# IVIA IN THE INTERIOR S.O. S.O.

#### SFUMATO

derived from the Italian word fumo, meaning "smoke"

In fine art, the term "sfumato" refers to the technique of painting in which colors or tones are blended in such a subtle manner that they melt into one another without perceptible transitions, lines, or edges. S k i n just like paint blends in from one stimulus to another leaving little or no traces to the world outside but completely changing e v e r y t h i n g for the person who wears it.

Cover image and concept by Chetna Chauhan

#### **FOREWORD**

As we lend to you, our third edition of Marketplace we attempt to explore 'Skin'. Skin, in all it's mundanity and universality is also something so personal, and so intimate and to say the least, we left the submissions absolutely moved.

The vastness of skin. The personal battles which come with its suppleness, and how it is a giant canvas of experience. Further, skin has always been a site of violence. And of politics. The myths of purity and pollution have played out here. The policing of it's forms has prolonged itself through history. Which skin is desirable? Which skin is policed? Skin has also lent itself to desire. To love languages. To the archaicness of beauty. The connotations are endless and before you sink in, we ask you to think for a brief moment, 'what does skin mean to you?

It has been a pleasure to curate this issue. The breathtaking illustrations, the brutally honest photographs and the supple poetry we've held onto for so long, we can't wait to share it with you. Happy reading

- Anureet Watta

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#### **Unfinished Skin**

By Sasa

skin; so various, so wonderful in all of its shapes, colours, textures and forms. searching for something meaningful, skin. skin that's been shamed, scratched, cut and burnt. shattered, and bruised, and painted over, and stretched and compressed. skin that's been so loved, so hated. waiting desperately to feel something again. sunlight shyly reaching each inch, warming me up, bringing me back to life. wind tickling my underarms, water running down my cheeks, then my back, kissing them softly, gently, goodbye. skin touching skin, wandering through unknown places, destined for love and youth and heartbreaks and loss. aching for acceptance at it's own home.

# Skin as a Reparation

By Anureet Watta

I'm sorry to bring this up but, Do you know about the Nazi that made a lampshade out of human skin? How long did his house reek of rotting flesh?

Beige banality, and a great conversation starter, sitting quaintly between a wedding photo and a scented candle-it's not our backs that we own, only our lies.

I would touch you,

but we live in times where skinning a cow turns into skinning a man turns into a forgotten news report.

Repertoire.

A 2000-year-old race -

to drown in soft earth like a warm embrace or to be gnawed to the bone by hate.

Who wins and gets to forget?

What I'm saying is, it's a charade the hand that holds a gun, is also a gun, and neither meant for making a fire in this endless frost.

Except all we yearn is for the comfort of an elbow, a wayward cheek, the warmth of a palm, to peel a lover open.

Except, we don't really remember where we learnt to crave for skin and then to conquer it What is a country if not a tapestry of skin it reaped unfairly?

What I'm saying is
I may be a coward
but how can we touch and do anything if not mourn?

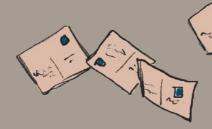


#### Dostcard

In collaboration with Almaarii, we introduced Dostcard: a postcard exchange artists to counter the capitalistic, heteronormative version of love enforced upon us every year on Valentine's Day and do something different. We had 13 different designs to choose from, made by our queer artists to send to your friend, partner, family, yourself, or even a stranger. For each Dostcard purchased by you, we sent anoth-

er to an awaiting stranger from our recievers list. We also sent a portion from the amount collected to the mutual aid initiative run by @trains\_trans to provide ration for working class cis women, trans women and people from the Kothi communities, while the rest went to our talented artists. The response we received towards this project was absolutely overwhelming! We sent almost 400 postcards, handwritten and packaged by our team all across India. Every time you received a postcard, tagged us in your stories, we were blown away by your support and love. We're looking forward to undertake this initiative once again in the future!

Written by Anoushka Radhakrishnan Images by Gayatri



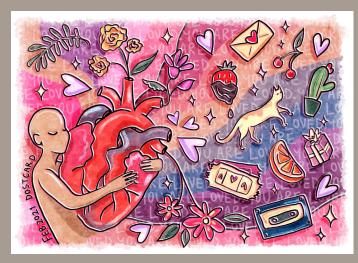




ANUREET WATTA



HANA



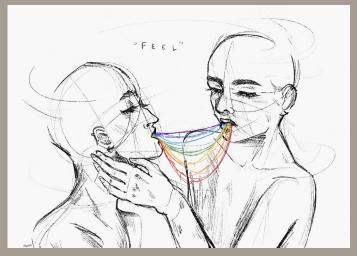
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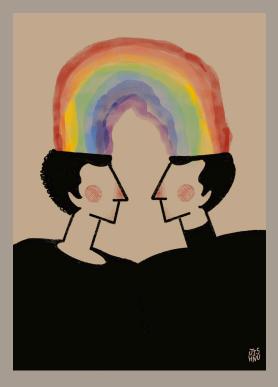




AKRITI



SAMHITA SONI



JISHNU



TORA

# Instagram Live with Vibhav Singh

On 17th January 2021, we hosted an Instagram live with Vibhav Singh, a freelance illustrator and animator based in Bangalore. As described in his own words, his work is mostly narrative, inspired from classic science fiction and fantasy, music and film. Vibhav has worked in the Indian indie music scene, collaborating with musicians on visuals and cover artworks, as well as illustration, concept art and visual development in gaming, film and advertising. In a lively and engaging conversation, we discussed art, his creative process and all that he learned through his journey in the field.



Written by Anoushka Radhakrishnan Image by Vibhav Singh

# A Garden of a Mother's Insecurities about her Daughter's Distaste for men

By Mili Mukim

What flowers will grow on the graves I dig in my skin How many cuts does it take for roses to grow fuller, sunflowers to sigh.

Would you kiss me when the flowers seep out of me Is it okay to hold you close softly whisper 'flowers aren't what they're called'.

My therapist says
it's all inside your head
you're not as gay
as you think you are
My mother, with tears in her eyes

like a gun to my heart, You have had enough it's time to get straight or get married.

How many days does it take for roses to rot.

#### Stella Barla on Skin

Artist and photographer Stella Barla interviewed by Aadrika Sominder, Chetna Chauhan, Ishani Singhal and Radhika Chauhan

Written by Aadrika Sominder

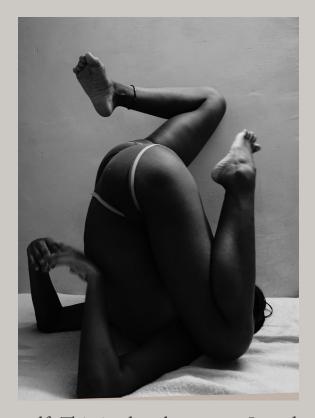
Stella Barla sits with her back to a white wall, in front of the camera that she is usually behind. With her sit the three of us, with our heads in our hands- leaning as we listen to her talk about skin and photography.

Q. Hello Stella, why don't we start with you telling us what skin means to you and how you reflect it in your work?

Okay so, the way I think about skin is how most people think about skin, you know?

A lot of my art revolves around the growth and evolution of skin mainly because when I look at myself in the camera, I see so many imperfections- the stretch marks, the acne. But that gives me confidence. And this is also what helps people connect to my work. They're seeing things in my pictures that they already have!

For this connection only, I also try to make my photographs as subjective as I can because the end message I want to send with my piece is simply to accept



myself. This is also the reason I tend to post a lot of pictures without a corresponding writeup or 'caption less' posts. We are all allowed to exist however we want to exist- with our scars, stretch marks, acne, weight. This is what I hope people see through my art- the freedom to exist.

Q. That's really cool. Could you walk us through your process- how you come up with ideas and how you implement them? Okay, this is a sticky question because, sometimes- actually, I rarely plan my work. The pictures have always come before the stories and most photographs I take are in the moment shots of everyday instances. I can't do the whole planning for Instagram thing because I do photography for myself and planning feels a little bit restrictive. After I've taken the photographs, then I'll look at them and build a story.



As for the process, I mean I like to keep most of my pictures very low edit and even if I edit, it's very light editing. And while I usually prefer natural, mellow tones some of my work does have bold colours but I usually do that in an attempt to make something stand out. The colour already exists- like the soap picture- and I just photograph it how I see it.



Q. A lot of your pictures are quite intimate- bare skin, monotones. Is there a reason behind this?

Okay, let me ask you a question. Don't people really exaggerate the importance of an 'outside gaze'? Why is this outside gaze so important? Why is the way other people see us so important?

My photography comes from a place of insecurity and I feel like most artists make work that is very personal to them. I believe that everything is natural and I only aim to portray things how I see them. There is nothing deep about how I take pictures. I'm just trying to show bodies how they are, uncensored.

One of my favourite pictures is part of a series called 'Hands'. It's a little scattered across my feed but in that, I've portrayed a human and a mannequin in high contrast, low light setups.



It is actually a story about how they cannot be together- a human mannequin twisted love story and when I showed it to one of my friends, they said it was pretty representative of a real relationship. And that was so cool because the theme of the picture was dark and twisted but simple- black and white. I created it to show touch- skin to skin warmth, holding hands, kisses on foreheads- that sort of thing.

As you can tell, most of my work is very obvious because one of the joys of photography is having people interpret your art the way you want it to be interpreted. Even when it's open to interpretation.

Q. You seem to have a very good sense of your style but when did you start exploring photography and how did you decide upon it as your main medium?

Oh, this was a pretty natural process because I've always been attentive to detail.

All of us do the same things- gestures and all. And I take inspiration from that. Like look at us right now, four women talking about skin and everyone is leaning, touching their faces! This. I just wrote it down but this is how women sit when they talk to each other.

I actually began with photographing ghar ke log, you know. My mother, my sister. My sister is a very creative person and I take a lot of inspiration from her. After that, I did a lot of photography in college and that was a good environment to explore a lot of new genres. It's not that hard to learn how to photograph especially with the resources we have on the internet.

So you learn and you keep learning, I guess. You have to be open to every style in the beginning because if you don't explore, you won't find the one that fits best. And taking inspiration from around me is a big part of my process- everything inspires everyone and everyone inspires everyone.



Q. What's the next step then? How do you go from deciding your style to actually being comfortable with it? What about the dreaded imposter syndrome?

Oh, haven't we all struggled with this?

Professionally, in my first year, I would look at pictures on my feed and think what am I doing? Am I doing enough? But then I was like- why am I comparing my work to other people's work, you know? This used to really affect me when I started and I used to constantly put myself down, for no reason!

But over time I think I've learnt how to disconnect myself from this type of response to other people's photographs. I think the key is to stop comparing your work to their progress. The only person you should be comparing yourself to is you.



It's a long process but it never really goes away. I recently read this article where they were talking about how when a woman writes about heartbreak and emotions its always said to be too feminine, emotional and not classified as real art, but when a man writes about heartbreak it's a sad song that should achieve critical acclaim. They're right. Why is a woman not allowed to express her feelings through art? What is this hypocrisy?

And I think it's our job as artists to break through those barriers. It's the only way we can move forward.

Q. You're right. It has been such a pleasure talking to you! Before we say goodbye is there anything else you'd like to add?

Yes, there is no path to becoming a 'good enough' photographer. There is no step that you can take that will make you 'good enough'. My principle is that as long as what you're shooting makes sense to you and to other people, it is enough.

Photography is about expressing yourself, and only expressing yourself will bring you maximum fulfilment. This fulfilment should be your only goal. Everything else is allowed to keep changing.

### ये कौन रोज़-रोज़

#### आकृति द्वारा कविता

ये कौन रोज़-रोज़ इंकलाब का हाल सुना जाता है?

फकत चमड़ी जल जाती है गुलिस्तां का हाल देख कर।

जल रहे इस चाम को किस तेल से बुझावे?

लाओ इस बाग की मिट्टी जरा पोरों मे झोंक दो।

जो आग गर तब भी बुझे ना देह में मेरी,

तो इस पर फैज की कोई ग़ज़ल का इल मल देना।

उन लाठियों के है निशान तो हैरत हुआ क्यों बेवजह?

कह दो हथियार अपने बदल लें हारा नहीं है काफ़िला।

ए आशिक़ तुझे क्या दे सकी, कुछ खाली खतों की इश्कियां?

रुक आज ना मेरे लिए मेरी चमड़ी ने बहुत कुछ सहा।

# This Skin That I'm Hiding Behind

Self Portraits by Ishani Singhal







I feel the stimulus from the outer surface of my skin- far away from this world inside of me that twitches at every touch. This foreign world seeps into me through my skin and turns into a different world of its own. Everything it makes be feel remains burried inside this skin of mine. Among silences touch echoes in feelings I never even knew I could feel- feelings you will never know I have felt- and my skin enjoys being audience to this dramatic irony.





#### Archived Skin

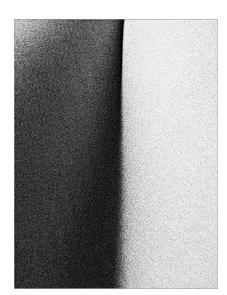
By Nafeesa Ghazal

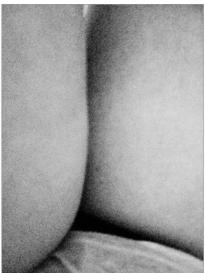
Autumn skin of mine is too crowded tendrils of glass piercing into words shaping brown bronze medal age in the reflection of hawks picking up my skin, nipping my dreams colour of mine make them spit tuneless garbage. I'm, they say "a coloured waste." Does it matter? does it? seeing me as the colour of my skin but, when my soul leaves will they be able to shot it down the heartbeats of that white soul? what if my soul is white and theirs be bronze ...then, am I allowed to / supposed to shoot them down? does it really matter? the colour of my skin more than flesh, blood, bones, heart, life on my crowded pores questions live asking to be sinked in.

# Origami Folds

By Varsha Panikar

Origami Folds is an ongoing photo-poetry series which explores curves and folds of the human body (self and others) and uses it as a medium and metaphor for hopeless frailty and hardened impenetrability, from which emerges the themes of identity, dysphoria, commodification of the body, and denial and loss of autonomy as conditions of globalized society and cultures though the lens of south-asian, queer and marginalized bodies which are forever under critical scrutiny, objectification and dehumanizing policing from external and internal perspectives. Within this stifling framework, the skin has separated from the body, both physically in the act of medical dissection and alterations in an effort to meet popular standards of beauty, and metaphorically in the separation between skin and psyche. Skin here, also represents time and wraps us up like cellophane wraps hard candy.





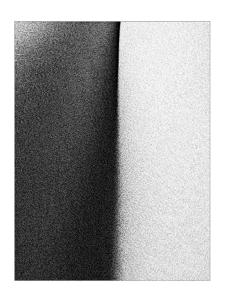




our lives are not
a pretty picture
covered in
shiny cellophane boxes.
like this skin,
they are just a collection of different bits
that randomly fit
and rarely,
interlock



you origami fold me and stuff me into boxes, categories and caskets but all you ever had was my skin, the carcass. i can't be had, can't be captured, not even quantified. i am an origami fold, endless and inexhaustible, and within my thundering mass i remain the madness, the one of garish news.



the skin i live in
where the ink is
more permanent from within, where words and memory bleed across the skin,
and the scars...
if I scratch them,
will they disappear?
will the pain remain?
this skin,
raw and ruined
in the new world aesthetic.
how many mirrors
have seen your hate?
will you murder your body until you suit their taste?

## Fish Scales = Tree Leaves



By Bondar Kate

#### Innocent

By Pratishtha Jindal

In a room with no light, In a house with no fight.

But then the lights turn on,
And I see my skin.
I don't know why it speaks, why it tells,
Saying a million words that are left unsaid.
I don't know what it says or what it once did, I don't know what made people do what they did.
I cannot understand, how could they do what they did?

To me, it's just my skin-It hasn't sinned.

I often think, did these things really happen? In history books, in all these pages I've read and have been shook, But then the news reminds, these things still happen.

It's so innocent, my skin-It doesn't know what wrong it did.

I often realize, how fortunate I am,

To be alive at this time, When no guns are fired at the colour of my skin.

I hear about racism and think, we must have grown,

How can we still believe, that something so mute as this skin speaks?

But then the books moan, all the truths they fold;

And I feel myself sinking, why are we still chained?

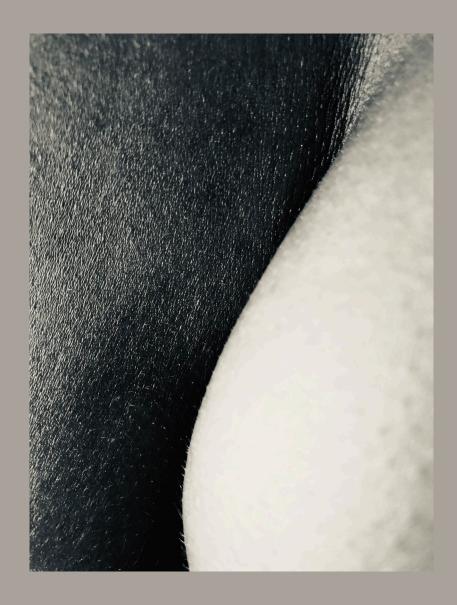
If there are keys to be found, why are we still locked?

Skin is a part of one's identity, Why does it have to fight to be? Why is there a fight, to begin with?

In a room with no light, I n a room with no fight.

But then the light turns on, And this time, you and I, We don't hide.

# Peace in this skin



Photograph by Tyson Simmons

### The Skin I Live In



Illustration by Anurag Pushkaran

#### Pleasures of the World

By Shafa Shamsudeen

Rusty hinges, white window panes trapped sun within beige curtain pave the way for the cold air rolling down their hard bent spines.
Bathroom tiles sick of gray hair; drown the music for the partially deaf.
Two bodies sat blowing bubbles on a yellow porcelain tub.
Water dripping from their sides
Shedding dead skin off her bald head.
Champagne glasses clicked, arms flapping in air Words trickling down his rotten teeth.
They spoke of dances denying loose hip Drinks with eyes closed, cheers for the winning team.

Sugar rush from birthdays of senility,
Dinner reservation for two with dentures.
Necks kissed, wrinkles absorbed.
Stray dogs fed, alarm glasses broken.
Drunkenness and impaired honesty
Cereal in bed and sunsets of satiety.
"Let's have them all!" said the hedonists
Wiping each other's skin.

# From Mapping the Textures of the Skin



Photographs by Priyanshi Jhaveri





Priyanshi Jhaveri is a visual artist who engages in narratives themed around Abjection. Her work is the ambiguous liminal space of jouissance and horror. Her practice has evolved, with the process of making with a range of media such as sketchbooks, drawing, photography, printmaking, ceramics, and installation.





Illustrations by Anurekha Deb



# Brow Skin Gurl



By Maurice Moore Feat. Sarah Baartman, Nina Simone

#### Untitled poetry by Anushka Deshmukh

sometimes i stare at my eyebrows and find faults in them "too bushy, very uneven, should get them done someday" i think to myself. and sometimes i see someone in the metro cute pants, nice top, so tall no sorry, these aren't my thoughts. this is: i wish i was her. and some days, i just stare in the mirror 3 seconds longer which sounds like nothing but is long enough to get disappointed. the thing about body positivity is that everyone is body positive on the outside, till it's a trend, on Instagram but when their friend asks them if they look good and asks for an honest answer it's all 'you're a pear shape, honestly bananas will look much better on you' and then everyone is body positive until it applies to their own self, they're always 'still learning' to love their body which is alright but then why are people just so mean to themselves? why am i so mean to myself? does this make me a big hypocrite? maybe i am. i wonder if someone looks at me and wishes they were me i hope no one does

# Ode to my Scars

By Soph Bee

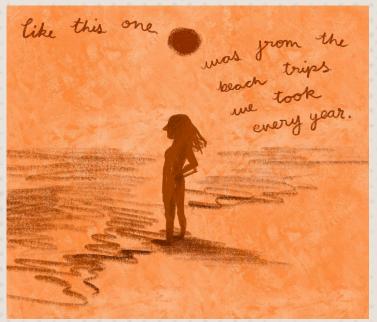
you wicked gossip, giving away all of my secrets before I even say a word. you frankenstein's mouth. you fat white worms, crawling up my arms and making yourselves at home on my upper thighs. I look at photos of myself and you stare back at me, demanding attention the way children do when they are desperate to be seen and believed. I often sink into daydreams of skin like calm waters because I still miss what used to be the blank canvas of this body, all whisper and possibility and softness but you took the hurt and called it healed. you quieted the screams that escaped from the ugliest parts of me. some days I run my fingers over you and am shocked that I survived the war, and relieved. so ode to you, you ribbons of forgiveness. ode to both the storm and its aftermath, the wreckage and the creation, the death and the rebirth. ode to the way you loved me when I did not love myself and ode to the way you let me live through what I thought was unliveable every time.

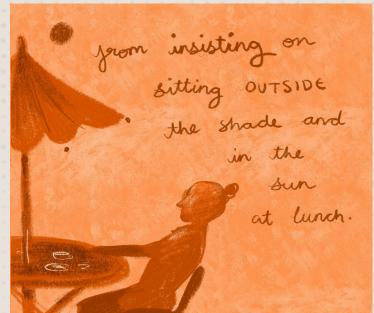
# Freckles



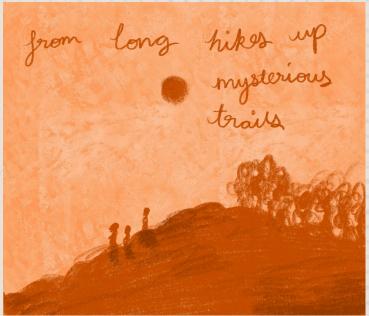




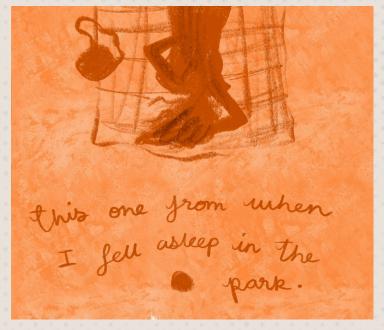


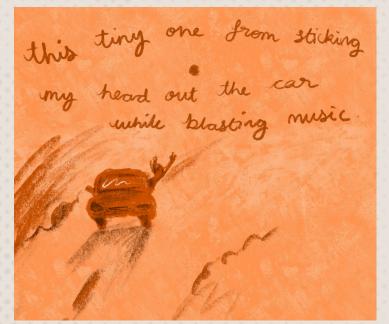


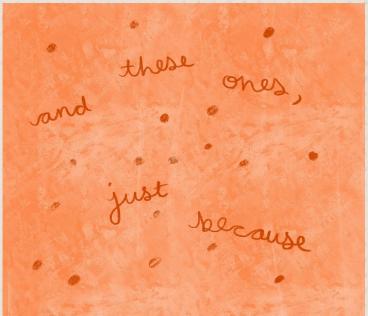














Comic Strip by Maithali Joshi

### An Ode To Your Cheek

By Rosie Shackleton

Below your eye,
To the left of your nose,
And to the right of your ear;
That is my favourite part of you.

That sacred oyster-shell cheek, Which when I kiss it, You close your eyes.

## Skin and River



Photograph by Barnana Sarkar

# I'm Me



Photograph by Shkurte Ramushi

### Fall from Grace

By Kaniz Hossain

There's something to be said for the look in your eyes when you catch my gaze and tell me that you want me. Dangerous in its honesty, inviting in its admission.

Did you mean to kiss this secret into my mouth?

The curve of your lips follows the line of my neck, and I want to know if you'll familiarize yourself with every part of my body this way.

I get my answer when your hands ghost over my skin, fingers trailing like sentences that could never be finished.

Warmth blooms underneath where you touch just a little more, and I can't catch my breath quick enough to tell you to keep going.

But you know, don't you?

Know how to stain my skin in red to mirror the ink in yours. Your hand snakes around my neck, tightening like this knot in my stomach.

Bruising kisses littered along my collarbone reads like a love letter full of promises.

Fuck, what a heady feeling – to know I'm safe in the face of your primal need to take my breath away.

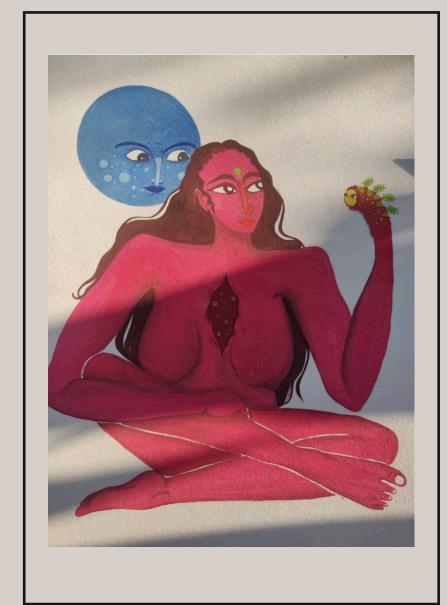
You can't stop tasting, and I can't stop from falling. A whisper in the back of my mind wonders if

this is how Lucifer felt when he was cast from heaven.

For how salacious it feels to call out for God, when you burn your smile into my inner thigh, mischief in your eyes,

intent on making a sinner out of me.

### Catta Peeled Me



There's this thing
Under my skin
It's makes me kinda blue.

Sometimes glitchy Other times prickly, Stuck to me like glue.

On full moon nights
Is when it tends to bite
Wish I could see it thru.

Should I set it free Or just let it be Do you feel it too?

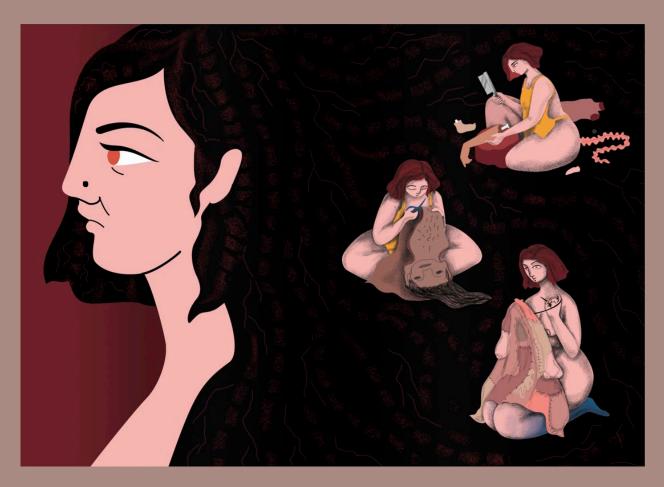


Comic Strip by Gargi Chandola

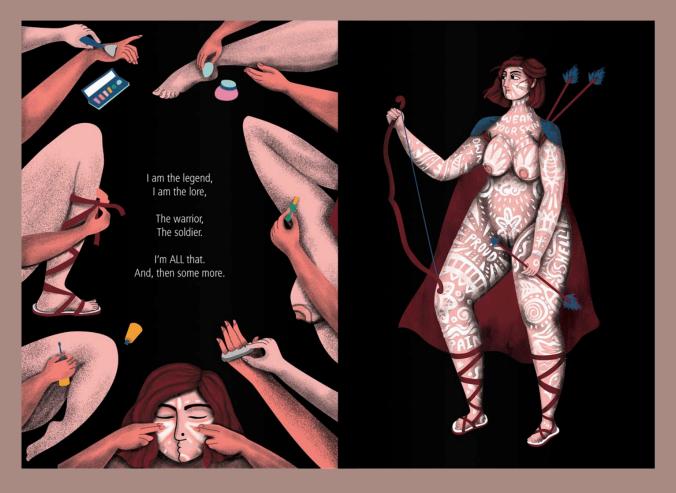












## This is a Good Thing

By Linda Imbler

The little white Texas toddler
Bathes her black baby doll
With her mother's help.
She changes the baby's clothes
By herself,
Bestowing kisses and hugs
On the doll, a gift,
And her mother says
This
Is a good thing.

The young white six-year-old Plays with the black girl, Her same age, sharing her toys, Knowing the other has few, And her mother says This Is a good thing.

The 13-year-old white girl
And her mother wait,
Standing behind the black man,
Getting a drink
From the same common water fountain,
And her mother says

This Is a good thing.

The 18-year-old white college girl
Exchanges summer phone call
With her black friend
And classmate, Patsy, during vacation.
They talk for a long time with frequent giggles.
Patsy is smart, beautiful, and so very funny,
And her mother says
This
Is a good thing.

Fifty years on,
I still have the photo of toddler and doll.
Of the events, I still have my memories.
And I say
This
Is a good thing.

# Beauty is Fragile



Photograph by Medha Khanna

# The Stretch of the Hour



By Sagrika Das

# Lubing the Lizard

By Kay Sage

My first thought was to kill it, pry it off like a band-aide, scales on fingertips, then fling it far. Or better a hammer, bash green leaf into mulch.

It would only be fair I be the one to do this. You did it to two birds the cat took into its mouth. Boxed them in a shoebox and stepped.

But you said, No. There, splayed on the glue trap for flies, the green anole waited. I do not think much of reptiles, but

it knew. It knew it was going to die, slowly, body confined to awful bed, while it starved. Out on the porch, the leaves were going to skeleton too,

green once, then color drained, then little wisps. They clung. But you said No. We left the glue traps in the garage. This is our fault. We have to try. So one

panicked call and one Google search later, I brought out the vegetable oil. The jug was big enough to drown in. I poured a little in the cap, then dipped my

fingers in. You held the fly trap, lizard still breathing. I lubricated it like it were machinery. I said Alright, time to get lubed, guy. (I tend

to make jokes when I'm nervous.) And I dropped, dropped, dropped while you held. Front legs came up then the tail, slid fingers under the belly

until it was in your hands. We put it by the railing in the sun. How it had trusted us, how it had no choice, stuck like a tongue to a pole.

I didn't know, or perhaps forgotten, Dissolve can be a transitive verb. I didn't know I would cry.

# Skin and Bark



Illustration by Sabatin Bascoban



Photograph by Sonora Bravo

### Orion's Belt

By Jennie Louise

Most nights you can see Orion's belt.

Dot to dot the stars with your finger while I dot to dot the spots on my skin,

Too scared to look up,

Too busy pick, pick, picking at the surface.

Across arms and legs, deep down my back and along my scalp,

I leave spots wherever I touch;

Indentations like craters that make me wish I could tear apart the night sky instead of my body.

I would scatter the stars into oblivion with my fingertips until they are muddled without focus, Orion's belt stretched and an empty sky in its place.

# Stretching Out and In



Illustration by Felix Jackson

He pursues drawing as an effective means of communication, conveying a diverse range of psychological narratives and emotional states. He is also very keen to explore the delicacies of the line itself, & its capacity for expression.

### **Editorial Board**

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