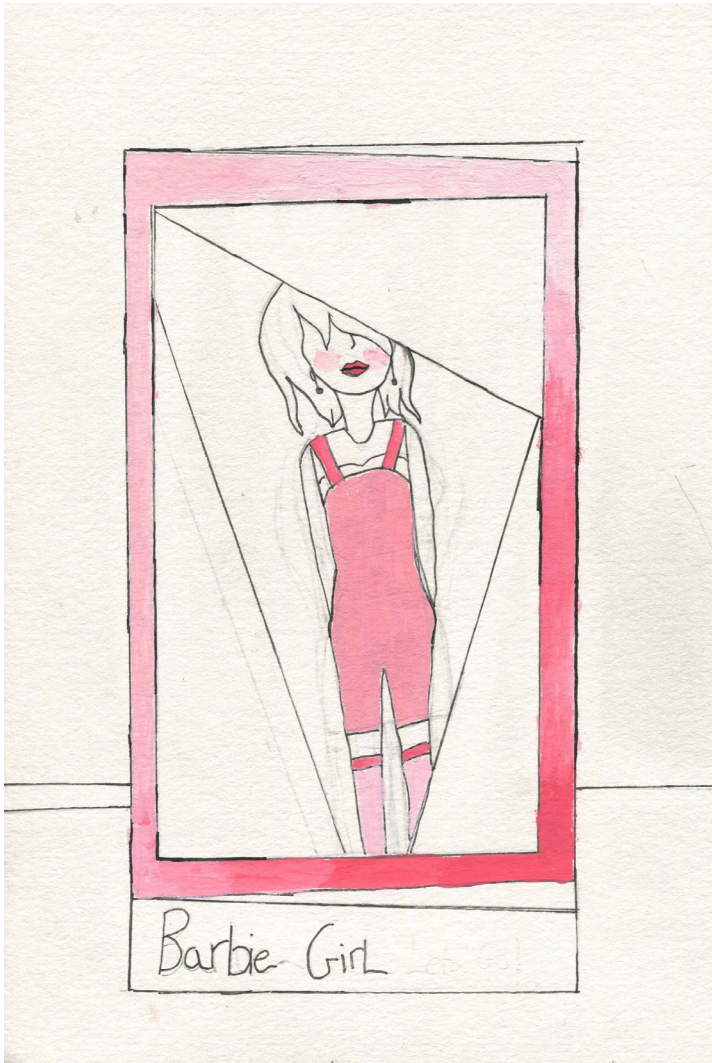


Writing that Tries

A Memoir in Three Stories

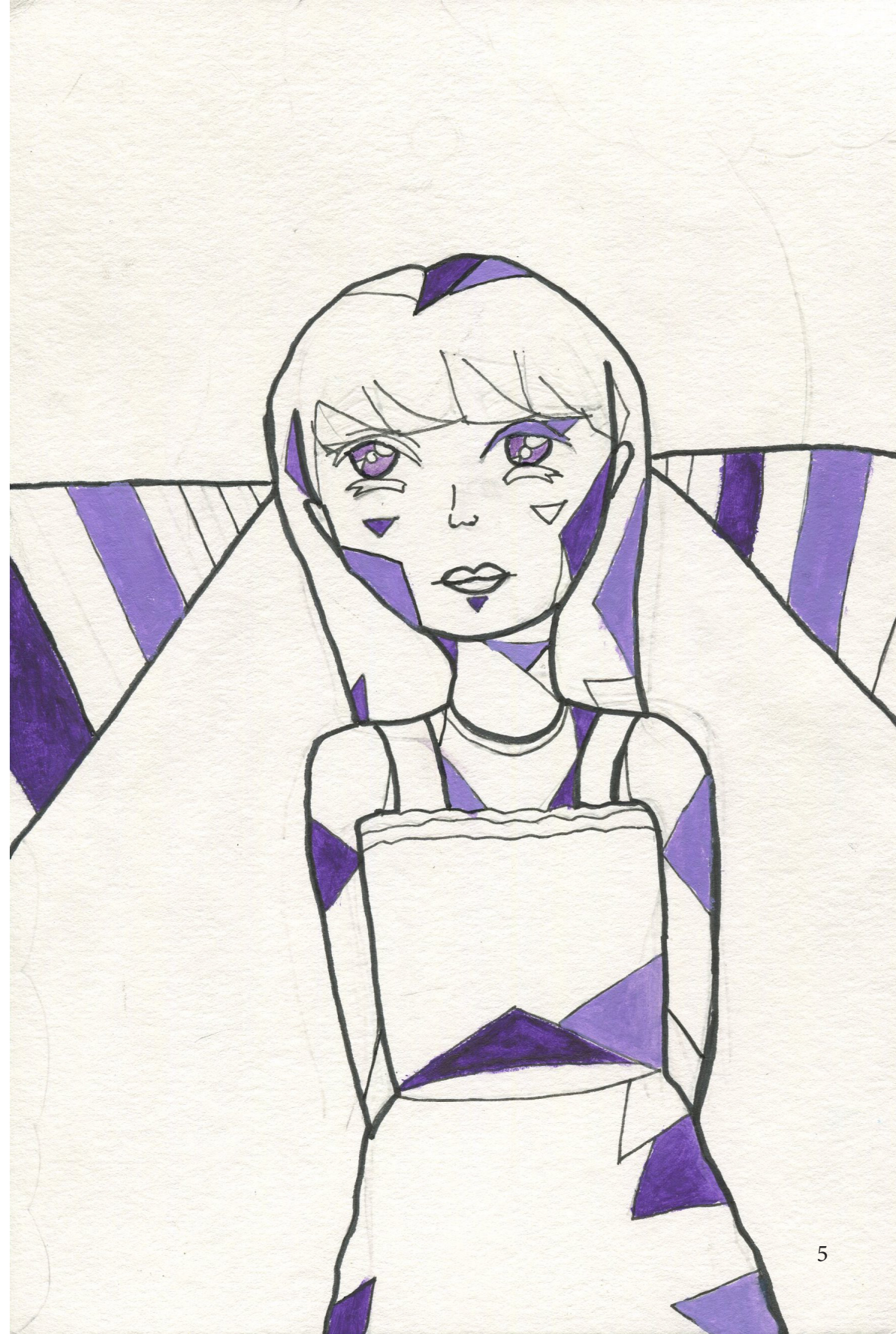
by Payal Subba



Drown



I was the age of one full hand and three fingers.
I wore a dense cotton dress during the blurring
heat. My mind held wonders, and so I walked all
the way up to the swimming pools. I saw my
cousins, who were the same age as me: swimming.
The water was bright blue, and it glistened and
swelled during that summer day.



I wanted to try, so I slowly tried to dip myself in. I felt fear. I could not see the ground, it was hollow and empty. The water swallowed it whole. I vaguely remember my cousin shouting, "I'll help you!"

I plunged into the water. I gripped the rails as fast as I could, but the rigid movement of the water suffocated me. Before I knew it, I had launched myself forward and onto the wet concrete. My hair dripped as I walked away slowly from the pool.

I was too afraid to let myself float. I stood there envying all the people who were swimming. My mind just thought, "Try again!" And I did.

My dress at that point was even denser. I could feel the saturated weight of the water engulf into the cotton. It encumbered my shoulders down. Remember at this point, I was 8, and I didn't know how to swim. My tiny brain could not comprehend that I should not wear a dress while swimming.

Again, I slowly drifted my leg into the water, then my whole body. My arms extended and held the rails. The water swayed, and I felt the cool breeze run through my skin. It was silent for a moment.

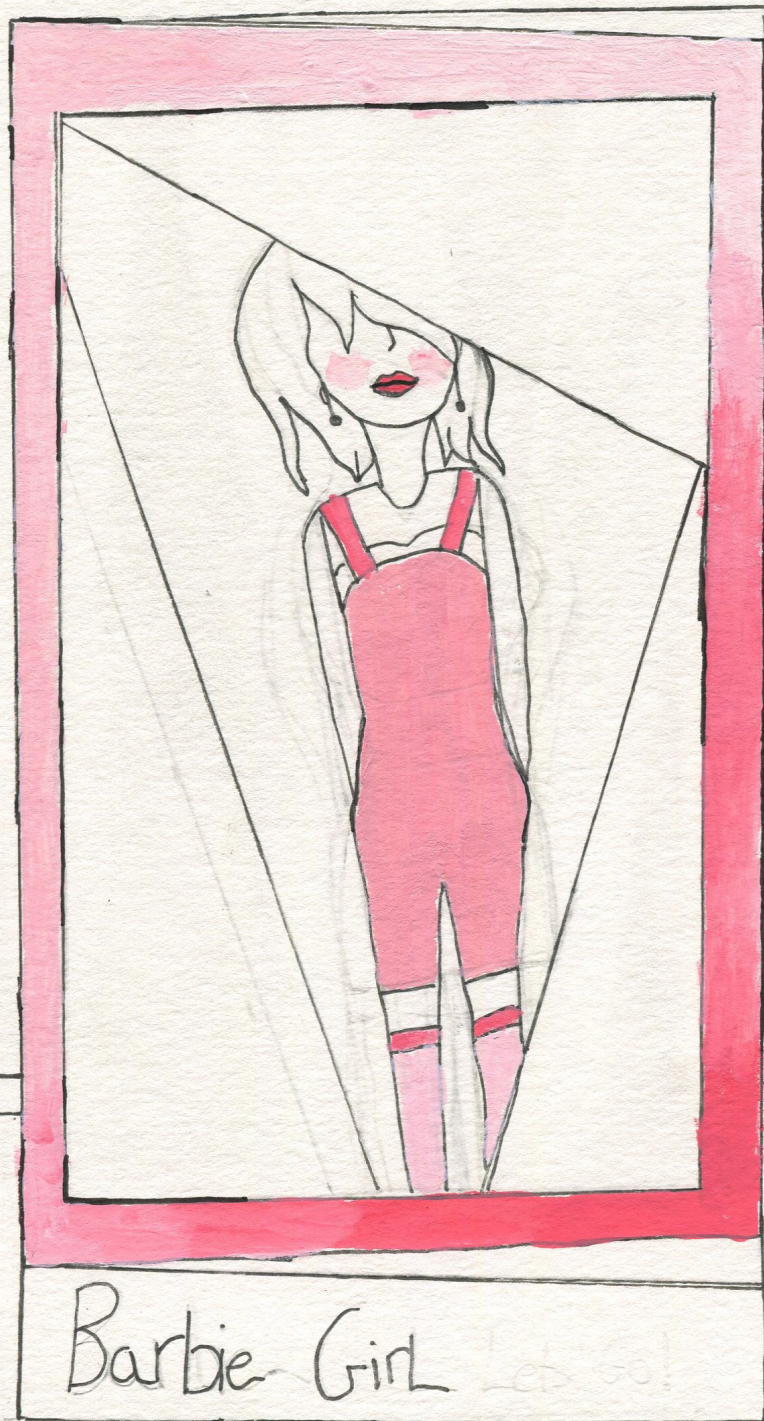
My dress had bloated into a jellyfish. It was a gown. The water pulled the dress into the depths, and I was wavering with it. I gasped. My fingers fell off the rails. The water was rippling against the chaotic movement of my body. Then I could not breathe. I opened my eyes. The shimmering blue had turned dark. My eyes landed on a light. It was blurry, and I sank.



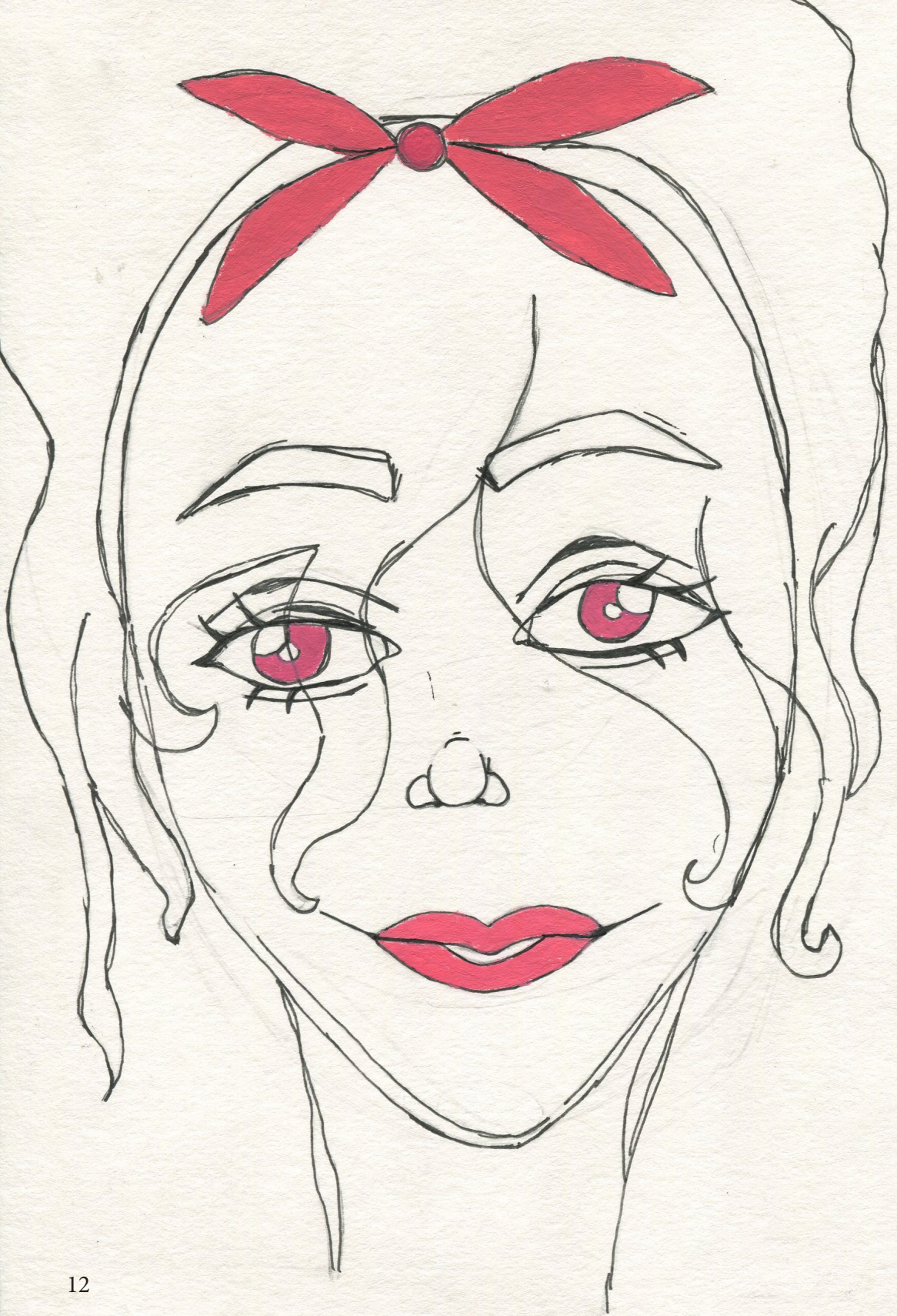
The feeling was calming. The water submerged me, and it felt like a warm hug. The only thought I had was "Oh. I'm going to die." I didn't fight it. I just let myself go.

I opened my eyes to see the faces of my cousins. They stared down at me. I was on the cement. I couldn't even speak. I was ashamed and embarrassed. I walked away from the pool, and to this day, I still can't swim.

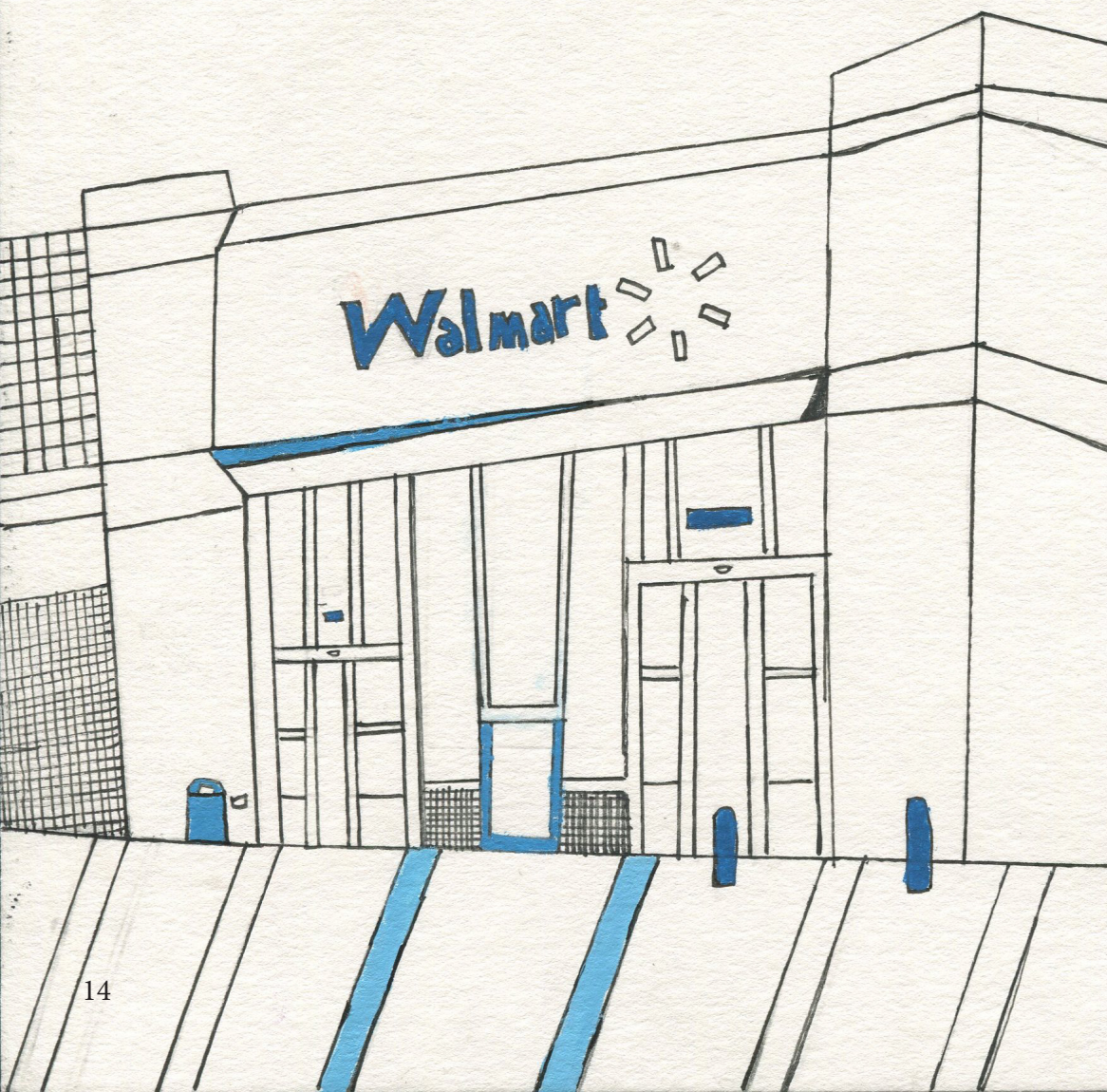
Doll



I had a weird fascination with dolls. Their lifeless eyes would stare into my heated ones, and I would feel a sense of familiarity. If I could reach and tug on my imagination hard enough, then they would start talking all by themselves. They would say "Oi!" when I took them out of the package, then "Gou Ko!" when they were thrown away. They never frowned, and only smiled with pearly teeth.



The most distinct memory from my blurred childhood commenced with dolls. It all happened when I begged my mom for a dollhouse. A few hours after daybreak, when the Texas sun had started to distend, we headed out. My family did not have a car, so me and my mom walked. We ambled through shades, and the sharp light. The trees, and the breeze fraternize together to form a peaceful melody. After a few hours of walking, and me whining, we came to Walmart.



I found a dollhouse, and we swiftly brought it. The real suffering started when we had to drag the dollhouse back to our apartment. It was the beginning of summer. We were in Texas. It was mid-day. It was painful. My small arms would extend and push. Then it would tire out, and my mouth would start rambling. "Are we there yet?" I inquired. "My legs hurt!" I whinged.

My mom just laughed and pulled. Halfway down a scuffed hill, I felt the embrace of the cool wind, and we stopped for a bit. My forehead was spotted with drops of sweat, and I could feel my lungs beginning to expand. Along the rest, a man walked towards us. Not actually at us, but up the same path. He saw the dollhouse, "I like toys too!" He grinned pointing to the box.

It was kind of weird. The man was a random stranger, and he peculiarly just said he liked toys. I remember thinking, "Wow, this man is very random!" My mom did not seem to mind, so she just laughed. Finally, the man left, and we began our pattern of push and pull all the way down the hill. It wasn't very steep, but more jagged and rough.

The scorching heat had turned my neck beet red, but mentally I was more burnt. Then the cool feeling of bliss set in soonly as we came upon the sidewalk narrowing to our apartment. The dollhouse hit the carpet, and I did too. I layed down like a pancake, and just breathed. Breathed in and out. In and out.

Sunlight was seeping into the blinds. It flashed and little particles loomed and danced around. The sun was shying away into the horizon. Hues of purple whirled and scarlet streaked strayed abroad. It was getting dark. My mom for some reason had not turned on the light, so the little radiance we had was used. I forgot how long it took to build the dollhouse, but when we were finally done, the blurry stars echoed the night. Whenever I think about that night a sense of nostalgia hits me. It's very special and personal.



For about all the way up to our moving, the dollhouse was kept in a comforting corner of the house. It went through losing parts of it to getting kicked. Then it permanently got slanted, but it also got a friend. That friend was a doll closet. It was pink and bubbly, and hung piles of cheap metallic clothes. They were a pair, but sadly, I was forced to give up my doll closet. Two or so summers came and went along, and in one particular gloomy night my hands held the dollhouse loosely. We were getting kicked out of our apartment.

Trinkets and gizmos fell down the gaping stairs. My mom yelled, "Don't go down to pick it up!" I complied and did not. The moon hangs low as my parents and I walked towards my uncle's house. The atmosphere is dry and flaky, and the soft breeze turns vicious as cars speed throughout the road. Lamps illuminate for miles, but I can hardly see where I'm going. I just follow behind my dad. His voice is airy and out of breath, and he complains more than I do. I am grasping onto the leg of the dollhouse. My fingers are digging into it, and it hurts.

I didn't really understand the severity of the situation when I was young. It took me a few good years to understand that my family used to be homeless. The dollhouse followed whenever we hopped from an extended family's place to another. Then it resided after summer.

The dollhouse represents a lot of things for me. It was my childhood all condensed into one plastic pink toy. The moment me and my mom bought it, I knew I would treasure it. It holds a special place in my memories, and I don't think I'll ever forget it.



Nana the Cat



In my mind her name is Nana, but I would just call her "biralo" like the rest of my family. Which simply means cat in Nepali. I was too shy to give her a name upfront, so whenever it was just her and I, I whispered, "Come here Nana."

After being somewhat homeless for that summer, my parents had finally found a place. It was bigger and duller, and very far away. I had to move schools because of this. Which meant I had no friends at all. This led to me wanting company.

During fall when the leaves strode towards the musty ground, I kept asking my mom for a cat, but she kept disputing, "They poop a lot!" Which makes no sense if you really think about it because doesn't everyone? Sooner or later she gave in, and during a somber morning we walked towards an aunt's house. Light rain sprinkled through the dazy sky, and the smell of sodden wood was apparent. I knocked on the blue door and it opened.

Biralo was timid and would run away when approached. The aunt explained, "She's the oldest one, but she just doesn't want to leave her mom." I felt bad. It seemed like a crime wanting to separate the mother and daughter. Soon, that feeling would fade away when I saw the mother cat huddled up with dainty kittens. I wanted biralo to experience a new home.

She was afraid I could tell. The moment her paws met the floor, she dashed away. In the bottom crook of the bed, her green eyes glowed. It was afternoon, the day had been too long, so I just let her stay there. She would warm up to me, I knew.

Which biralo did. Days passed, and everything went in a haze. Before I knew it, she had kittens. Eleven of them. All so different with their cheeky spots and contrasting colors. They meowed in a symphony, and cried in one movement. They grew so fast.

My mom became the evil villain. In the hush night, she stole all the kittens and even biralo away. That morning I could not find them anywhere. Not even the bottom crook of the bed. I asked, "Where did they go?" My mom replied with a laugh, "They're in Fort Worth at the pet shop."

My palms began to itch, and I started to cry. What really made me sad wasn't that they were gone, but that I couldn't say goodbye to them. To this day, I still hope biralo and her kittens are living a happy life somewhere. I hope someone was finally able to give biralo a pretty name.

The END.



