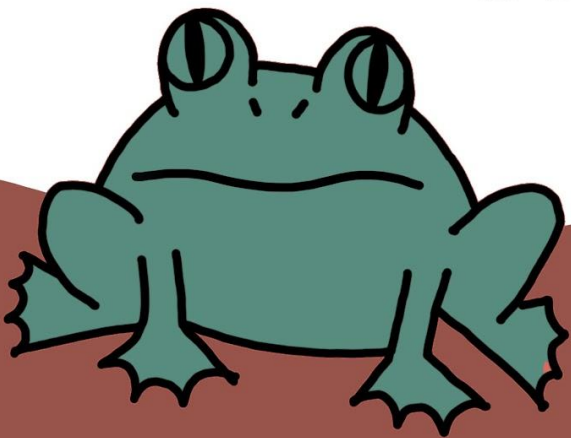




Of the Flesh & Earth



# **Of The Flesh & Earth**

By: Riley Zito

Illustrated by: Dylan Merzenich

## Table of contents

---

Frog - Mud

Songbird - Rooster

Oak/mushroom - Soul rot

Summer peach - Skin meld

Death & Life

## How to read

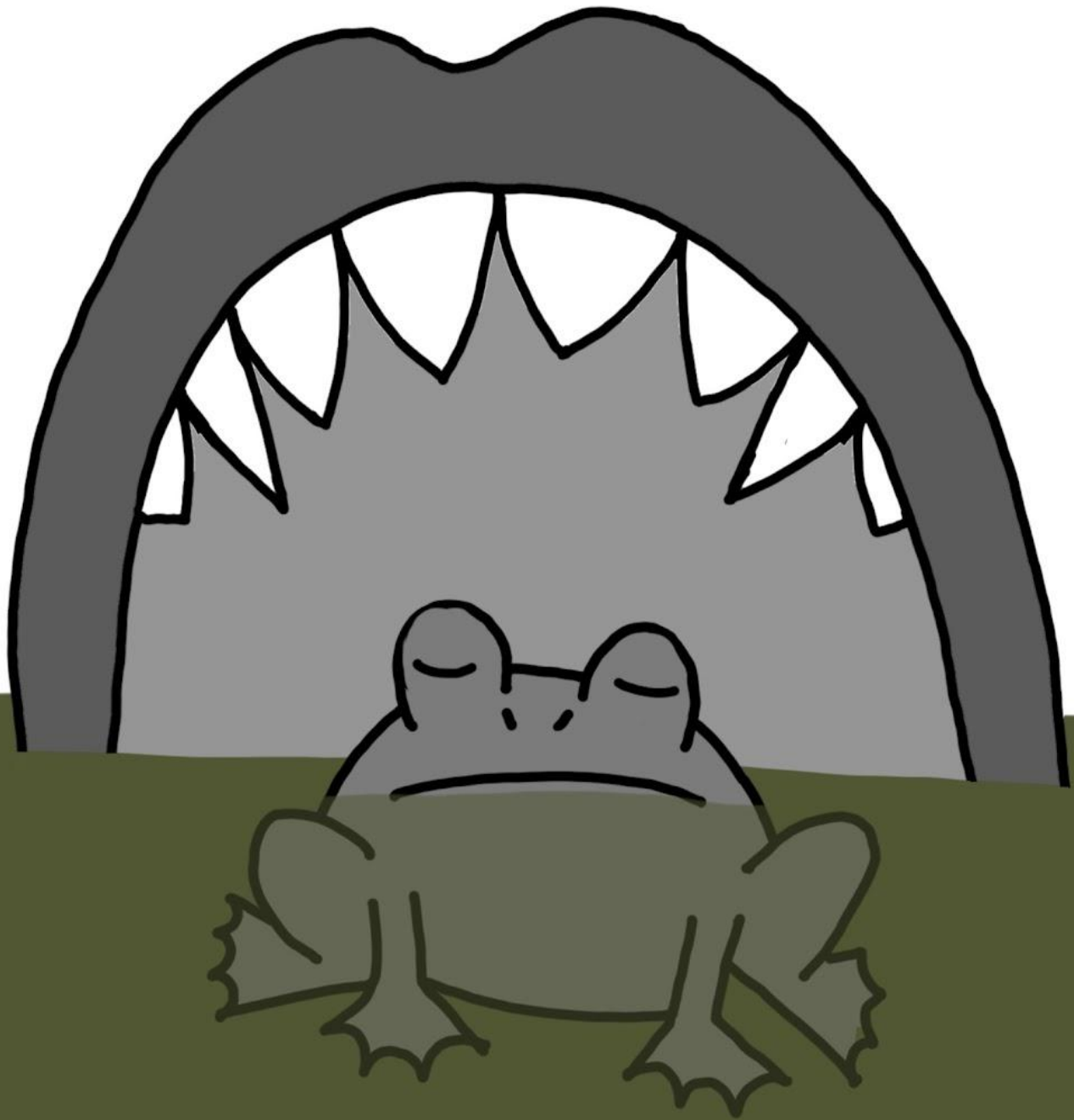
---

If you wish to cut sadness out  
and love tenderly with no doubt,  
read the left & play your role

If you are a sunny storm,  
and full of worry metaphor,  
read the right & see the whole

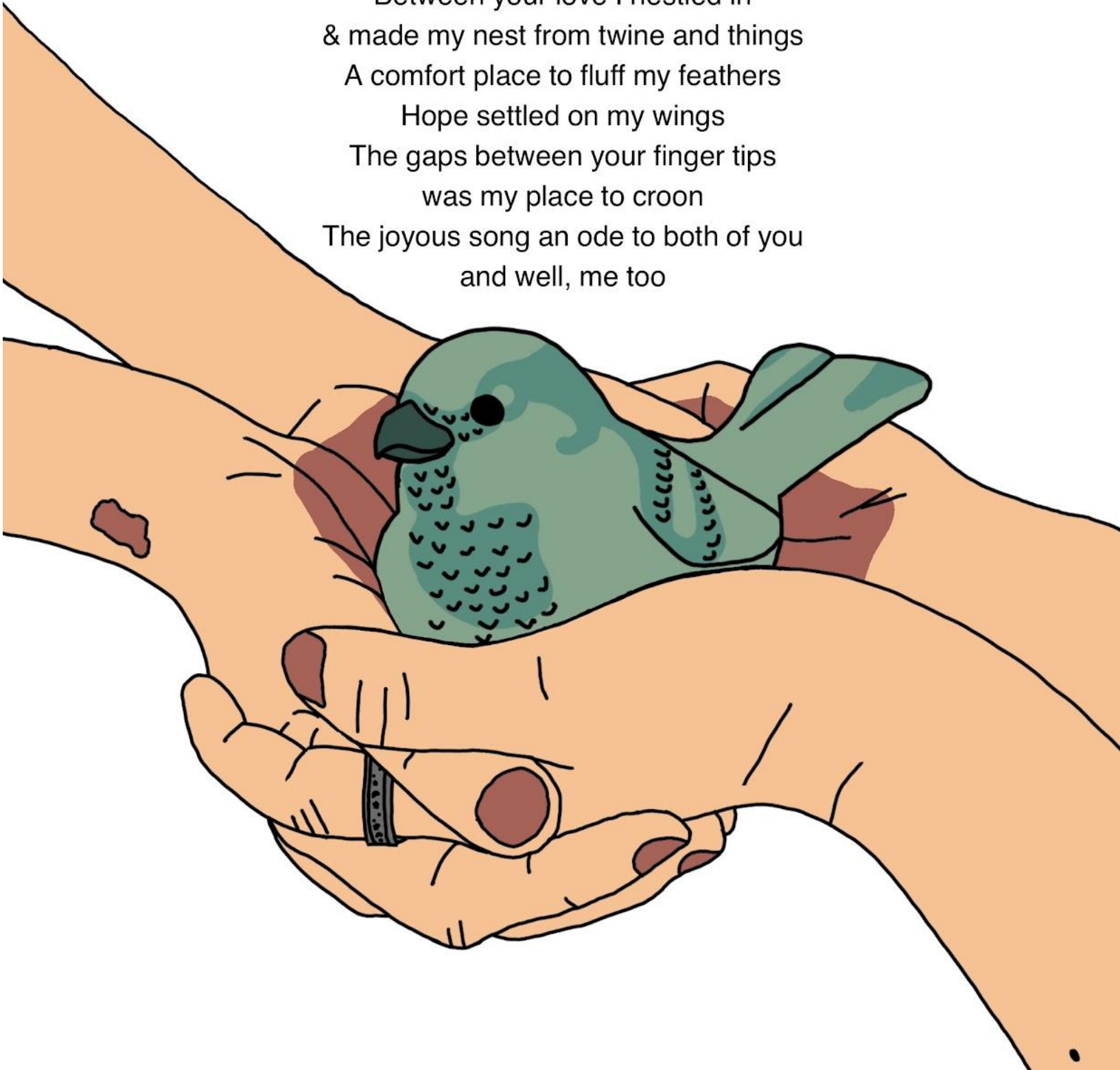


If I were a tender frog,  
I'd leap into your mouth  
A warm safe bog  
to hibernate from cold  
Pressed into your tight bound hold  
I'll close my eyes & croak



I sink into the mud  
No one see me  
The Cold has come  
Tender frog, far from teeth  
I fear your jaws  
So I'll sleep

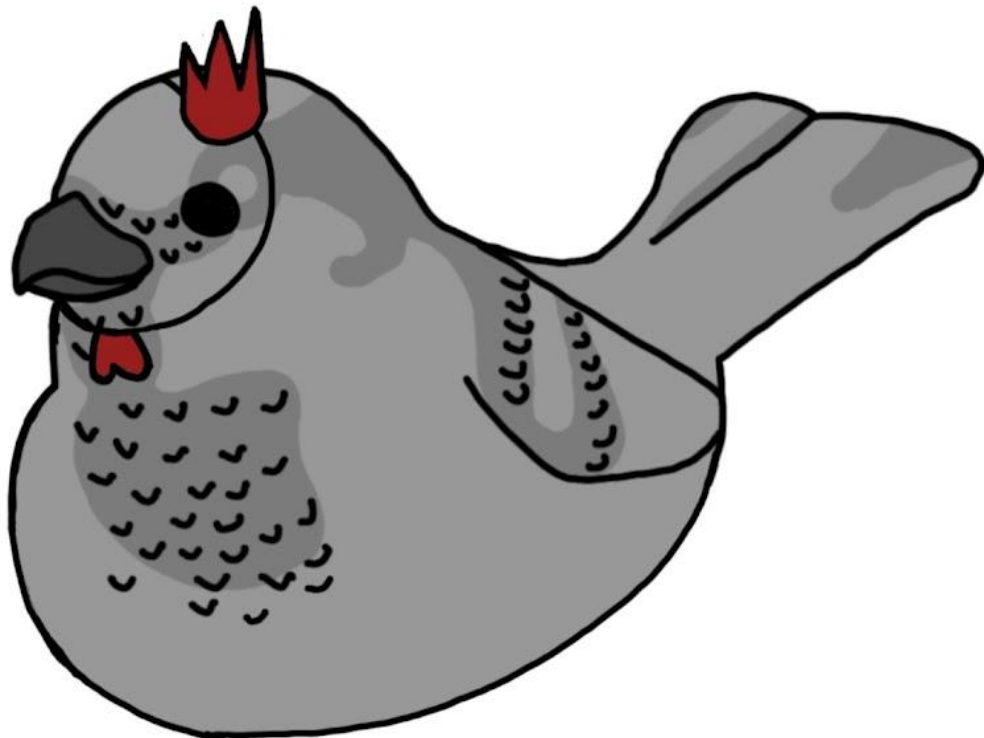
Between your love I nestled in  
& made my nest from twine and things  
A comfort place to fluff my feathers  
Hope settled on my wings  
The gaps between your finger tips  
was my place to croon  
The joyous song an ode to both of you  
and well, me too

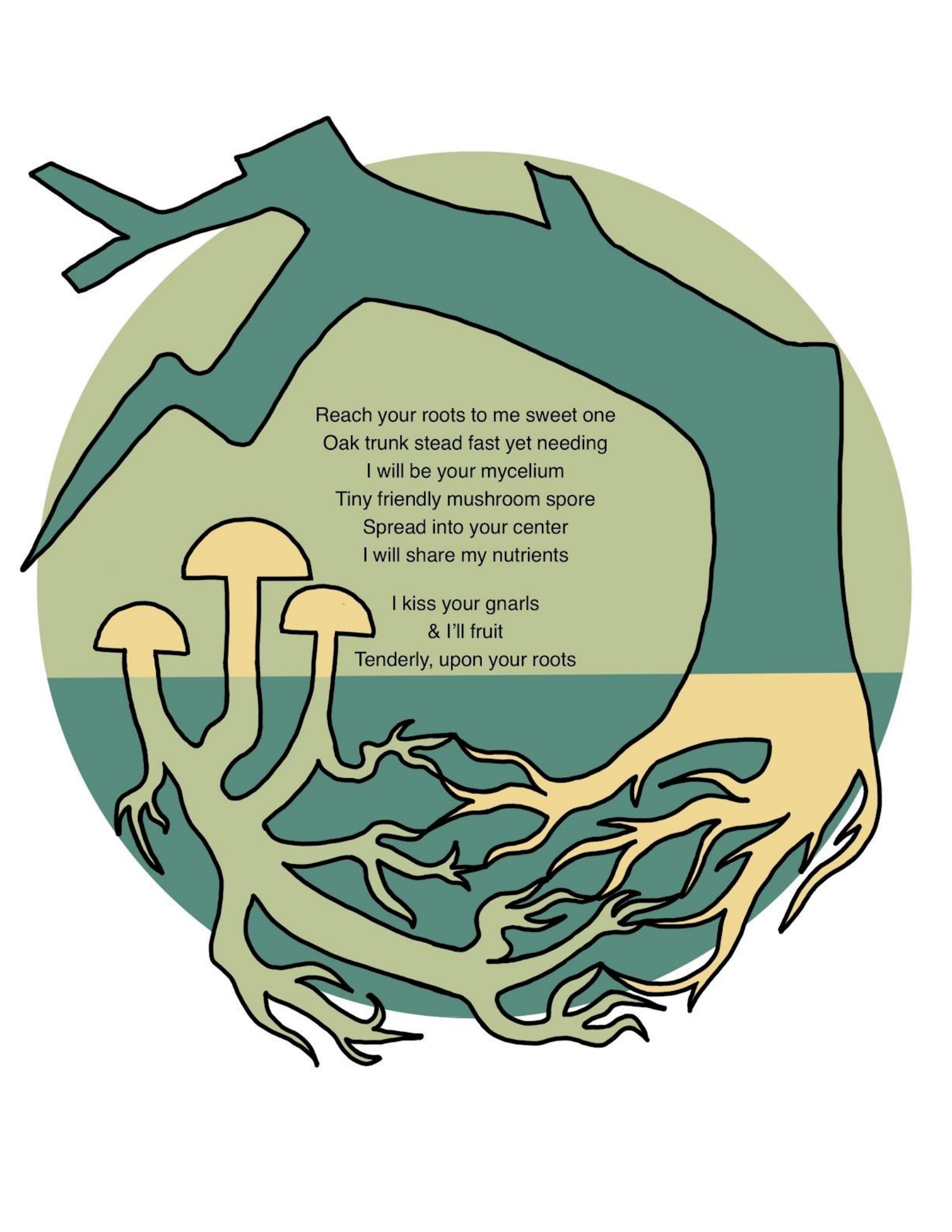


Oh rooster, how loud your cry  
To make a hen turn her eye  
Is it love she feels  
for your possession,  
Or does she twist her fear?

Nestled under mother wing  
I grow in a tender den  
Yet - I cannot bear you there  
I vow to never be your hen

I'll become proud in stead,  
Don a red comb crown,  
yell to yell,  
Only to look around  
at empty nests from flighted hens

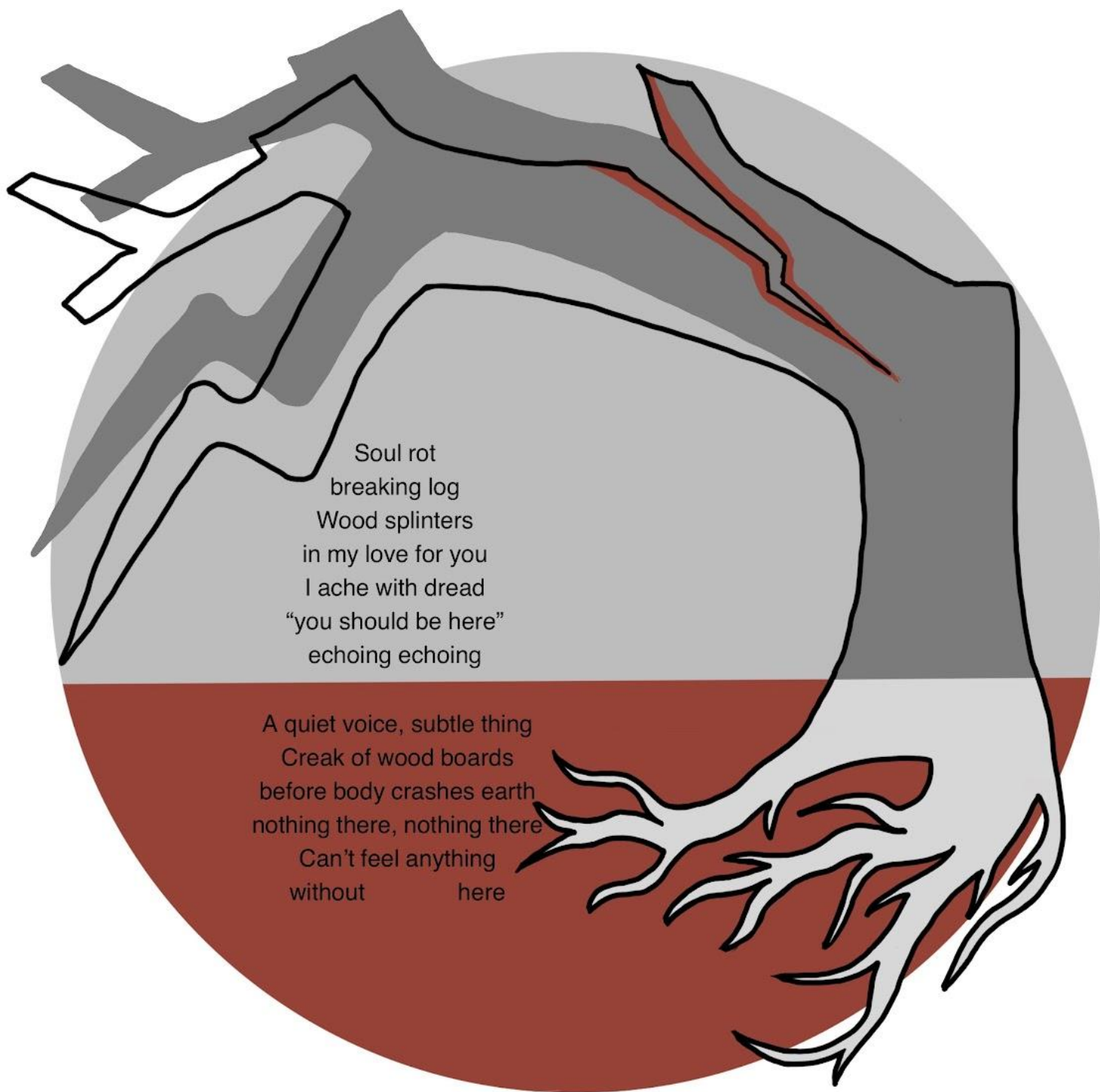




Reach your roots to me sweet one  
Oak trunk stead fast yet needing  
I will be your mycelium  
Tiny friendly mushroom spore  
Spread into your center  
I will share my nutrients

I kiss your gnarls  
& I'll fruit  
Tenderly, upon your roots





Soul rot  
breaking log  
Wood splinters  
in my love for you  
I ache with dread  
"you should be here"  
echoing echoing

A quiet voice, subtle thing  
Creak of wood boards  
before body crashes earth  
nothing there, nothing there  
Can't feel anything  
without here

We touch, your fingers trace me  
Pleasantness, like a memory  
deep within my skin

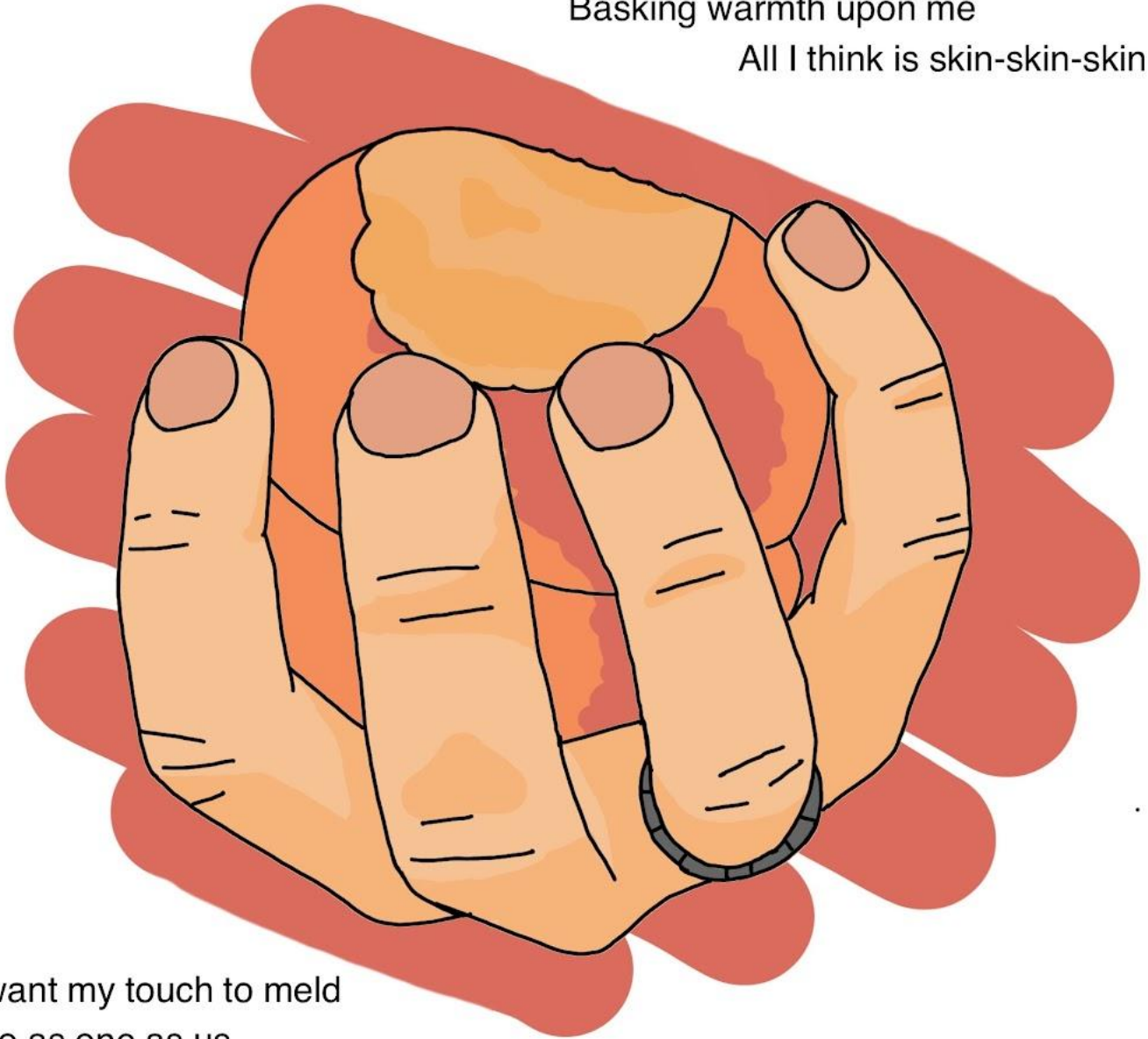
Sweetness of a peach

Juices flow from chin

Content in the summer sun

Basking warmth upon me

All I think is skin-skin-skin



I want my touch to meld  
two as one as us

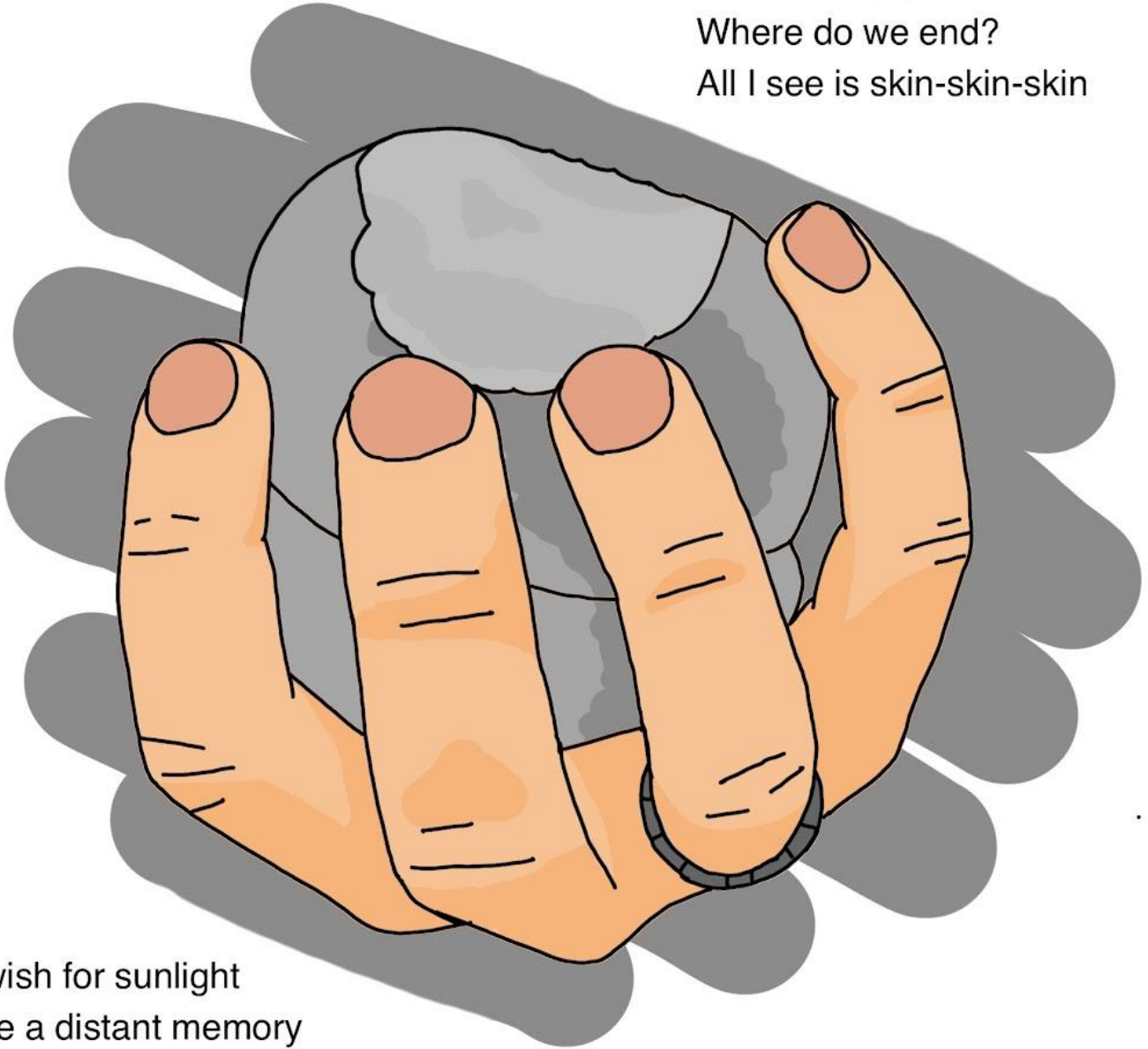
Not inside your skin, but one with  
Mesmerized, enthralled

My heart rhythms yours  
My breath is what I hear

from you, from me  
Where do I begin?

Where do I begin?  
Our body melded  
Skin contorting,  
as I stretch,  
arm reaching,  
before skin snaps back

I breathe for air  
Only to find yours  
and I wonder,  
Where do we end?  
All I see is skin-skin-skin



I wish for sunlight  
like a distant memory

Of a sweet peach  
I wanted badly

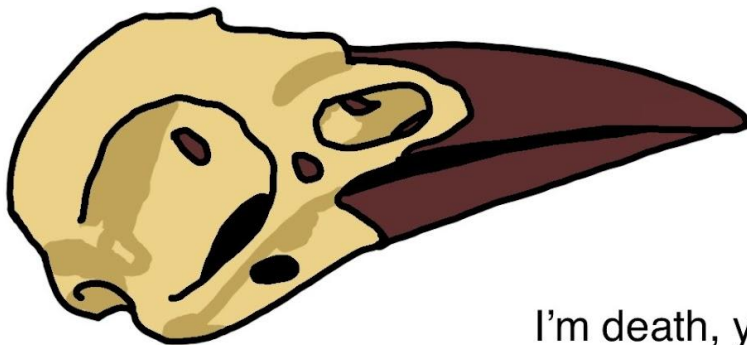
I eat one in the winter  
Flavorless & full of flesh

Fingers hold it, us,  
close and sticky

My love is  
the sweetest kiss  
the breath of life  
the fullest lip  
all the colors of the earth  
will give your skin its tint



Oh, I rot in wanting  
aching flesh for feast  
Please don't turn away  
Grow full on decaying beast



I'm death, your devoted  
Ask of me & I'll give  
The ash from my rose veins  
will make a hearty loam  
and when you reap your harvest,  
My blood love shall find its home

Dedicated to my muse, my editor, & my illustrator  
Dylan.

As well as Austin, Emma, & Jules.

Inspired by:

Alok Vmenon -

["CONFESSIONAL"](#)

Emily Dickinson -

["Hope" is a thing with feathers](#)

[Her breast is fit for pearls](#)

[Because I could not stop for Death](#)

Chinaka Hodge -

Jordan Davis' *broken ghazal*

notes for Smoke before he meets father