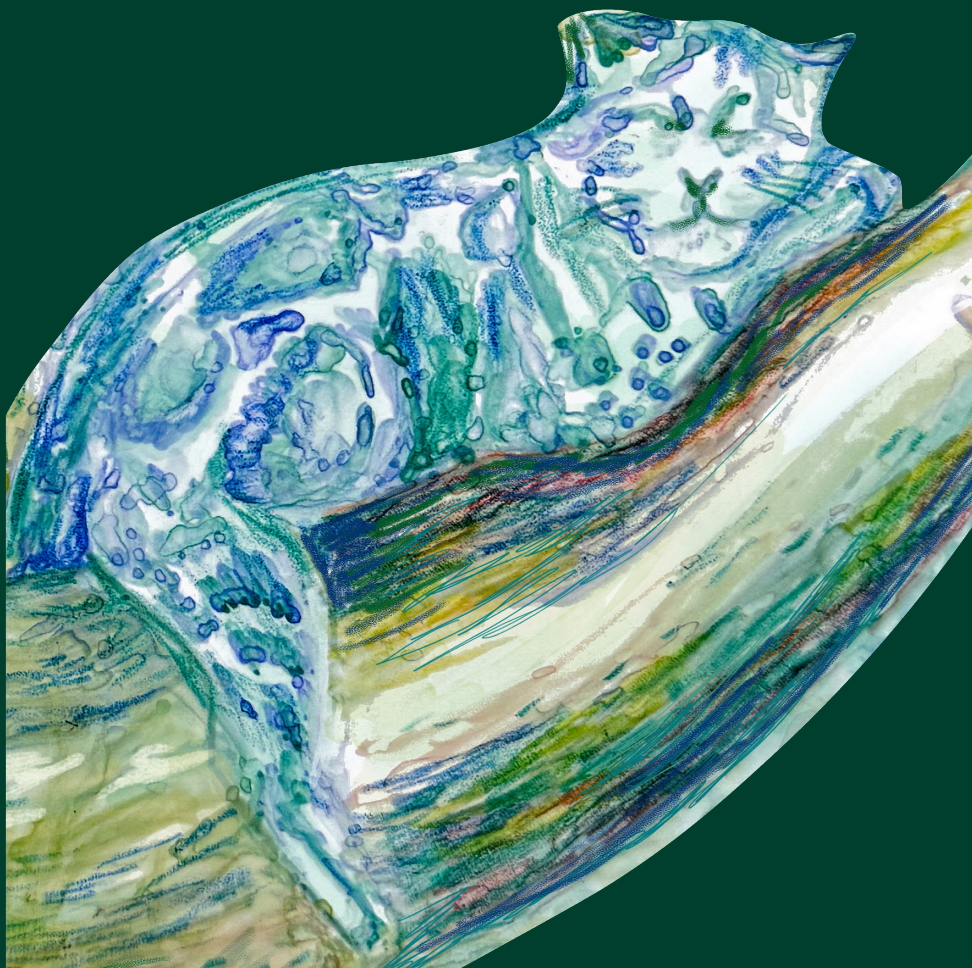


# BUT, HAVE YOU MET A TREE?

Text & Illustrations: Aditi Puttige  
Co-Created with: Lakhiram Rongam, Vena Kapoor,  
Phuntsog Dolma, Joyshree Gogoi,  
Sadhana Ramchander & Nayantara Siruguri



# BUT, HAVE YOU MET A TREE?

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The text and illustration in this book are inspired by the stories shared by  
Lakhiram Rongam, Vena Kapoor, Phuntsog Dolma, Joyshree Gogoi,  
Sadhana Ramchander & Nayantara Siruguri

Collaborators

Srishti Manipal Institute of Art, Design & Technology

Canopy Collective





**But, Have You Met a Tree?** is an invitation to explore the interconnectedness of the worlds of people, plants and trees. Conversations with Lakhiram, Vena, Phuntsog, Joyshree, Sadhana and Nayantara revealed deep-seeded connections with plants and trees.

**Lakhiram Rongam** is a forest watcher and part of the Special Tiger Protection Force, in Pakke. He finds a deep sense of contentment walking under the canopy, discovering new species that he didn't know of. However, when he first came to Pakke and entered the forest, he had a very different experience.

**Vena Kapoor** is a nature educator who runs Nature Classrooms. She suspects that her love for plants and trees came by just having them around. She especially loves the Honge tree that has been touching the balcony of her house for the last 8 years.

**Phuntsog Dolma** is a botanist by training and works as a Flock Supervisor in Ladakh. Her Nana instilled the love she feels for plants. Her friends sometimes complain that she loves them too much, and she should perhaps park it aside for a while when with them.

**Joyshree Gogoi** is the co-lead at the Green School in Gobuk, where she spends time teaching and learning from the children about their surroundings and nature. Trees have always been there with her, through her childhood and have always been her friends.

**Sadhana Ramchander** is a nature lover, and is part of the 'Save the Banyans of Chevella' movement to prevent the removal of 914 heritage banyans and 9000 other trees to make a national highway. She is an Editor by profession, and runs BluePencil Infodesign, a publishing support service.

**Nayantara Siruguri** is a conservation practitioner interested in cultural ecology and nature-based learning. She is fascinated by the way canopies hold space and time and raises lovely questions of why we have physical and psychological fences when interacting with trees and our perception of them. A Baobab tree near her home in Mumbai is one of her closest friends.







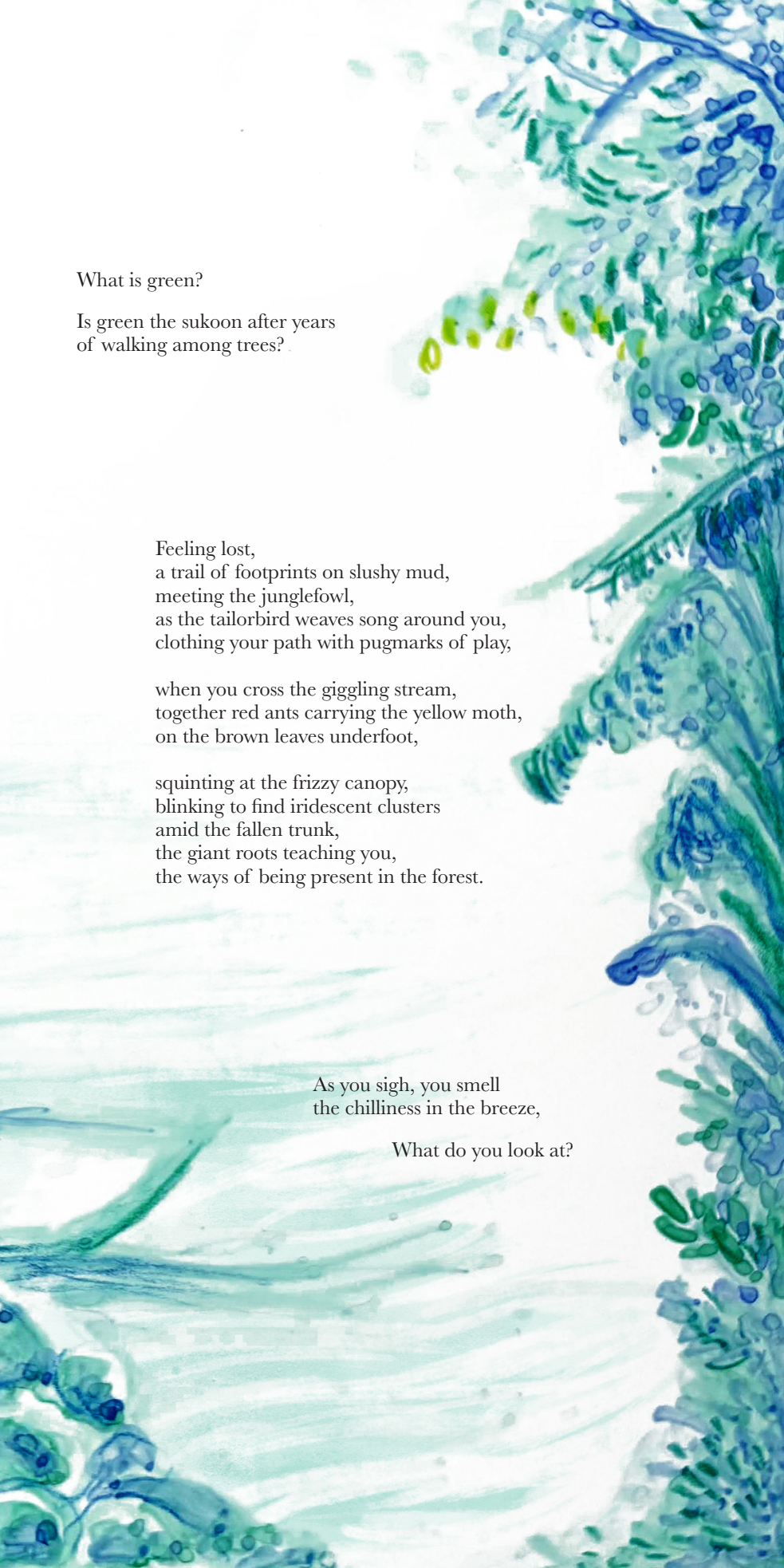




The clouded leopard stretches  
his paws, lays himself on the branch,

Have you ever met a tree?





What is green?

Is green the sukoon after years  
of walking among trees?

Feeling lost,  
a trail of footprints on slushy mud,  
meeting the junglefowl,  
as the tailorbird weaves song around you,  
clothing your path with pugmarks of play,

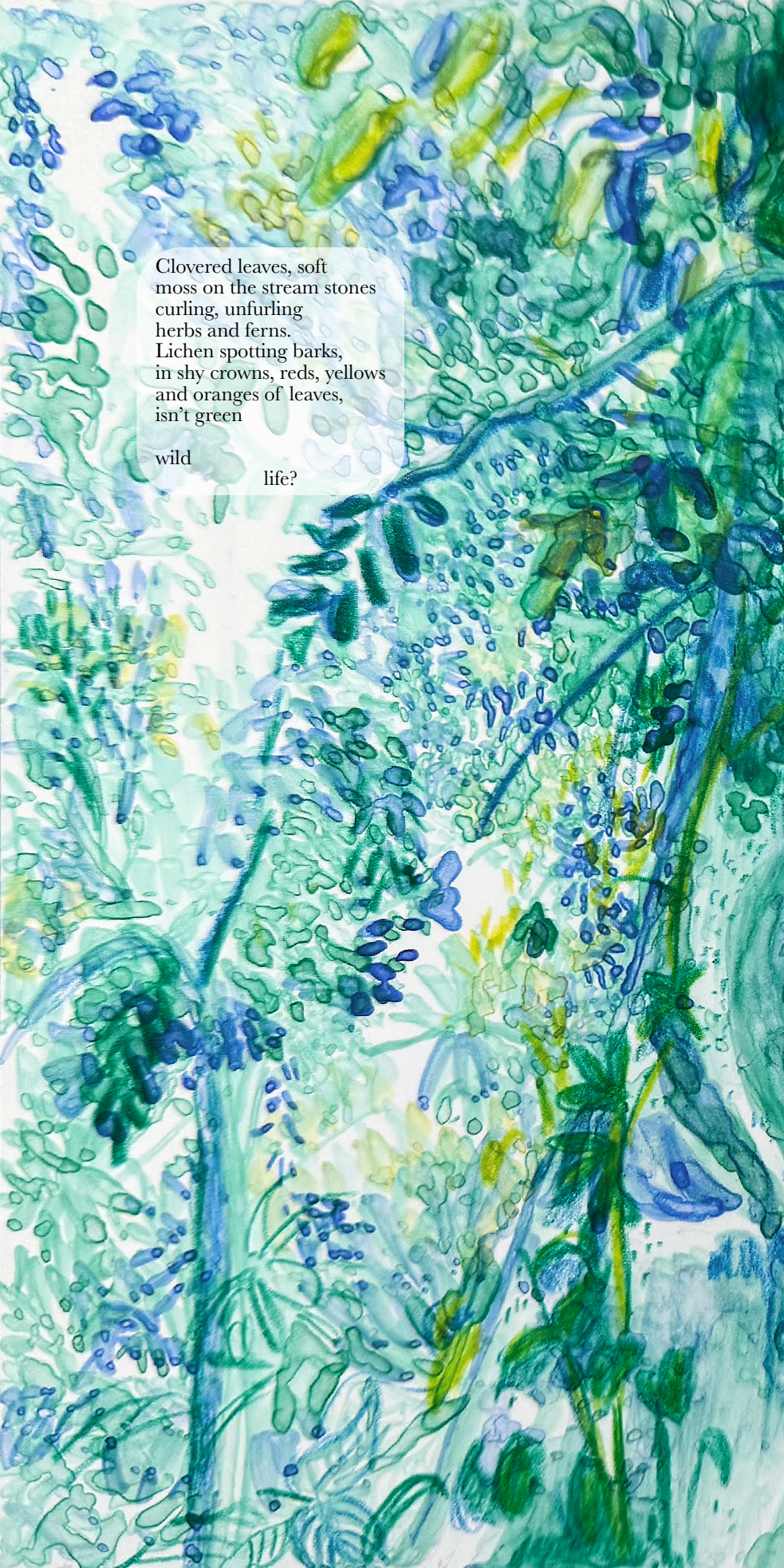
when you cross the giggling stream,  
together red ants carrying the yellow moth,  
on the brown leaves underfoot,

squinting at the frizzy canopy,  
blinking to find iridescent clusters  
amid the fallen trunk,  
the giant roots teaching you,  
the ways of being present in the forest.

As you sigh, you smell  
the chilliness in the breeze,

What do you look at?



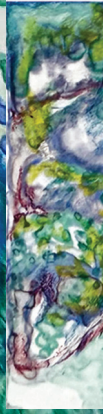
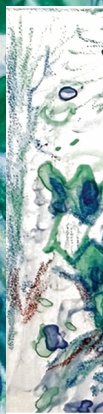


Clovered leaves, soft  
moss on the stream stones  
curling, unfurling  
herbs and ferns.  
Lichen spotting barks,  
in shy crowns, reds, yellows  
and oranges of leaves,  
isn't green

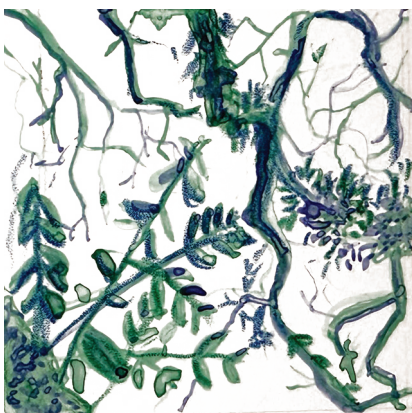
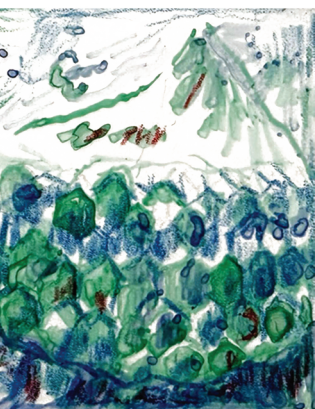
wild

life?





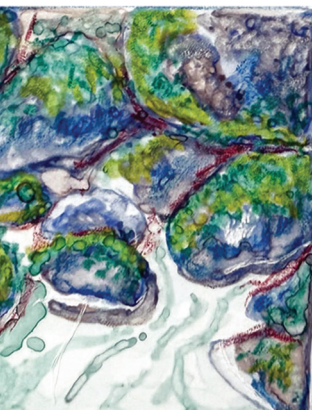




Is green resilient,  
sprouting through cracks in the walls?



Is green tired,  
giving into the greed of companies?



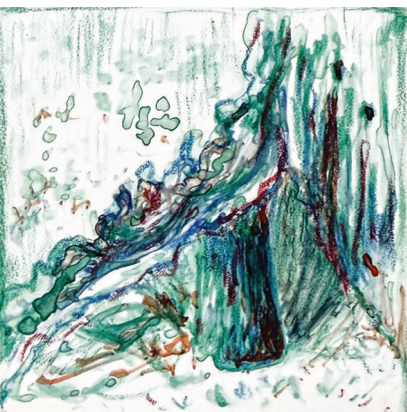




Is all green carbon copied,  
in rows of eucalyptus plantations?



Is green happy,  
nestled amidst life in the forest?

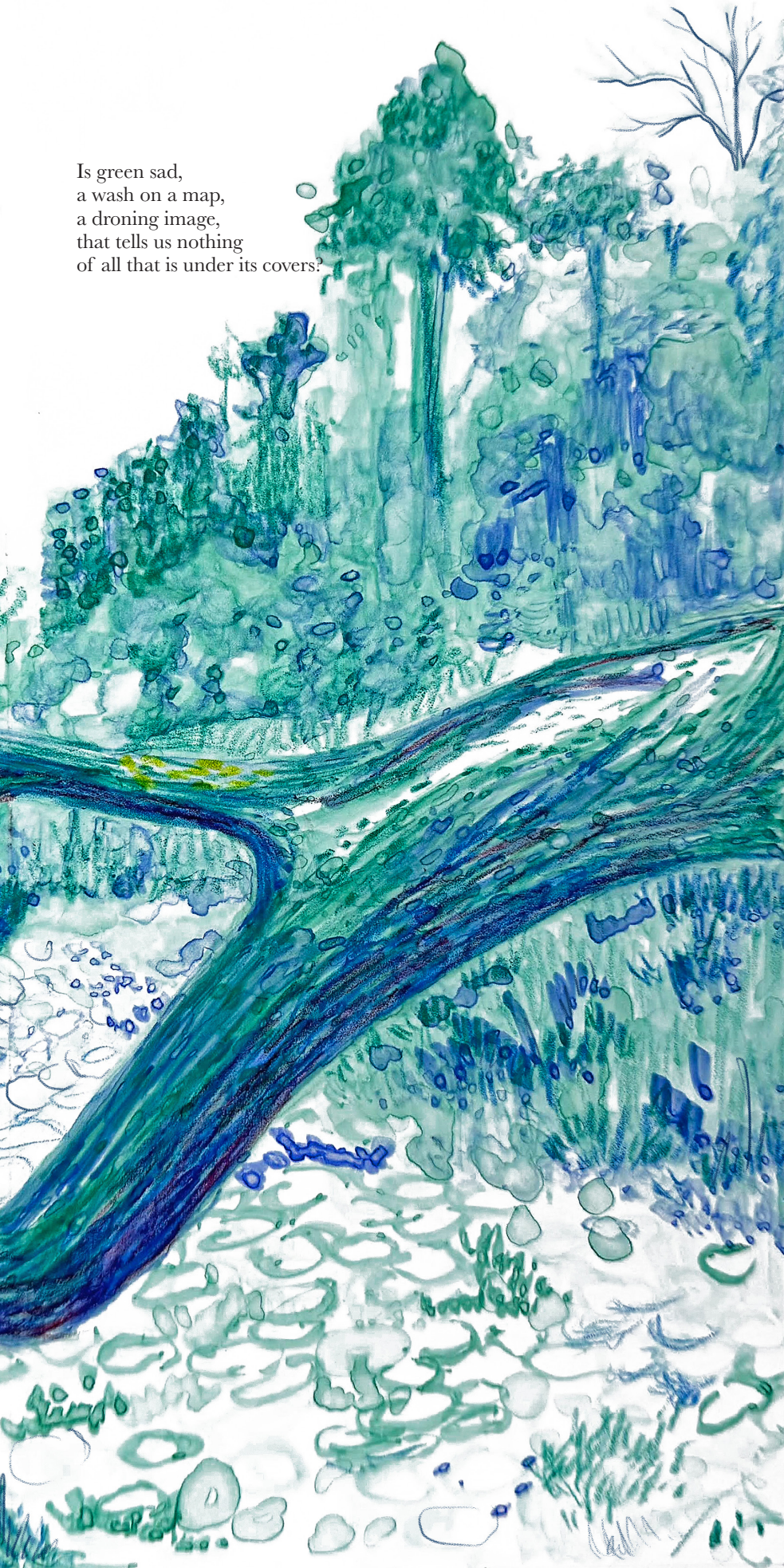




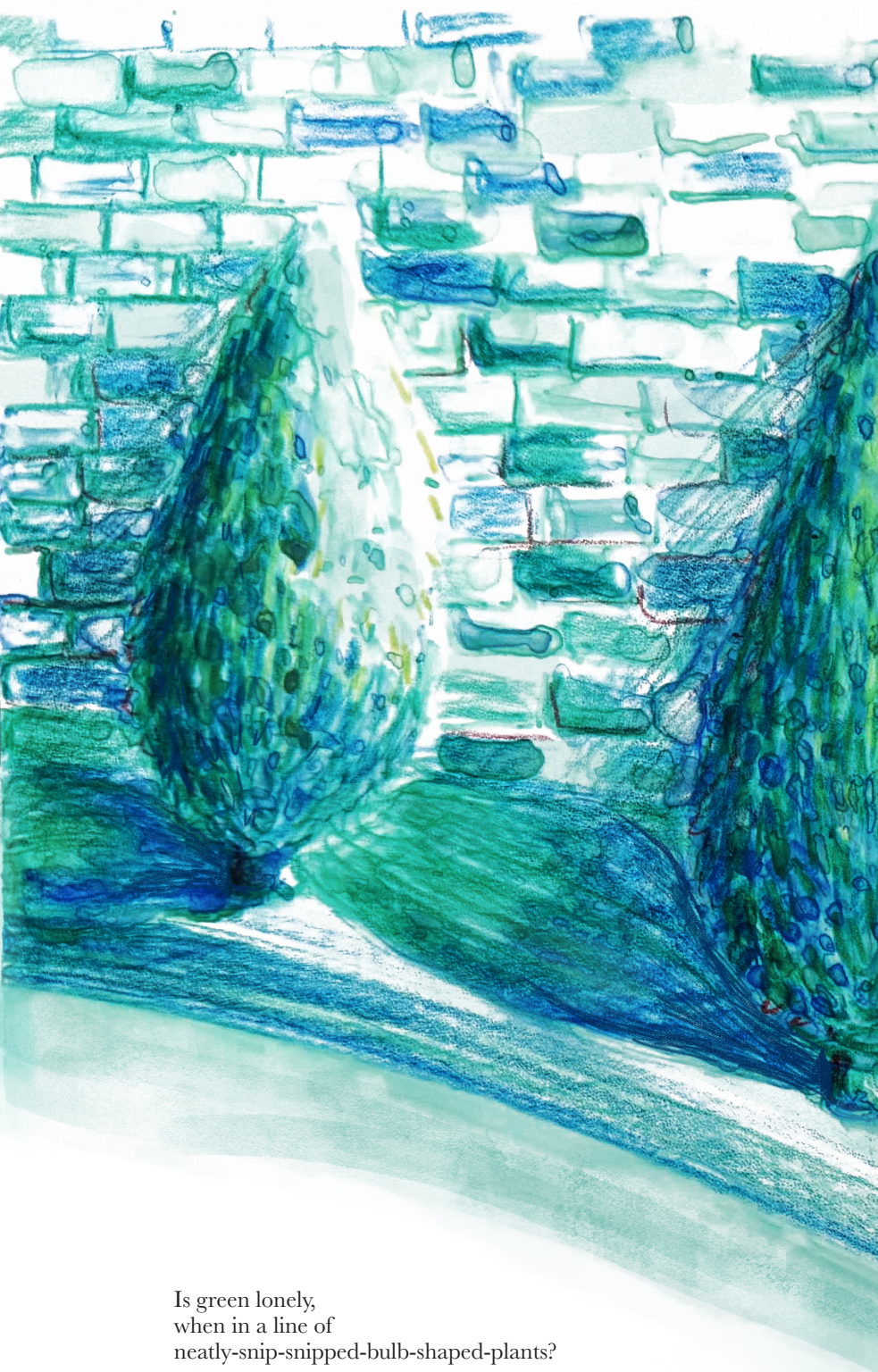




Is green sad,  
a wash on a map,  
a droning image,  
that tells us nothing  
of all that is under its covers?



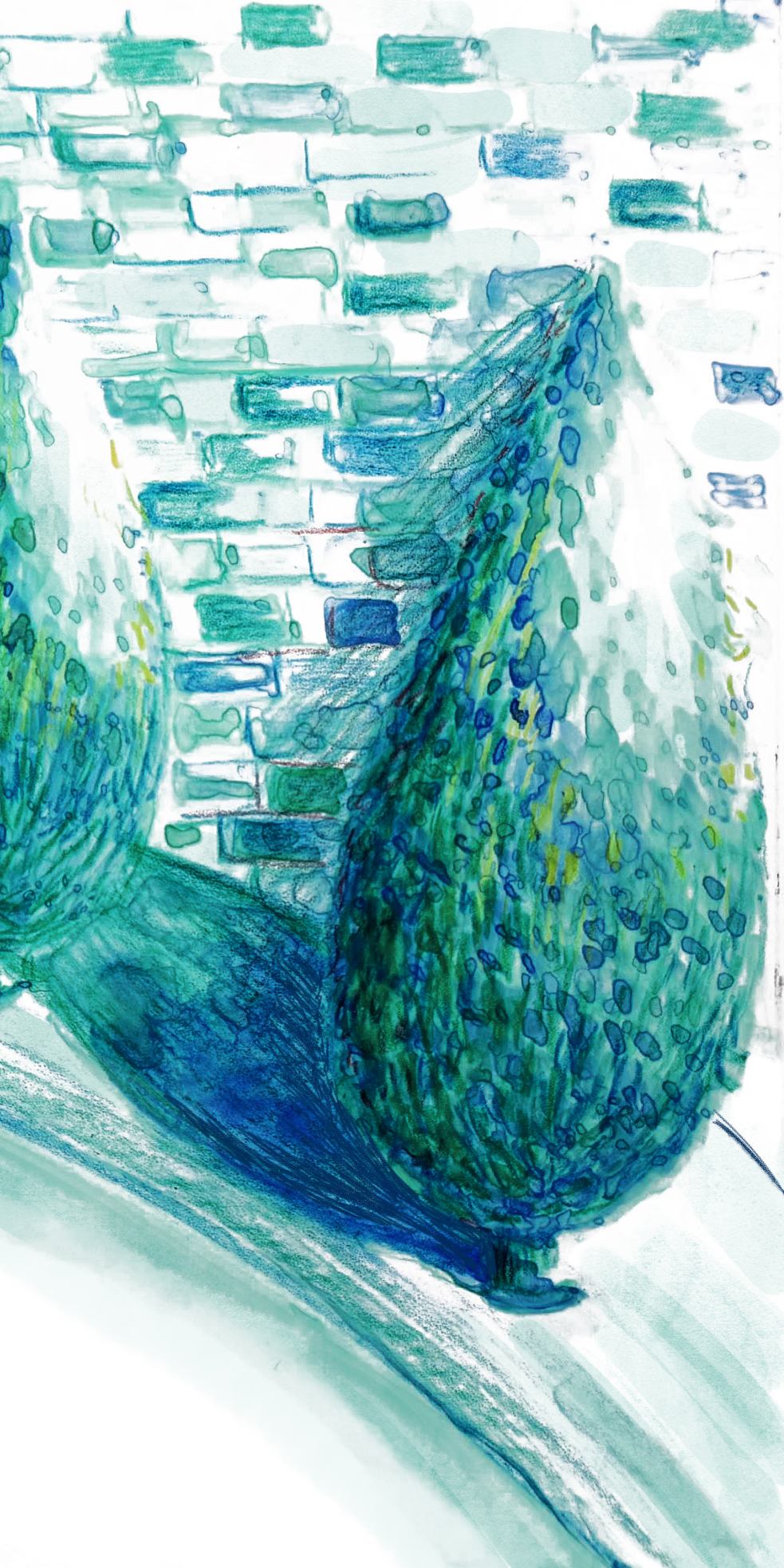




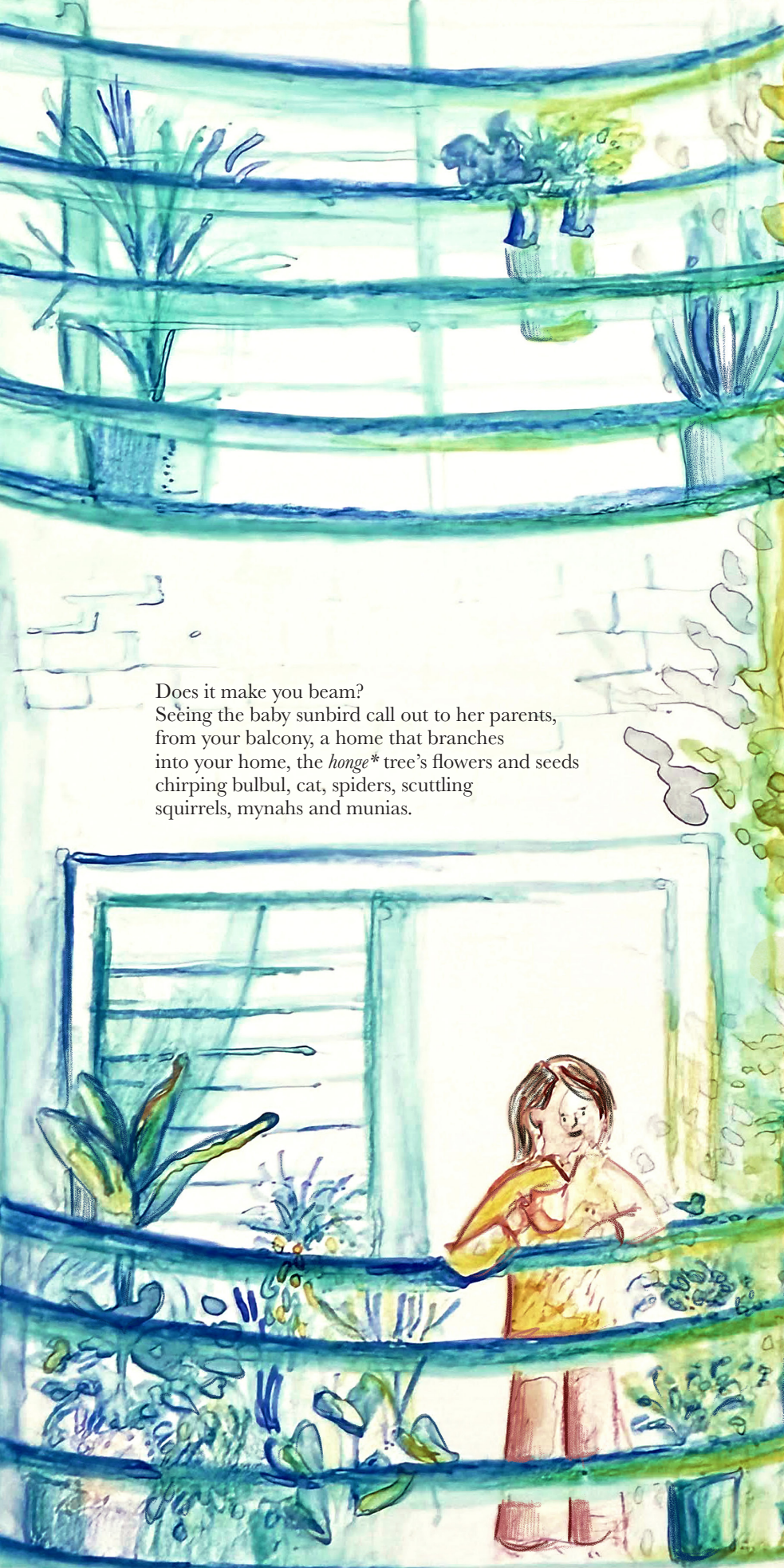
Is green lonely,  
when in a line of  
neatly-snip-snipped-bulb-shaped-plants?

Is green the perfume of air  
of freshly mowed grass?



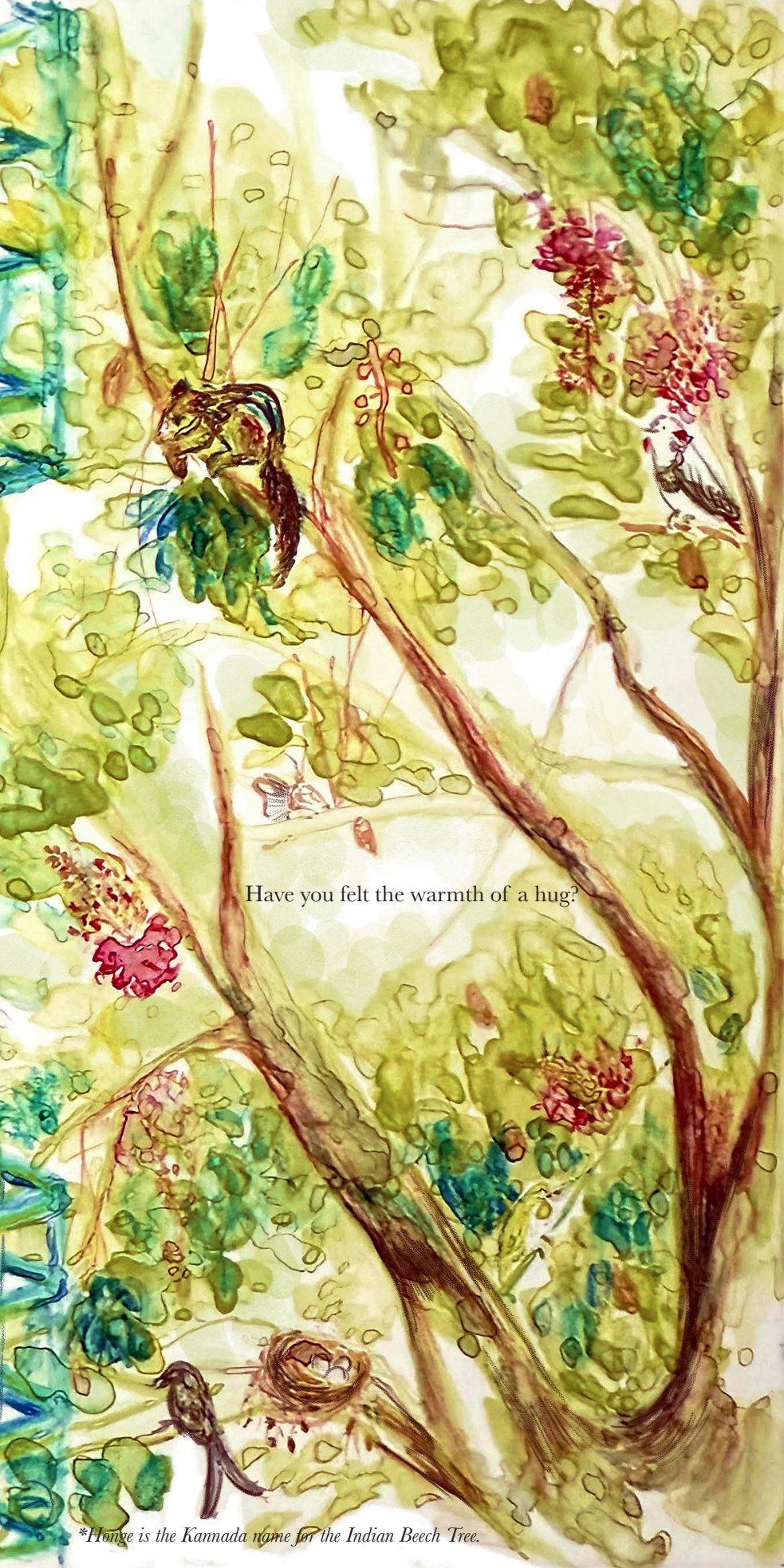






Does it make you beam?  
Seeing the baby sunbird call out to her parents,  
from your balcony, a home that branches  
into your home, the *honge*\* tree's flowers and seeds  
chirping bulbul, cat, spiders, scuttling  
squirrels, mynahs and munias.





Have you felt the warmth of a hug?

*\*Honge is the Kannada name for the Indian Beech Tree.*









Does it heal you even if it pricks a little?  
The stem of a herb wrapped around hands,  
holding all ways of being,  
Even if that means nettles of *zatsot*\* sting!

*\*Zatsot is the Ladhaki name for the Stinging Nettle plant.*


















Does it feel easy?  
Straining your neck in joy to see  
the hornbills feast, their clacking *gok & rroh* tunes.









Does it take you back in time?  
as the tree hugs you, memories in faded  
yet vivid green from your *bachpan*  
exploding like a seed pod.












A watercolor illustration of a forest scene. On the left, there is a dense cluster of green foliage and small brown dots, possibly representing berries or seeds. In the center, a small branch with green leaves and brown buds extends upwards. On the right, a large, weathered tree stump is visible, showing vertical lines and some red and green staining. The background is a light, textured wash of yellow and green.

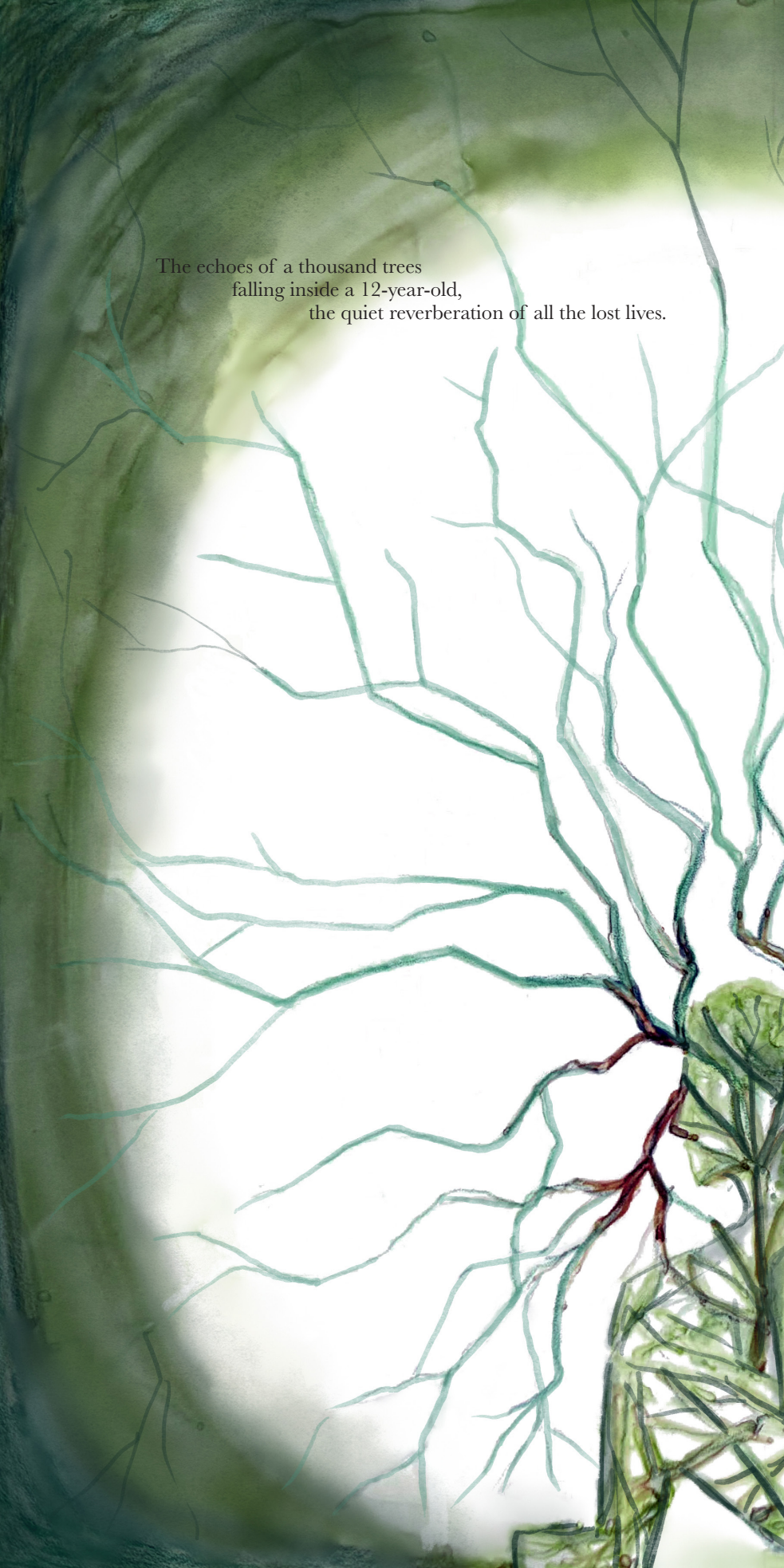
Have you ever (almost) lost a loved one?






Your best friend,  
the starfruit tree whose  
branches you swung  
from right after school,  
just a memory,  
no more.





The echoes of a thousand trees  
falling inside a 12-year-old,  
the quiet reverberation of all the lost lives.



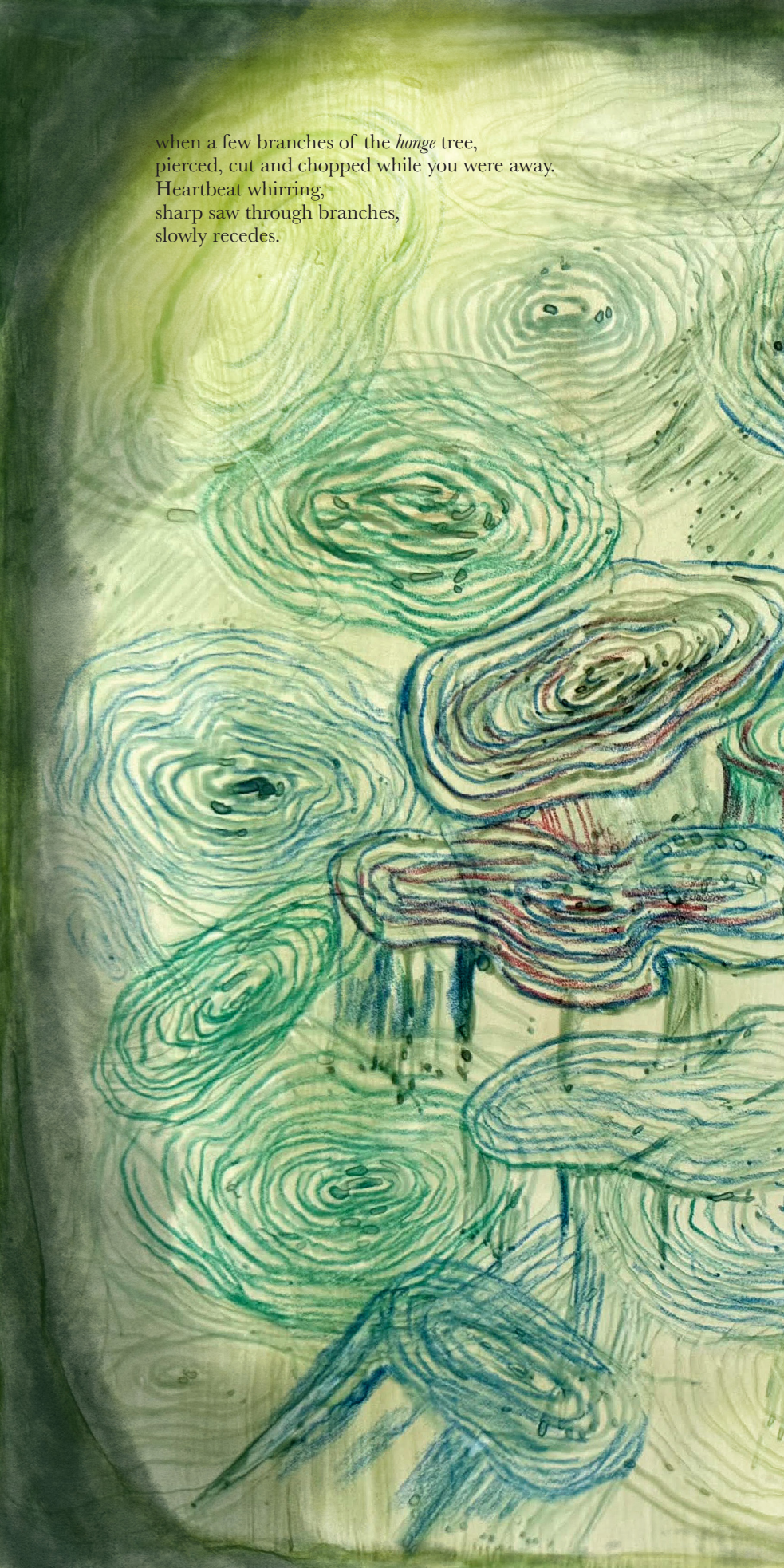


Mourning the breath-makers first,  
then breath takers.

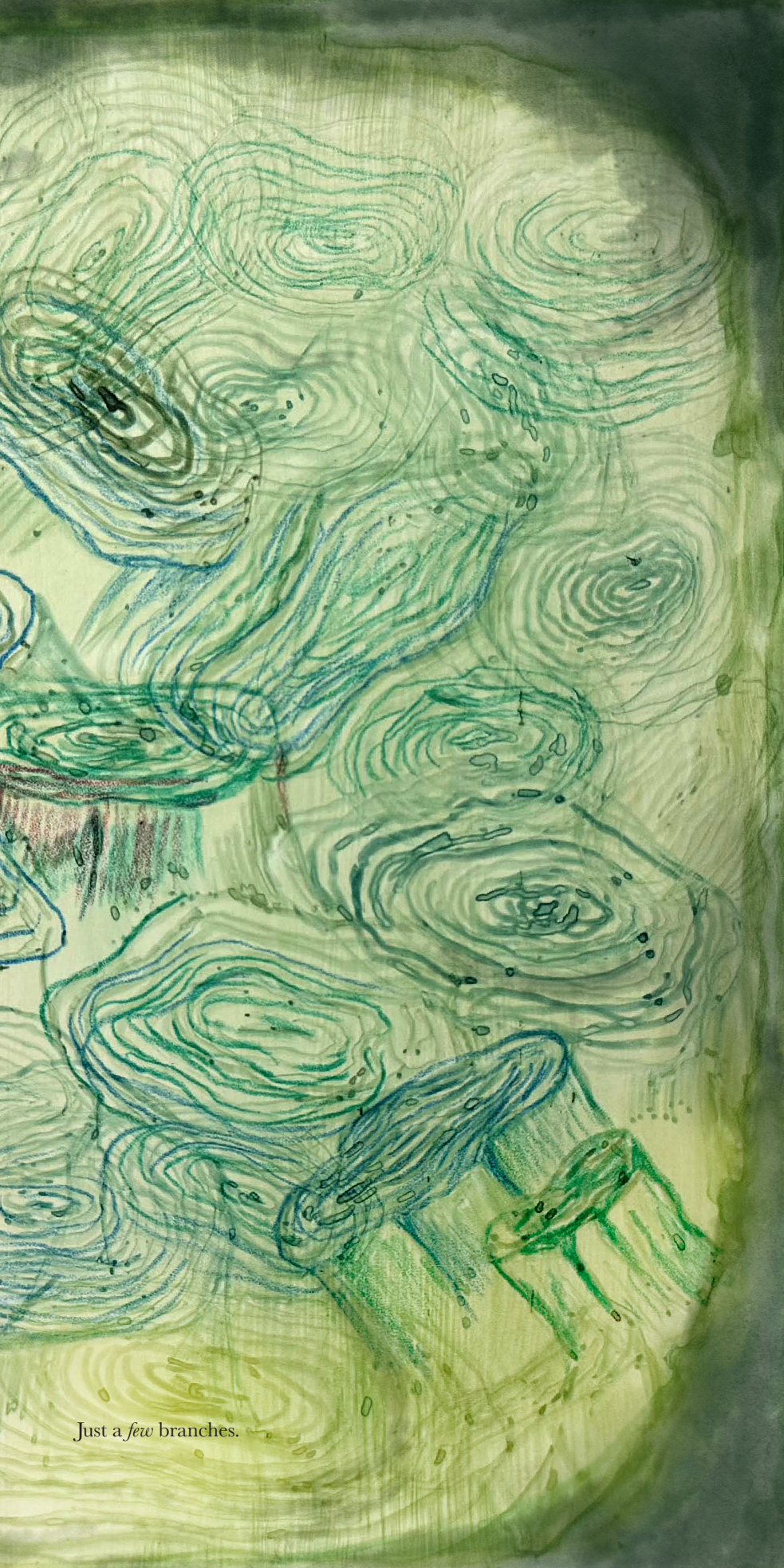
A cyclone of grief that spirals in you.



when a few branches of the *honge* tree,  
pierced, cut and chopped while you were away.  
Heartbeat whirring,  
sharp saw through branches,  
slowly recedes.







Just a *few* branches.





PLEASE  
P



Fingers intertwined, hands clasped,  
joy turns to desperation,  
begging to save a tiny rare patch of plants,  
attempting to alter the fate  
of the path of a digger of cables.





A close-up photograph of a green, textured object, possibly a piece of fabric or a small plant, with the word "PLEASE" repeated in a stylized, green, hand-drawn font above it. The text is oriented diagonally, following the curve of the object. The background is a light, neutral color.

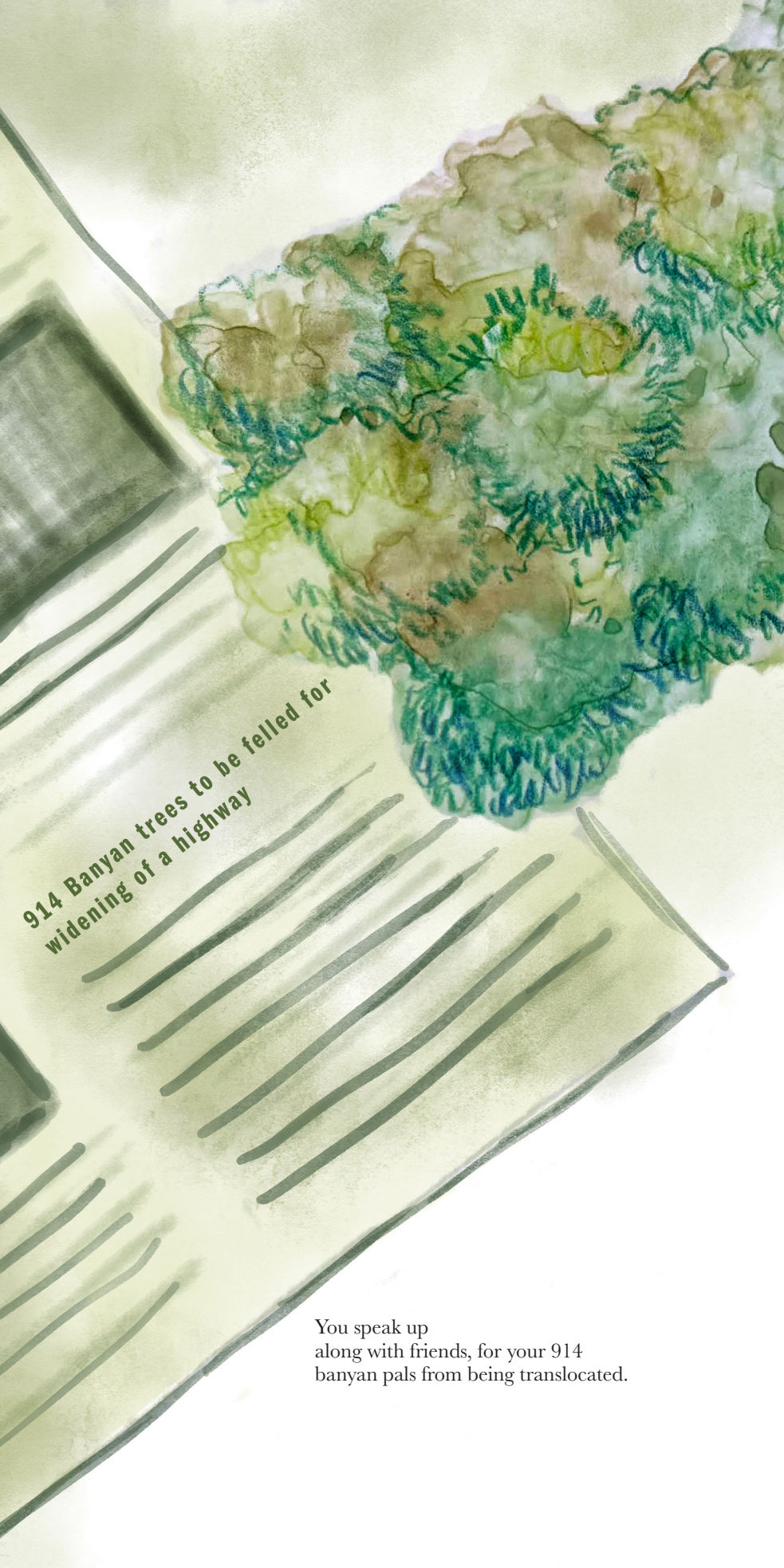













914 Banyan trees to be felled for  
widening of a highway

You speak up  
along with friends, for your 914  
banyan pals from being translocated.





In its hanging roots are conversations,  
play, and hugs, easing the knots of the worry.









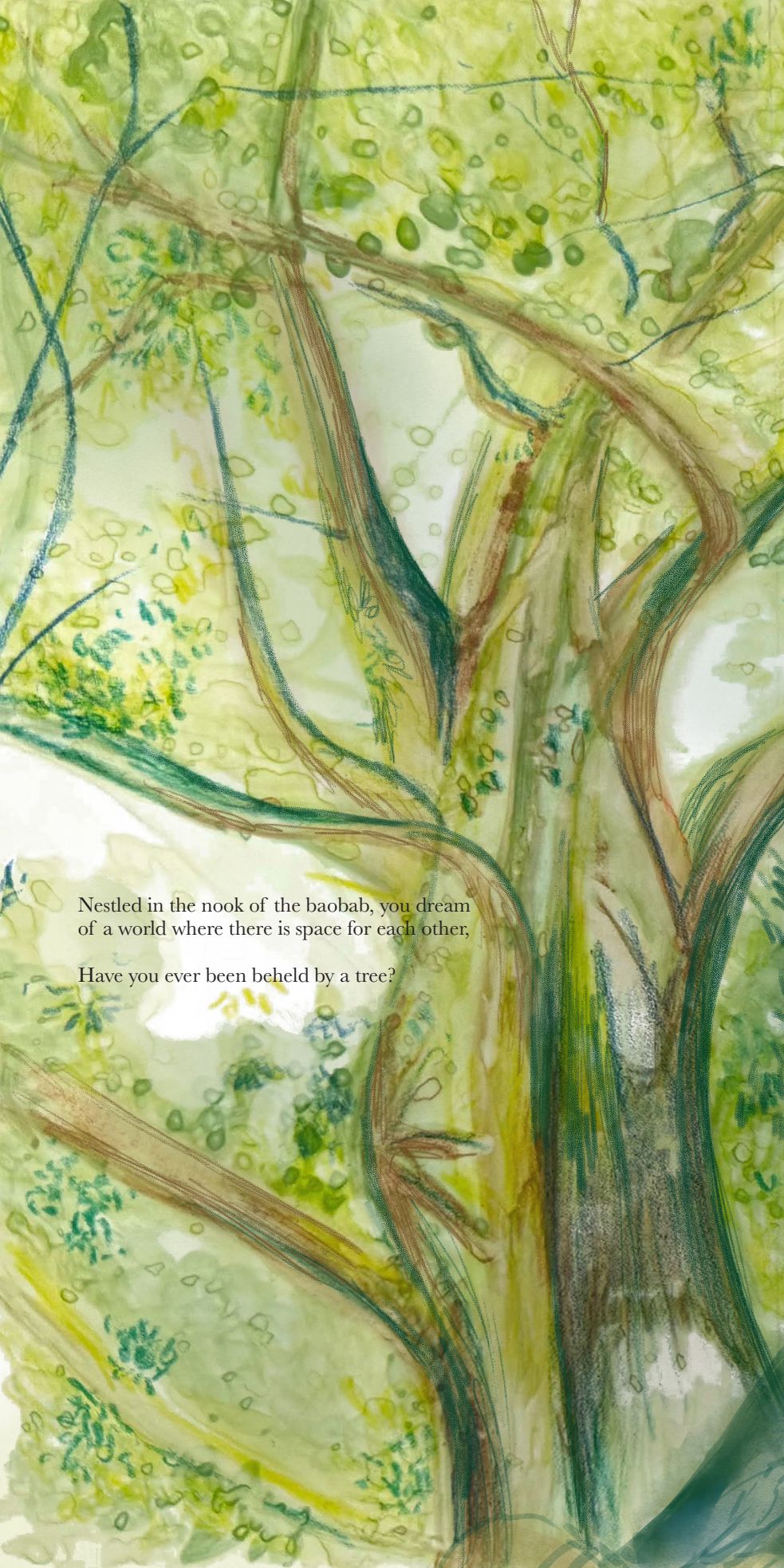


Maybe hope is not a sliver  
of a silver lining,  
but is intertwined, picnicking in the  
clouded leopard patterned shade,  
in the heaviness of a trunk,  
the flitting bulbul's song, sprouting  
of a seed, and mushrooms emerging  
from a fallen trunk.









Nestled in the nook of the baobab, you dream  
of a world where there is space for each other,

Have you ever been beheld by a tree?















For Lakhiram Rongam, Joyshree Gogoi, Phuntsog Dolma, Vena Kapoor, Nayantara Siruguri, & Sadhana Ramchander trees and plants are companions, soulmates, and peacebringers. They exist in the foreground of their landscapes.

How do these companionships, rooted in joy, vulnerability, and peace, begin? Is there hope to be found in the face of deforestation—not only in forests but also in urban spaces where trees translocated? How do they cope with, and sometimes even resist, the silence that follows the disappearance of trees?

‘But, Have You Met a Tree?’, is a series of instances that emerged from conversations with these individuals, exploring the intertwined feelings of joy, hope, and despair experienced in the company of trees and plants.