

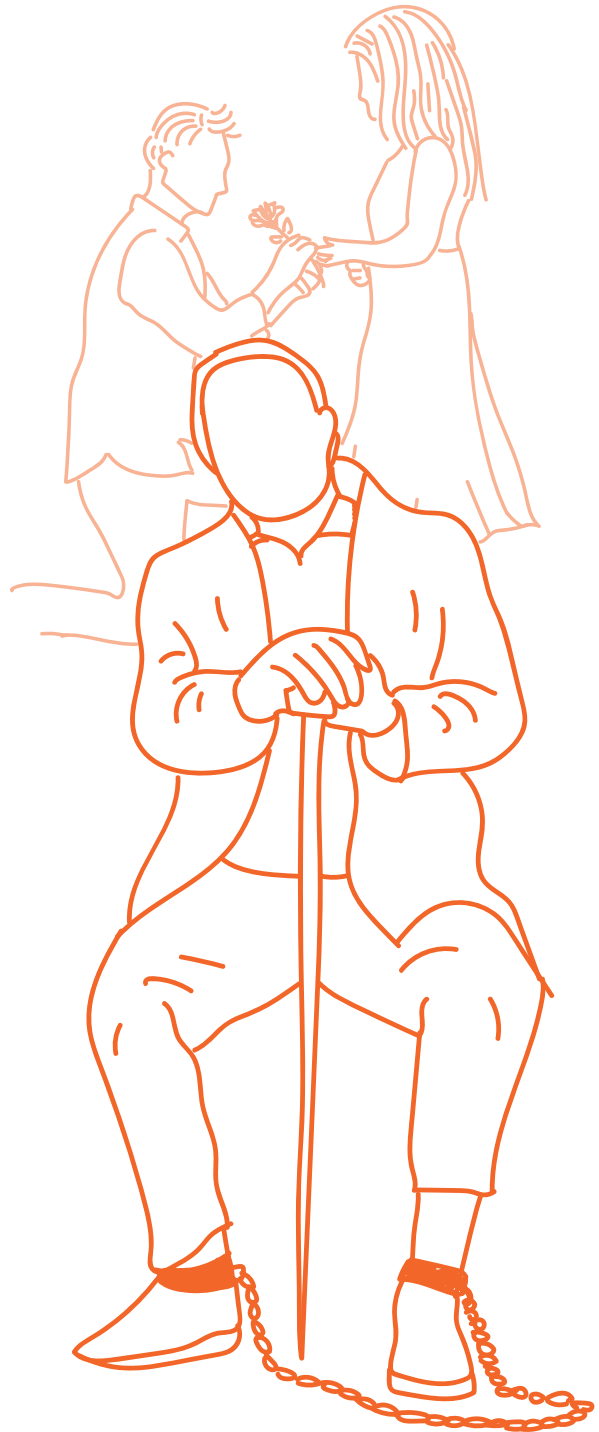


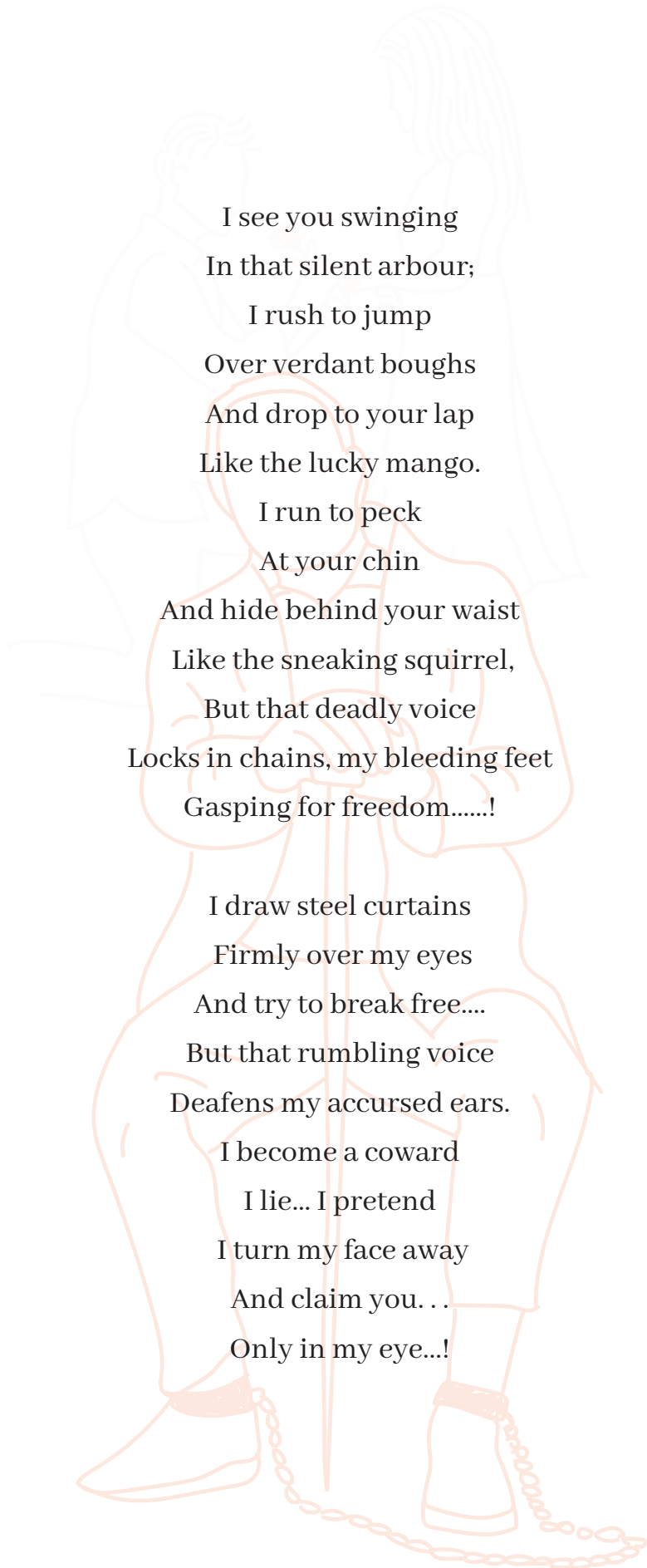
Civilized Chains

Vasanthi Vasudev

My balding crown
Streaks in silver-grey;
My drooping shoulders
Match my slackening gait.
My frame's made corpulent
And the pot belly prospers....
But cinders of aching youth
Continue to smoulder and choke.

I want to pluck
That nascent flower
And gift it, at once,
To your whirling ringlet.
But my throbbing finger is
Stopped and warned
By a stern voice....!
And the flower lies inert,
Crushed under the stone
Of my beleaguered heart.



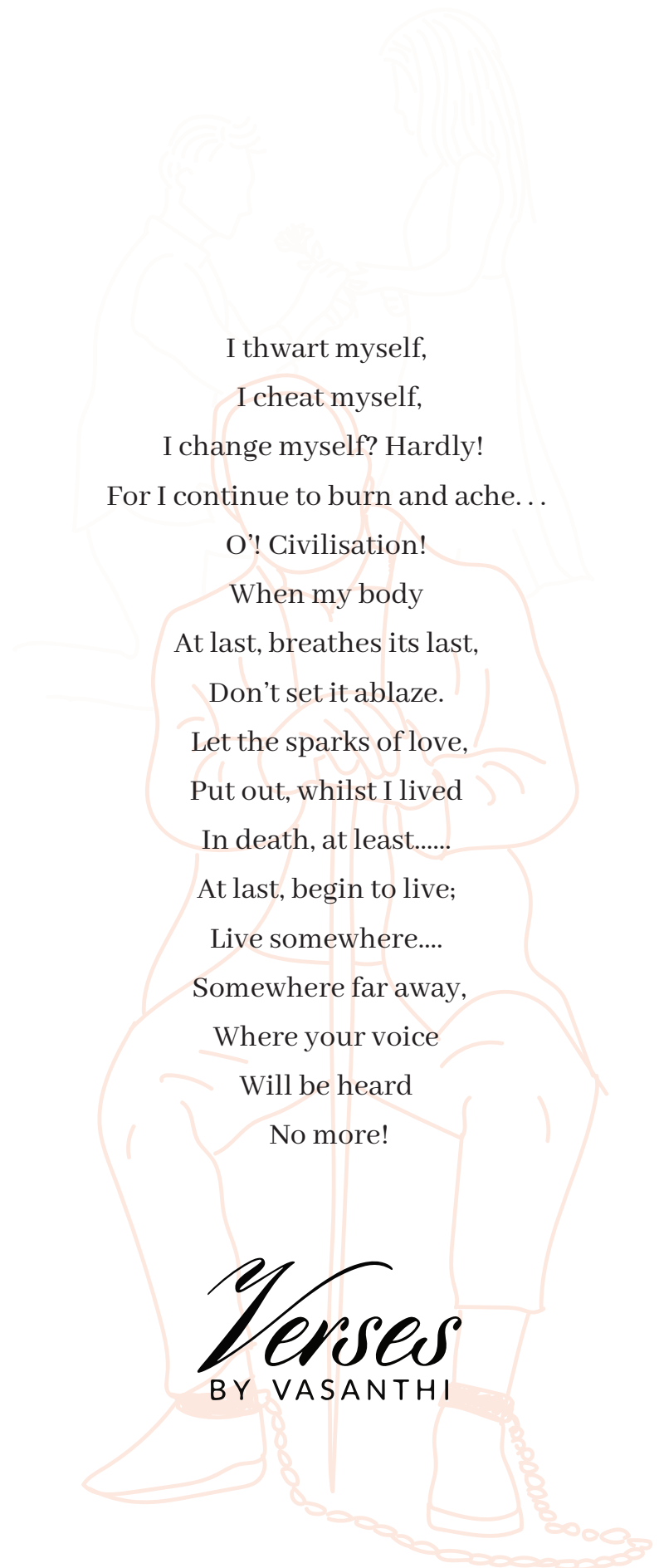


I see you swinging
In that silent arbour;
I rush to jump
Over verdant boughs
And drop to your lap
Like the lucky mango.

I run to peck
At your chin
And hide behind your waist
Like the sneaking squirrel,
But that deadly voice
Locks in chains, my bleeding feet
Gasping for freedom.....!

I draw steel curtains
Firmly over my eyes
And try to break free....
But that rumbling voice
Deafens my accursed ears.

I become a coward
I lie... I pretend
I turn my face away
And claim you. . .
Only in my eye...!



I thwart myself,
I cheat myself,
I change myself? Hardly!
For I continue to burn and ache...

O! Civilisation!
When my body
At last, breathes its last,
Don't set it ablaze.
Let the sparks of love,
Put out, whilst I lived
In death, at least.....
At last, begin to live;
Live somewhere....
Somewhere far away,
Where your voice
Will be heard
No more!

Verses
BY VASANTHI