



Bow-tied
Underbellies

Zanne D'Aglio

I counted four old women scanning
groceries at six open checkouts.
I see them everywhere in retail jobs we
held in our twenties
jobs you kicked life off with.

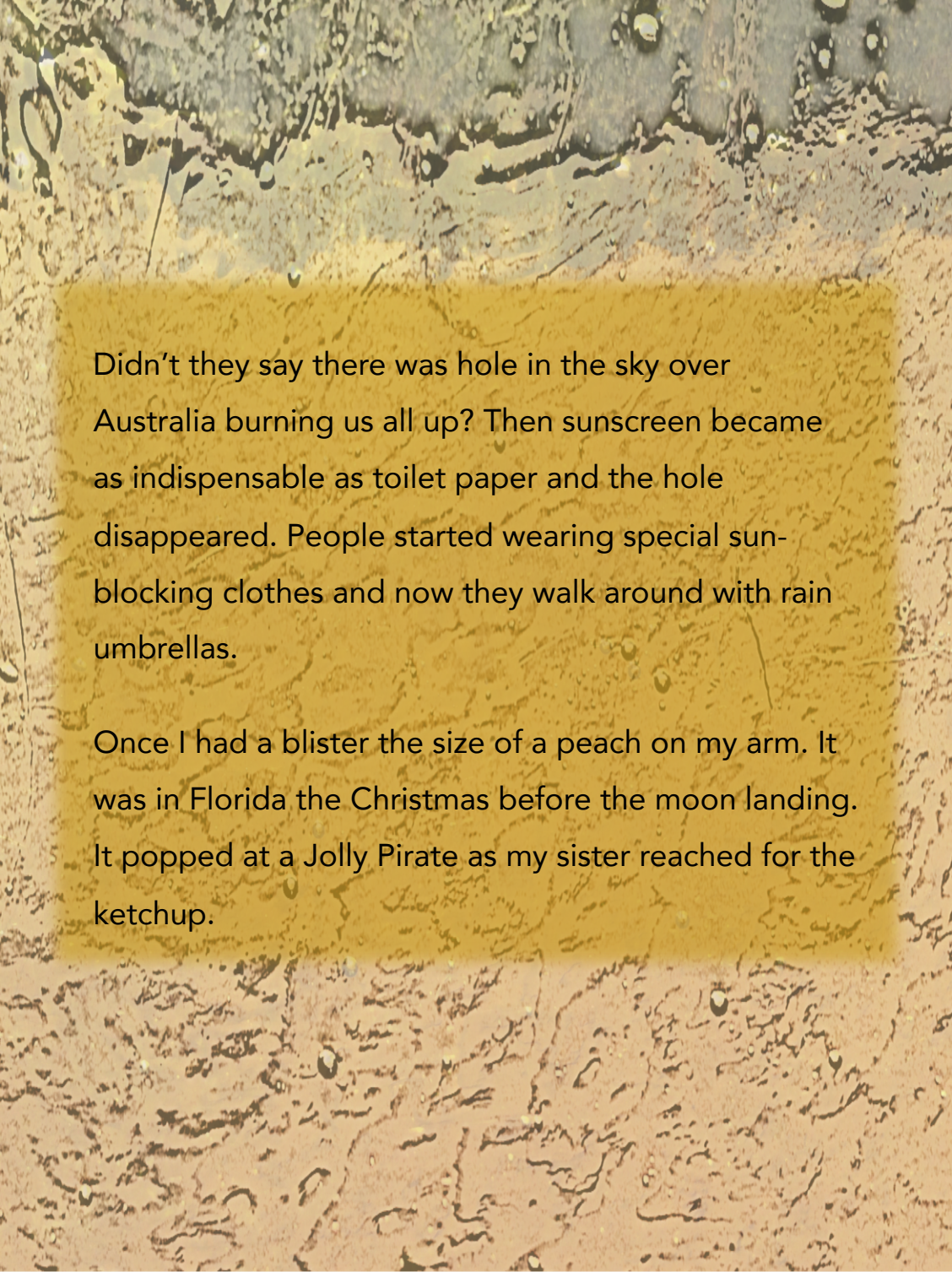
A wearied comfort has settled their
posture
buckled-in jello hips, pudding piled
breasts
a bejeweled wristwatch keeping cadence
one hand passing goods to the other.

Steadfast practitioners of the American
dream
ransacked.

Small leather faced woman
who cleans houses on our street
clutches her groceries
walking her chipped asphalt road
where people wander and wait around.

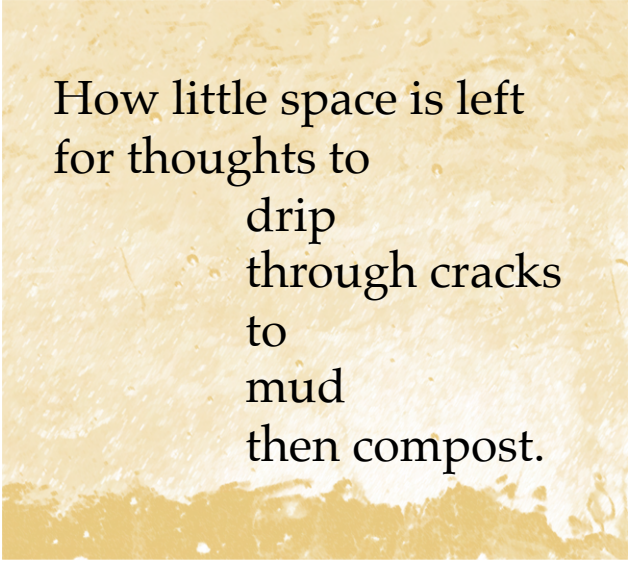
I listen to the commentator
interpreting her concerns;
neighbors aren't we all
staking claims

until pushed up against each other
under a solitary flickering street light
seventeen miles south of San Diego.

The background of the image is a close-up photograph of a tree trunk, showing the rough, textured bark with various cracks and small holes. A large, semi-transparent yellow rectangle is overlaid on the center of the image, serving as a background for the text.

Didn't they say there was hole in the sky over Australia burning us all up? Then sunscreen became as indispensable as toilet paper and the hole disappeared. People started wearing special sun-blocking clothes and now they walk around with rain umbrellas.

Once I had a blister the size of a peach on my arm. It was in Florida the Christmas before the moon landing. It popped at a Jolly Pirate as my sister reached for the ketchup.



How little space is left
for thoughts to
drip
through cracks
to
mud
then compost.

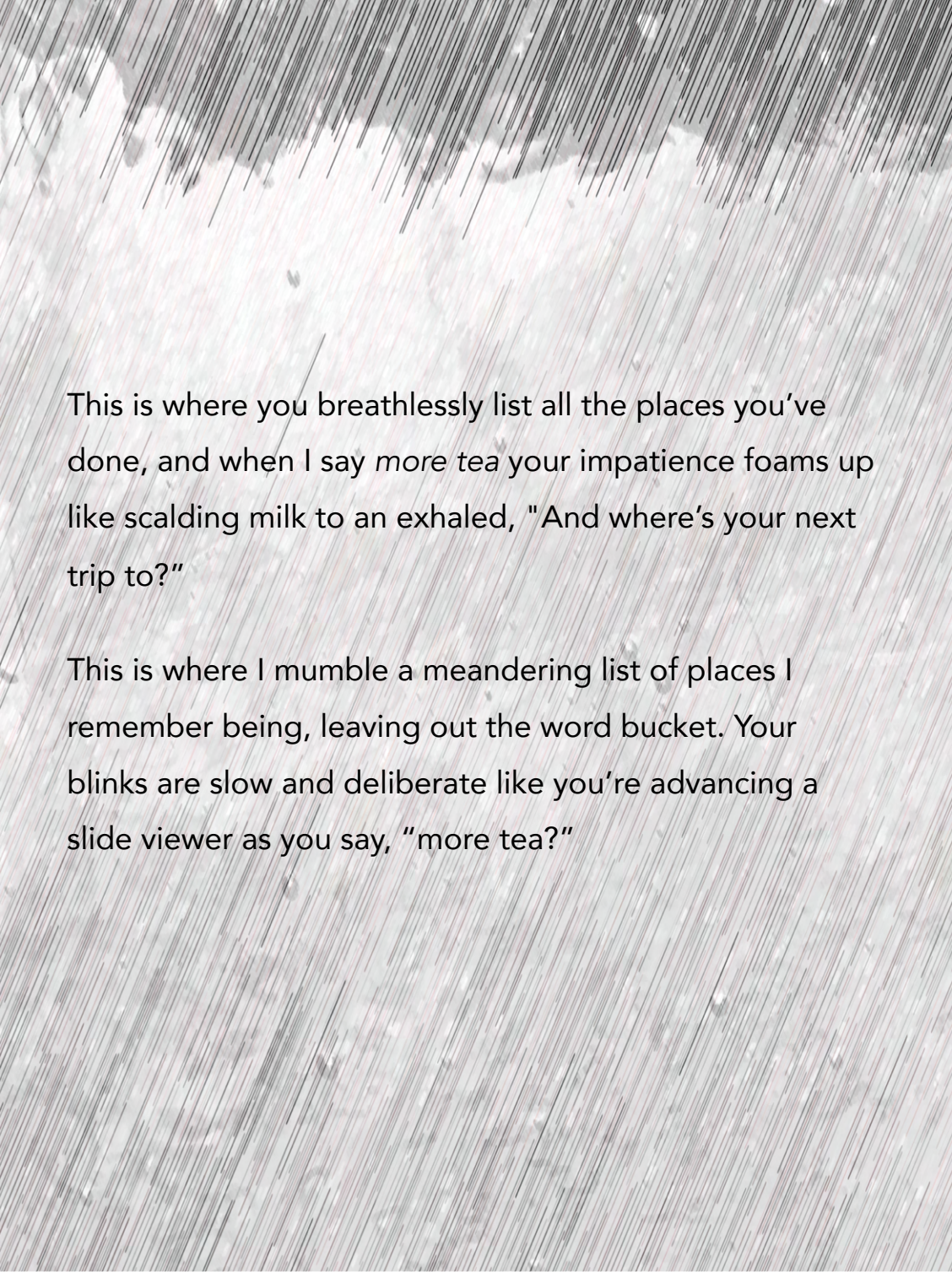
Maurice says he hates slush
those grey and gravel-peppered imprints of tires turning
right
into parking lots of shopping malls after it snows before
they plow

I'm fat with clothing
a muzzled torso with paw-shaped hands and feet stymied in
Chinese wool
a paralyzed heap on the front bench seat of the Buick

Connie says she isn't afraid anymore to say she's alone and
prefers it to being with me or him
Not beaten not broken not longing, I'm thinking

If she slipped on the ice hurrying to McDonalds
because on that day fries were 60 cents
because her dollar was worth 70
and she broke her hip and the bill
was more than she earned in a decade
she'd still despise Obama's care

Not lying from the back bench seat of the Buick



This is where you breathlessly list all the places you've done, and when I say *more tea* your impatience foams up like scalding milk to an exhaled, "And where's your next trip to?"

This is where I mumble a meandering list of places I remember being, leaving out the word bucket. Your blinks are slow and deliberate like you're advancing a slide viewer as you say, "more tea?"



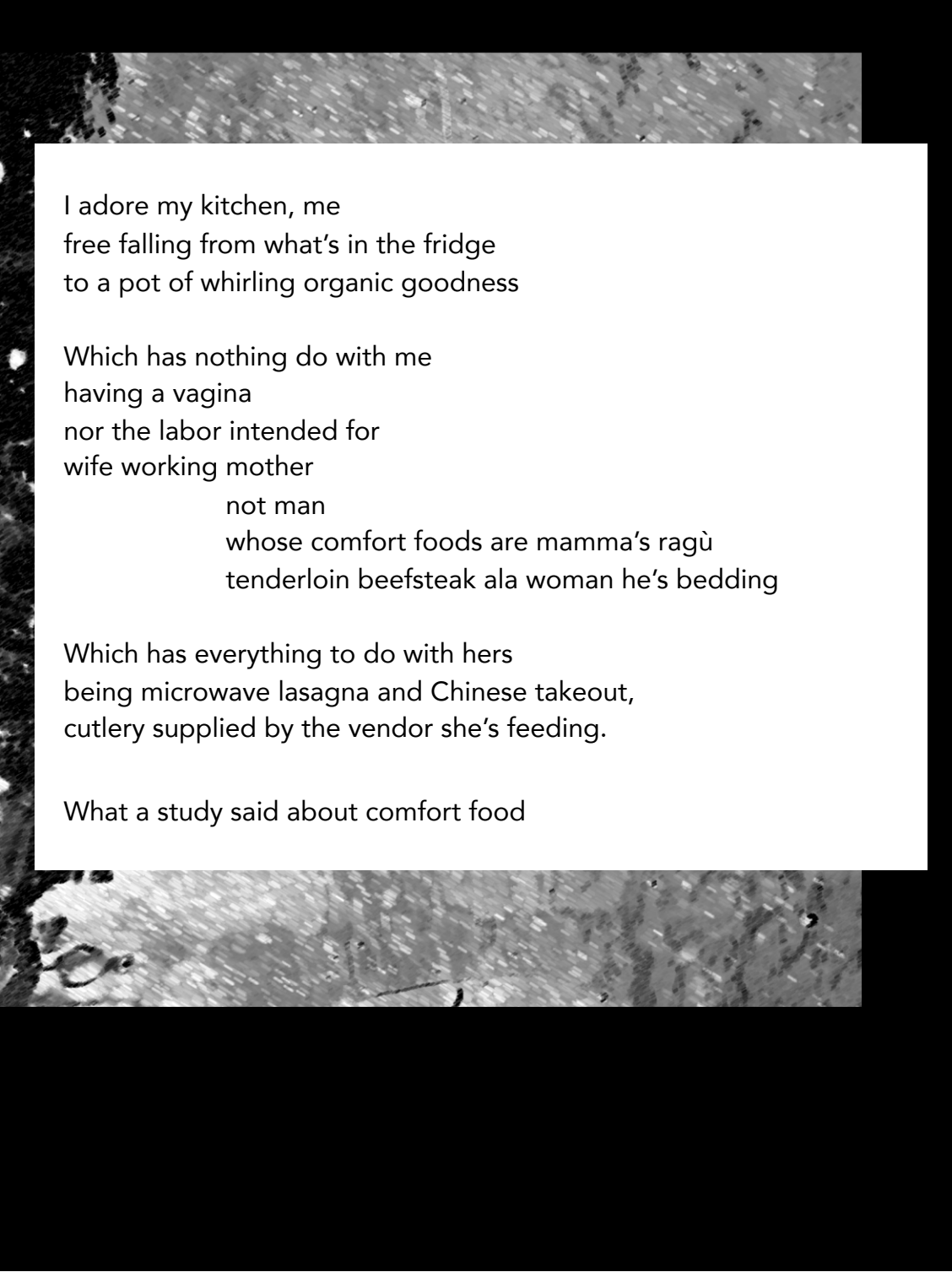
Pinocchio's nose it
should first be known
is not wooden at all,
but bone and horn
and acutely aware
of lies girando.

Lies of lies he's never told,
let alone in languages
he's never heard or
stories as absurd
as some would tell

like dusty fables,

entirely incapable of
souring the moment
the storybook's
set out on the table.

Bugiardo!

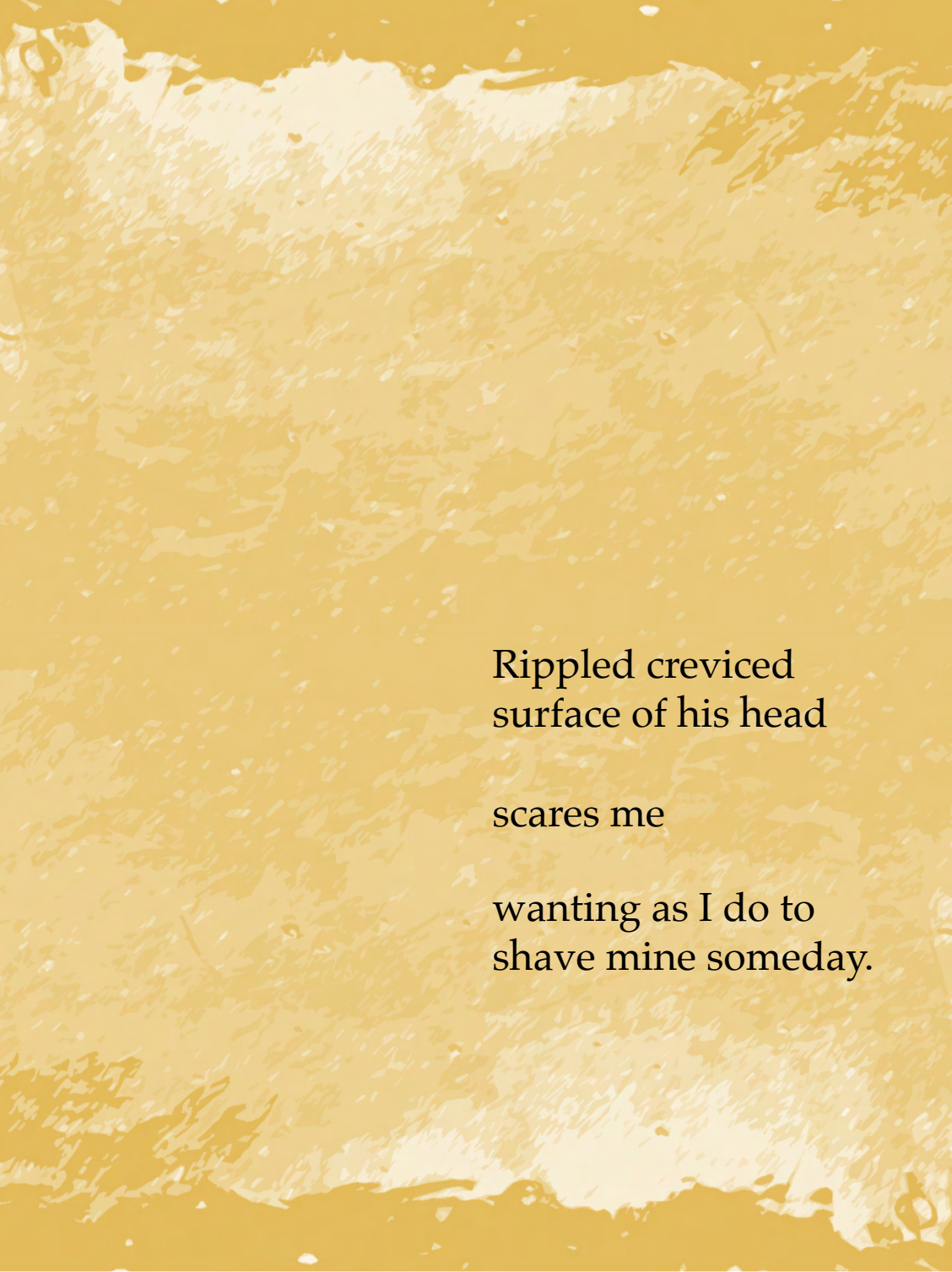


I adore my kitchen, me
free falling from what's in the fridge
to a pot of whirling organic goodness

Which has nothing do with me
having a vagina
nor the labor intended for
wife working mother
not man
whose comfort foods are mamma's ragù
tenderloin beefsteak ala woman he's bedding

Which has everything to do with hers
being microwave lasagna and Chinese takeout,
cutlery supplied by the vendor she's feeding.

What a study said about comfort food



Rippled creviced
surface of his head

scares me

wanting as I do to
shave mine someday.

How far down

can a nail go

burrowed into
finger's flesh

and manage still

to scratch an itch

pick a wound


up a dime.

Ugly stumps

tapping tunes

can't even cinch a bangled wrist:

these claws of mine I've chewed unfit.



Don't get caught scraping
every last bit of oatmeal
from the bowl, the flecks of
grains and nuts, seeds and
fruit you lovingly soaked
and chopped, ground
and washed and cooked
in a pan on a low gas burner,
don't tell anyone, you

then wash the bowl and spoon
and pan
in a sink with soap you squeeze
from a bottle and a bucket of
water
you saved from the shower,
don't tell anyone
with a lawn to mow car to
wash house to paint dog
to walk--

Considering
the benefit
convenience
and pleasure
of fragranced
ingredient chemicals,

the making of
bottle parts

the transport of
materials and
product
managers
and
waste,

marketing campaigns
employee redundancies,

water circulating
through process and discharge
of millions of bodies lathered in
liquid soap,

and me with my bar.

I stand here calmly
in my kitchen again
to tell you
what I saw:

Two ghoulish skinny men
straddling one barricade of maybe ten
pulling and squeezing their man-made breasts
like strippers do,
though these were tiny little things
like mine once were, girls.

They were screaming I don't know what
at us
us women
because
we are just
women
and they
they are not.

Let Women Speak NYC



For my mother



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