can't conquer
my god damn body
because
these corpse limbs
can't even sum up the phantom memories
of how to hold these pens
and paper
or
how
to hold myself
or
how
to look my mother in the eyes

because
I see phantoms
because
they remind me of the pretty nurse who told me the devil was inside me
because
she didn't believe either

that a sweet thing like me
could have corpse limbs
that I needed to be saved by god
and not Myself



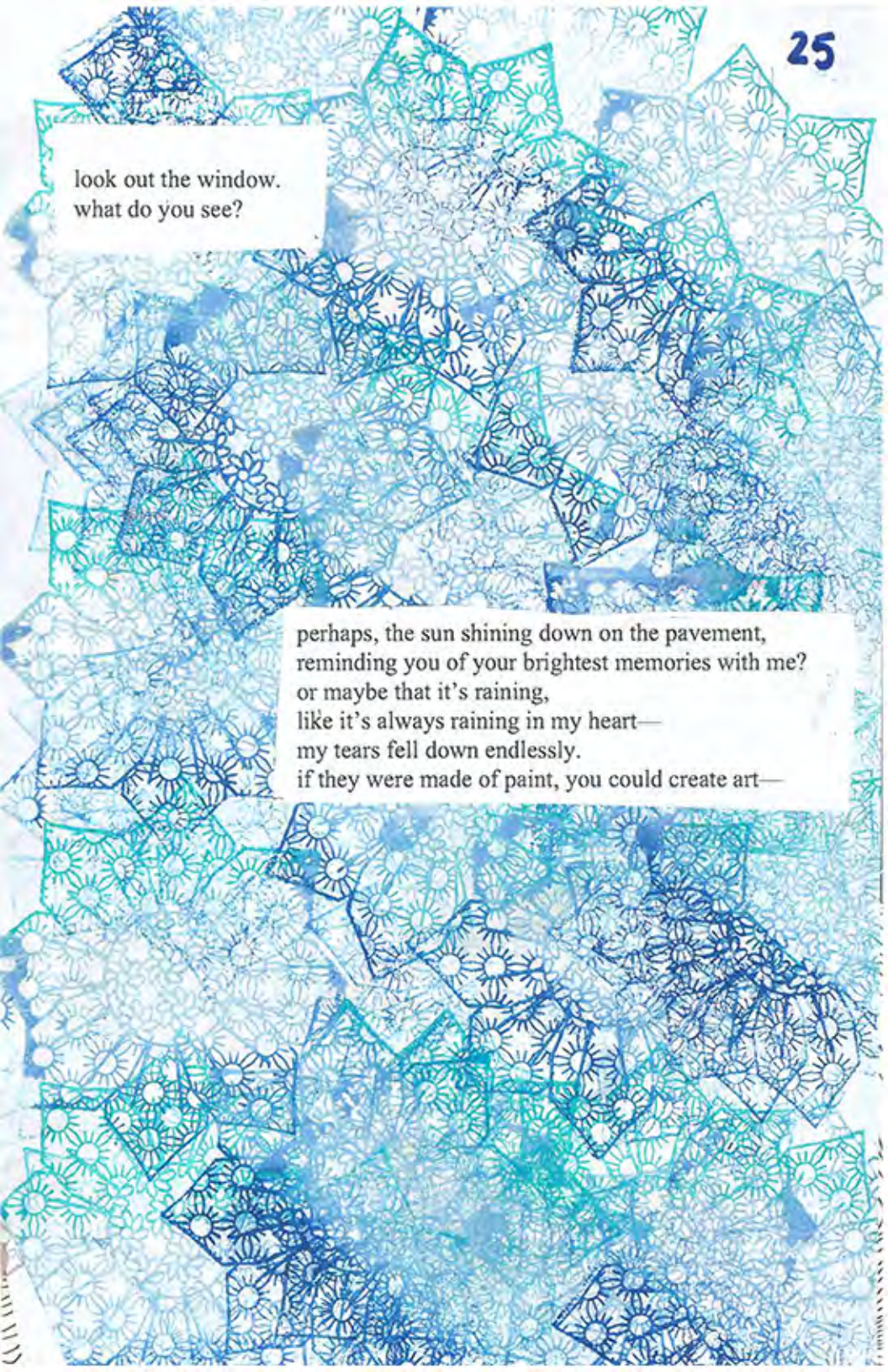
that these phantoms still haunt the slow trickle of my heart stream
like the ins and outs

of
a
stead

y
beat
or the opening and closing of my eyes
like relapse after
relapse
some longer or more frequently shorter
like this day;

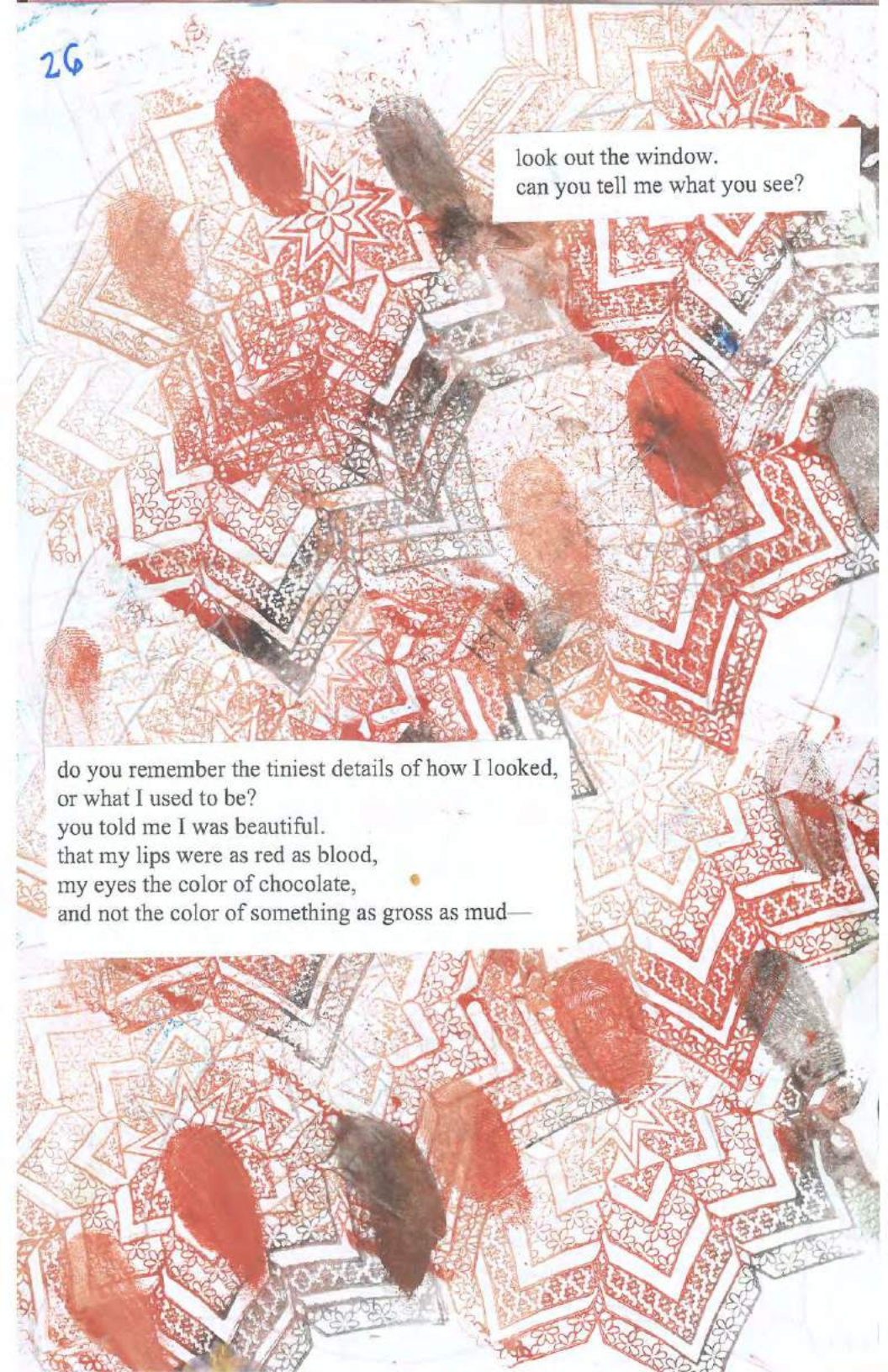
where I can wake up with a smile
but Amu's tone can send me to shivering
tears
because she can't see
my phantoms
because she doesn't believe in me
because she doesn't believe in none of it,





look out the window.
what do you see?

perhaps, the sun shining down on the pavement,
reminding you of your brightest memories with me?
or maybe that it's raining,
like it's always raining in my heart—
my tears fell down endlessly.
if they were made of paint, you could create art—



look out the window.
can you tell me what you see?

do you remember the tiniest details of how I looked,
or what I used to be?
you told me I was beautiful.
that my lips were as red as blood,
my eyes the color of chocolate,
and not the color of something as gross as mud—



m

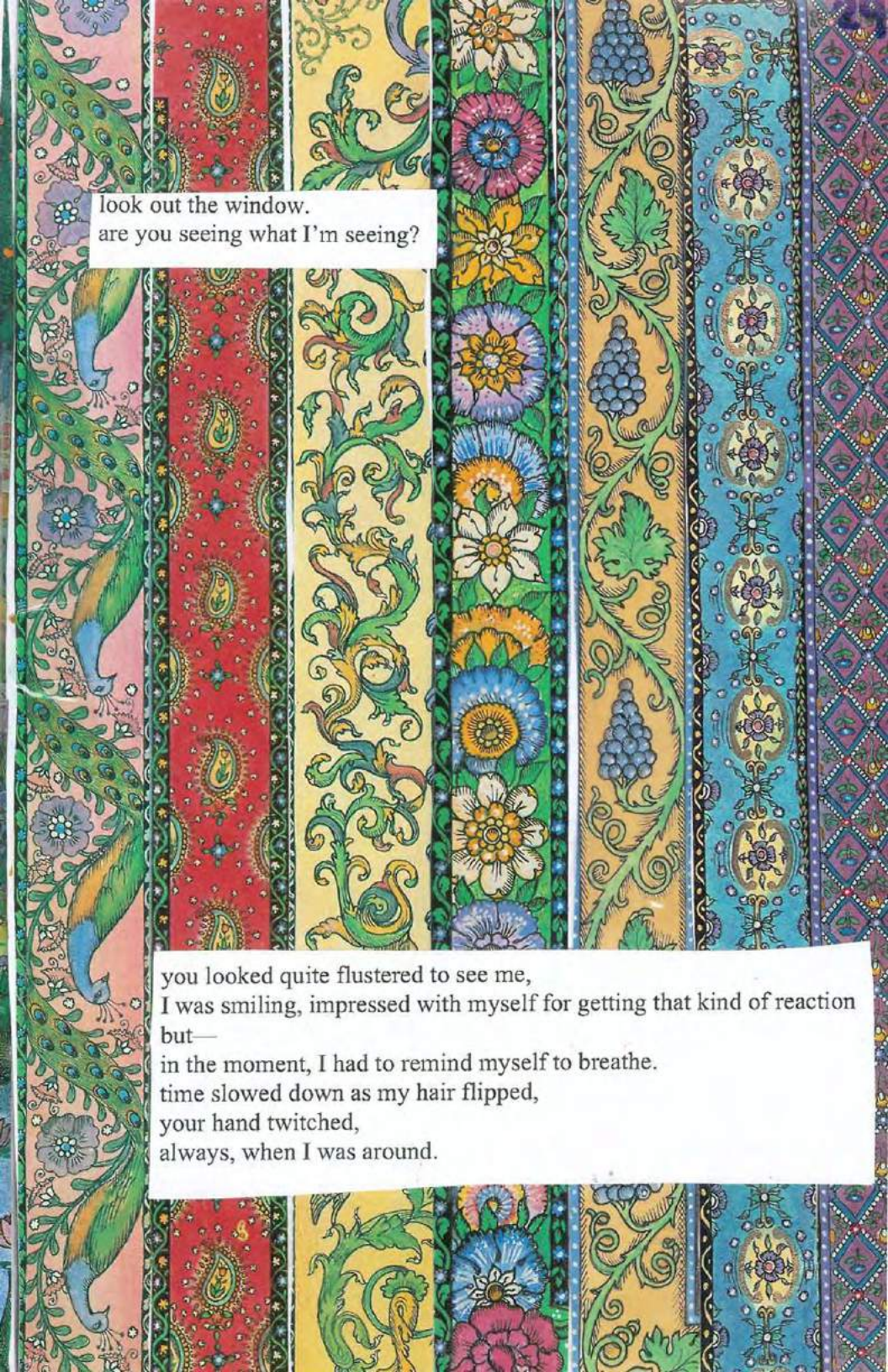
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D



look out the window.
are you seeing what I'm seeing?

you looked quite flustered to see me,
I was smiling, impressed with myself for getting that kind of reaction
but—
in the moment, I had to remind myself to breathe.
time slowed down as my hair flipped,
your hand twitched,
always, when I was around.



look out the window.
when did you stop seeing me?



my heart shattered into dust,
I choked on the words that
I knew I had to say, it was a must—
when we met, I thought it was fate,
but you taught me that some things are truly meant
not to be.

L



T

HE CLOTHES
those that I invent for a life
ow," said P
ned for

WIE

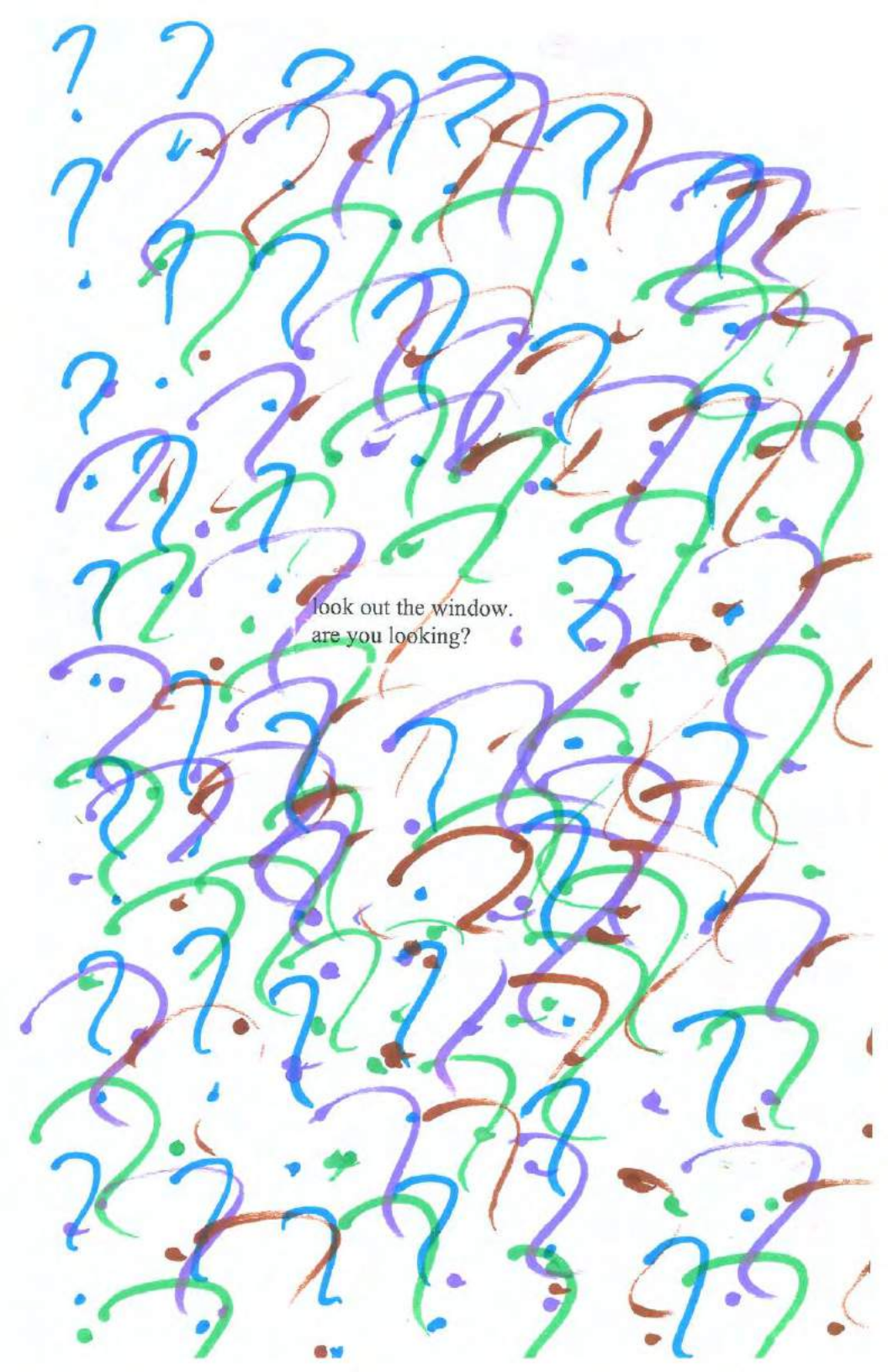


oo



32

This image shows a page of handwritten practice for the letters 's', 'e', 'a', and 'p'. The letters are written in four colors: blue, purple, brown, and green. They are arranged in a dense, overlapping pattern across the page, with some letters appearing multiple times in different orientations. The handwriting is cursive and somewhat messy, typical of a child's practice. The page is numbered '32' in the top left corner.

The background of the page is a dense, abstract composition of swirling, hand-drawn lines in various colors: purple, blue, green, and brown. Interspersed among these lines are numerous question marks of the same color palette, creating a sense of mystery and inquiry. The lines and symbols are scattered across the entire page, with a higher concentration in the upper half.

look out the window.
are you looking?

I'm only asking because ---

I'm looking too.

- nebbani

I promise I'll stay I know that he'll wait I know
only make sense to me and no one else hehe.
head - same - these meaningless words and phrases
late night show - dreams - look at my eyes right now
rachel sakhai - more people are coming, big things
tasfiawahid inna - sumiya monaf - sumaiya islam
ezazulayon haque - shamnaz shamsu zzaman - sabree
nevin nahar haque - nunun nahar haque - akm nurul haque
noahamran haque - nova nahar haque - bipasha haque - futu
ants - heartbreak - scared of drowning - of the future - kid
my ancestors gave their blood so I can speak Bengali like
ghokers - do you believe in magic? - it's in my blood - gen
writer - I never u
sushi - are these +
my faith's gone
I promise i'll stay
for you - a quest for home - what is home? - you al
never thought I would see you again because
don't stop me now b
sa - photographer - id
ter - fall - run up the
stairs - my wall
computer lab -
rovert - not an ex
myer briggs type
no one knows
who they are
ate - maggin oadl
astrology - straw
hat - loyal - sha
hel - photo shoot
owa - chi cago -
adeshi - American - Muslim - believe in yourself la
y - waiting for everything happens for a reason - you
ss romantic - planning - anxious - bringing uetA

- NEBBANI



but I didn't do who
at I am or am I just
nd my way - i hope
wait - I know I can
wonder why
mist - nasheed - f
writer - friend -
- netflix-binger
bangladeshi -
dancer - sing
hopeless rom
ic - cook - to
watermel or
bipa - alim
ghss - sju
idontwa
be you a
procrast
been si
chocolat
arranged
who knows
in yourself la
for a reason - you

AND DEVOTION A LIFE
A FLOWER FRUIT AT



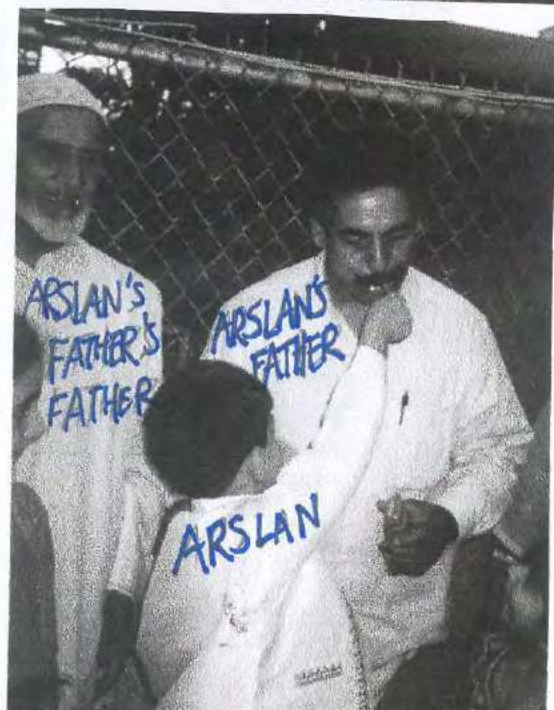


புணு









Urdu

صبح تو میری جان ہے
خوشی آپکا پہچان ہے
سونا بھی آپسے حیران ہے
یہ سارے صرف آپکے نام ہے

Transliteration

Subha tu meri jaan hai
Khushi apka pehchaan hai
Sona bhi apse heraan hai
Yeh saray sirf apke naam hai

Translation

The morning is my life
Happiness is your recognition
Even gold is astonished by you
These are all just your names







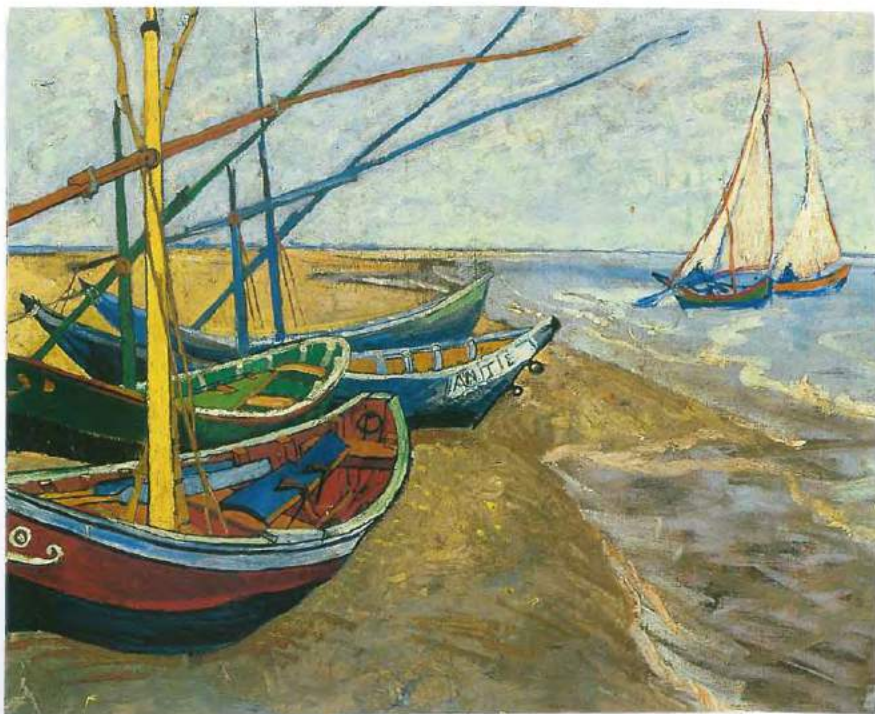


Eclipse

by Arslan



Two kingdoms torn from hatred with a fire so intense, it could set the entire world on fire in an instant. The Kingdom of Solariya stood tall and dense with bustling streets. The Kingdom of Lunariya stretched vastly and took advantage of the land. Between them lay a large island. On it lived two former soldiers, one from each of the two kingdoms.

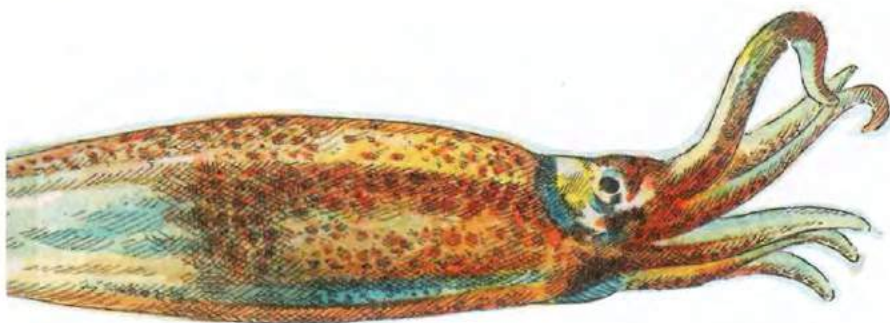


Roshan had hair as dark as ash, skin kissed by the sun, and eyes of gold. Chandu had hair as bright as the stars, the skin of pearls, and eyes of nothingness. And they were in love.

Arslan

At a young age they were enlisted as spies for their own kingdoms. When they first saw each other, their orders were to kill. Roshan and Chandu had spent several years practicing solar magic and lunar magic, respectively. They could never fathom using such a beautiful art to kill any being. So they blasted their way out of the twin nations and made their escape to Equinox Island. There, they set up a home in the plateau of a mountain.

Equinox island had been rumored to be a sacred place, so sacred that kids would learn humans who set foot, would be disintegrated in the blink of an eye.



For all of the twenty years they had lived, they had never seen such tranquility. They had found home and prospered with the land. Over time, they had refuted other runaways and outcasts of the twin nations. They created flourishing communities themselves in the shadows. Whilst Roshan and Chandu had furthered their studies in the magics from a knowledgeable woman, Hester, who also had known of another form of magic.

Ecliptic magic



She had never seen it herself, but knew it existed. Within Roshan and Chandu. She told them we all would see the new magic very soon.





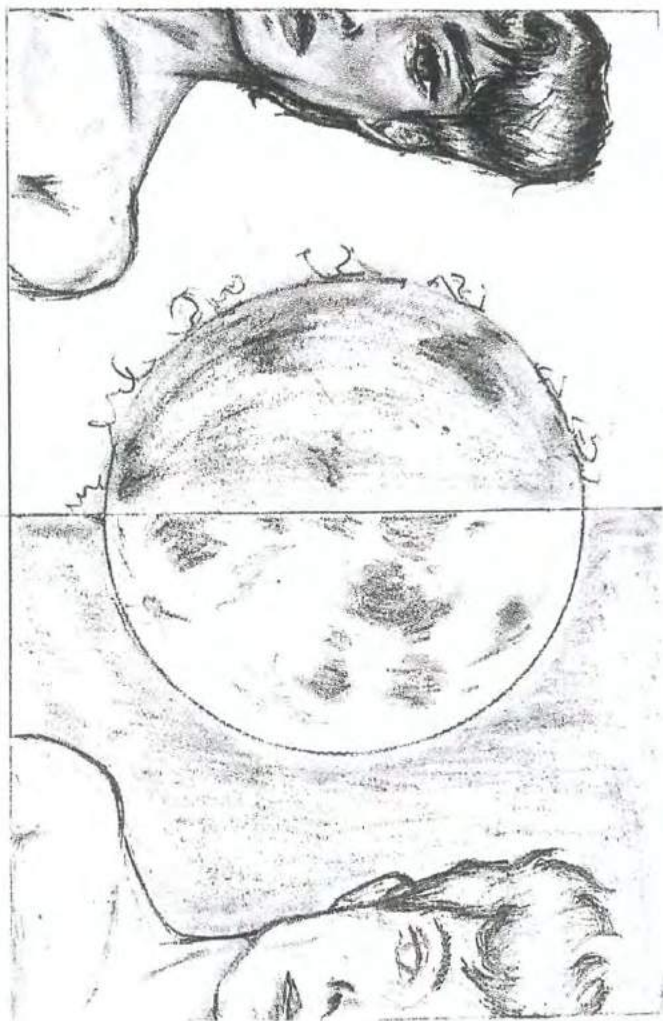
On the sunniest day anyone has ever seen, there was news of a group of soldiers had landed on Equinox Island. Within hours, half of the island had been covered with soldiers from both kingdoms. Joined together for a day to eradicate the menaces and disgraces of their societies. Roshan and Chandu, their friends, their family, all feared for their lives. But Hester walked towards those who had come to kill her with a smile. She looked at Roshan and Chandu and yelled "it is time to stand up, to stand up for freedom." Both of their brows furrowed and their mouths were open and wordless. Before they could respond, the elder woman had eight beams of sunlight and seven beams of moonlight all going through her heart.

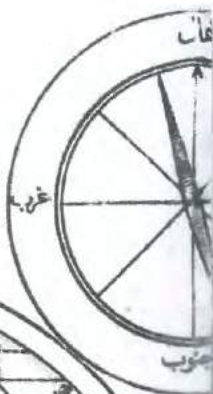


Chandu let out a scream of a thousand screams and Roshan grabbed his arm. His hand slid from Chandu's bicep, to his hand, and locked his fingers in Chandu's. With tears on their faces, they aimed their hands. Not at their foes, but towards the ground and let out a magnificent blast. It was neither solar nor lunar magic, but a magnificent and pure black, outlined with a smokey and celestial white. The blast sent a rippling shockwave, sending all of the soldiers to the shore and into the waters that ran between the kingdoms.

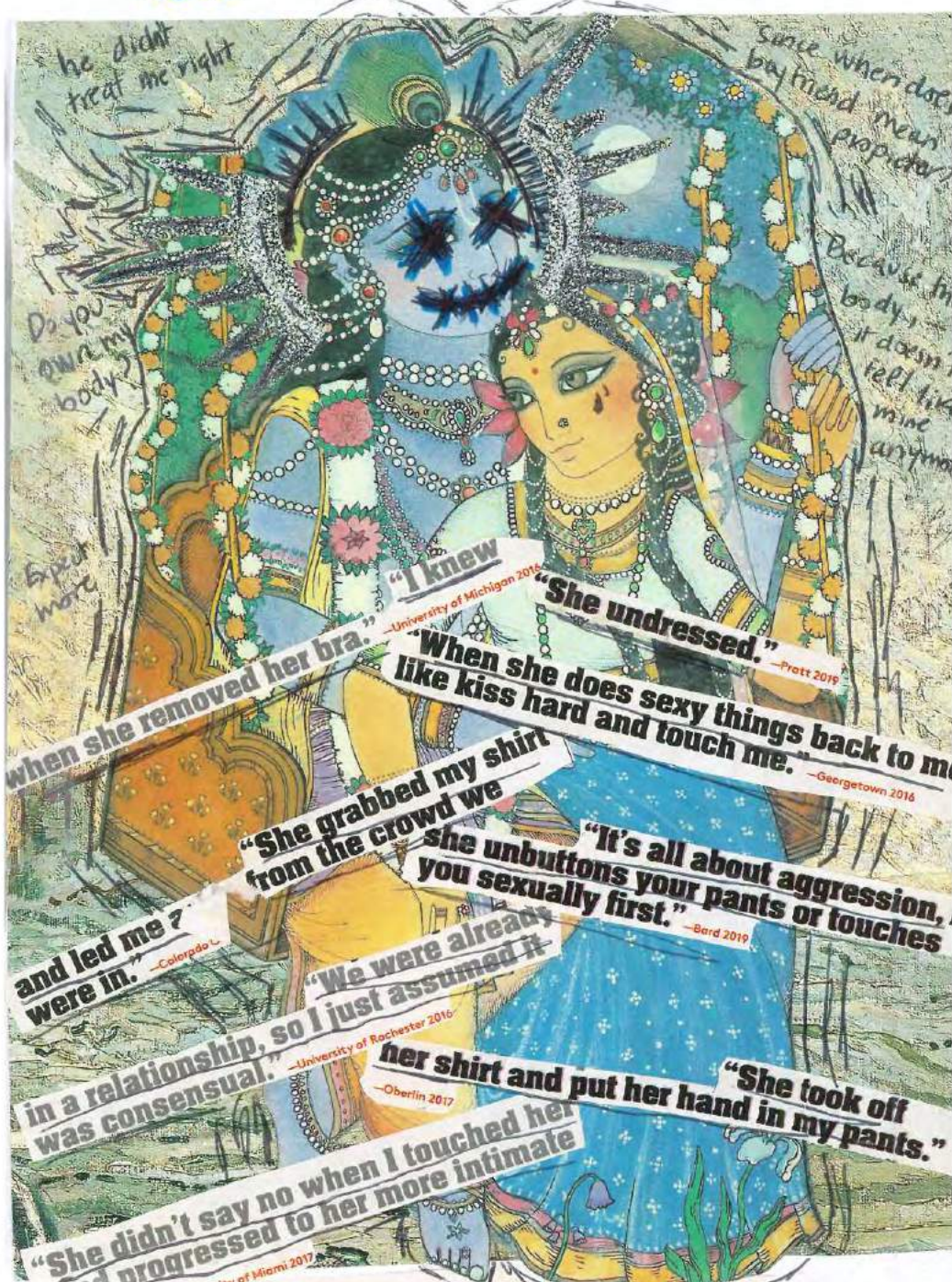
The pure black had imbued the island, dyeing it with it's dark color, turning greens into charcoal, reds into teals, and yellows into gold. That same smokey and celestial white, is now cascading along the coast of Equinox. Protecting the island from any whom wish it harm.







Please? tell me we can do better



he didn't
treat me right

Since when does
boyfriend mean
proprietor

Do you
own my
body?

Because in
body, it doesn't
tell like mine
anyone

Expect
more

"I knew

"She undressed."

when she removed her bra."

"When she does sexy things back to me
like kiss hard and touch me."

"She grabbed my shirt
from the crowd we

"It's all about aggression,
she unbuttons your pants or touches
you sexually first."

and led me?
were in."

"We were already

in a relationship, so I just assumed it
was consensual."

her shirt and put her hand in my pants."

"She took off

"She didn't say no when I touched her
and progressed to her more intimate
areas."

What I Took for Yes

An informal poll of current college students on how they



Receive Me NASTY

[Handwritten signature]



My people are GAY.
They are Latino.

My people are IMMIGRANTS.
They are Trans.

My people are DESI
They are musicians and poets.

My people are American, documented or not.
They are Queens, and also yes, Brooklyn — you.

My people fight for their truths,
They lie in them too.

My people preserve and protect nature,
They capture it in focus or face.

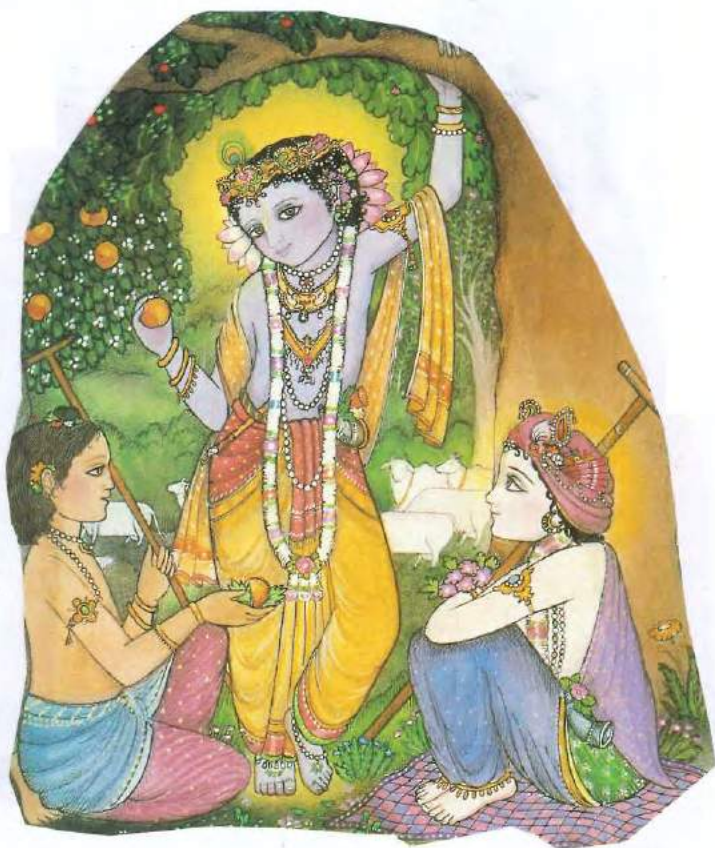
My people keep up with the city pace
They love barbecues and a night sky with stars they can trace.
They are 90s born, bold, and brazen. Steps like a dagger.
COLORFUL, the fruits of labor in their swagger.

My people I am part of you,
All of your truths, all of your pursuits.

My people, you are my roots.

They are.

Maahi X Tomás





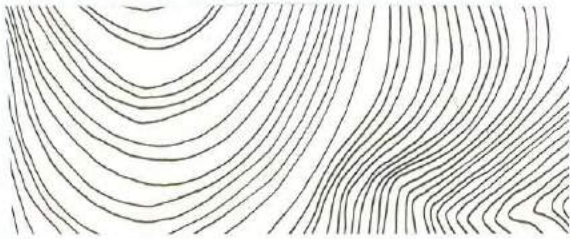
By Maahi Chowdhury



I don't know how I knew

WHEN THE MOMENT ARRIVED

OR EVEN WHAT
MANIFESTED BEFORE.



Its shape...

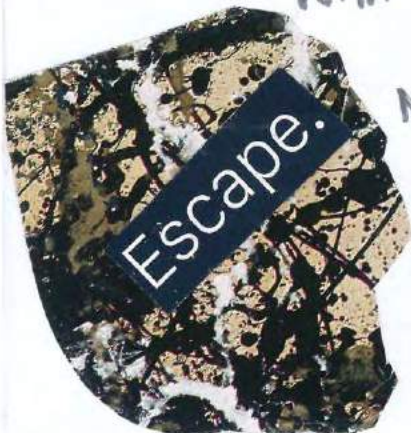
the form, abstract,

came to my mind

with little to

NO effort.

Escape.



Suddenly the thought
FLOODED
my peripheral fear



I unlocked the door to my
apartment

Climbed stairs
cautiously



WHEN A PANG OF DREAD
FLUSHED my face as I
entered the Kitchen.



Sure, in some twist of fantasy
and gray absent-minded thoughts
from the night before the

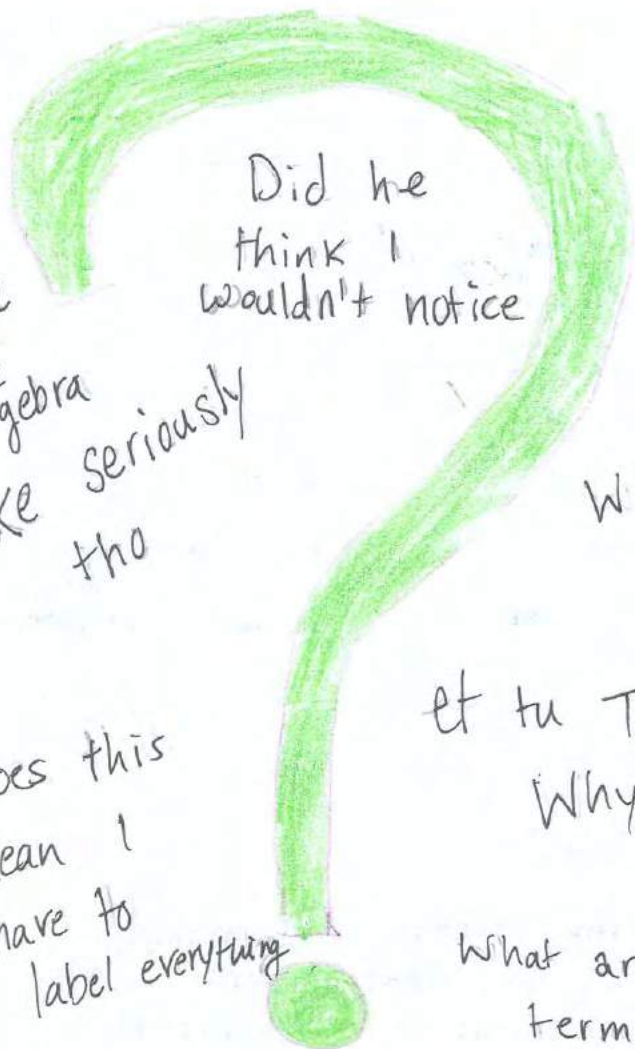
possibility
crossed to the
realm of an
improbable factor
now, felt like
an inevitability



In a moment of sobering
and precise clarity, without
any outside warning or communication,
I knew.



My roommate ate
my last cookie.



did he

do the
algebra

Like seriously
tho

Does this

mean I

have to

label everything

Will I ever recover

Did he
think I
wouldn't notice

When

Where

did I

go wrong

et tu Tomii, I don't
understand

Why

tho

What are the long
term ramifications
of our otherwise
enduring

RELATIONSHIP

I can't even have ordinary cookies, they
have to be dairy free...
why would he even want it?

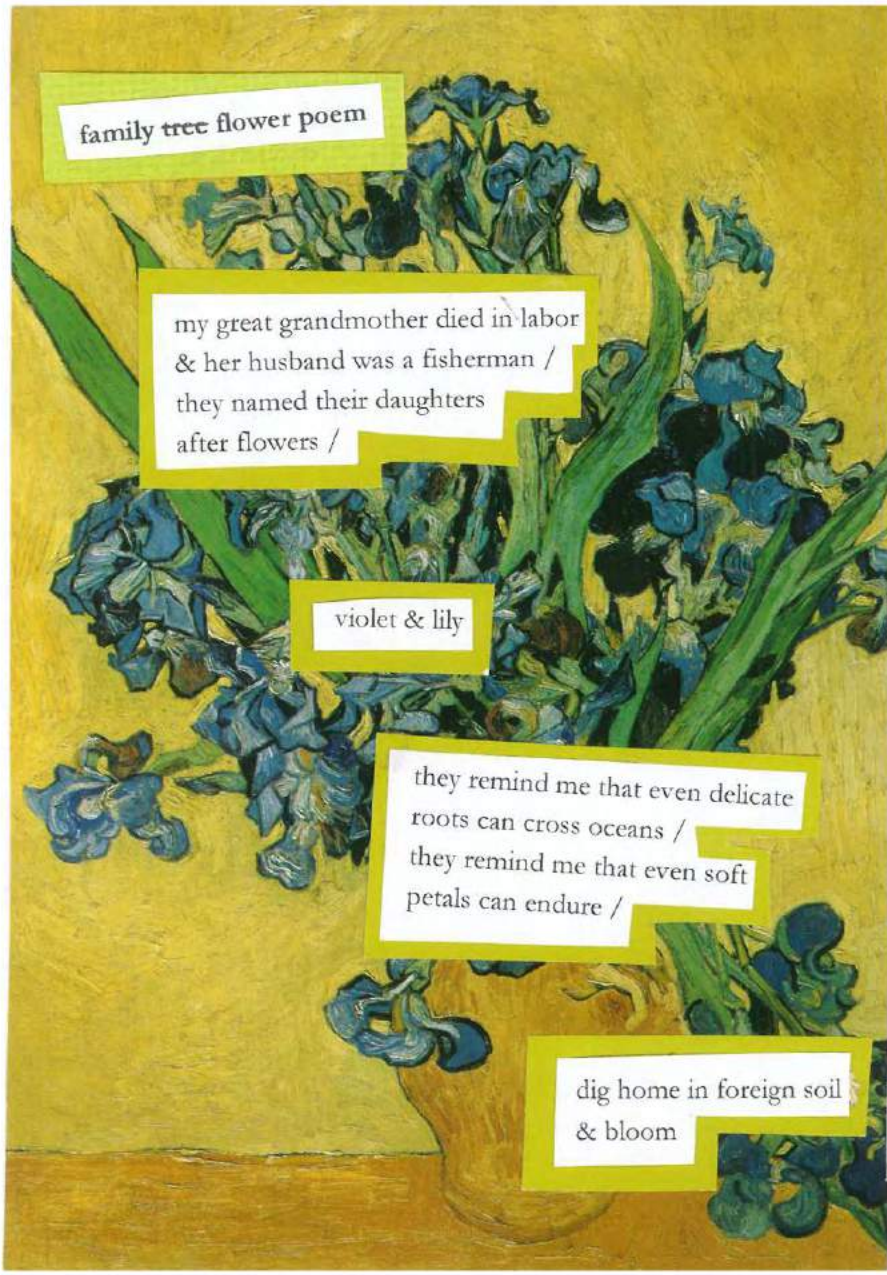
ALL THE SECRETS MY MOTHER
TUCKED NEATLY INTO
HER SARI IS A TRADITION
PASSED DOWN BY SOUTH ASIAN
WOMEN ENTIRELY IN SILENCE.
RESILIENCE.

I'LL NEVER KNOW THE SECRETS
TO A SARI - I'm not allowed.

BUT I'LL ALWAYS KNOW
MY MOTHER'S LOVE.







family tree flower poem

my great grandmother died in labor
& her husband was a fisherman /
they named their daughters
after flowers /

violet & lily

they remind me that even delicate
roots can cross oceans /
they remind me that even soft
petals can endure /

dig home in foreign soil
& bloom







Only Buildings Stay in Place
by Mah.noor

You were my temple
My secret space
The one I'd travel to,
To forget my pain.

But now that you're gone,
Where do I say my prayers?
Where do I find my peace?

Only buildings stay in place
People don't

A Pot of Happiness
by Mah·noor

*You tell yourself that you want to find
The secret to happiness
But what if it wasn't
A secret to begin with?*

*Maybe It's right there
In front of your eyes
The sunshine you avoid
Saying you're too busy working
as you dash from one to-do item,
to the next*

*The sky you won't look up at
When you're too busy focusing
on what's coming ahead
instead of what's floating away*

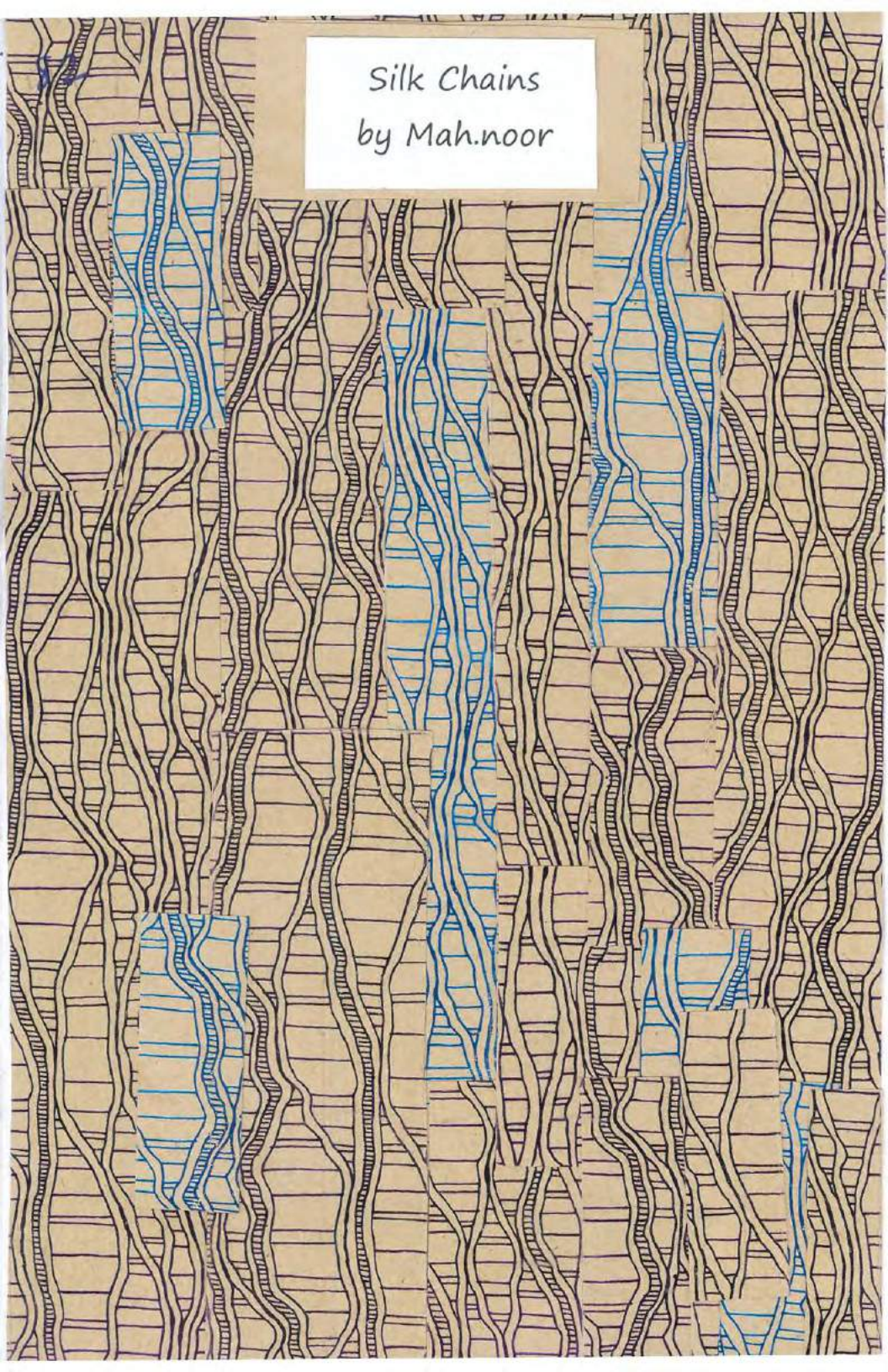
*The moments you check out
Because life seems too boring
And you'd rather leave your body
to swim in possibilities,
you're too afraid to take*



*But maybe it's true what they say
Maybe it's not that easy
You really do have to be wise to
That happiness is not waiting
at the end of a rainbow*

Happiness is a way to be

Silk Chains
by Mah.noor



I always wanted to experience
The warm embrace of a sari
How the silk would hug me, in its vibrance
Cloak me in its colors

It's always been mesmerizing
How something can be so soft
Yet invoke my tastebuds

Like the spicy tingle of pani puri
And the sugar rush of jalebi
All at once

**But how can I make myself forget
That this embrace is fed
Like metal chains to a captive**

**Built to hold us down against our will
With the weight of oppression
Tying us to old traditions**

**How does one embrace these chains,
Without tasting the poison?**

84

Synergy
by Mah.noor

A vegan key lime pie
Or a mango lassi?

Why do I have to pick
Between what I love?

Whoever said I did
was undoubtedly mistaken

For they taste even better,
Together

The tingle of lime
And the crunch
of its coconut flakes

Go perfectly
With the soft,
Sweet, mango taste

Dear Ma
by Mah.noor

I don't think death scares me
As much as losing you does
A world without your warmth
Doesn't seem worth much

What would I do without your hugs?
What would I do without your trust?
Who would I be without you?
Who would love me as such?

I haven't been in a world without you
Since the moment I came to be
How could I fathom you leaving?
Don't go, ma, please







Arts & Democracy engages the power of creativity to increase people's participation in the decision-making that impacts our lives. With a core practice of cultural organizing, Arts & Democracy integrates arts, culture, and media into organizing strategies. We believe that all people and communities have a right to their creativity and traditions, and that deep and sustained transformation happens when people bring their full selves to their activism. Arts & Democracy cultivates year-round arts and cultural programming with and for immigrant communities, including the Bangladeshi community in Kensington.

www.artsanddemocracy.org

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ARTS & DEMOCRACY

NYC Cultural Affairs



*Come join us in the South
Asian mythic journey
towards home and identity.*