

to: / the fragments we gather and forget / pieces of
people we loved but never truly left / the laughter
that echoes only in memory / the voices that
softened over time / the moments that shaped us
without us knowing / the remnants of joy, of
sorrow, of everything in between.

for: / the lives we once lived / the quiet love that
still lingers / the spaces we carry in us even as we
move forward / the broken edges that form
something whole / the parts of ourselves shaped by
others, and the fragments we've collected / this is
for you / for all of us, pieced together, always
more than the sum of what we've left
behind / this last time.

- Arisha Jain



Chrysalis

you've never known a world without me—
mom yelled at me, and it taught her
she never wanted to raise her voice at you.
i painted my walls in soft shades of blue,
and soon, yours reflected mine.

we live under the same roof,
but i haven't spoken to you in months
then you called, shared your deepest aches,
and i realised — i don't know your favourite colours.

i remember the first time i came home—
you ran, arms wide,
hugged me like i'd been gone a lifetime.
now, your door stays silently shut.
still, i take your pictures,
choose the dupatta to match your suit.


i remember when you woke up sick at three,
and how quietly jealous i was
when mumma first brought you to me.
as children, we fought over
the tv remote and the front seat,
persisting until one of us dissolved into tears.
no one else calls them 'mumma' and 'papa'
like we do,
your first steps were an echo of mine.

i stumble through life's firsts,
hoping to leave some light for you—
but i don't know your friends anymore.
you still hand me jars you can't open,
and i only see you at dinner.
i sit cross-legged at the counter when i eat,
and now you do the same.
when offered a shelf of books,
you chose the one i picked at your age.

i hope some part of us remains,
still playing (or arguing)
in the memory of our childhood home.

-Aarisha Jain



"Look."
 the barren field stretched out for miles.
 with warm little bites of makeshift aeroplanes and birds,
 the scorching heat turned into a comforting one.
 the little acts of admonishing for the easier wrongs,
 helped bring the long dure rain,
 after clean dishes were kept in the right place,
 daisy clothes clumped into the whirlpool;
 and my bed was made first thing in the morning,
 daddy's hugs felt no less than
 my little sister's favourite blanket at night.
 the dewy, fresh grass now invited a kaleidoscope
 with their linked greens and warm blues.
 sitting next to  dadu while he did samath,
 solitude paved the way to my favourite window
 that looked out into the field of blue butterflies.

The callous palms that fed me day and night,
 the same ones that handled the curls that I
 despised,
 they caressed my back while I lay my head on
 mumma's shoulders;
 looking at the moon, sick every fortnight.
 the same stars and many more, now look upon the
 evening jasmies that now don the field - blooming
 into a pure white;

The smile accompanying my distraught cries,
 belonged to papa who opened the pandora's box:
 revealing chocolates of different kinds;
 saving the field just before it drowned,
 and from the warm walls of my home,
 the gleeful cheers bounced.



The voice that balm my widening wounds,
 teaches me how to look after you
 it balm the land in such a way,
 that water flows from the cliff
 that once stood alone and dry on a breezy
 monsoon day.

I hear a neigh from outside, as I run away
 from the dinner table
 "Prisha, don't leave your meal -"
 "Mumma, look, there's a horse drinking water and
 a swarm of bees and a kal-ka-le of butterflies"
 "It's a kaleidoscope"
 Yes, look.



- Prisha Jain

gustling in

I used to love watching my mother bake,
she would only do it so rarely.
She would put her hair up in a bun,
Her wrinkled night suit proving to be a good enough apron.
She would talk in that sweet voice and hold my hands,
she would pretend it was a baking show and we were the stars.



We would play, sing and dance around,
so much flour and sugar in our hair,
But we still didn't care.

I would hop on stools to reach the counters,
Measure everything so precisely as
if we were being judged on it later.
I used to love watching my mother bake:
she seemed so carefree when she
moved around the kitchen;
It didn't matter that she stepped into
one after so long.

I used to love watching my mother bake.
It meant the house would smell like butter,
With a thousand dishes in the sink.

It meant more time together,

As I navigate my way through every process.

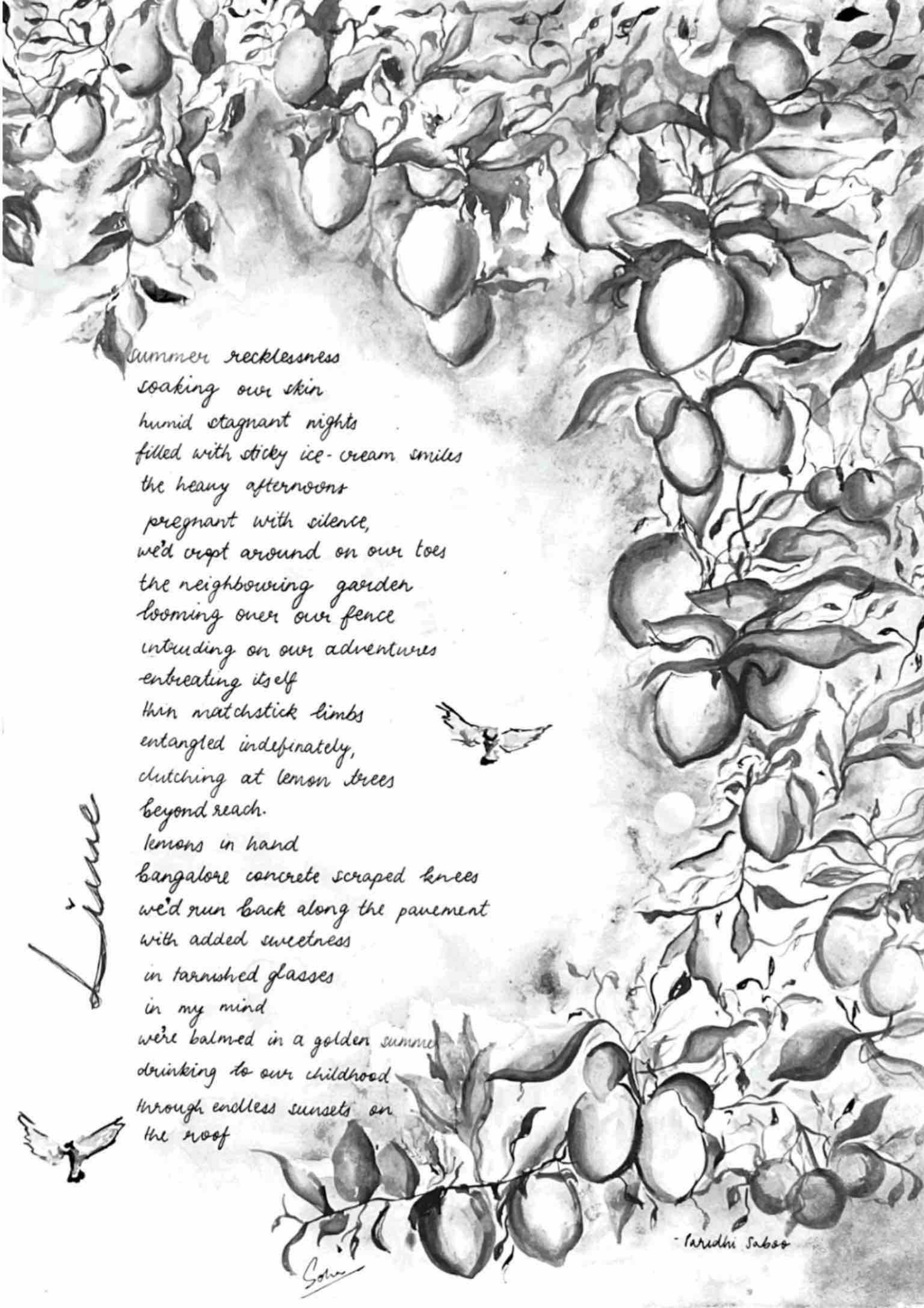
"A pinch of salt comes with everything sweet, Sara,"
Younger me wondered if your words meant more,
As I cleared up the milk that spilled on the floor.

But still soaked up whatever you said in that kitchen,
Like the rags that soaked up the milk.

We both lost track of time
Not once did we glance at the clock.

I used to love watching my mother bake,
And I don't think I ever stopped.

- Sara Guel



Summer recklessness
soaking our skin
humid stagnant nights
filled with sticky ice-cream smiles
the heavy afternoons
pregnant with silence,
we'd crompt around on our toes
the neighbouring garden
looming over our fence
intruding on our adventures
embracing itself
thin matchstick limbs
entangled indefinitely,
clutching at lemon trees
beyond reach.

lemons in hand
Bangalore concrete scraped knees
we'd run back along the pavement
with added sweetness
in tarnished glasses
in my mind
we're balm'd in a golden summer
drinking to our childhood
through endless sunsets on
the roof

Time

I gather these shards
each crasping onto a story untold
the clink of glass bells
the murmur of prayers
dancing shadows on ancient walls
the speck of sweetend chai on my tongue
a mosaic of bitter sweet existence
all fractured yet complete.

- Jannara Baird

your cold white marble for me to walk on,
towards thee
so as to feel the warmth,
until reaching your holy waters
so as to be immersed into the sense of your acceptance
so as to be immersed in the sense of belongingness for you who is unalike
until reaching your holy names of iscovar
so as to listen to your shabd that doesn't question my existence
that doesn't murder my soul by drowning me
for nothing but my admiration for marionne and hesione
so forgive me for calling this my dirty
i know nothing about you for to believe in you
except the cosmic connection you bring out of my rangyat

- Jessica B. Laur

mom used to froth coffee for us when the walls were orange.
when they were red, you stopped adding sugar.
now they're white and i've stopped adding milk.
they yellow as you live across oceans.
seven year behind,
i was oblivious to your behaviour.
seven years ahead,
you've forgotten
what it feels like to be seventeen.
i ripple after you every seven years,
still, i hope our fingers brush just
one day.

- Paiddhi Soboo



in time -
ghosts fade away
in empty whispers, they lose their say.
faces morph, blur in a cascade
conversations drip slip, then get misplaced,
emotions remain like little flickering lights
in the distance.

time erases our fingerprints
and the fairies we drew on the walls
set past the horizon
in a little corner out of sight you remain
linger in places we no longer belong to.
you're the last i glance at,
ever-present
in the spaces we won't return to
- Arisha Jain

I wish I could kiss the stars
And the clouds in the sky,
But I lack the grandeur.
So I kiss the ground instead.

I appreciate Her skin,
Rough at places which have endured trauma,
And soft where Her children have cuddled Her.

Polled up where She ate plenty,
And flat where She let Her children stomp on Her.

And what is sleath
If not my return to the womb,
That nourished me

for eternity
Before life.
- Kaanya J. Patel



When I give myself to you
I give to you my mom's fear of
pigeons, my dad's belief in superstitions.
I give to you my sister's love for stories, my
friend's ability to forgive, my best friend's
capability to convince.

I give to you nights of oiling each others' hair in
the Bulbul down, I give to you breaths I tried
catching after running behind an auto with my
childhood friend.

I give to you Saturday nights of reading books
when everyone else has slept, I give to you Sunday
afternoons of humming old Bollywood songs.

I give to you teenage girls profoundly refuting
what "wise men say", I give to you sleeping in laps
under a flowerless tree, I give to you incidents that
turned into stories, travelling from one mouth to another.

I give to you petals of a rose from a friend who is no
longer one accompanied by the words of consolation
the fading flower brought.

I give to you the *frangipani* that once sat behind my ear
with the gentleness of the hands that placed it there.

I give to you warmth, I give to you loss, I give to you not just
me, but a fragment of every person
I have ever loved.

-Aahana Gupta



alchemy of
pain

A thousand failures that weigh me down,
Constant worries willing me to drown,
Each moment a struggle, a fight to the death
Each blow strikes ere I catch my breath.

Every success so high and every oversight so low,
Every tear masked to put on a show
Each word not spoken out of fear
Of longing for a courage that's
Yet, I remain a ghost of pain
Of phoenix rising from the
From infinite depths of doubt,
Mending the fracture that time



never near.
and a fire that flashes
fragmented ashes
I endure and I ascend
cannot bend.


In the alchemy of pain, I find
Transforming my struggles into a chance
Within the shadows of my heartache and the tears
There lies a quiet courage, a strength born
Each bruise a mark and each scar a story
A testament forged in resilience and glory.

my rebirth,
for self-worth.
I have wept,
dread.

From shattered pieces I rise, and I see
Each fractured fragmented is what was meant to be.

Amaya Marwah





Would you place wilting barberries on his grave?
Fragments of the last garra
he brought home a year ago;
Would you display it on your tables or shelves,
If the best memories were to be kept
and special flowers preserved.

How about the way you wept,
When you decided to press it between the pages
of your favourite book,
Careful not to damage your little rose:
Fragile as a whisper
You were afraid to lose it
To hurt it

As if losing it was worse than when he left
As if it was the only trace of him you had left.

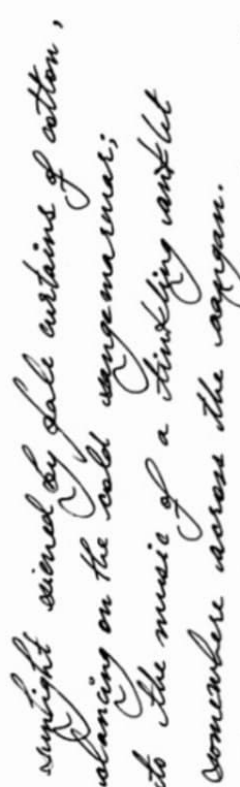
Opening and closing the same rusty paperback
Tracing the words behind your dying flower,
every syllable still aches for him
Would you not keep your wilting little rose,
Away from everyone else?

As if he was still there, he was still yours,
you were still his?

- Shambhavi Prige

sunlight scented by late curtains of cotton,
slamming on the cold vengeance mat;
to the music of a tinkling castlet
somewhere across the saffron.
the smell of jasmine - the note of a home
entangles with the constant sound of bicycles
at hands that run this house.
some visit some day
but leave your shoes at the threshold,
bare feet on dust
that clings to the edges of my skirt.

standing on history that could trouble the earth,
chubby feet chasing butterflies in the garden
A gentle and soft key hit, covered in mud,
because of these who, the world spins,
soon the leaflet stops walking
and the feet slip;



Leaving still from the hair of the Langsun
they watch
as I walk away
inhaling grief like the air -
the flow of a loved one.
sweepy footprints on the ground,
soon muffled away
and with them
the remains -
of my last dance

- Ruby Thamb



The Last Time

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