

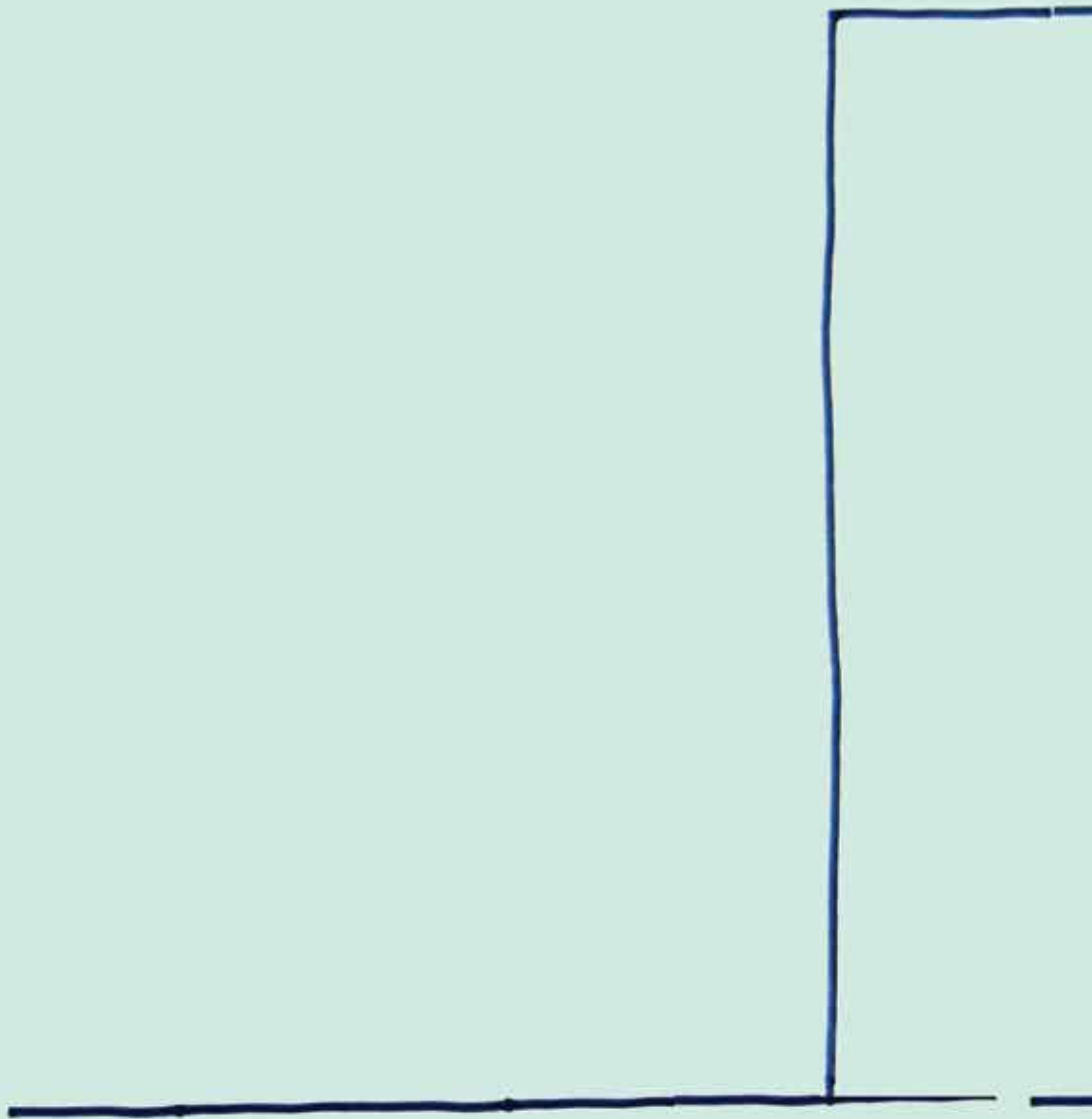


Tales from a  
Dinner  
plate

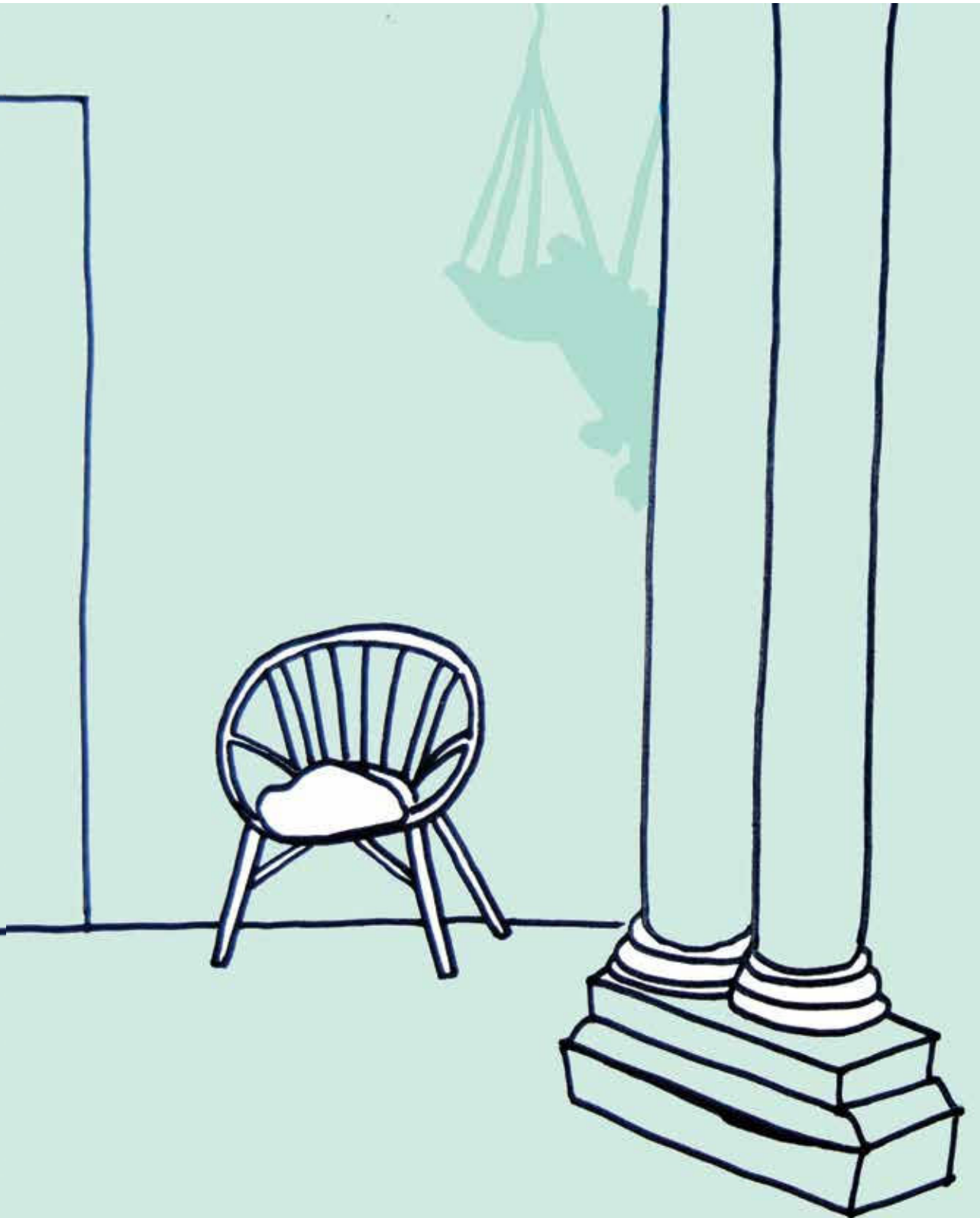


Tales from a  
Dinner  
plate

SHYAMA



My grandfather was the one who  
taught me that there is no single story.



He used to say that there is no single truth



no single reality



There would always be several ways in which a story is told.  
And the way you tell a story, changes the way it is being heard.



Every vacation was spend in his village.  
He had this curious habit of eating in  
a painfully slow manner



According to him, one had to hear the swish of your tongue, the slow chatter of your teeth as you ate. Because when you ate you became the sun, the wind that pondered over vast plains, the desert sand that was swept across oceans and found its home in river beds, the touch of souls you would never meet, stories hidden in specks and blotches of color. One had to pause while eating to feel the texture of thousands of stories dancing inside you.

To the horror of parents, I came back from my vacation as a master of the art of mindful (slow) eating

My earliest memory of Grandparents' place is of of rice being boiled



The taste of that rice was in being cooked outdoors



in being watched as it boiled



in being involved.

From early on, I learned that, things which take time to grow



were worth the wait.

My grandmother was an amazing cook. Making food was the only life she knew like her mother before her, and all the grandmothers before her.

And like all of them,

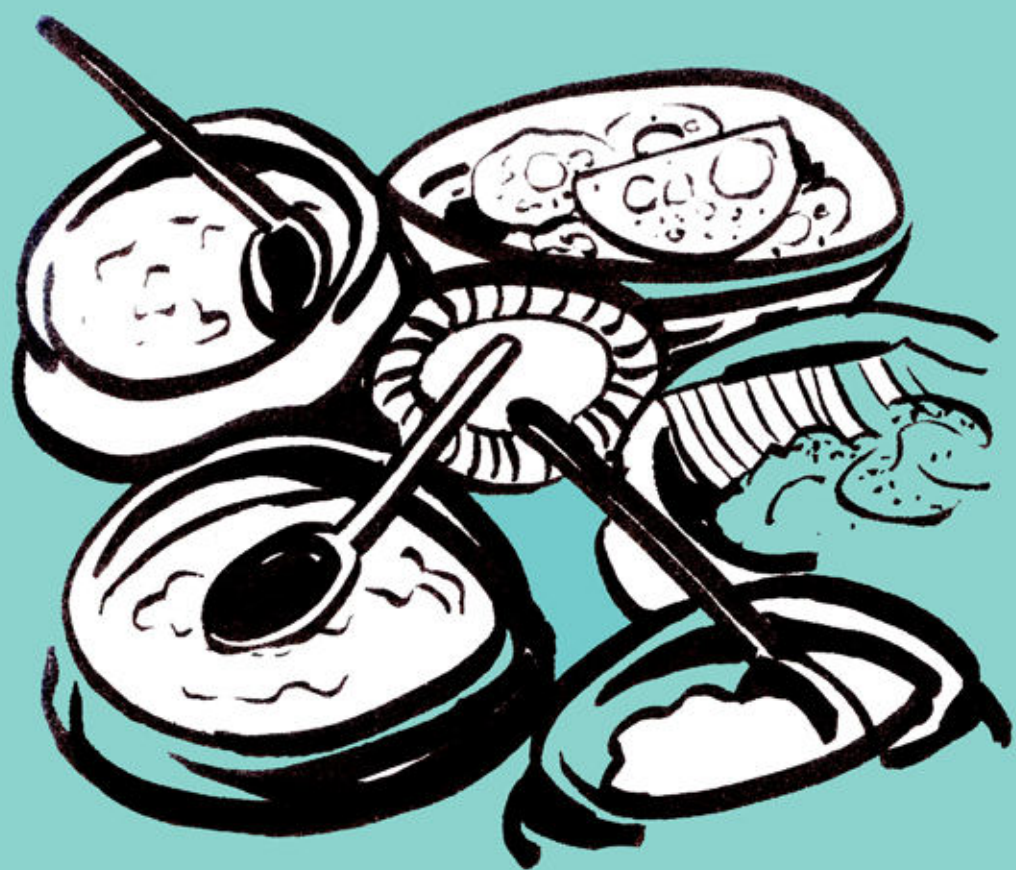


She had the magical ability to transform anything



Anything at all






Into delicious food

My busy parents kept moving from our tiny and quiet village, to bigger and bigger cities.

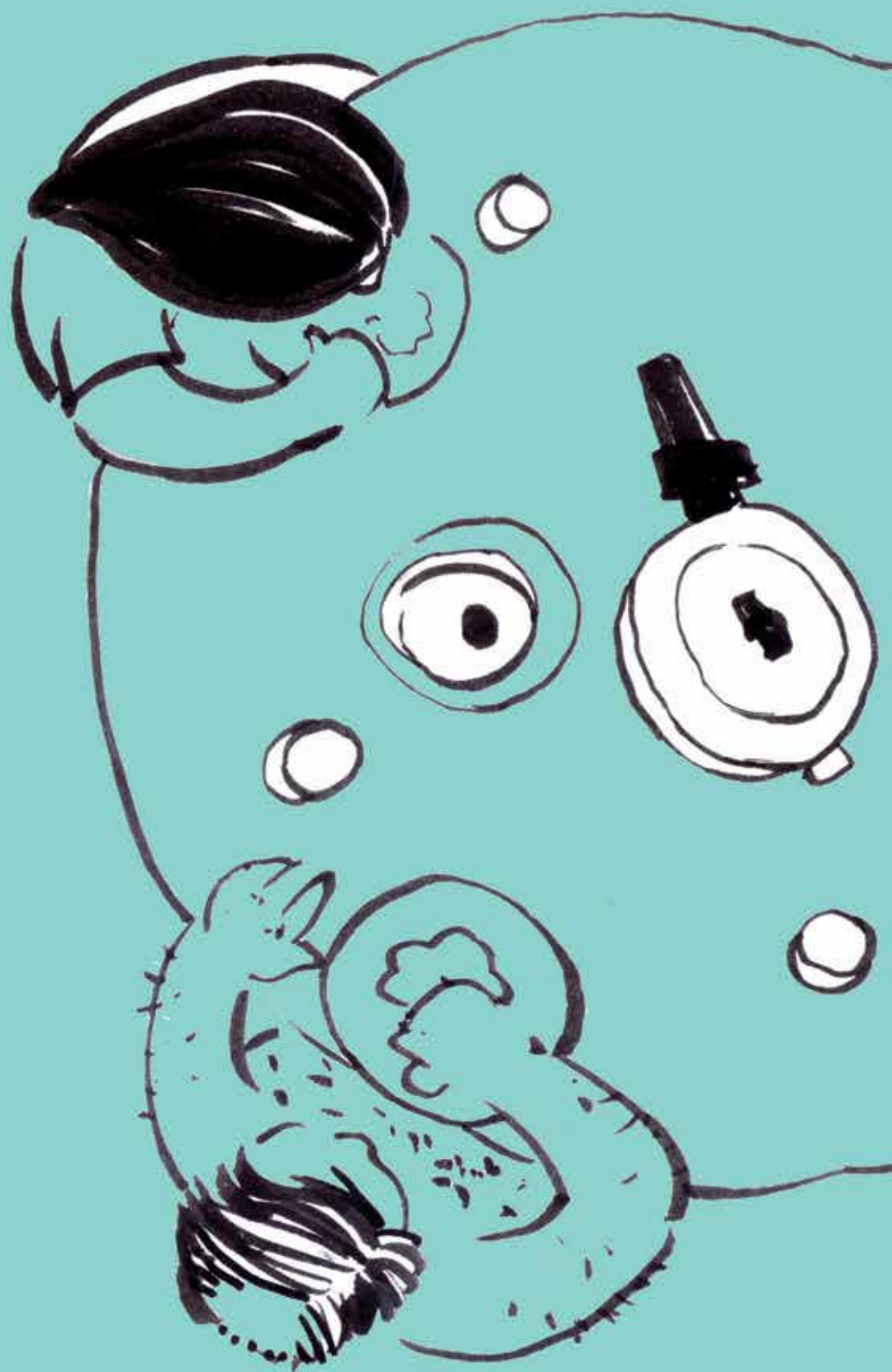


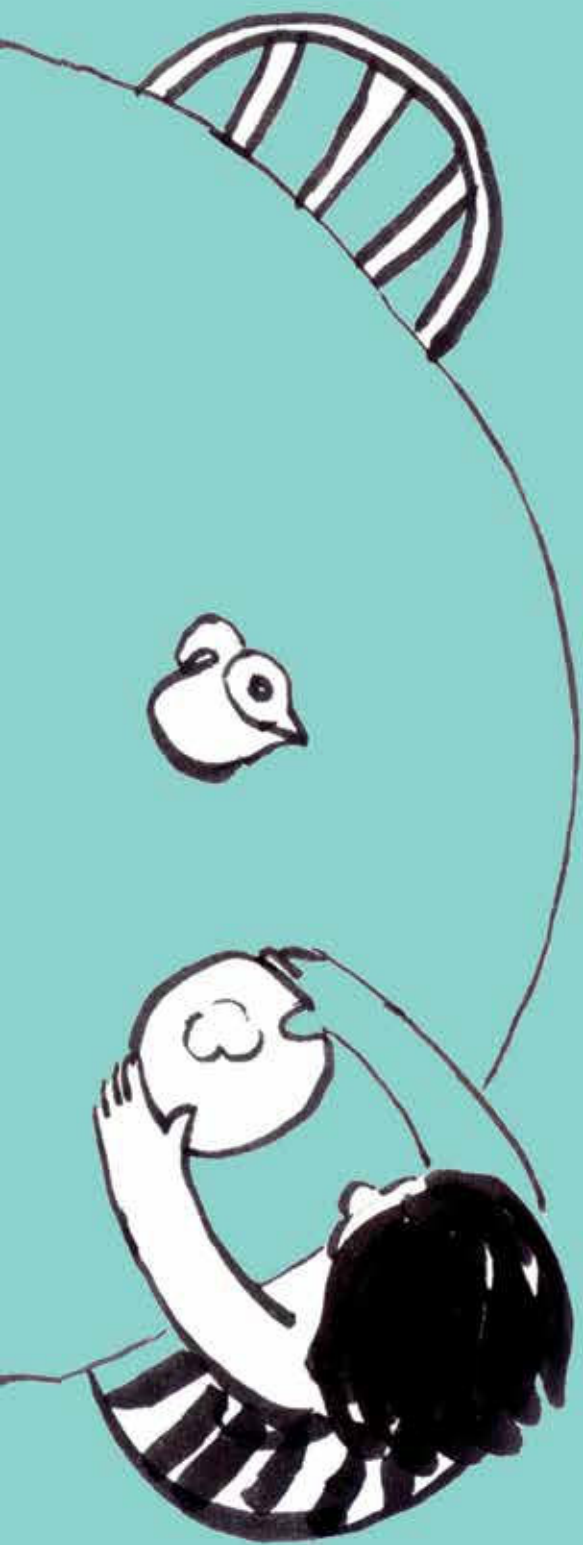
## **The city**



**Government to ban all advertisements  
aimed at children to avoid  
post traumatic stress disorder due  
to prolonged exposure to  
desirable things**

The only available family time was spent on our dinner table.  
We discussed world history, politics, science, career prospects.





But of course there were things which we never discussed. Things that were addictive.. Evil

I loved the city



Everything was bigger



Soon life changed. I forgot the marbles, the trees, the mud. City offered it's distractions to help me forget my old life.

Everything in the city was nicer,

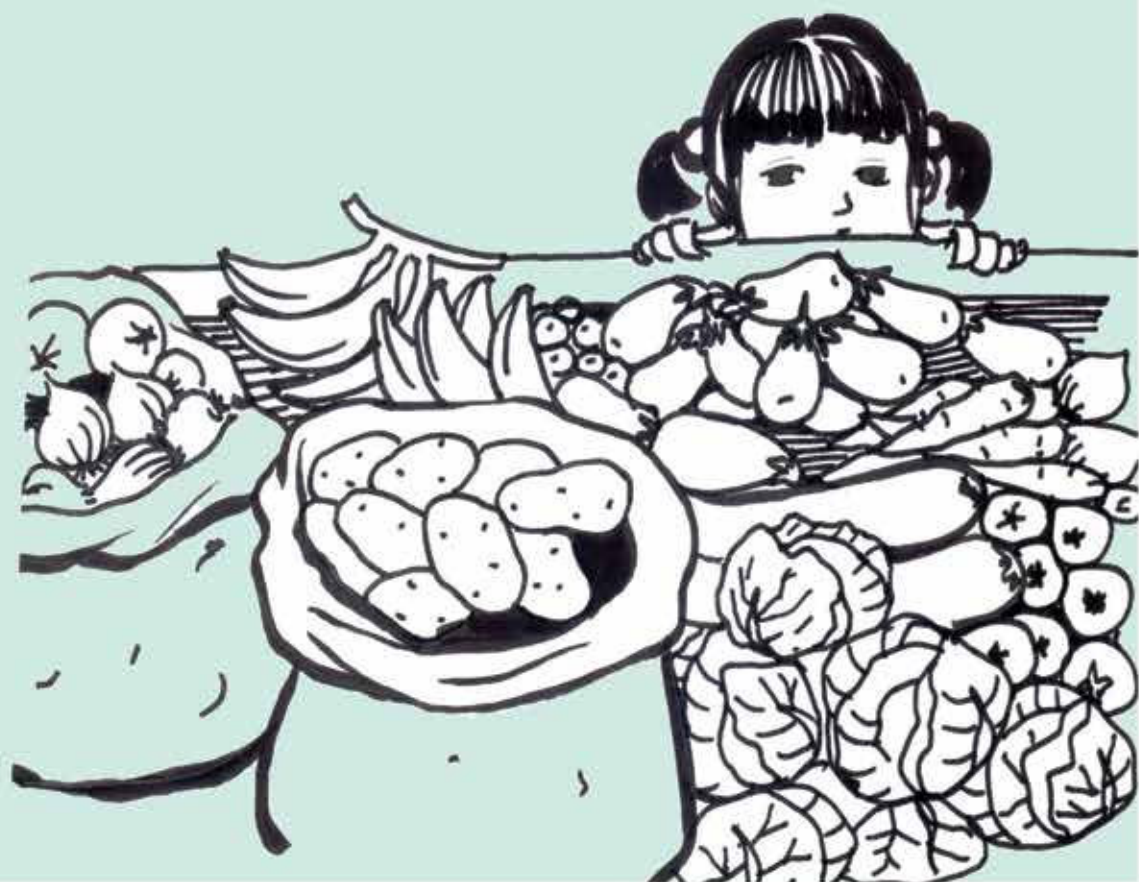


sparkling with life,

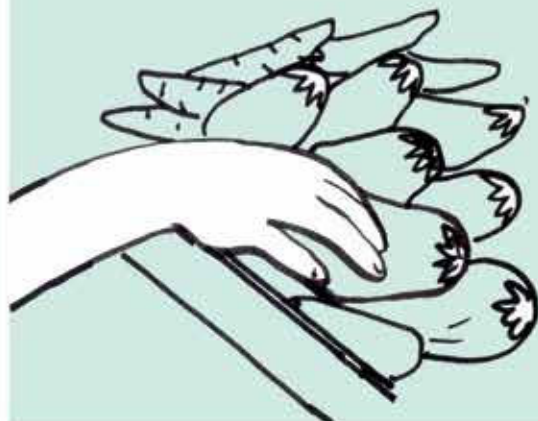


cleaner

Atleast on the outside.



Everything made me want it.





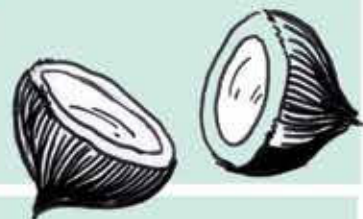
They looked like toys to me.



Her idlys had alternate uses



they were unbreakable



Upmas were served with sugar,



I soon developed an unnatural & unreasonable phobia of upma & sugar



With time, our dinner table started to change. Technology revolutionised my life when a refrigerator walked into my home.



When I was 17, I moved away from home to a metro. Stepping out the confines of home and culture brought in a lot of questions.

Are you an Iyer ?

What's your surname?

How come you  
dont speak hindi?

You dont know  
this song?

How come you  
never saw this movie?

Dont tell me that  
you haven't been  
to McD



Just like them I had my own curiosities.  
There were questions I wanted to ask.  
How do you not know how to cook? How  
do you not know what a mango tree looks  
like? How can you spend so much money  
eating bad food outside?  
But of course,  
I never did ask these questions



How come you dont know  
what doing upperlip  
meant?



I kept mum



I had learned to keep  
quiet. Like most things in  
life, this skill too was  
beaten into me, at the  
dinner table



Eat, or else the crow  
will take your food



Whether you like it or not, you  
have to eat brinjal. Otherwise,  
I will call Dad.



It's just hair. Eat or you dont  
get to have playtime





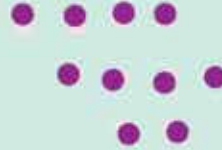
pesticides



I had slowly learned to keep quiet no matter what was found in my food. The power of wilful ignorance can't be overstated. No matter what I found , knew or saw, I kept looking the other way.



chemicals



hormones



I never uttered a word when my grandfathers land was sold either.

As I moved further and further away from that boiling pot of rice, I learned new food pyramids

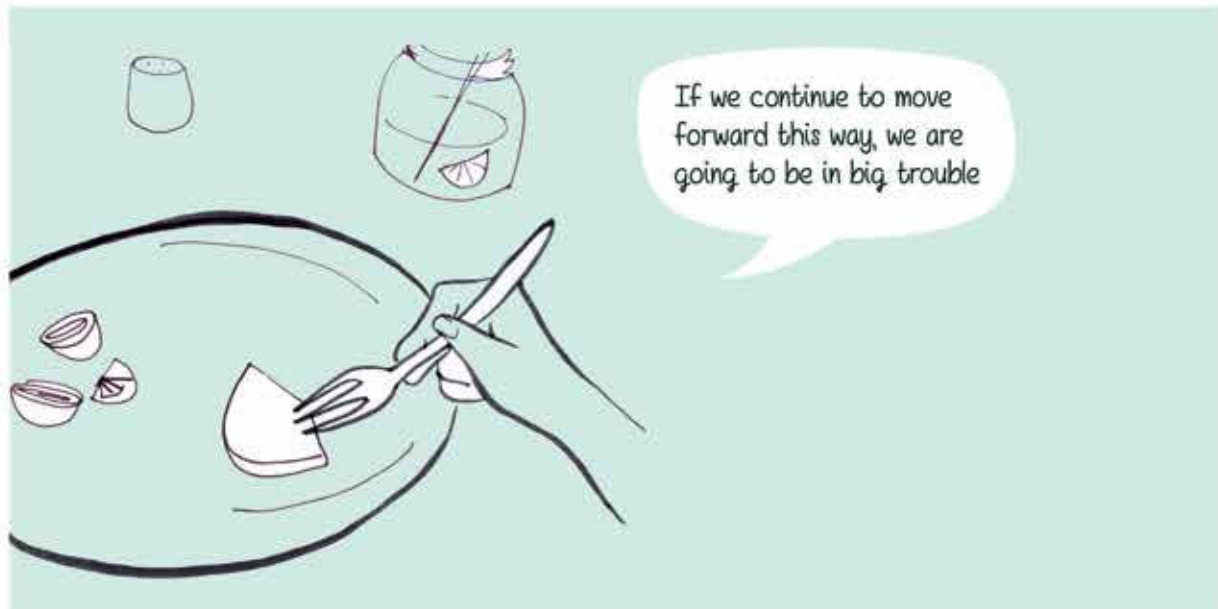


According to changing identities, changing pressures



Internet offered infinite lifestyle choices, infinite possibilities of being, and infinite advices of doing things right. Yet there were infinite ways of going wrong. It took yet another dinner for me to learn this. Till then, I ate without knowing.





If nothing, think of  
the environmental costs.

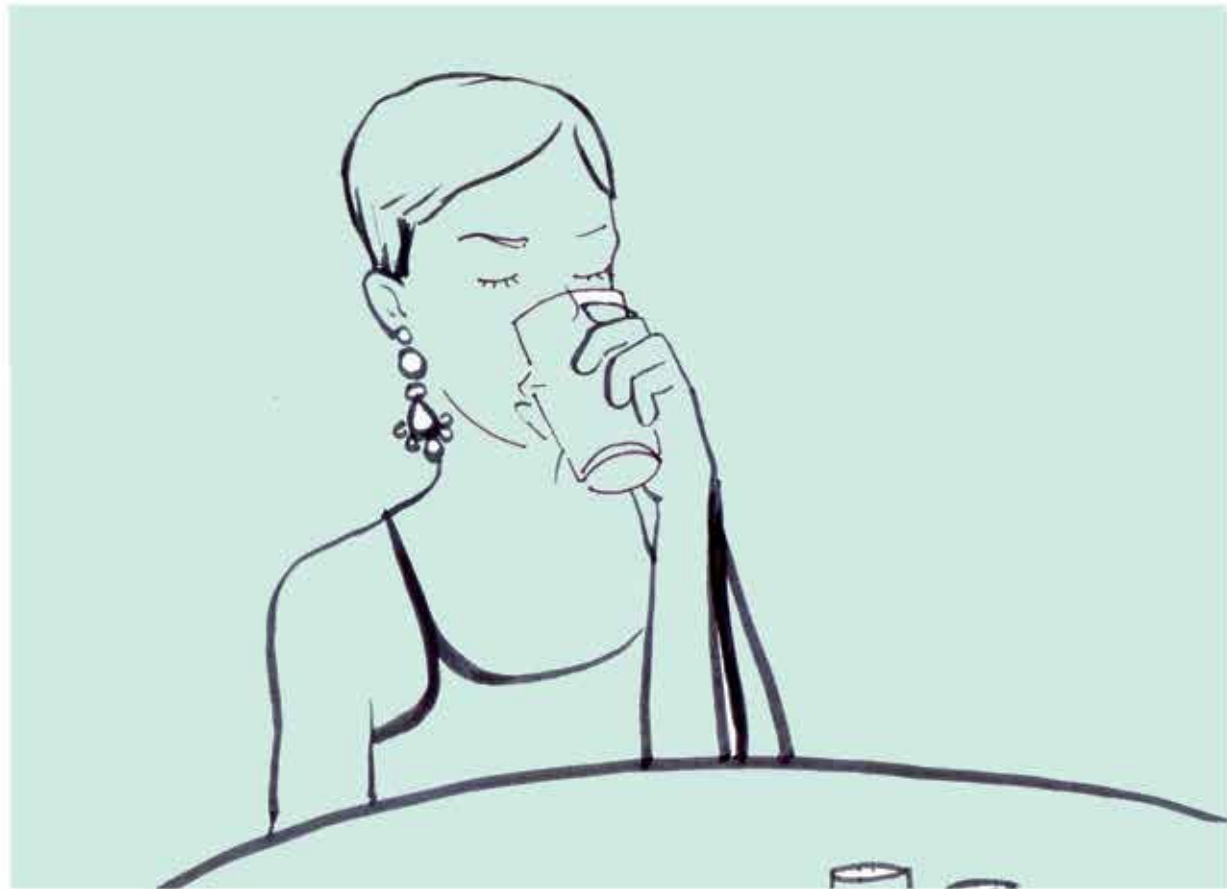


One bag of chips cost  
45 liters of water



One way or another, we are  
affecting something as you eat,  
if not your health



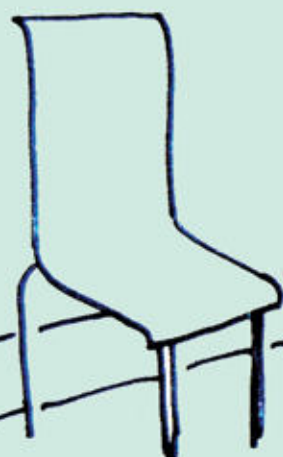




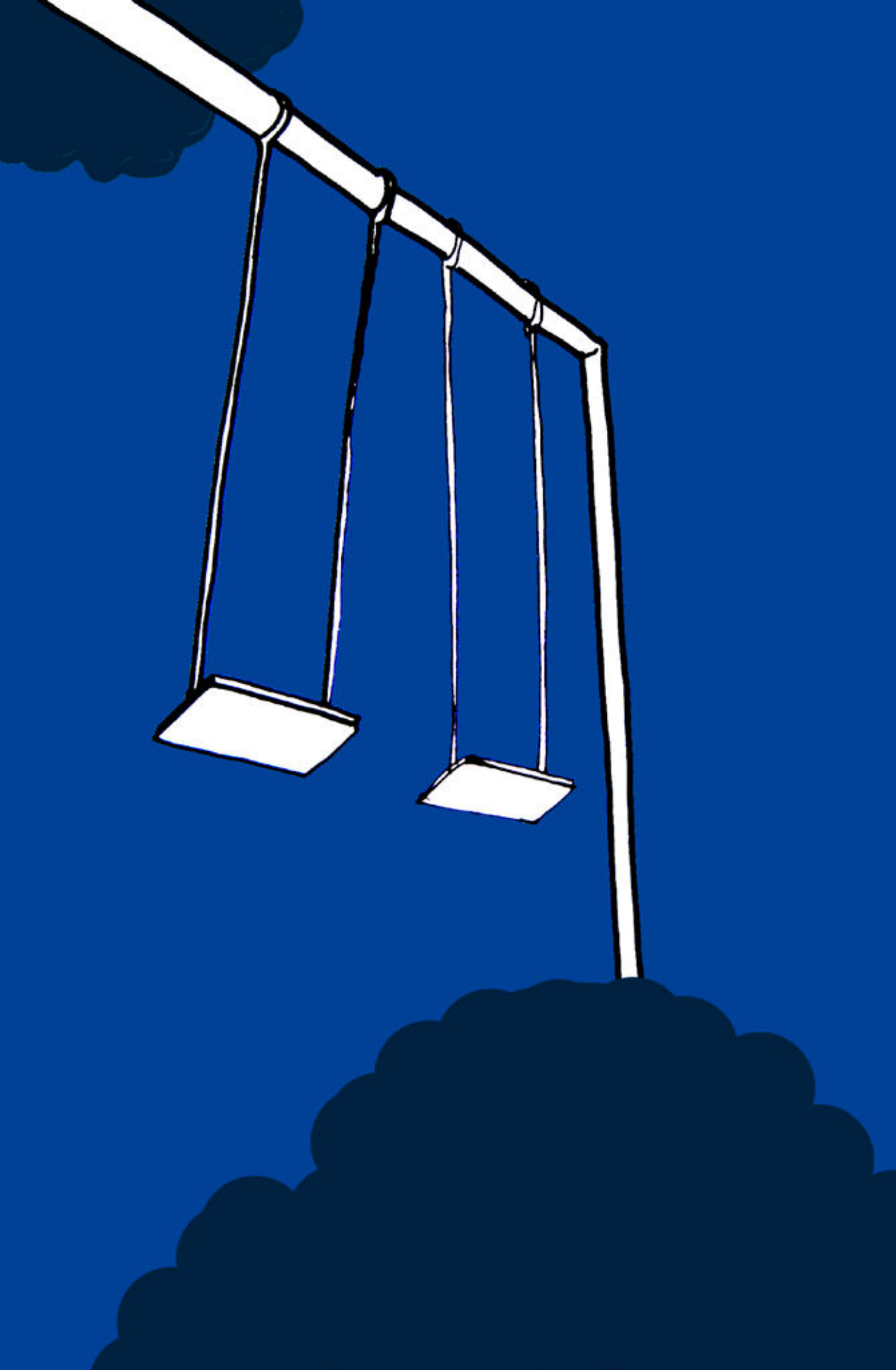
Up until that dinner, I was under the impression that you only thought so much about food while you have no money left to eat. I wasn't sure what to eat anymore.

When I was young, my mother decided what I ate and how much I ate and how much sugar and carbs were put in my food. I was not sure who were deciding these for me anymore.

In a world where food kills more people than natural disasters and terror attacks, I believe cooks and farmers save more lives than doctors. Most grandmoms have now retired from our kitchens, and yet I wish they would sneak back in, to claim control & to add that extra magical flavour.







For my Mom and grandmom  
and everyone else who has ever fed me.





