

# BARI:

know your place

**OR**

**HOW I**

**RELUCTANTLY**

**MADE SOME ART**

**ABOUT THE**

**BAD OL' DAYS**

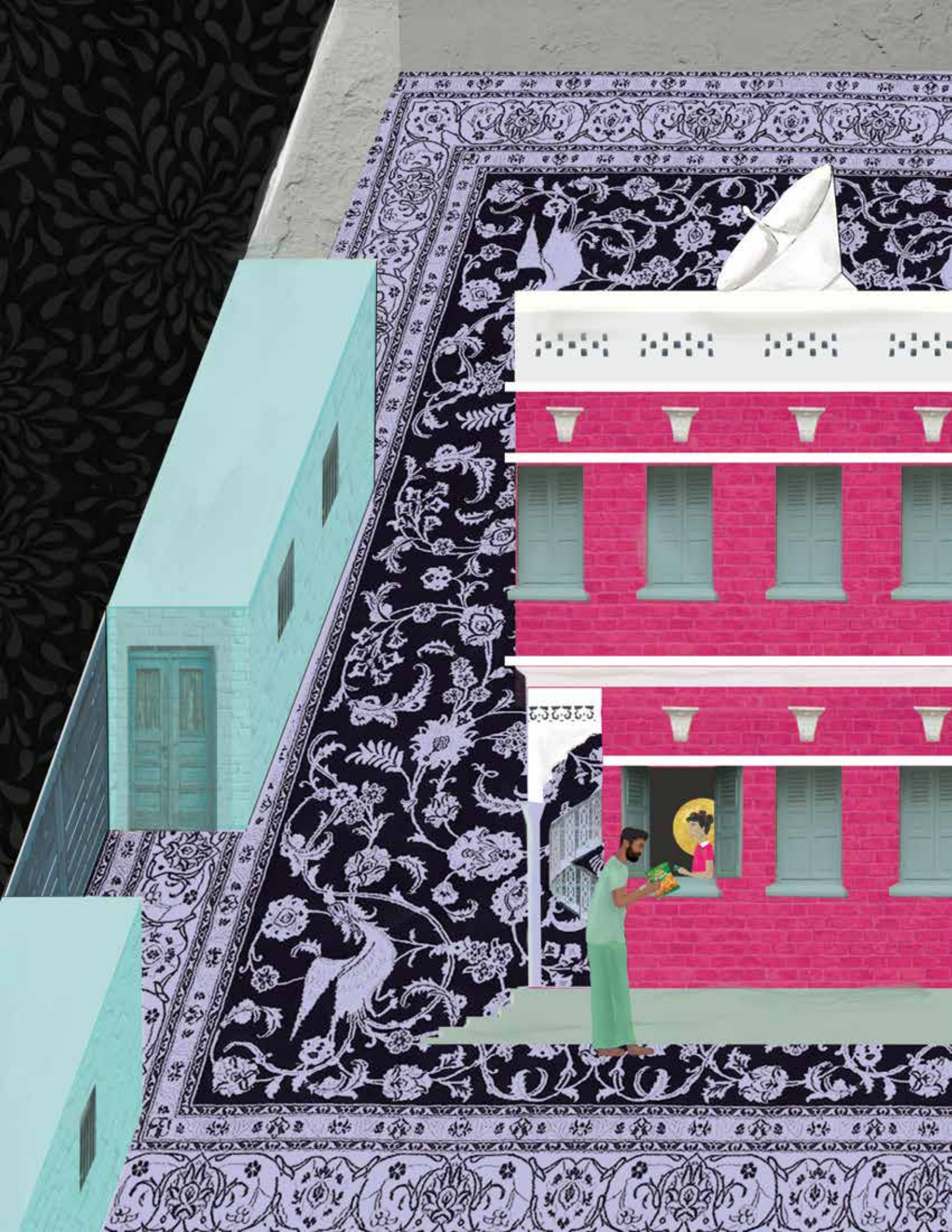


## Overview

Inspired by the high-horizon, miniature style paintings cultivated in Southeast Asia between 15th - 18th centuries, this exhibition of illustrations and writing by Symin Adiva explores the hierarchies of family, class, race, gender, belief, sexuality, and power through grounded contemporary scenes in the life of a young immigrant as they grow to understand their "place."

The illustrations in "Bari," which means home in Bangla, employ centuries old storytelling devices once used to regale the court with tales of the most powerful among them. But here, the pages explicitly lay out the kind of stories that has always been encouraged to stay private, realities to be glossed over at best. For many immigrant artists, their work is a tribute extolling their cultural and familial roots. This instead explores what is to be untethered to the standard ties of family and community as well as the cultural attitudes that led to this break.





# potato crackers

OR the infinitely less unpleasant of  
the only two, vivid memories I have of  
my childhood in Bangladesh

The tale I can freely tell  
of power, of potato chips  
Story that's  
easy,  
removed,  
aggrandizing  
and betrays nothing  
(barring class issues)  
Tale  
of a time when I could  
buzz a buzzer  
to summon a house employee  
to venture to other side  
beyond the gates  
to retrieve chips of my choosing  
Usually "Potato Crackers"  
Or "Ring Chips"  
Which are how they sound  
Chip you wear as a ring  
And eat!  
Sweet, sweet satisfaction at & around  
my little, little fingers  
Seamless is less thrilling





# ଘାଟ, fuzzy memory

OR my non food related memories of Bangladesh are  
for sure not good

Let's solve a mystery!

Mystery of why was I so afraid to cry  
Maybe it was the time I was locked up  
in the closet under the stairs.

No, no

I forgot about that till my sister told me.

Further back.

6, 5, maybe 4

Could be that Christ at hands of the Romans moment  
that I spent on the other end of the switch.

Because I dared to walk into the living room crying.

I'm drawing a mental venn diagram.

I've got my red conspiracy yarn, corkboard and thinking cap.

Let's connect those bloody dots...

We'll get to the bottom of this

I know it.





# what are you?

OR unwelcome ambiguity in  
the American South

Woops, sorry  
Didn't mean to confuse you  
With an ethnicity you can't pin down  
and worse yet  
a name so far askew  
Woopsie doopsie it's tied your tongue  
your eyebrow in beaded sweat  
What racial epithet to hurl  
so hard to tell  
what a quandary I've forth, set  
Woops magoops  
actions, words even less familiar  
clothes don't help  
god it's all ambiguous  
and ya know I never did make things  
clearer  
I've worked your brain too hard  
just pile me under "other"  
and relax  
Sorry again





## greater than

OR my parents' best attempts at  
indoctrinating their racism

Child, listen  
We're better than them  
All of us are greater  
All of them are lesser  
How do we know?  
It's just so  
It's been told  
And now we're telling you  
Good to have someone to feel  
greater than  
Without being better than  
Good for us  
Don't question it  
Just remember to keep telling everyone  
Maybe not everyone  
might not be a good look  
Whisper it in your immediate circle  
and to the wind  
Always to the wind



## 2face 1 furious

OR the fakest kutta I ever knew

Abba  
The greatest actor of his generation  
Everyone  
Watch him preen  
Watch him joke  
Watch him pander to the stars and higher ups  
Is he that good or does no one care to see?  
The cracks in the act  
The face behind the face  
The oh so limited range  
Catch his next show if you can right behind this door  
Usually an audience of one  
One he has no need to please  
Just one being of much, much lower stature  
A crew member if you will  
Hear him now  
Hear him again  
Hear him growl  
No character to break  
But boy can he break a spirit.  
As the best thespians secretly do.



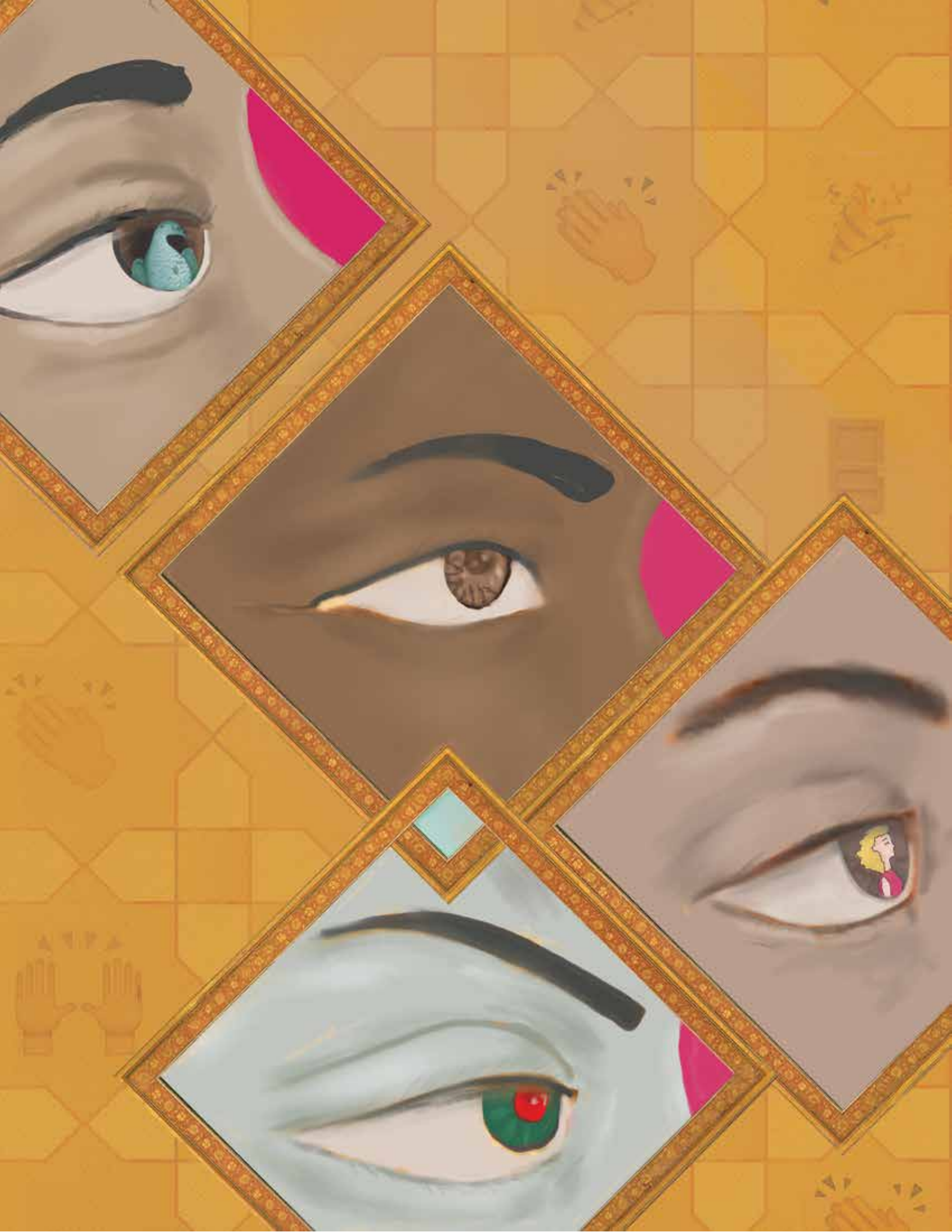


# independent thinking

OR Santa, Jesus, my father and  
other men I've never believed in

When I was little  
A clown told me a truth,  
his,  
that he was important  
that his word was key  
He told me repeatedly  
I did not believe  
I knew him to be an idiot  
a liar  
frankly, a tool  
A clown told them a truth  
a lie but a truth  
universally accepted  
they believed  
they thought he was funny  
and liked him so  
and liked the universe so  
and it did not occur to them  
to question  
Now  
I'm filled with pride  
that I never took anyone  
at face value  
but what to do  
what to do  
about those pesky  
authority issues





# eyes on the prize

OR differences in priority among family

There it be  
My my my  
The most important thing  
Apple of our respective eye

Flight for I  
Freedom awaiting, upward ho

Adoration for father time  
Only just from everyone we know

Status quo for mother security  
Let us accept as she

Blonds for brother shine  
For they sparkled so to he  
And wouldn't you know  
quite a lot of our lot agree



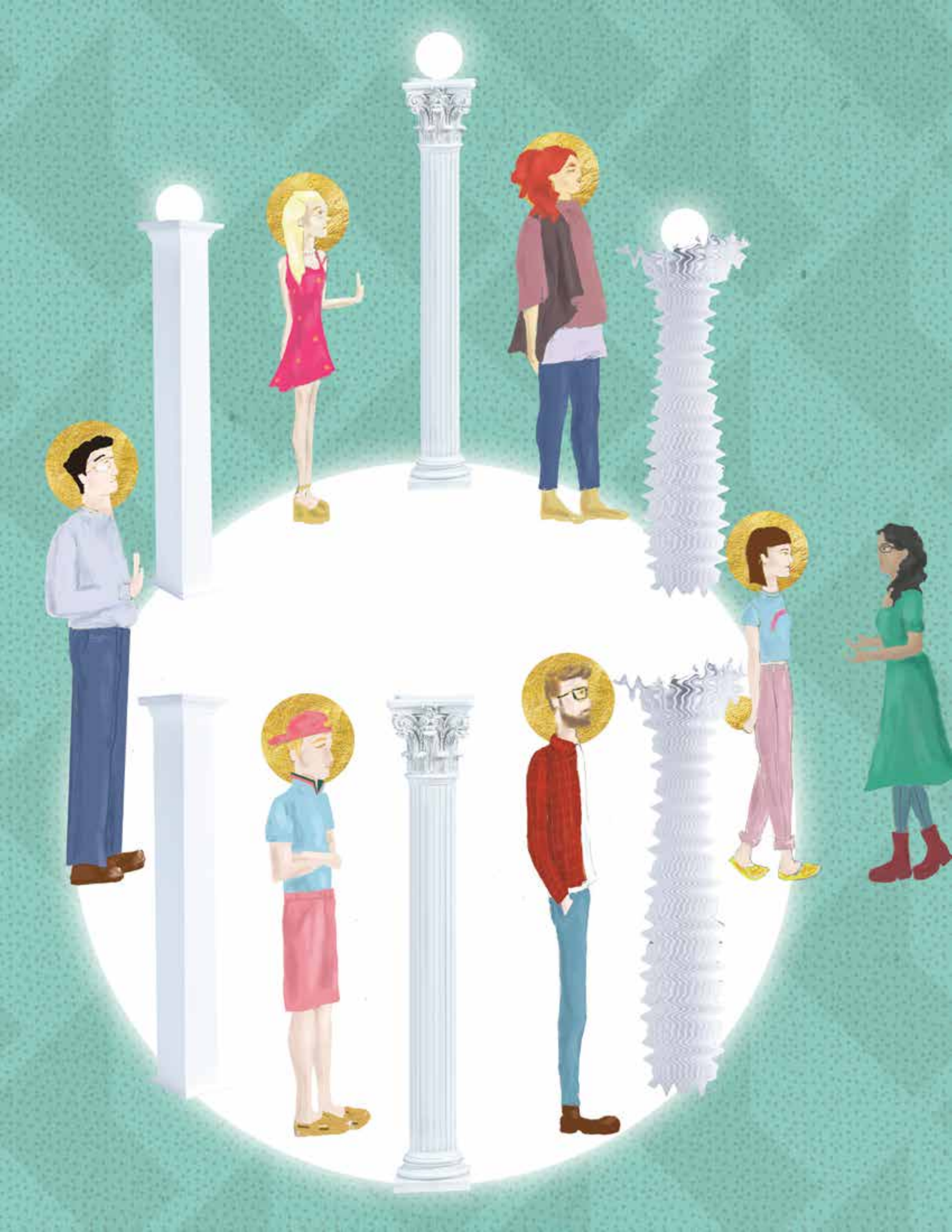


# the great indoors

OR permanent groundings that lead to totally healthy coping mechanisms

The show, it's on  
Hear that witty banter  
One day I will banter wittily  
See the way they lean on each others' shoulder  
One day there will be a shoulder, and boy will I lean  
Look at them go, go, go  
One day I can go as I please  
Till then  
There's TV, Sugar





## ढूढूढूढू

**OR** let me bludgeon you with a metaphor  
and also did you know Thomas Jefferson  
loved him some Greek architecture

When I stepped onto the "grounds"  
of Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia  
I was struck by the amount of columns.  
Ionic. Corinthian. Popped-Collar columns.  
Proud of their column-ness.  
The columns I'd seen before were simpler,  
Doric? No, more basic.  
When I moved to NYC,  
the columns almost didn't even resemble  
columns.  
These columns curved and swooped.  
If you didn't look down, you could almost  
mistake them for something other than  
a column.  
They didn't want to be associated with  
the stodgier columns.  
But columns they were none the less.  
Always in the way.  
Obstructing views and holding up ceilings.





## इतना many option

OR refusing to convince my sister into agreeing to an arranged marriage and then watching it all unfold anyway

Hey apu, it's almost your wedding!  
The fine, fruitful day our parents' guilt and manipulation has reaped  
And also you get to pick some napkins!  
The day when you spend what you can't spare  
so people can ooh ahh stare  
And pick the table arrangement!  
The day your stinky singledom no longer stinks up our parents' good name  
And you pick the invitations!  
Gosh they already have one weird, daughter, me, spare them the indignity of two please!  
Quick, pick your cake  
You like cake!  
A lot. Too much. According to you know who.  
That's why you don't get to pick the groom.  
They have made home in their box  
And you will too.





# the forbidden dance

OR a short list of races my parents did  
not want me to associate with

Black

"Mexican"

The End.

Quick, no one tell them about

Afro-Latinos

Lest minds implode

Definitely not the one I lost

something or other to

I believe it was a lotus...





new people, new  
places, new things

**OR** all the spaces I don't belong but I'm here anyway

Everything I couldn't do,  
I now can  
Technically can  
Have done  
And sometimes do do  
But what of the things I have not?  
Of the places I've not gone  
Of the roles I've not worn  
Do I go in there?  
I was told no  
But now there's no one telling me so  
Not directly  
Just politely  
Boy is it dark there  
And what's with all the fog  
Why does it still look kinda scary  
Well, there's always tomorrow



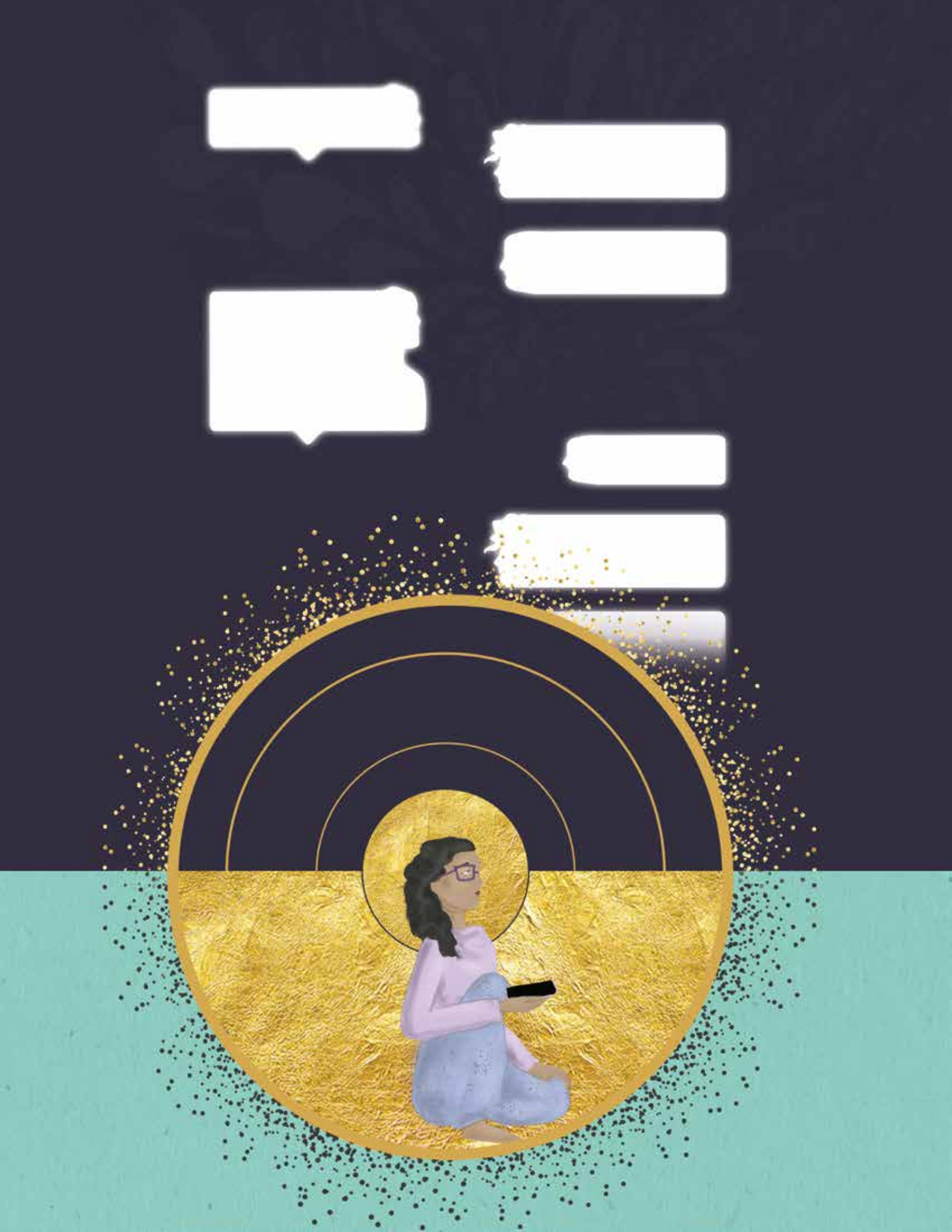


# i dreamt of power

OR quest for autonomy to get gone and stay gone

I dreamt of power  
Big leaps, heroic hurdles  
Like moving freely and laughing as loud as I please  
But I kept quiet  
Lest I wake any sleeping giants  
They slept on a bed of coins  
I dreamt of taking it by force  
Fearlessly, bloodily  
Muffling enemies and crippling legs as they had me  
But I just stood perfectly still  
They'd tire eventually  
From holding the purse strings and my strings  
I dreamt of big plans  
To gain strength to run to the furthest reaches  
I'd gain the upper hand  
And thwart a tricky and vengeful god  
I dreamt of power  
bounty of gold, ships in my command  
Till I had it  
Then nothing else felt important  
Worth doing, left conquering  
I dream of power  
Of losing it  
Of swash buckling under the pressure  
Of misfortune taking the very thing  
All my dreams were all but made of





# forget

OR saying goodbye to family

Forget  
Please our darling child, forget  
You are our most precious child  
Please forget  
Come back to the fold  
Why do you keep ignoring us?  
Did you remember to forget?  
Do as we do  
and darling we only know to do  
one thing  
Reflect?  
No!  
Introspect?  
Does God?  
No!  
Why are you like this?  
Didn't we teach you to forget?  
We forgot!  
And for that we are sorry.  
But for everything else,  
do forget.





# Strength in vulnerability

**OR** sometimes treacly cliches are true and you only need an autoimmune disease that takes away your emotional stability to learn that

I told you I cried  
To my surprise  
I didn't die  
I cried in front of you  
Still I go on living  
I cried on the subway  
It's weird but I was thrown a parade  
I cried in view of the whole parade  
I've honestly never been happier  
I cried to each 7 billion of my fellow criers  
I swear I could bench press a whole mountain  
Drink down the sea  
And do more reps





# ତୋବେର, ଘାଟେର, ହଟ, ହଟ, ହଟ

OR look, I'm basically a  
fully realized butterfly now

I'm done  
I did it  
I've navigated  
Cultivated  
I've grown  
Propped up  
Held up  
Glowed up  
On my own  
Each year better  
Than before  
Oh there's more?  
Curses!





**SYMIN  
ADIVE**

**बाडी**

