

# THE INVISIBLE STRING

CHIWENDU OKECHUKWU GR 9

THE STRING TO LIFE FEELS WEAK AND THIN,

AN INVISIBLE STRING BENEATH MY SKIN.

IT HOLDS ME HERE, YET SLIPS AWAY,

AND LEAVES ME LOST ALMOST EVERY DAY.

THIS INVISIBLE STRING IT PULLS SO TIGHT,

THEN DISAPPEARS WITHIN THE NIGHT.

IT BINDS ME NOT WITH CHAIN OR ROPE,

BUT THREADS THROUGH EVERY STRING OF HOPE.

I REACH FOR SOMETHING I CAN'T SEE,

A LIFELINE STRETCHED TOO FAR TO SEEK.

EACH STEP I TAKE, IT PULLS ME AWAY,

THIS INVISIBLE STRING DECIDES MY WAY.

THOUGH I TRIED, IT JUST WON'T BREAK,

AS HOPES AND DREAMS BEGIN TO SHAKE.

STILL DEEP INSIDE, THERE'S SOME SMALL THING

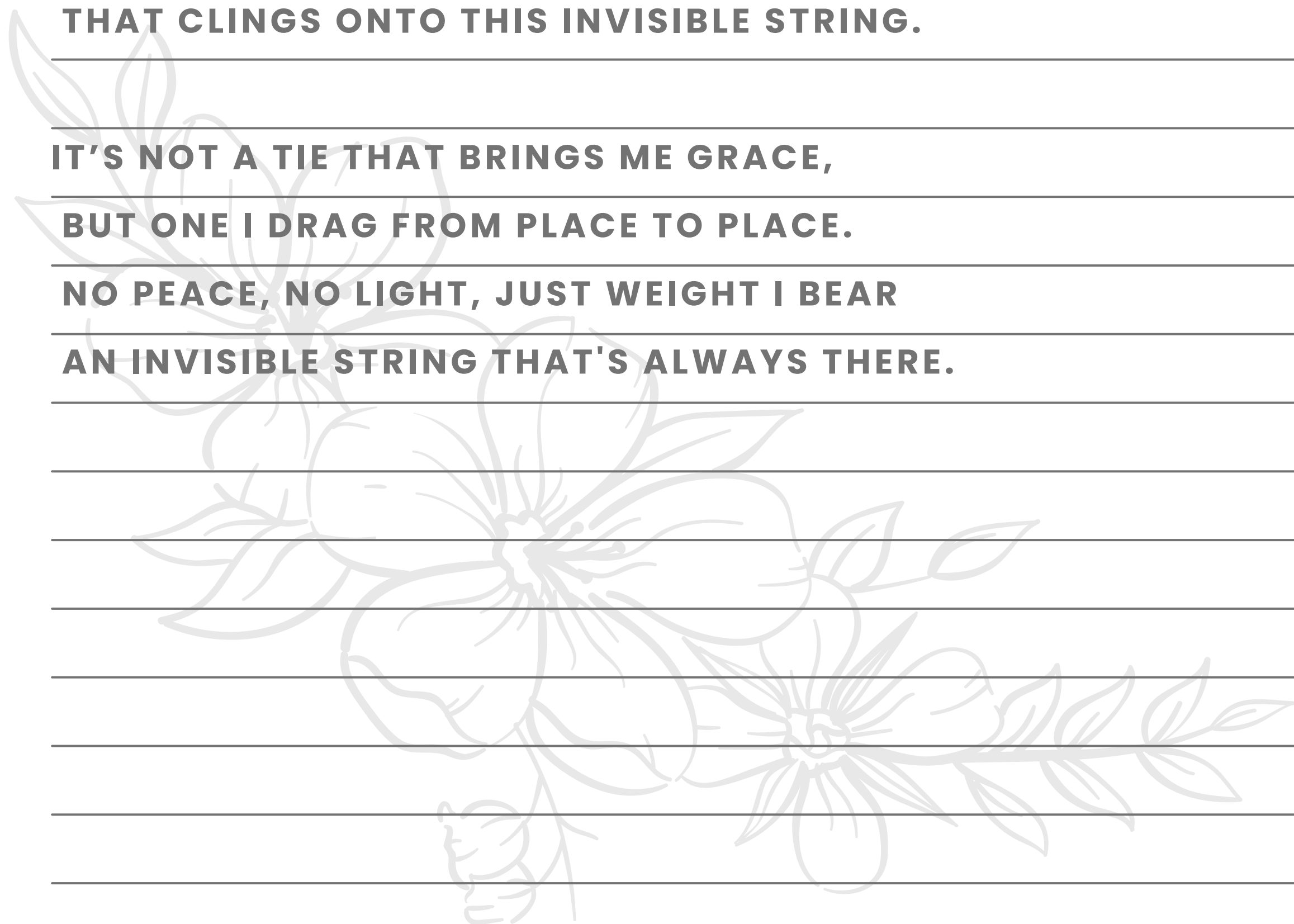
THAT CLINGS ONTO THIS INVISIBLE STRING.

IT'S NOT A TIE THAT BRINGS ME GRACE,

BUT ONE I DRAG FROM PLACE TO PLACE.

NO PEACE, NO LIGHT, JUST WEIGHT I BEAR

AN INVISIBLE STRING THAT'S ALWAYS THERE.



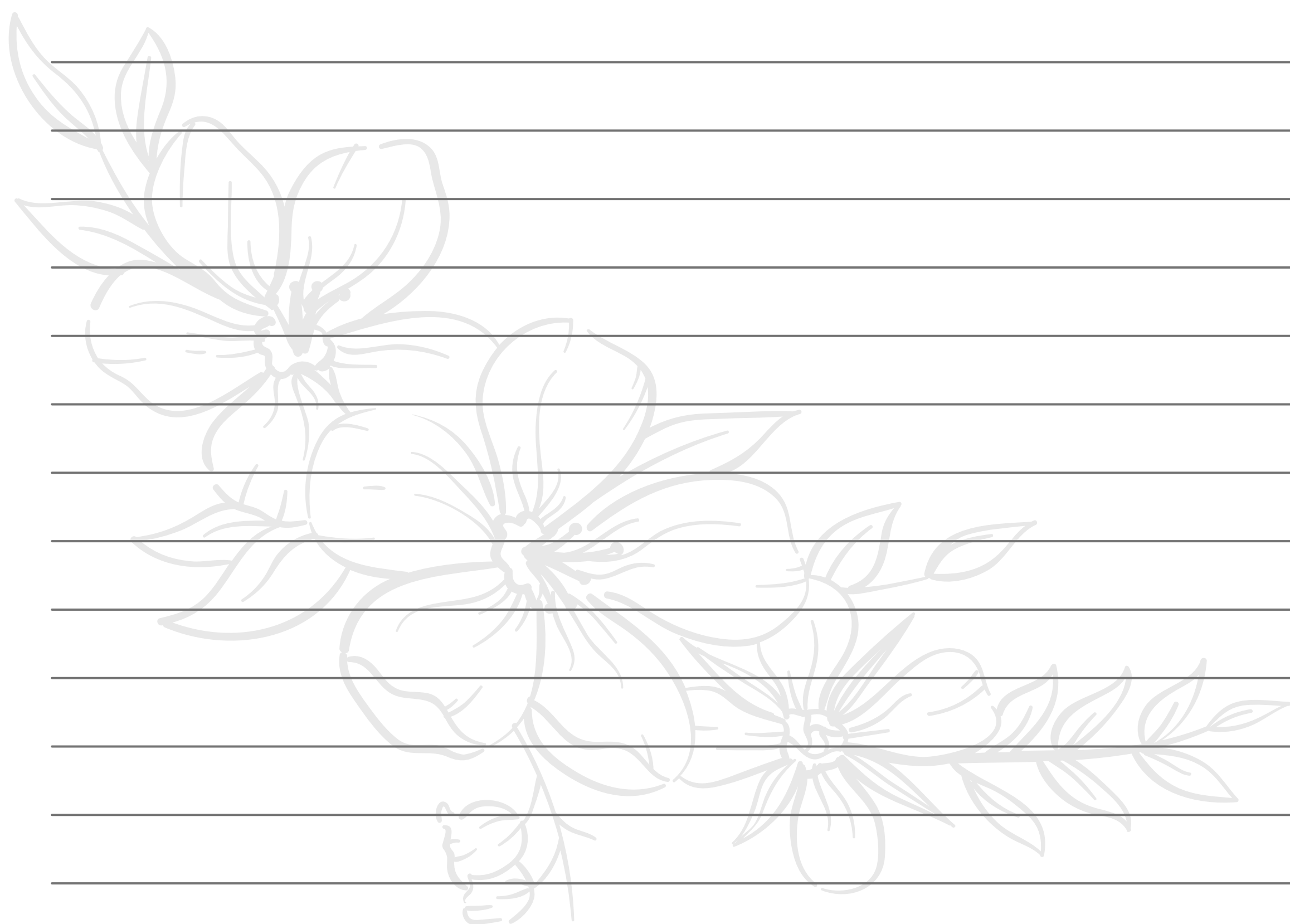
# PULLED BY FATE

EMMA REIBELING GR 9

I SIT AT MY DESK, ADMIRING YOUR BEAUTY FROM AFAR. I WOULDN'T DARE TRYING TO TALK TO YOU, BUT I FEEL LIKE I SHOULD. LIKE A STRING PULLING US CLOSER AND CLOSER. I'M THE ONLY GIRL WHO YOU DON'T TALK TO, MAYBE I'M NOT THE ONE.

I STAND BY MY BUDDY, BUT CAN'T CONTROL MY HEART AS I'M BEING STARED AT LIKE THAT. I HOPE YOU FIND THE COURAGE TO TALK TO ME ONE DAY, BECAUSE I CAN'T. BUT I FEEL LIKE I'M BEING PULLED TOWARDS YOU, LIKE A STRING ATTACHED TO US BY FATE.

BUT IT'S BETTER IF REALITY CUT THAT STRING.



# THE INVISIBLE STRING

## SPHESIHLE HLUBI GR 9

AN INVISIBLE STRING BINDS ME TO YOU.

A THREAD OF SHARED PAINS,

OF STRUGGLES TRUE,

OF COMMON ROOTS IN OUR VEINS.

TOGETHER TRAPPED IN DARKNESS,

UNWANTED, UNWORTHY, UNREAL.

A WEIGHTED SORROW IS ALL WE FEEL.

BOUND TO OUR WEAKNESS.

YOU BEGIN TO FORGE YOUR WAY.

A GOLDEN THREAD OF LIBERTY,

SETTING YOU FREE,

BUT STUCK IN THE SHADOWS I STAY.

AN INVISIBLE STRING BINDS ME TO YOU.

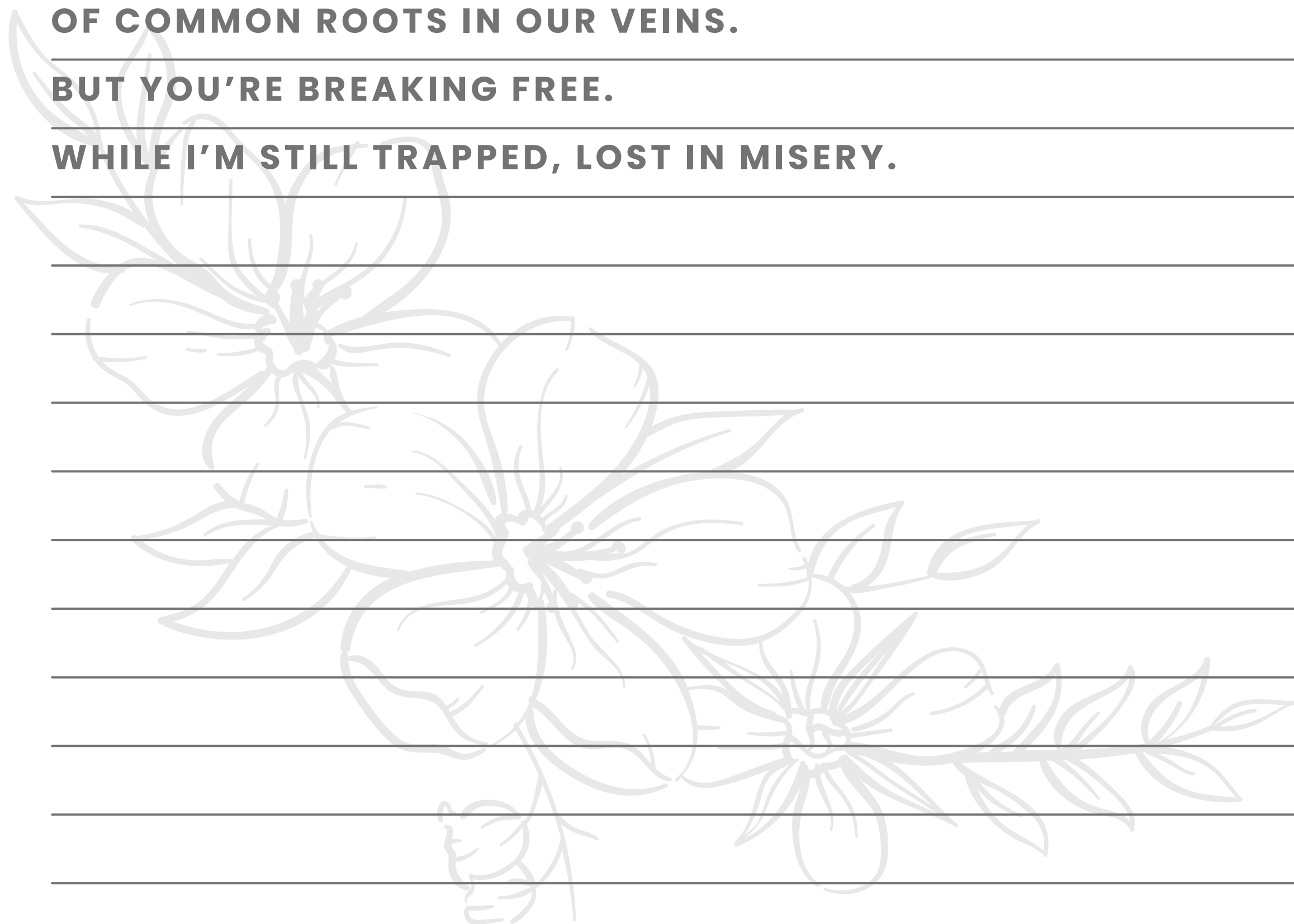
A THREAD OF SHARED PAINS,

OF STRUGGLES TRUE,

OF COMMON ROOTS IN OUR VEINS.

BUT YOU'RE BREAKING FREE.

WHILE I'M STILL TRAPPED, LOST IN MISERY.



# ADDICTION

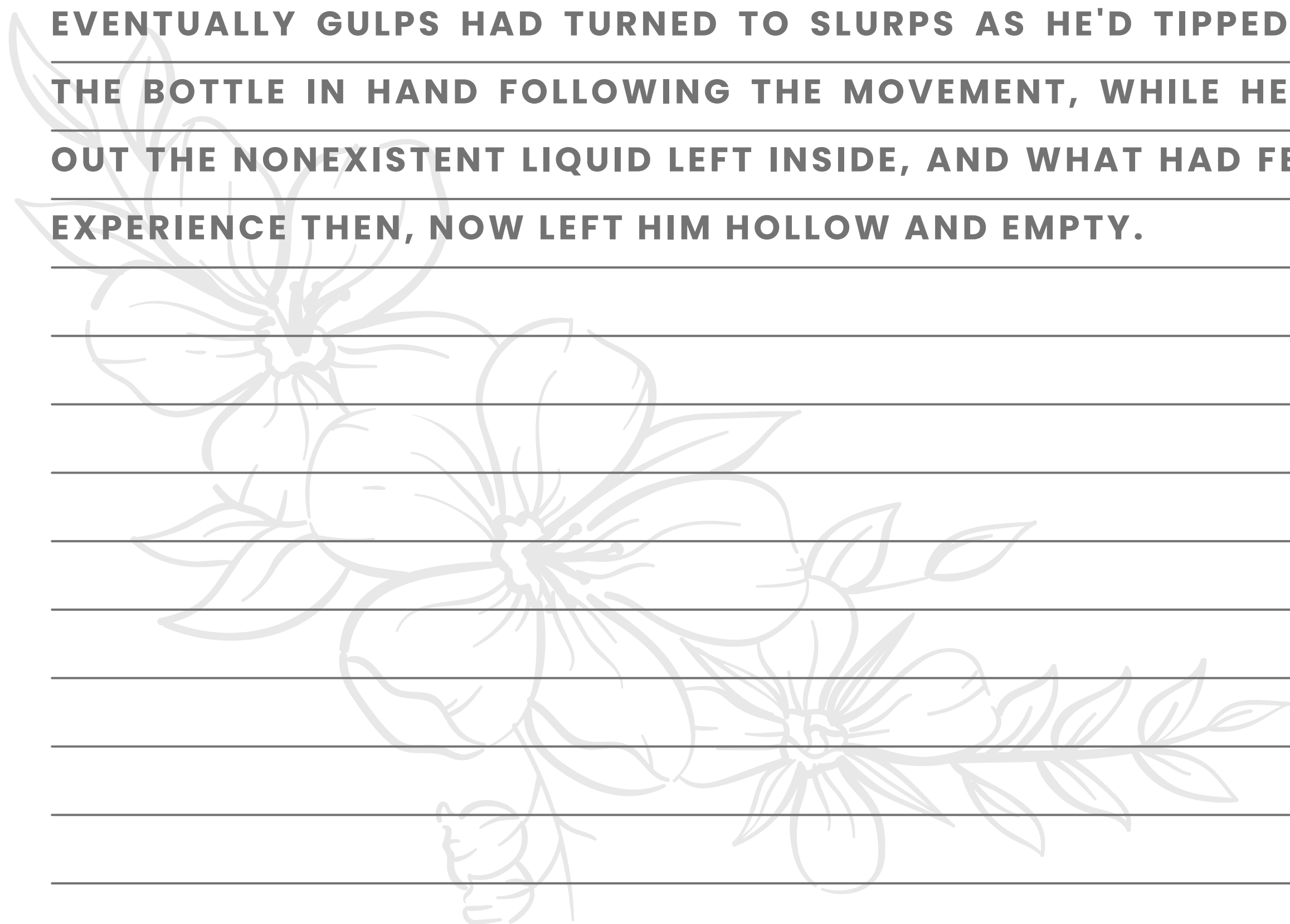
PHENYO MOSENAMI GR 11

THERE'S NOTHING QUITE LIKE IT, THE UNMATCHED CONNECTION ONE SHARES TO SOMETHING THEY FEEL DRAWN TO. WHEN ONE GAZE CAN CAUSE THE PERSON'S EMOTIONS TO USURP THEIR WHOLE BEING. WHEN IT FEELS AS THOUGH TIME ITSELF STOPS TO OBSERVE HOW THAT SPECIFIC ENCOUNTER WOULD PLAY OUT, AND GRAVITY SEEMS TO FAIL AT IT'S ONLY PURPOSE, OR AT LEAST THAT'S HOW HE'D FELT IN THAT MOMENT- FROZEN IN TIME AND RENDERED BREATHLESS AT THE SIGHT BEFORE HIM.

HE HAD TRIED TO IGNORE IT , BUT COULDN'T. HE SWEARS IT GLINTED AT HIM, THAT IT PULLED AT HIM, THAT IF IT HADN'T HE WOULD'VE WENT ABOUT HIS DAY LIKE AN UNSATISFIED BEAST, BUT AT LEAST HE WOULDN'T HAVE SURRENDERED TO THE NOW EMPTY BOTTLE BESIDE HIM.

EACH GULP HAD SOOTHED IT'S WAY DOWN HIS THROAT, AS A SENSE OF FAMILIARITY HAD ENVELOPED HIM. EACH DROP, MORE REFRESHING THAN THE LAST, AND WHILE HE KNEW THAT ALL GOOD THINGS CAME TO AN END, HE COULDN'T HELP BUT CLING TO THE BELIEF THAT THIS FEELING WOULDN'T.

EVENTUALLY GULPS HAD TURNED TO SLURPS AS HE'D TIPPED HIS HEAD BACK, THE BOTTLE IN HAND FOLLOWING THE MOVEMENT, WHILE HE TRIED TO EMPTY OUT THE NONEXISTENT LIQUID LEFT INSIDE, AND WHAT HAD FELT LIKE A FILLING EXPERIENCE THEN, NOW LEFT HIM HOLLOW AND EMPTY.



# THE INVISIBLE STRING THEORY

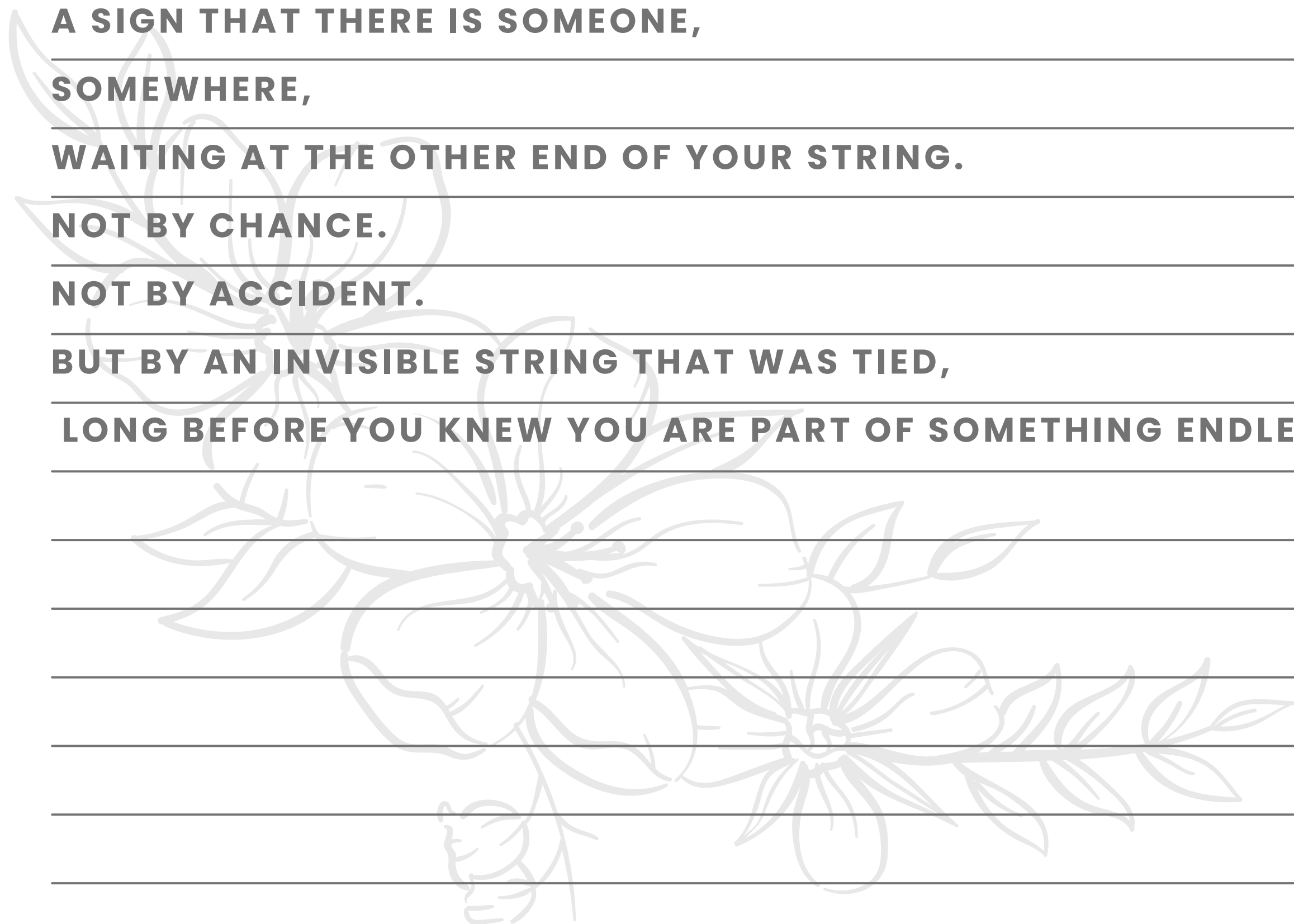
MIEKE ROTHMAN GR 9

THEY SAY THERE IS A STRING,  
CREATED FROM SOMEWHERE BEYOND OUR KNOWLEDGE,  
TYING ONE SOUL TO ANOTHER.  
IT IS NOT CRAFTED OUT OF WOOL OR SILK,  
BUT OF FATE.

NO MATTER HOW FAR TWO PEOPLE WANDER,  
THE STRING HOLDS.  
IT TANGLES THROUGH TIME,  
THROUGH MISSED OPPORTUNITIES,  
THROUGH DESPERATION AND THE HEARTS DESIRE,  
THROUGH STORMS AND SILENCES.

SOMETIMES IT TUGS AT THE EDGES OF YOUR SOUL  
IT DOES NOT WITHER AWAY.  
IT DOES NOT SNAP.

BUT IT'S ALWAYS THERE  
A SIGN THAT THERE IS SOMEONE,  
SOMEWHERE,  
WAITING AT THE OTHER END OF YOUR STRING.  
NOT BY CHANCE.  
NOT BY ACCIDENT.  
BUT BY AN INVISIBLE STRING THAT WAS TIED,  
LONG BEFORE YOU KNEW YOU ARE PART OF SOMETHING ENDLESS.



# THE INVISIBLE STRINGS

CHIDI OKECHUKWU GR 11

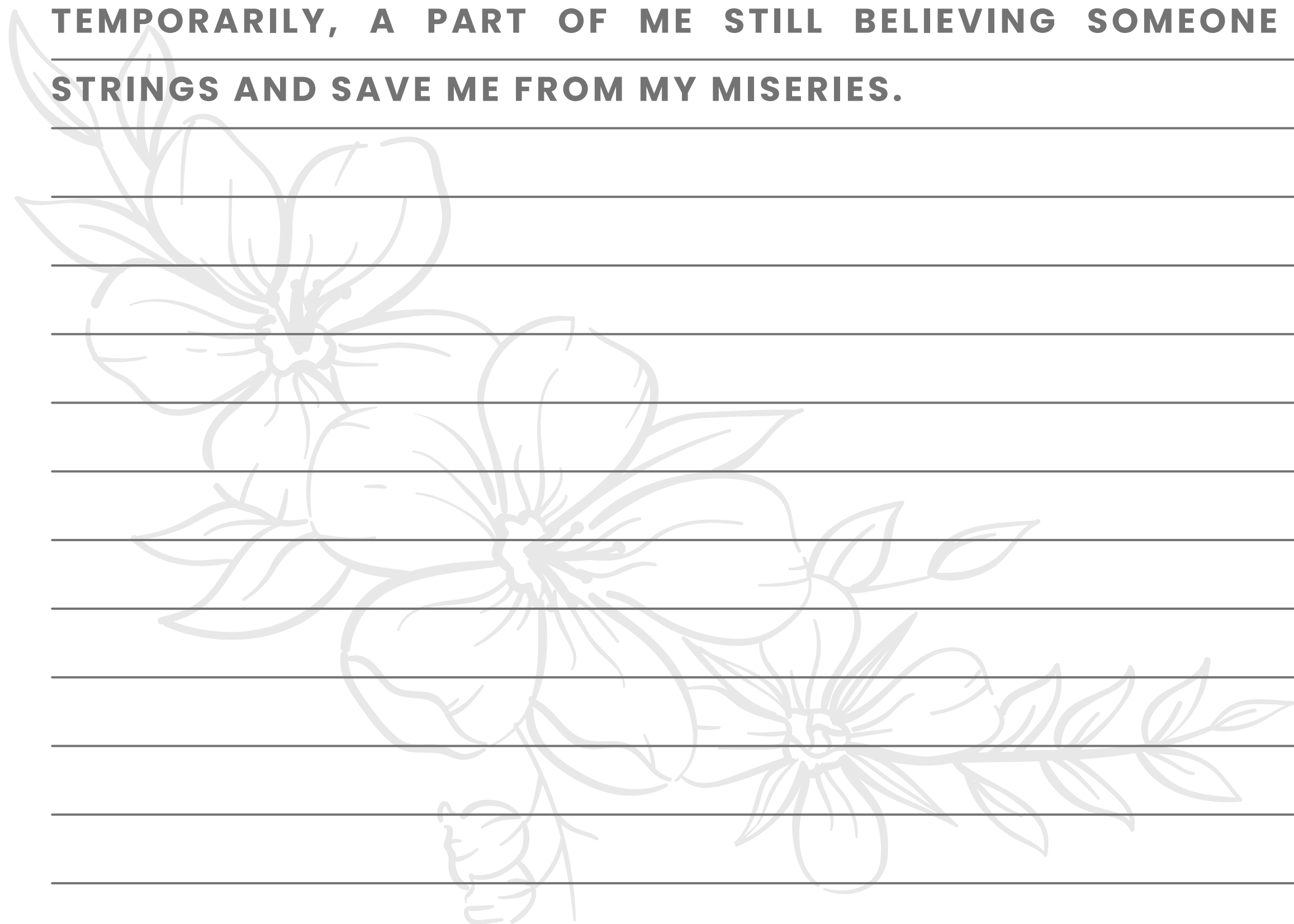
"THE ONLY THING MORE EXHAUSTING THAN BEING DEPRESSED IS PRETENDING THAT YOU'RE NOT"

I SIT ON MY BEDROOM FLOOR, MY BACK AGAINST THE WALL, KNEES PULLED TO MY CHEST. AND THE STRINGS ARE THERE AGAIN. IT'S ALWAYS THERE. THE THIN, TIGHT WIRES WRAPPING AROUND MY WRISTS, MY LEGS, MY THROAT. BUT NO ONE ELSE SEES THEM.

ALL MY FAILURES, DISAPPOINTMENTS AND NOT BEING ENOUGH, MAKES THE STRINGS TIGHTER AND STRONGER, LIKE ADDING FUEL TO THE FIRE. I ALWAYS WEAR A MASK, I LAUGH WITH MY FRIENDS, I ACT AS IF EVERYTHING IS ALRIGHT. BUT THE STRINGS PULL TIGHTER WITH EVERY "I'M FINE" THAT TASTES LIKE A LIE IN MY MOUTH.

THE WORLD MOVES IN BRIGHT COLOURS OUTSIDE MY WINDOW, WHILE I SIT IN THIS QUIET, GREY SPACE, TRAPPED IN WHAT NO ONE ELSE CAN SEE.

THE STRINGS DON'T KILL ME. THEY JUST MAKE LIVING MORE DIFFICULT. BUT THE PAIN IS TOO MUCH TO HANDLE. BUT THE PROBLEM MIGHT JUST BE TEMPORARILY, A PART OF ME STILL BELIEVING SOMEONE WILL SEE THESE STRINGS AND SAVE ME FROM MY MISERIES.



# MY BEST FRIEND

## HASSAANAH SOOLIMAN GR 11

THEY SAY THE UNIVERSE IS STITCHED TOGETHER BY INVISIBLE STRINGS-  
THREADS SO FINE THEY EVADE THE EYE, YET STRONG ENOUGH TO PULL SOULS  
ACROSS SPACE AND TIME. SOME CALL IT FATE. OTHERS CALL IT COINCIDENCE. I  
CALL IT YOU.

I DON'T KNOW HOW OR WHY, BUT YOU AND I WERE ALWAYS ORBITING THE  
SAME WORLD, JUST SLIGHTLY OUT OF SYNC. TWO STORIES BEING WRITTEN IN  
THE SAME SETTING, BUT ON DIFFERENT PAGES. THE SAME THOUGHTS, MIRRORED  
IN TWO DIFFERENT MINDS .YOU SAT TWO SEATS AWAY IN PRESCHOOL. YOU  
WERE THERE IN MY EARLIEST MEMORIES, JUST OUT OF REACH, LIKE A WHISPER I  
COULD NEVER QUITE CATCH.YOU WERE TO ME JUST A FAMILIAR NAME,AND I  
WAS TO YOU A FACE THAT EXISTED SOMEWHERE IN THE BACKGROUND OF A OLD  
MEMORY.WE LAUGHED WITH THE SAME FRIENDS. SHOPPED AT THE SAME  
STORES. LIVED IN THE SAME SMALL TOWN. AND YET, SOMEHOW, OUR LIVES  
NEVER TOUCHED. WE ORBITED THE SAME SUN, BUT NEVER COLLIDED.

YEARS PASSED-QUIETLY, LIKE AUTUMN LEAVES DRIFTING PAST ONE ANOTHER  
ON THE SAME WIND. WE MUST'VE PASSED EACH OTHER A HUNDRED TIMES-  
BRUSHED SHOULDERS IN CORRIDORS, STOOD AN AISLE AWAY IN THE GROCERY  
STORE, LAUGHED FROM OPPOSITE ENDS OF THE SAME ROOM. ALWAYS  
CLOSE,YET OUT OF REACH.

UNTIL NOW.

I'VE ASKED MYSELF SO MANY TIMES WHY NOW,AND WHY NOT ALL THOSE YEARS  
AGO. BUT MAYBE SOME SOULS ARE ONLY MEANT TO FIND EACH OTHER ONLY  
WHEN THEY'RE READY. WHEN THE HEART IS BRUISED ENOUGH TO UNDERSTAND  
GENTLENESS. WHEN THE SOUL IS QUIET ENOUGH TO RECOGNIZE ITS REFLECTION  
AND ECHO OF ITS HEARTBEAT IN ANOTHER.

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PEOPLE TALK ABOUT SOULMATES AS IF THEY'RE RESERVED FOR LOVERS. BUT  
THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF OUR FRIENDSHIP,THE WAY OUR TWO  
HEARTS CAN BEAT TO THE SAME RHYTHM WITHOUT EVER TOUCHING, UNTIL ONE  
DAY THEY DO.

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SOMETIMES, I FEEL AFRAID. NOT OF YOU, BUT OF TIME. OF HOW FRAGILE  
EVERYTHING GOOD CAN FEEL. LIKE WE'VE BEEN GIVEN SOMETHING RARE, BUT  
WITH AN EXPIRY DATE NO ONE CAN READ. BUT THEN I REMEMBER THAT SILENT,  
INVISIBLE THREAD CONNECTING MY HEART TO YOURS. UNSEEN. UNBREAKABLE.  
THE KIND THAT TIE HEARTS TOGETHER ACROSS LIFETIMES.

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IF THE UNIVERSE WAS KIND ENOUGH TO PULL US TOGETHER ONCE, IT WILL DO IT  
AGAIN. AND AGAIN. AND AGAIN.

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I'VE STOPPED BELIEVING IN COINCIDENCES. BECAUSE WE WEREN'T STITCHED  
TOGETHER BY CHANCE,WE WERE WOVEN BY DESTINY.

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SO EVEN IF WE LOSE OUR WAY, EVEN IF THE WORLD CHANGES AND WE DRIFT  
LIKE STARS IN SEPARATE SKIES, I BELIEVE IN THE STRING. I BELIEVE IN THE PULL. I  
BELIEVE IN US.

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YOU DIDN'T ENTER MY LIFE LOUD. A CONVERSATION THAT LASTED A LITTLE  
LONGER THAN EXPECTED. A LAUGH THAT FELT ODDLY FAMILIAR. AND SUDDENLY,  
YOU WERE EVERYWHERE. NOT IN A SUFFOCATING WAY, BUT LIKE SUNLIGHT  
THAT SIMPLY ARRIVES. GENTLE, CONSISTENT, WARM.

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YOU DON'T JUST UNDERSTAND ME. YOU ARE ME.YOU ARE THE POEM MY SOUL  
HAD BEEN WRITING ALL ALONG. WE THINK THE SAME, FEEL THE SAME, DREAM  
THE SAME. IT'S AS THOUGH WE ARE TWO VERSIONS OF THE SAME SOUL-MINE IN  
BOLD, AND YOURS IN CURSIVE. YOU ARE ME IN A DIFFERENT FONT,DIFFERENT  
LETTERS, SAME MESSAGE. YOUR PRESENCE FEELS LIKE DEJA VU AND I NEVER  
FULLY UNDERSTOOD UNTIL NOW. YOU ECHO MY THOUGHTS BEFORE I VOICE  
THEM. YOU SEE THE VERSION OF ME I THOUGHT I'D LOST.

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YOU ARRIVED WHEN THE WORLD FELT LOUD AND I FELT SMALL. WHEN EVERYTHING WAS SLIPPING, YOU WERE STEADY. FOR THE FIRST TIME,I DON'T FEEL ALONE IN MY MIND BECAUSE IN YOUR LAUGHTER,I FOUND MY OWN.

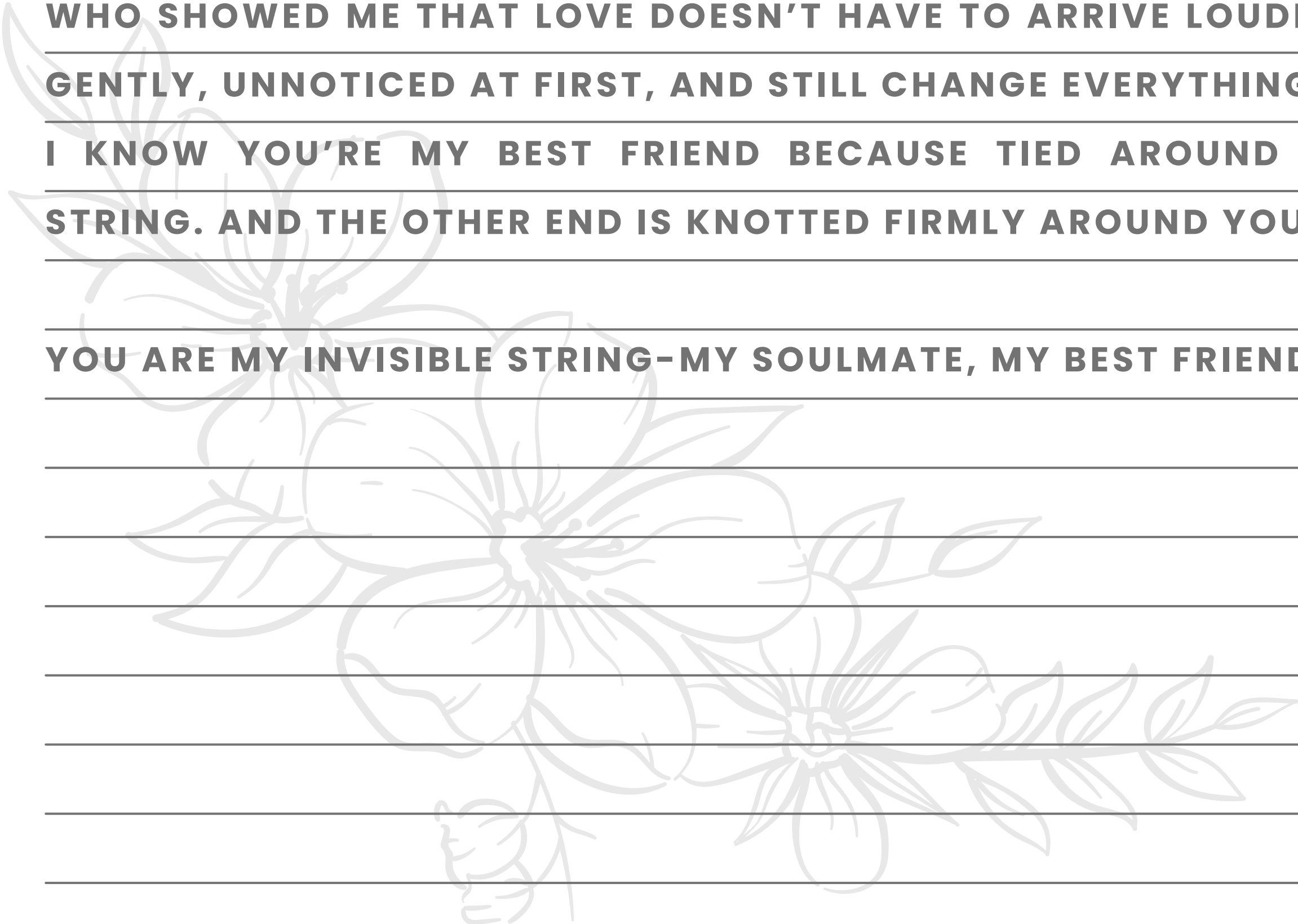
IT'S STRANGE, ISN'T IT? HOW TWO PEOPLE CAN EXIST SIDE BY SIDE FOR SO LONG, UNAWARE THAT THEY WERE MEANT TO FIND EACH OTHER WHEN IT MATTERED MOST. YOU ARE NOT JUST MY FIRST BEST FRIEND. YOU ARE MY FIRST BESTFRIEND . THE KIND OF PERSON POETS TRY TO DESCRIBE AND ALWAYS FALL SHORT. THE KIND OF PERSON THAT MAKES THE WORLD SEEM SOFTER, WARMER, BETTER.

YOU AND I ARE INTERLINKED. OUR THOUGHTS ECHO EACH OTHER. OUR JOKES OVERLAP. WHEN I'M WITH YOU,I DON'T FEEL THE NEED TO HIDE PARTS OF MYSELF TO BE UNDERSTOOD. YOU UNDERSTAND. WITHOUT ASKING. WITHOUT EFFORT.

SO HERE WE ARE. TIED TOGETHER BY A THOUSAND UNSEEN MOMENTS THAT BROUGHT US HERE. YOU, WHO TURNED MY DISBELIEF INTO CERTAINTY. YOU, WHO SHOWED ME THAT LOVE DOESN'T HAVE TO ARRIVE LOUDLY-IT CAN SLIP IN GENTLY, UNNOTICED AT FIRST, AND STILL CHANGE EVERYTHING.

I KNOW YOU'RE MY BEST FRIEND BECAUSE TIED AROUND MY HEART, IS A STRING. AND THE OTHER END IS KNOTTED FIRMLY AROUND YOURS.

YOU ARE MY INVISIBLE STRING-MY SOULMATE, MY BEST FRIEND, MY FOREVER.



# CONNECTED BEYOND WHAT WE SEE

## AMOGELO MONO GR 9

THEY SAY WE ARE ALL CONNECTED BY SOMETHING UNSEEN, SOMETHING  
FRAGILE

YET UNBREAKABLE. A THREAD SO FINE, YOU MIGHT MISS IT IN THE RUSH OF LIFE,  
YET STRONG ENOUGH TO PULL AT YOUR HEART WHEN YOU FEEL ALONE.  
THAT THREAD IS THE “INVISIBLE STRING”

IT CONNECTS MOTHERS TO CHILDREN, FRIENDS ACROSS OCEANS , SOULMATES  
WHO

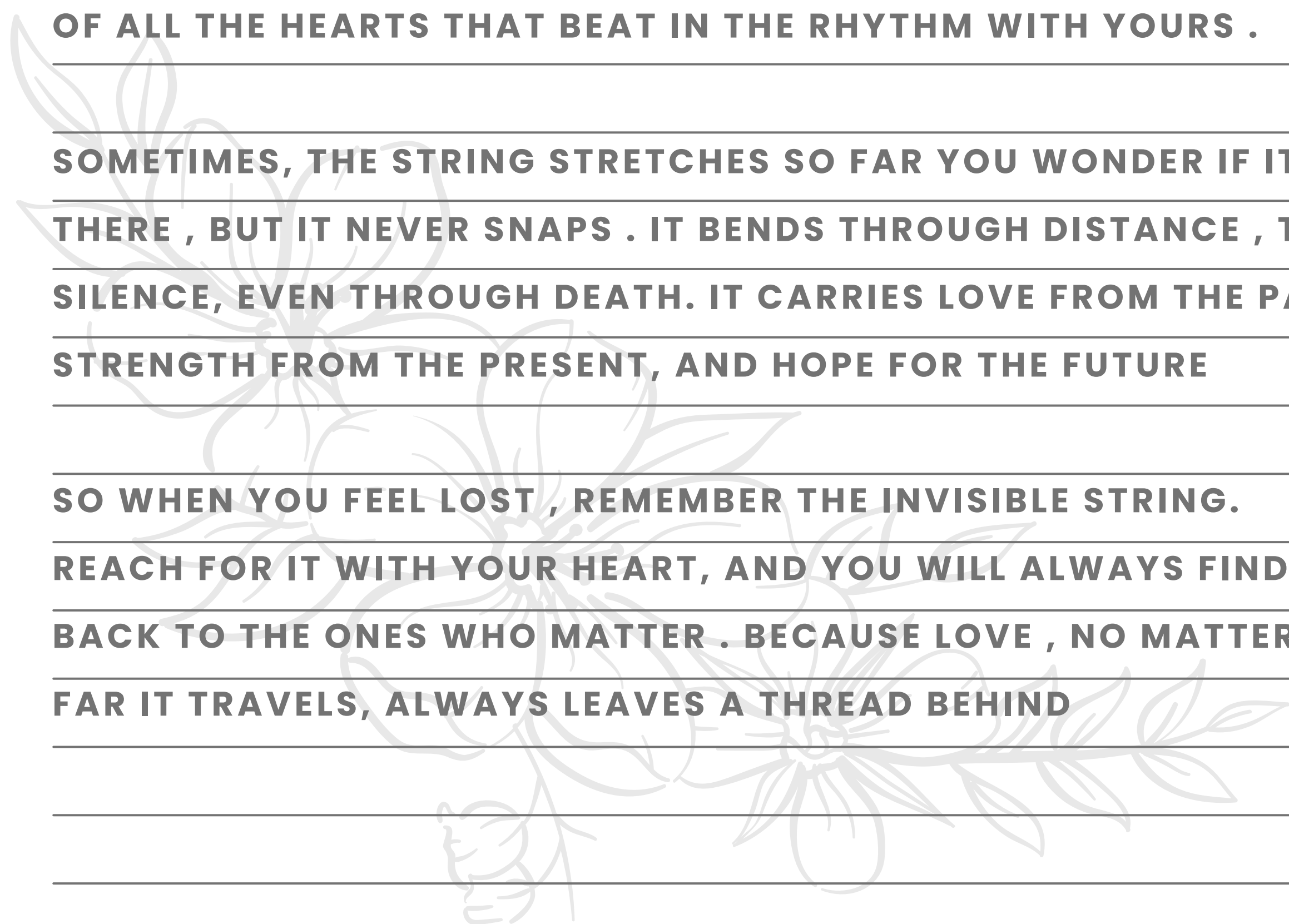
HAVEN'T EVEN MET YET. IT TIES US TO THE PEOPLE WE'VE LOST , AND TO THE  
ONES

WE ARE STILL FINDING. YOU CAN'T SEE IT , BUT YOU FEEL IT , IN A MEMORY , IN A  
SONG, IN A SUDDEN LAUGH THAT ESCAPES YOUR LIPS WHEN YOU THINK OF  
SOMEONE FAR AWAY. THAT'S INVISIBLE STRING, TUGGING GENTLY, REMINDING  
YOU: “YOU ARE NOT ALONE”

WHEN THE WORLD FEELS LOUD AND CHAOTIC, THE INVISIBLE STRING IS  
QUIET AND STEADY. WHEN GOODBYES ARE PAINFUL , IT WHISPERS ,  
“THIS IS NOT THE END.” AND WHEN FEAR CREEPS IN, IT REMINDS YOU  
OF ALL THE HEARTS THAT BEAT IN THE RHYTHM WITH YOURS .

SOMETIMES, THE STRING STRETCHES SO FAR YOU WONDER IF IT'S STILL  
THERE , BUT IT NEVER SNAPS . IT BENDS THROUGH DISTANCE , THROUGH  
SILENCE, EVEN THROUGH DEATH. IT CARRIES LOVE FROM THE PAST,  
STRENGTH FROM THE PRESENT, AND HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

SO WHEN YOU FEEL LOST , REMEMBER THE INVISIBLE STRING.  
REACH FOR IT WITH YOUR HEART, AND YOU WILL ALWAYS FIND YOUR WAY  
BACK TO THE ONES WHO MATTER . BECAUSE LOVE , NO MATTER HOW  
FAR IT TRAVELS, ALWAYS LEAVES A THREAD BEHIND



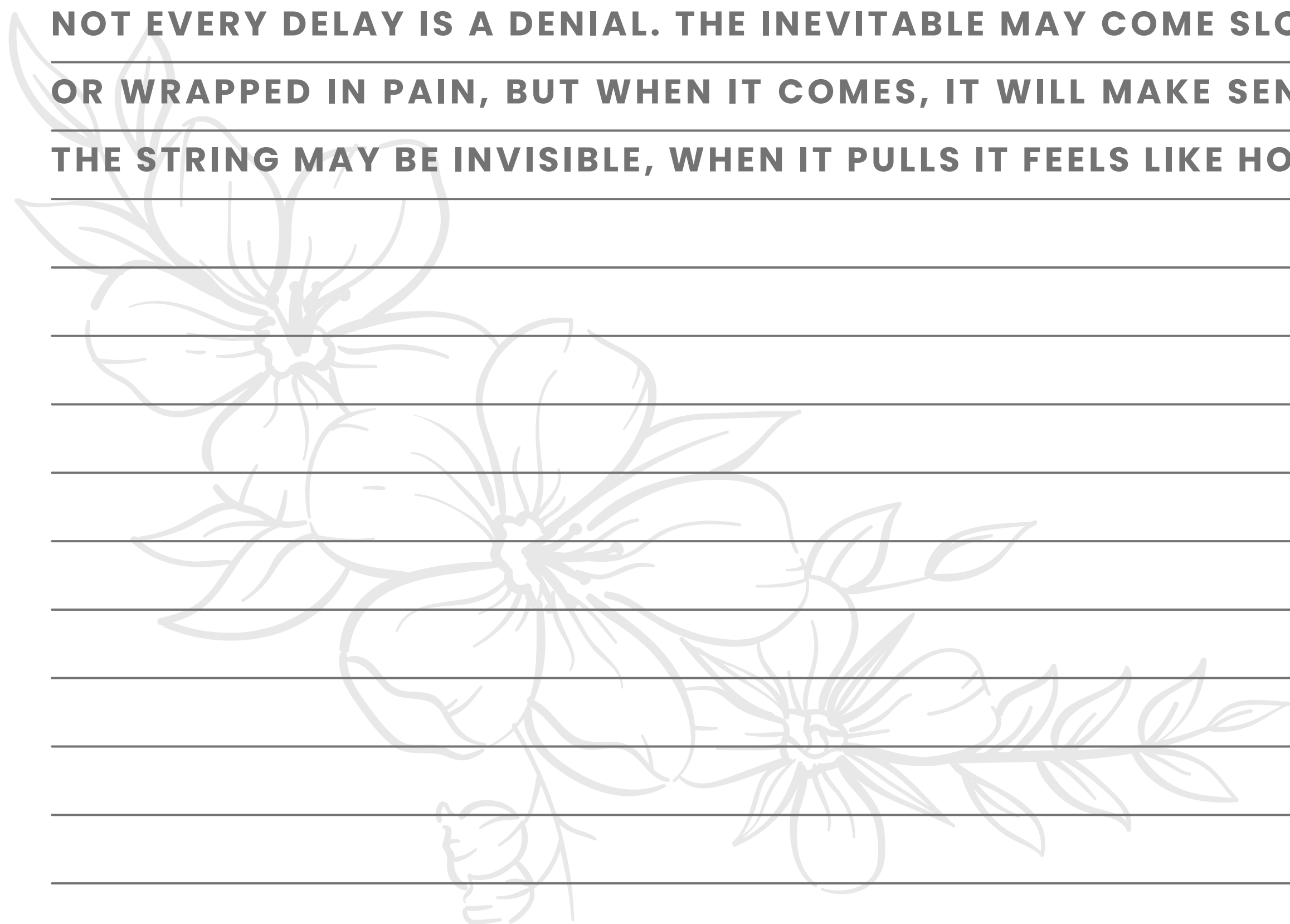
# THE INEVITABLE

## GOMOLEMO MALEPE GR 11

THERE IS A QUIET BELIEF THAT ECHOES BENEATH THE NOISE OF EVERYDAY LIFE A BELIEF IN THE INVISIBLE STRING. IT IS NOT SEEN, ONLY FELT, AND IT TTAPS GENTLY AT THE SOUL, GUIDING PEOPLE, DECISIONS, AND MOMENTS TOWARD SOMETHING THEY WERE ALWAYS MEANT TO MEET: THE INEVITABLE.

THE INVISIBLE STRING REPRESENTS A FORCE THAT BINDS CERTAIN LIVES TOGETHER EVEN WHEN EVERYTHING ELSE TRIES TO PULL THEM APARTIT CONNECTS TWO STRANGERS IN A CROWDED ROOM. IT PULLS CHILDHOOD FRIENDS BACK INTO EACH OTHER'S ORBIT. IT BRINGS BACK MEMORIES WHEN THE HEART IS READY TO RECEIVE THEM AGAIN. AND IT DOES SO NOT BY ACCIDENT, BUT BY DESTINY.THE INEVITABLE IS NOT LOUD. IT DOESN'T KNOCK IT WAITS. IT IS PATIENT AND UNMOVED BY CHALLENGES OR DISTRACTIONS.YOU MAY LEAVE FORGET GROW OR HIDE BUT WHAT IS YOURS BY TRUTH OR FATE WILL FIND YOU AGAIN. THE INVISIBLE STRING MAY STRETCH FOR YEARS BUT IT DOES NOT BREAK. IT WAITS FOR THE RIGHT MOMENT TO PULL.

THERE'S A KIND OF PEACE IN THIS BELIEF. IT QUIETS THE PANIC OF WHAT-IFS. IT REMINDS US THAT NOT EVERYTHING LOST IS MEANT TO BE FORGOTTEN. THAT NOT EVERY DELAY IS A DENIAL. THE INEVITABLE MAY COME SLOWLY, IN SILENCE, OR WRAPPED IN PAIN, BUT WHEN IT COMES, IT WILL MAKE SENSE. AND THOUGH THE STRING MAY BE INVISIBLE, WHEN IT PULLS IT FEELS LIKE HOME.



# TIED TO WHAT I CANNOT TOUCH

AMARIAH JENYA GR 11

I THINK I TEND TO OVERANALYSE THINGS, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO FEELINGS OR EMOTIONS. I DON'T JUST FEEL SOMETHING AND MOVE ON. I BREAK IT DOWN, PICK IT APART, TRY TO MAKE SENSE OF IT LOGICALLY. IT'S LIKE THERE'S A WINDOW BETWEEN ME AND WHATEVER I'M FEELING. I CAN SEE IT, BUT I CAN'T TOUCH IT.

SOMETIMES, I CATCH MYSELF QUESTIONING WHY I FEEL A CERTAIN WAY, IS IT VALID, OR JUST A PHASE? OR WHETHER IT'S JUST A REACTION TO SOMETHING I HAVEN'T FULLY UNDERSTOOD YET. SOMETHING NEW. OTHER TIMES, I FIND MYSELF WONDERING WHY I DON'T FEEL WHAT OTHERS SEEM TO FEEL. IT'S LIKE STANDING IN FRONT OF A MATH PROBLEM FOR THE FIRST TIME, EVERYONE ELSE IS SOLVING IT INSTINCTIVELY, AND I'M STILL STARING AT THE FORMULA, TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THE CONCEPT.

LATELY, I'VE BEGUN TO WONDER IF THERE'S SOMETHING TYING ME TO THESE FEELINGS, EVEN IF I CAN'T ALWAYS REACH THEM. AN UNREACHABLE FORCE, AN INVISIBLE STRING. MAYBE I CAN'T FEEL IT TUGGING AT ME THE WAY OTHERS DO, BUT SOMEWHERE UNDERNEATH THE LOGIC AND ANALYSIS, IT'S STILL THERE.

THE MORE I ANALYSE, THE MORE DISTANT I FEEL FROM THE EMOTION ITSELF. IT'S AS IF I BECOME THE OBSERVER, STANDING BEHIND THE GLASS, WATCHING. EACH TIME I PULL AT THE STRING, TRYING TO BRING THE FEELING CLOSER, TRYING TO MOULD IT INTO SOMETHING I CAN UNDERSTAND, IT STRETCHES THINNER. HARDER TO SEE. HARDER TO HOLD.

MAYBE I'M JUST A LOGICAL PERSON. MAYBE EMOTIONS AREN'T MY STRONG SUIT. I STRUGGLE TO RELATE TO PEOPLE WHO ARE GOVERNED BY THEIR EMOTIONS, WHO FEEL BEFORE THEY THINK. I DON'T GET IT, HOW SOMEONE CAN BE DEVASTATED BY THE DEATH OF A PERSON THEY BARELY KNEW. TO ME, IT DOESN'T REGISTER. IT'S AS IF THE CONNECTION ISN'T STRONG ENOUGH, TO PULL AT ME THE WAY IT DOES FOR THEM.

SOMETIMES I WONDER IF A PART OF ME DID DIE THAT DAY. I DON'T IGNORE EMOTIONS, BUT I DISSECT THEM. ANALYSE THEM TO DEATH. AND IN DOING SO, MAYBE I'M KILLING THE VERY THING I'M TRYING SO HARD TO UNDERSTAND. STILL, THE STRING REMAINS. EVEN IF IT'S FAINT, EVEN IF I CAN'T ALWAYS FEEL IT THE WAY OTHERS DO. EVEN IF ALL I CAN DO IS WATCH FROM A DISTANCE. SOME PART OF ME IS STILL TIED TO SOMETHING MEANINGFUL. SOME PART OF ME STILL REACHES FOR WHAT I CANNOT TOUCH. MAYBE THAT'S ENOUGH.



# INVISIBLE STRINGS

HASSAANAH SOOLIMAN GR 11

THERE ARE STRINGS THAT TIE US TO PEOPLE. INVISIBLE THREADS THAT STRETCH FROM THE HEART, PULLING US GENTLY TOWARD THOSE WHO MATTER. I'VE FELT THEM ALL MY LIFE. SOME THREADS ARE FILLED WITH LAUGHTER, SOME ARE WORN THIN BY TIME, AND OTHERS BREAK SO SILENTLY, YOU DON'T EVEN NOTICE UNTIL SOMETHING INSIDE YOU FEELS COLDER.

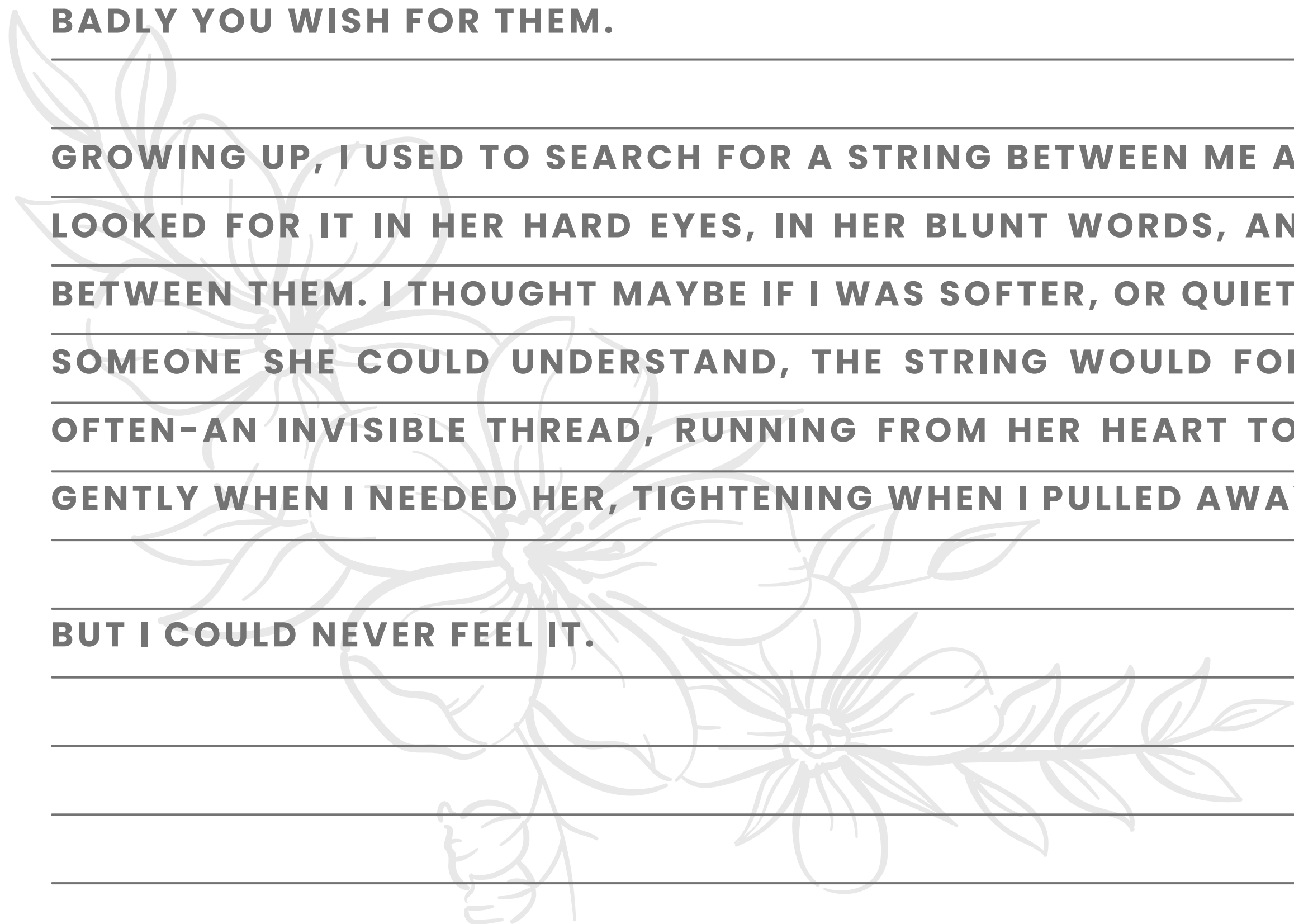
I'VE ALWAYS BELIEVED IN THESE INVISIBLE STRINGS. NOT BECAUSE SOMEONE TAUGHT ME TO, BUT BECAUSE I'VE EXPERIENCED THEIR PULL. THEY EXIST IN THE WAY YOU MISS SOMEONE BEFORE THEY'VE EVEN LEFT. IN HOW YOU AND YOUR FRIEND JUST CONNECT. THEY EXIST IN THE PULL OF BELONGING-AND SOMETIMES, IN THE ACHE OF NOT BELONGING.

THESE STRINGS ARE SUPPOSED TO PULL US TOGETHER, BUT THEY CAN ALSO TEAR US APART.

THE TRUTH IS, INVISIBLE STRINGS DON'T PROMISE TIME. THEY CONNECT US TO PEOPLE FOR MOMENTS OR LIFETIMES. THEY STRETCH ACROSS CITIES AND YEARS AND GOODBYES-BUT THEY ALSO TEAR, AND DISAPPEAR. SOME STRINGS ARE DELICATE. SOME ARE STRONG. SOME WERE NEVER TIED AT ALL, NO MATTER HOW BADLY YOU WISH FOR THEM.

GROWING UP, I USED TO SEARCH FOR A STRING BETWEEN ME AND MY MOTHER. I LOOKED FOR IT IN HER HARD EYES, IN HER BLUNT WORDS, AND IN THE PAUSES BETWEEN THEM. I THOUGHT MAYBE IF I WAS SOFTER, OR QUIETER, OR MORE LIKE SOMEONE SHE COULD UNDERSTAND, THE STRING WOULD FORM. I IMAGINED IT OFTEN-AN INVISIBLE THREAD, RUNNING FROM HER HEART TO MINE, HUMMING GENTLY WHEN I NEEDED HER, TIGHTENING WHEN I PULLED AWAY.

BUT I COULD NEVER FEEL IT.



AND MAYBE THAT'S WHAT I FIND HARDEST TO ADMIT, THAT SOMETIMES LOVE EXISTS WITHOUT CONNECTION. THAT YOU CAN CARE FOR SOMEONE DEEPLY AND STILL FEEL FAR AWAY. THAT A BOND CAN BE HOPED FOR, LONGED FOR, AND STILL REMAIN OUT OF REACH.

IT'S A STRANGE KIND OF GRIEF-TO MOURN SOMETHING THAT NEVER REALLY LIVED. NOT A DEATH, BUT THE ABSENCE OF SOMETHING I THOUGHT I WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE. A BOND. A MOTHER WHO COULD LOOK AT ME AND SEE ME. I WANT TO BELIEVE THAT MAYBE WE JUST DIFFER, THAT MAYBE HER SILENCE WAS HER VERSION OF LOVE. BUT LOVE, I THINK, IS SUPPOSED TO FEEL LIKE CONNECTION. LIKE A THREAD. LIKE SOMETHING HOLDING YOU EVEN WHEN YOU WANT TO FALL APART.

IT'S NOT HER FAULT, AND MAYBE IT'S NOT MINE EITHER. SOME PEOPLE SPEAK IN ACTIONS, OTHERS IN ABSENCE. MAYBE SHE HAS HER OWN INVISIBLE STRINGS-ONES I CAN'T SEE, ONES I WAS NEVER TAUGHT TO FEEL. MAYBE SHE LOVES IN A LANGUAGE I DON'T UNDERSTAND. MAYBE THERE WAS A STRING ONCE, AND LIFE JUST GENTLY WORE IT THIN.

I DON'T SAY THIS WITH ANGER. I SAY IT WITH QUIET SADNESS-THE KIND THAT SITS AT THE BOTTOM OF YOUR CHEST. THE SADNESS THAT WISHES THINGS HAD BEEN A LITTLE DIFFERENT, A LITTLE CLOSER, A LITTLE CLEARER. I'VE LEARNED NOT TO RESENT THE MISSING STRING, BUT TO RECOGNISE WHAT IT LEFT BEHIND. MAYBE THAT'S WHAT MAKES ME FEEL MOST HUMAN-THIS QUIET, UNRESOLVED SPACE IN MY HEART WHERE A STRING SHOULD BE. THIS WISH THAT, ONE DAY, I MIGHT REACH OUT AGAIN AND FEEL THE SLIGHTEST TUG IN RETURN.

MAYBE THAT'S WHAT INVISIBLE STRINGS REALLY TEACH US. NOT JUST HOW WE'RE HELD, BUT WHERE WE WISH WE WERE. WHO WE REACH FOR, AND WHO WE WISHED REACHED BACK. THEY SEE WHAT WE WANT, BUT GIVE US WHAT WE ACTUALLY NEED.

I MAY NEVER FEEL THE PULL FROM HER TO ME. BUT I’VE FELT IT IN OTHER PLACES,  
AND I’VE STARTED WEAVING MY OWN THREADS.

I CAN’T HELP BUT NOTICE HOW STEADY I’VE HAD TO BE FOR MYSELF. HOW, IN  
THE ABSENCE OF THAT STRING, I’VE TRIED TO BECOME A NET FOR EVERYONE  
ELSE. I HAVE TRIED TO BECOME THE KIND OF PERSON WHO HANDS OUT STRING  
FREELY. WHO NOTICES THE SMALL, INVISIBLE WAYS PEOPLE ASK TO BE LOVED.  
WHO PULLS GENTLY. WHO STAYS.

AND MAYBE, EVEN WITHOUT THAT ONE STRING I ALWAYS LONGED FOR, I CAN  
STILL BUILD A LIFE STITCHED TOGETHER WITH OTHER MEANINGFUL STRINGS.  
BECAUSE EVEN IF SOME STRINGS NEVER APPEAR, THE ONES WE CREATE ARE  
JUST AS REAL.

AND THEY’RE MORE THAN ENOUGH.





# THE INVISIBLE STRINGS

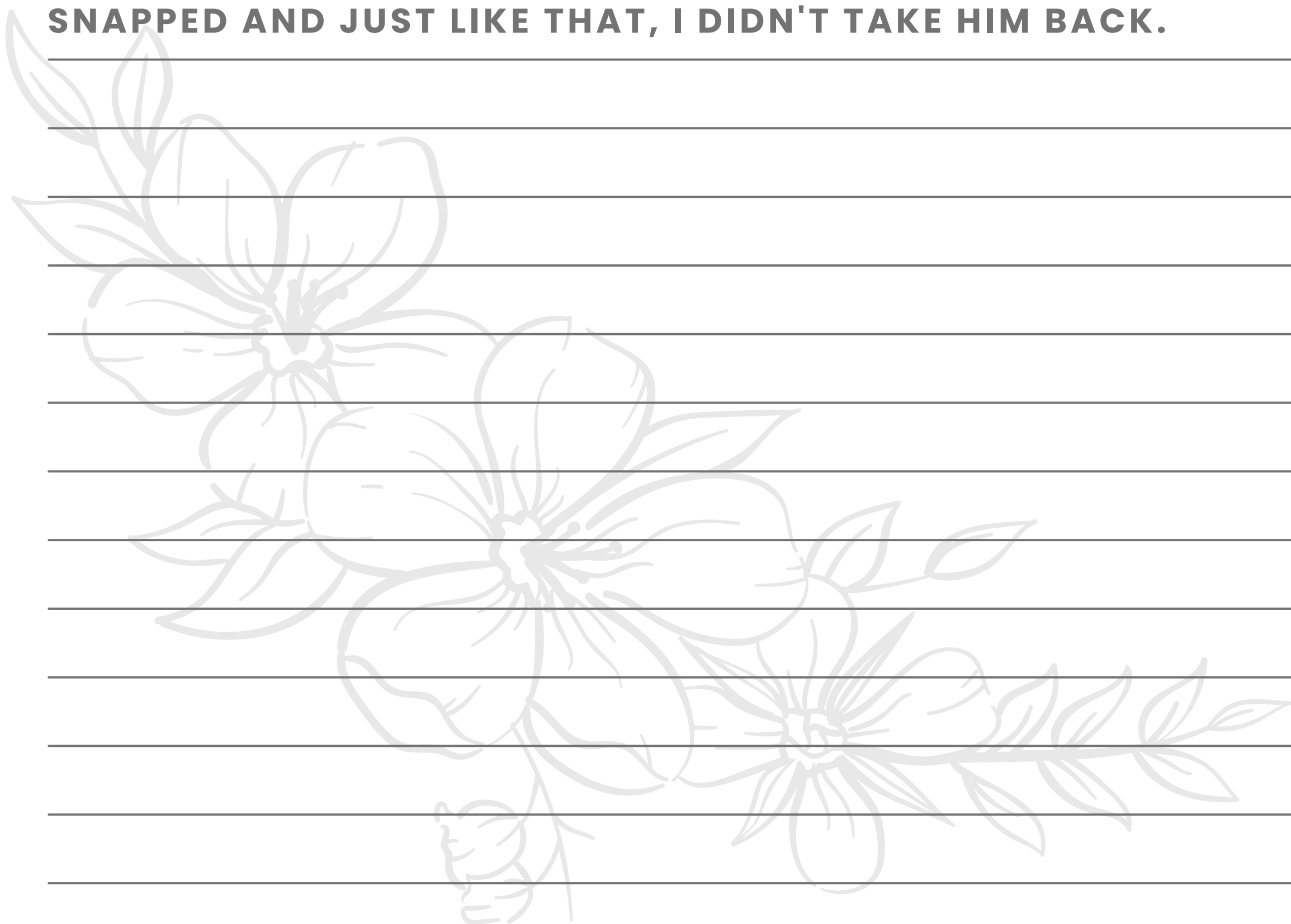
SHAZANA ABDUL GAFAR GR 9

THE INVISIBLE STRING, ALSO THE MOST POWERFUL ONE. PEOPLE UNDERESTIMATE HOW STRONG SOMETHING MAY BE ESPECIALLY BECAUSE IT CANNOT BE PHYSICALLY CUT LIKE OTHER STRINGS.

THE STRING IS MADE UP OF FEELINGS AND EMOTIONS, MY FEELINGS FOR HIM WAS ALWAYS SO STRONG AND THAT'S WHY NO MATTER HOW MANY STRINGS I CUT THAT ONE STILL STAYED.

DURING THE RELATIONSHIP HE WAS ALWAYS SO DISTANT AND ALWAYS HURTING ME...WHILE I WAS THERE LOVING HIM MORE AND MORE EVERYDAY, BUT WHAT I DIDN'T KNOW IS THAT WHILE I WAS FALLING DEEPER IN THE RELATIONSHIP, HE WAS ALREADY LOOKING FOR MY REPLACEMENT, AND SO BY THE TIME THINGS ENDED I WAS LEFT THERE STRANDED WHILE HE WAS ALREADY ON WITH THE NEXT GIRL AND WHAT WAS WORSE IS THAT EVERYTIME I TRIED TO MOVE ON THAT STRING WOULD PULL ME BACK.

THERE CAME A TIME WHEN HE WANTED ME BACK, BUT HE HAD HURT ME SO MUCH THAT THE STRING THAT ALWAYS LED ME STRAIGHT TO HIS HEART HAD SNAPPED AND JUST LIKE THAT, I DIDN'T TAKE HIM BACK.



# HOW I SAVED SCHOOL WITH HUGS (AND TEQUILA)

UNATHI MATLALA GR 11

HAVE YOU EVER WOKEN UP WITH SUPERPOWERS? LIKE BREATHING FIRE OR FLYING THROUGH THE AIR LIKE THE SUPERHEROS ON TV GROWING UP? MY FAMILY IS LIKE REALLY SUPERNATURAL, SO IT'S A HISTORICAL TRADITION THAT YOU FINALLY UNLOCK YOUR ABILITIES WHEN YOU TURN 17 YEARS OLD. MY "DIECISIETE AÑOS" IS TODAY AND I WAS REALLY EXCITED TO GET SUPER STRENGTH OR MAYBE EVEN TURNING INVISIBLE, I WOULD'VE BEEN HAPPY WITH ANYTHING, I'D EVEN SETTLE FOR TALKING TO ANIMALS FOR MY 17TH BIRTHDAY! THE LAST SUPERPOWER I HAD ON MY LIST WAS A COUPLES THERAPIST'S HOLY GRAIL.

SEEING THE STRENGTH OF CONNECTION BETWEEN TWO PEOPLE HAVE, HAS TO BE TOP 5 WORST ABILITIES IN THE BLOODLINE. HOW UNLUCKY DID I

GET? MY DAD GOT TEMPERATURE HANDS ON HIS 17TH BIRTHDAY, HE CAN LITERALLY BOIL WATER AT HIS FINGERTIPS OR EVEN FREEZE IT IN THE SAME AMOUNT OF TIME YOU CAN SAY "WHAT OTHER SUPERPOWERS RUN IN THE FAMILY?" AND THE ANSWER TO THAT IS, QUITE A FEW. MY ABUELA HAS THE POWER TO PRODUCE LIGHTNING, WE CALL HER "LA POWERBANKA" DURING LOADSHEDDING.

MY FRIENDS AT SCHOOL? HYPED TO ASK ME WHAT POWER I GOT THE SECOND I STEPPED THROUGH THOSE GATES. THEY WERE PROBABLY MORE UPSET ABOUT MY TERRIBLE POWER THAN I AM! I DON'T BLAME THEM, WE ALL USED TO SCHEME HOW WE COULD CHEAT ON TESTS DEPENDING ON WHICH POWERS I GOT. MY PERSONAL FAVOURITE WAS INTERLINKING ALL OUR BODIES TO THE SMARTEST KID IN CLASS, WHATEVER THEY WROTE DOWN, SO DID I. BUT THIS POWER REALLY SUCKS, ALL I SEE IS A STRING THAT'S ATTACHED TO PEOPLE. THE STRONGER YOUR BOND IS WITH A PERSON, THE THICKER AND

MORE VISIBLE THE CONNECTION IS TO ME. I PRACTICALLY HAVE A ROPE BETWEEN MY CLOSE FRIENDS AND I, BUT THE STRINGS I HAVE WITH OTHER PEOPLE ARE BASICALLY INVISIBLE.

I CAN TELL WHICH SCHOOL COUPLES ARE ON THE BRINK OF BREAKING UP AND I CAN ALSO TELL WHICH TEACHES ARE PROBABLY CHEATING ON THEIR SPOUSES AT WORK, BUT YOU DON'T NEED MAGICAL POWERS TO SEE THE CHEMISTRY BETWEEN MRS. KIM AND MR. HOLLING.

ALTHOUGH THERE HAS BEEN ONE THING THAT'S REALLY BEEN BOTHERING ME SINCE I GOT TO SCHOOL TODAY, JUSTIN. HE'S YOUR AVERAGE NERD THAT GETS BULLIED BY THE BIG KIDS, YOU KNOW, THE NORMAL HIGHSCHOOL ENVIRONMENT TROPE? BUT SOMETHING ABOUT HIM SEEMS LOCO TODAY. NORMALLY THE STRINGS I SEE BETWEEN PEOPLE ARE LIGHT BLUE OR EVEN DARKER SHADES FOR STRONGER CONNECTIONS, BUT JUSTIN IS RADIATING RED ROPES ALL AROUND

HIM. EVERY SINGLE PERSON IN THE SCHOOL IS ON WHATEVER LIST THAT KID HAS IN MIND, AND I WON'T HAVE MY FIRST LEGAL SHOT OF TEQUILA IF I DON'T DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT TODAY!

THANKFULLY MY FRIENDS ACTUALLY BELIEVE I HAVE POWERS BECAUSE THEY'VE SEEN MY RELATIVES DO NOT SO NORMAL THINGS WHEN I BROUGHT THEM TO ONE OF MY FAMILY FUNCTIONS. AT LEAST A HANDFUL OF PEOPLE BELIEVE ME, NOW IT'S UP TO EACH AND EVERY ONE OF US TO SAVE THE DAY BY SPREADING THE WORD. IN THEORY, IT WAS PRETTY SIMPLE: GO AROUND SCHOOL INFORMING INDIVIDUALS OR EVEN BETTER, LARGE FRIEND GROUPS, THAT WE GOT AN "ANONYMOUS TIP" ABOUT A POSSIBLE MASS SHOOTING TODAY, AND THE LIKELY CULPRIT WAS JUSTIN. THEY OBVIOUSLY DIDN'T BELIEVE US, SO WE HAD TO PLAY DIRTY AND BRIBE THEM. "WE'LL GIVE EVERYONE THAT PARTICIPATES FREE ALCOHOL AT MY DIECISIETE AÑOS PARTY!" I SAID. HOOK, LINE AND SINKER. TEENAGERS ARE

SO EASY.

WE ASKED EVERY GROUP WE ENGAGED WITH TO LET THE WHOLE SCHOOL KNOW BEFORE LUNCH, AND THE PLAN WAS SET IN MOTION WHEN THAT BELL FINALLY RANG. EVERY TWO MINUTES, SOMEONE WENT UP TO JUSTIN TO GIVE HIM A HUG. IT REALLY WAS THAT SIMPLE, A HUG FROM EACH PERSON IN THE SCHOOL. HIS BULLIES WERE THE HARDEST TO CONVINCE, BUT THE THE APOLOGIES THEY ADDED WERE PROBABLY THAT ICING ON THE CAKE.

NOW I WOULDN'T SAY THAT THE THREAT IS COMPLETELY NEUTRALISED, BUT AT LEAST HE ONLY HAS BRIGHT PINK STRINGS NOW WHICH I HOPE MEANS HE DOESN'T WANT TO KAMIKAZE THE SCHOOL FOR A WHILE. BUT IT'S STILL ALARMING ENOUGH TO CALL THE COPS FOR TOMORROW. EVEN THOUGH NOBODY BUT MYSELF HAD POWERS, WE WERE ALL SUPERHEROES TODAY. NOW I NEED TO EXPLAIN TO MY ANGRY MEXICAN MOTHER WHY A

MOB OF HIGHSCHOOLERS AT OUR FRONT DOOR IS DEMANDING FOR TEQUILA. NO BUENO.

