



Too many to count

Would anybody want them?

Or, if she was going to be honest with herself, what she was really wondering was... would anybody accept them from someone nobody would believe?

They were increasing in number. Too many to count.

When she first encountered them, she wasn't even sure they were seeds. They appeared under the tree. The weird tree that had grown up back of the barn on that fuzzy August day last summer. Grown and died in one day.

It had ! The tree had grown 40 feet. Feathered out with leaves. Blossomed the awesome, ridiculous flowers and thrown them down to the manure, rich soil. Bore one rank and ponderous fruit. Threw that down too. And died. Then, the fruit burst open and spew its innards out upon the ground; translucent,

tapioca flesh disappearing before her eyes and leaving the seeds behind.

Seeds heavy and darkly threatening like bullets.

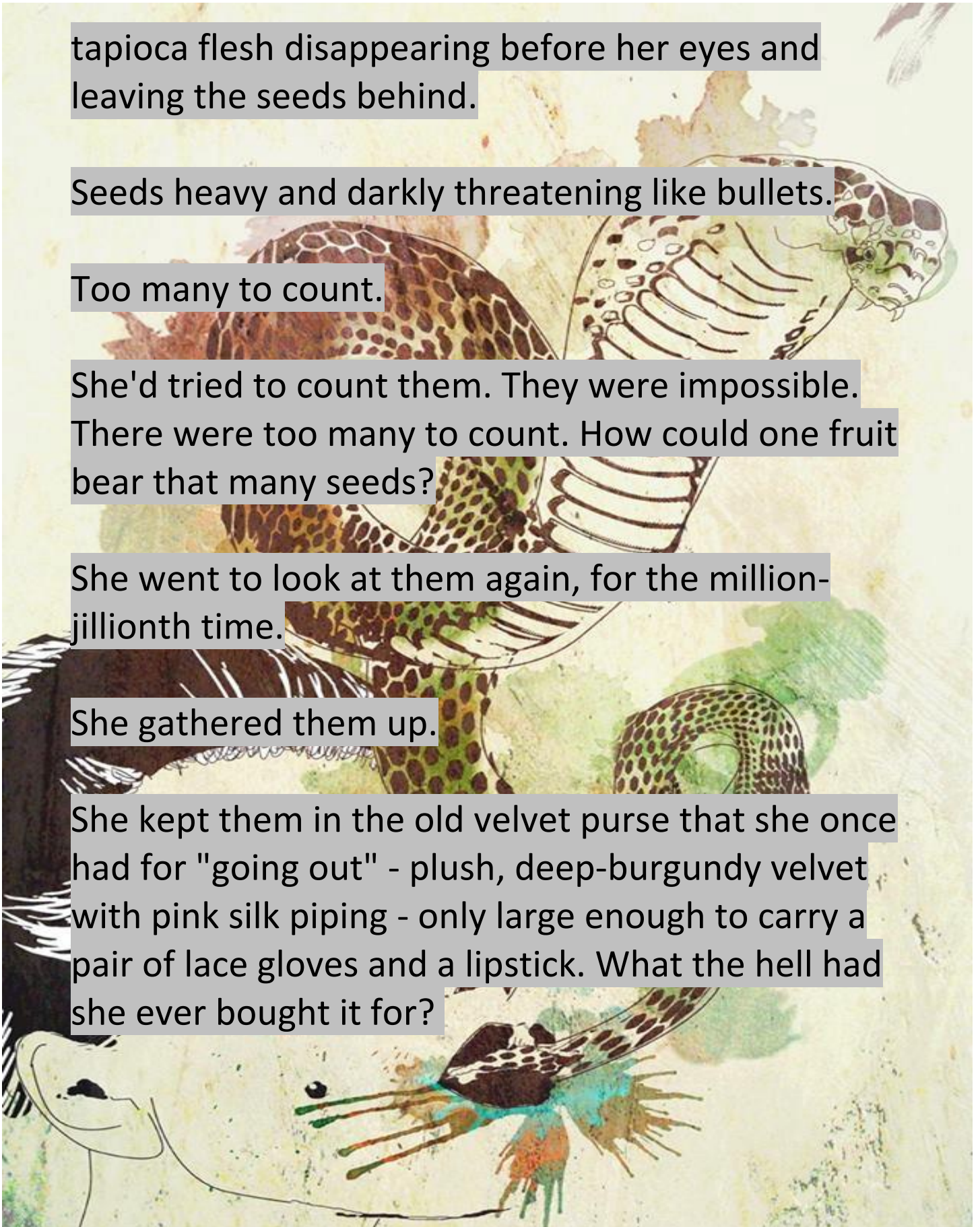
Too many to count.

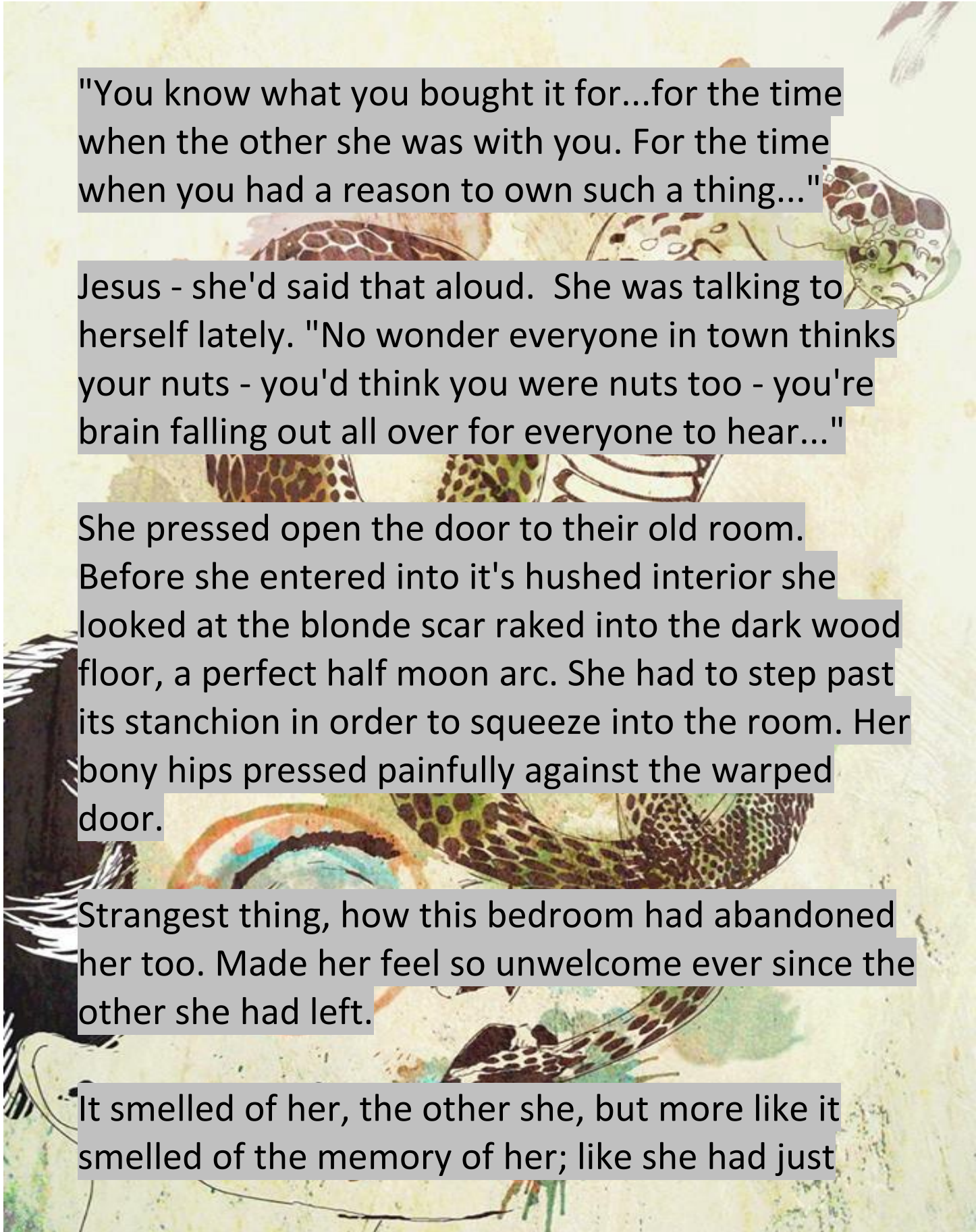
She'd tried to count them. They were impossible. There were too many to count. How could one fruit bear that many seeds?

She went to look at them again, for the million-jillionth time.

She gathered them up.

She kept them in the old velvet purse that she once had for "going out" - plush, deep-burgundy velvet with pink silk piping - only large enough to carry a pair of lace gloves and a lipstick. What the hell had she ever bought it for?





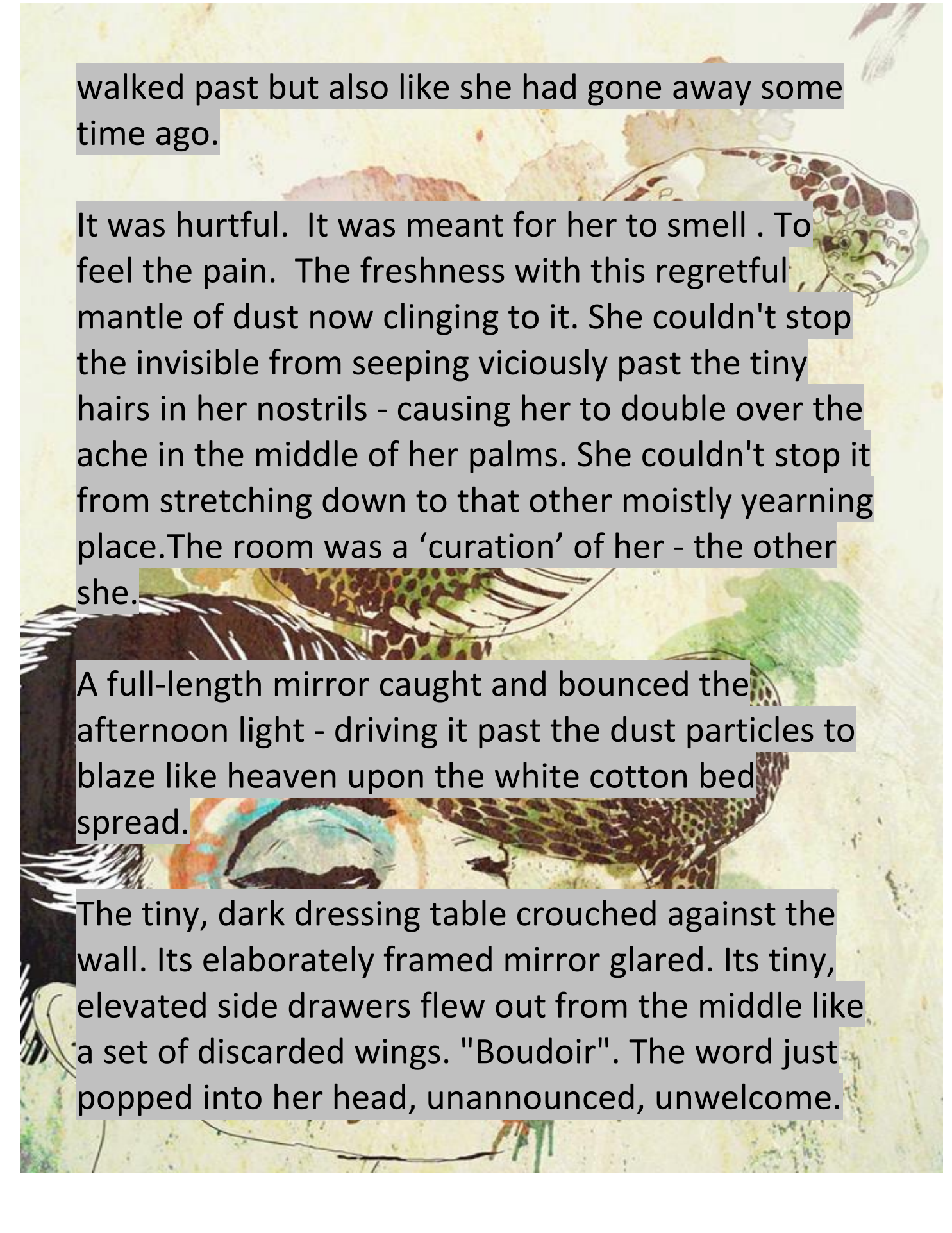
"You know what you bought it for...for the time when the other she was with you. For the time when you had a reason to own such a thing..."

Jesus - she'd said that aloud. She was talking to herself lately. "No wonder everyone in town thinks your nuts - you'd think you were nuts too - you're brain falling out all over for everyone to hear..."

She pressed open the door to their old room. Before she entered into it's hushed interior she looked at the blonde scar raked into the dark wood floor, a perfect half moon arc. She had to step past its stanchion in order to squeeze into the room. Her bony hips pressed painfully against the warped door.

Strangest thing, how this bedroom had abandoned her too. Made her feel so unwelcome ever since the other she had left.

It smelled of her, the other she, but more like it smelled of the memory of her; like she had just

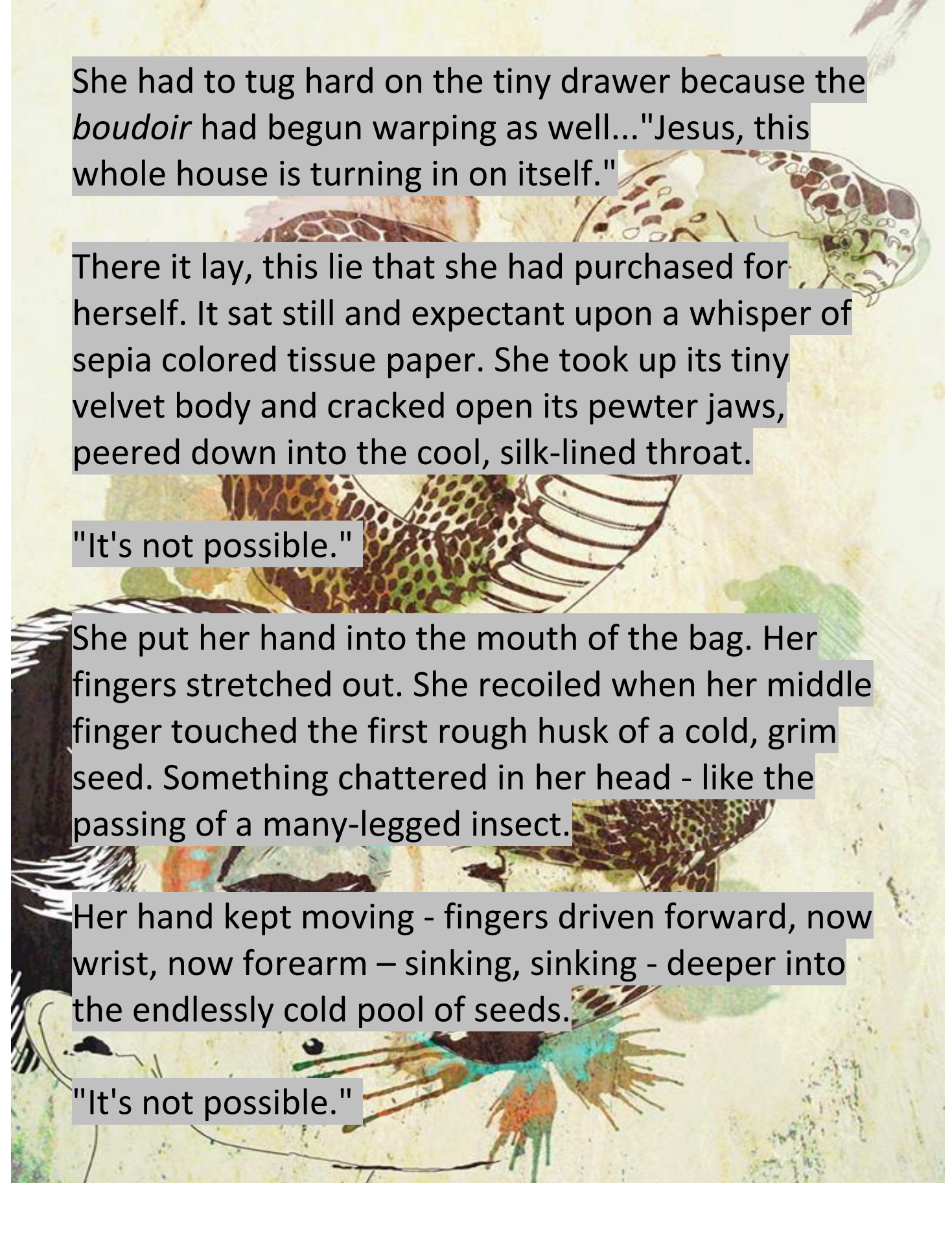


walked past but also like she had gone away some time ago.

It was hurtful. It was meant for her to smell . To feel the pain. The freshness with this regretful mantle of dust now clinging to it. She couldn't stop the invisible from seeping viciously past the tiny hairs in her nostrils - causing her to double over the ache in the middle of her palms. She couldn't stop it from stretching down to that other moistly yearning place. The room was a 'curation' of her - the other she.

A full-length mirror caught and bounced the afternoon light - driving it past the dust particles to blaze like heaven upon the white cotton bed spread.

The tiny, dark dressing table crouched against the wall. Its elaborately framed mirror glared. Its tiny, elevated side drawers flew out from the middle like a set of discarded wings. "Boudoir". The word just popped into her head, unannounced, unwelcome.



She had to tug hard on the tiny drawer because the *boudoir* had begun warping as well..."Jesus, this whole house is turning in on itself."

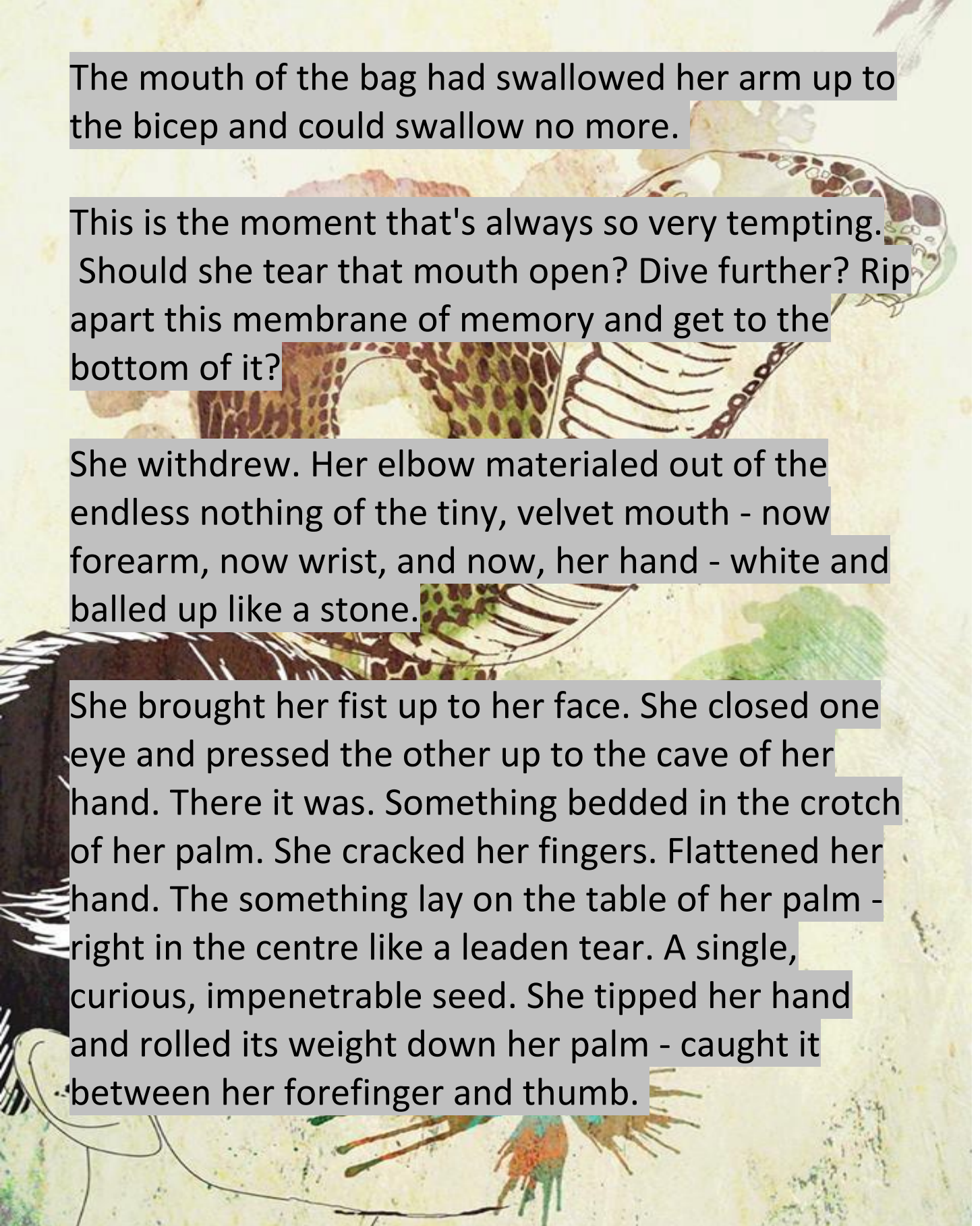
There it lay, this lie that she had purchased for herself. It sat still and expectant upon a whisper of sepia colored tissue paper. She took up its tiny velvet body and cracked open its pewter jaws, peered down into the cool, silk-lined throat.

"It's not possible."

She put her hand into the mouth of the bag. Her fingers stretched out. She recoiled when her middle finger touched the first rough husk of a cold, grim seed. Something chattered in her head - like the passing of a many-legged insect.

Her hand kept moving - fingers driven forward, now wrist, now forearm - sinking, sinking - deeper into the endlessly cold pool of seeds.

"It's not possible."



The mouth of the bag had swallowed her arm up to the bicep and could swallow no more.

This is the moment that's always so very tempting. Should she tear that mouth open? Dive further? Rip apart this membrane of memory and get to the bottom of it?

She withdrew. Her elbow materialized out of the endless nothing of the tiny, velvet mouth - now forearm, now wrist, and now, her hand - white and balled up like a stone.

She brought her fist up to her face. She closed one eye and pressed the other up to the cave of her hand. There it was. Something bedded in the crotch of her palm. She cracked her fingers. Flattened her hand. The something lay on the table of her palm - right in the centre like a leaden tear. A single, curious, impenetrable seed. She tipped her hand and rolled its weight down her palm - caught it between her forefinger and thumb.

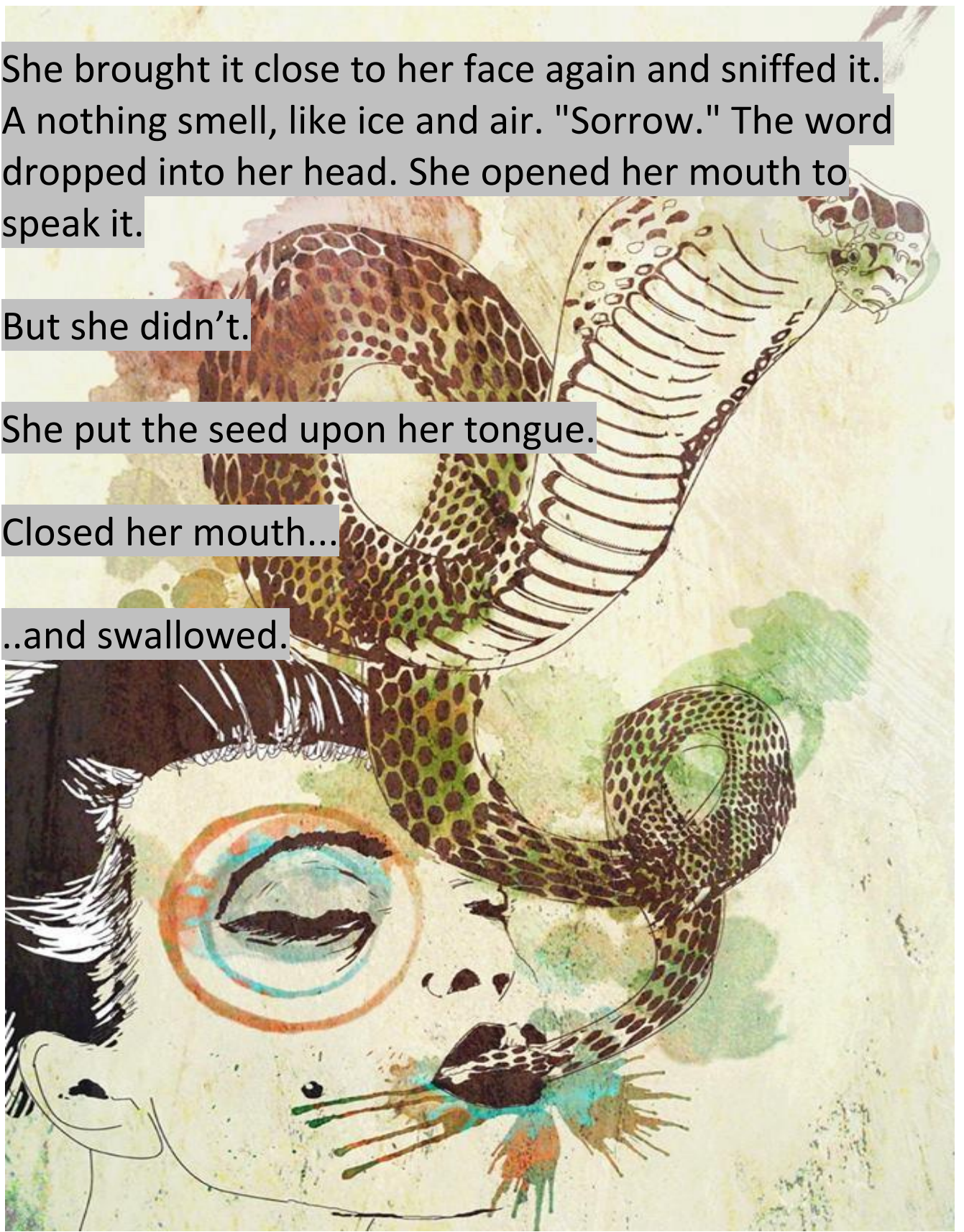
She brought it close to her face again and sniffed it. A nothing smell, like ice and air. "Sorrow." The word dropped into her head. She opened her mouth to speak it.

But she didn't.

She put the seed upon her tongue.

Closed her mouth...

..and swallowed.



Graphic by Ivan Amadeus Anderson

