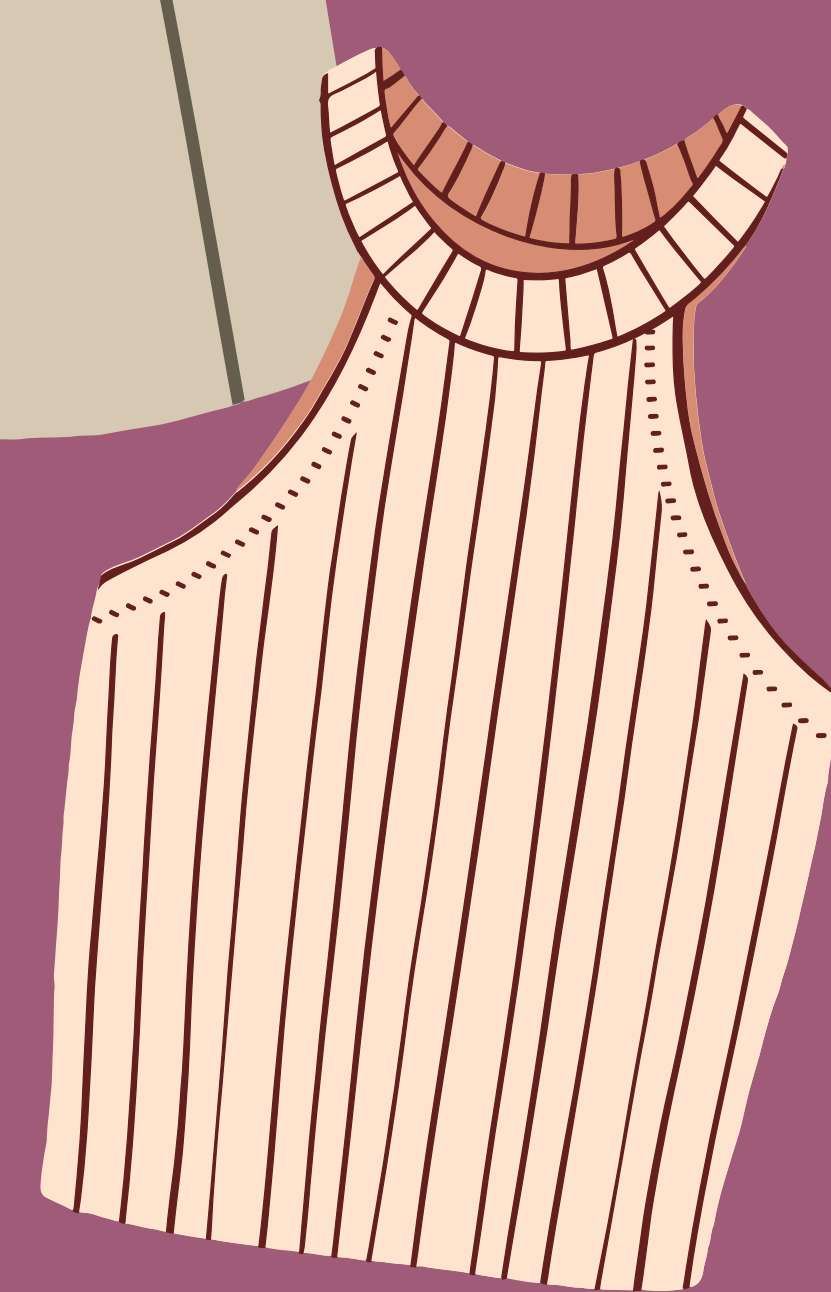




*Welcome to my*  
**CLOSET**



# Poems:

The Art of Charming.....	1
Charmed, I'm sure.....	2
Pricks and Parking Tickets.....	4
I didn't sleep much last night.....	6
I want to fall asleep with David Attenborough.....	8
Stalemate.....	9
Another Woman.....	11



## ● *The Art of Charming* ●

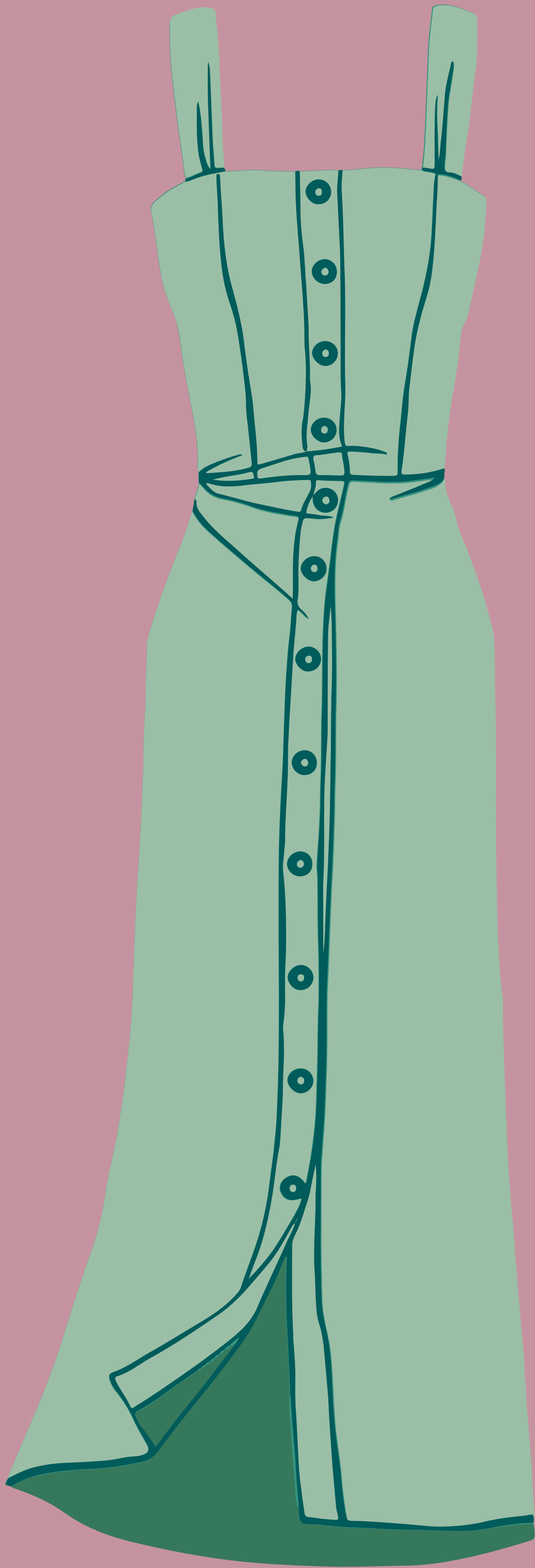
He needs to know how delightful I can be, smiling like a frosted danish on his continental breakfast, powdered with patience and false faces, sunny as morning glories.

He needs to know how beautiful I can be: a white men's button down, draped like a spiral staircase, my half moon shoulders taunting his wandering soul.

He needs to crave how enticing I can be, squeezing out laughs like the last ounce of toothpaste, baiting with smudged eyelashes, until

he applauds my girl next door routine, flouncing through the kitchen, free from inhibitions and pants 'til he finally says *ah yes, you were made for me.*





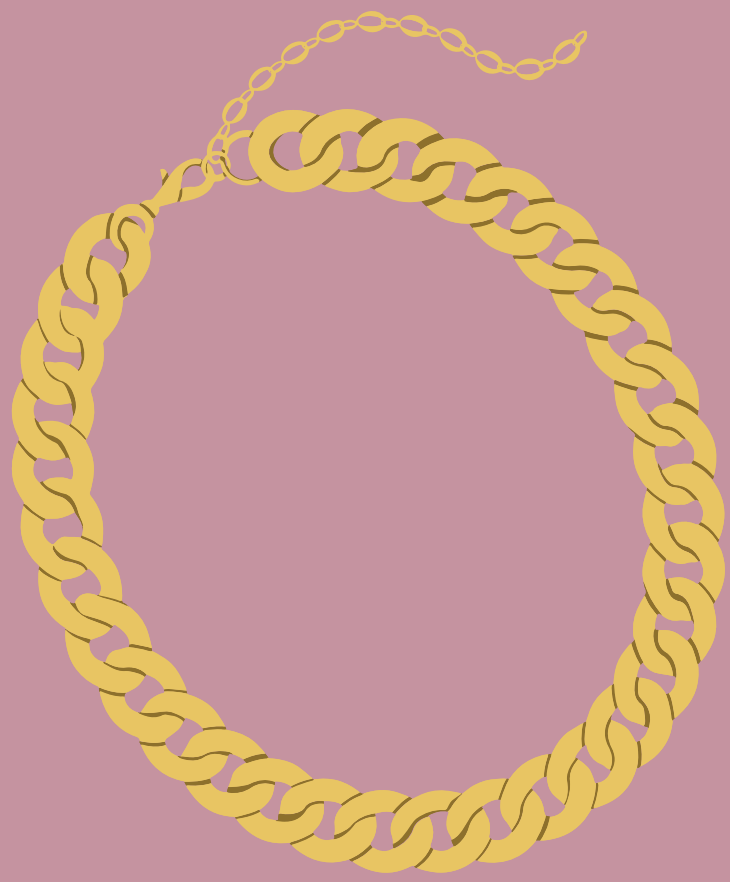
## *Charmed, I'm Sure*

A woman I know is ready  
for the fabrics that showcase  
her feminine figure,

but why does her best  
dress warrant whistles and  
wandering hands?

A woman I know is frustrated  
at the men critiquing her  
manicured attire, while they dare  
to wear head to toe Vineyard Vines,  
Tommy Bahama, or worse.

A woman I know is done  
dancing on eggshells for  
capitalists in pressed suits,  
shouting *give us a smile!*



A woman I know is happy  
to stir her momma's gravy  
until the skin wrinkles  
its gelatinous surface,

less happy to wear the apron  
whose ties wring  
sexist expectations round  
her petite waist: a lineage of

*stay at home*  
Moms.

# Pricks and Parking Tickets

He had piles of parking tickets  
on the passenger's side: my old  
stomping grounds.

They were good friends  
with my winter boots.

I don't think I was worried.

but by spring  
the once pale yellow  
tickets were crusted  
with road salt and mud,

shriveled as the leaves  
of my father's philodendron.



*Don't worry,  
I haven't paid a ticket  
since freshman year,  
and nothing bad  
has ever happened.*



And he was no longer attending his classes—

*it's the depression.  
I fucked up my meds*

*again*

I texted him reminders every morning  
as I swallowed my own pride and Prozac  
with a gulp of Bigelow Black, but

*My dad Is a fuck -up!*  
somehow made me feel

too short  
to ride the rollercoaster.

I don't know If he ever paid those tickets.

but he left  
and didn't graduate on time.

Back then I was

helpless

to his false faces and winks,  
the excuses like sunday school,

I told my roommate  
*ya know, you don't have to pay that ticket*  
*ntothing bad Is going to happen...*

she laughed In my face  
and put the kettle back  
on the stovetop.

the daddy Issues—

# *I didn't sleep much last night*

Hungover girls swarm like fruit flies,  
flocking to the sweet smell of  
*How was last night?*

I'm not ready  
to answer.

I don't usually succumb to  
peachy pick-up lines or  
eggplants. They  
somehow make me  
groom and prune  
for a man  
I do not know.

His hand gripped my velvet  
dress— silky with secrets,  
coaxing lust from my skin,  
stinging with fruity perfume.

I am uncomfortable  
in my bustier, so I take it off.

Fuck his Bob Dylan complex and blue  
complaints. He grabs my hair: I think  
he's probably addicted to porn,  
so I watch him watch me, obviously

he passes out first, and I can't  
help but revel in the silence, so  
why am I afraid of falling asleep?





I pretended to like his bitter coffee.

*So you liked him?* they buzz.

I suppose.

No.

I shuddered at his chapped lips.

Why lie?

I bring my breakfast tea to the porch,  
breathing in the daylight, hoping

to cleanse my body of the patience  
and false faces, now rotting away,  
wishing I didn't

feel like a nun  
on a fucking smoke break.



## *I want to fall asleep with David Attenborough*

Saying: *you will find your way, my darling.*

Perhaps, he will soothe with a sour taste:

endangered whales or disrupted ocean currents,

melancholy, but not apocalyptic. Or perhaps

he will present Iguazú, letting the gallons

baptize my semi-consciousness. Convince me,

recycling will help, and cardstock thank you

notes will make a difference.



# Stalemate

I don't mind losing to him,  
it goes with my sundress. He wears  
a witty, color-blocked shirt that  
mocks my failed Fried Liver, though his triumph  
still takes forty, calculated moves;  
he steals my sacrificial pawns with  
charisma that never blunders.

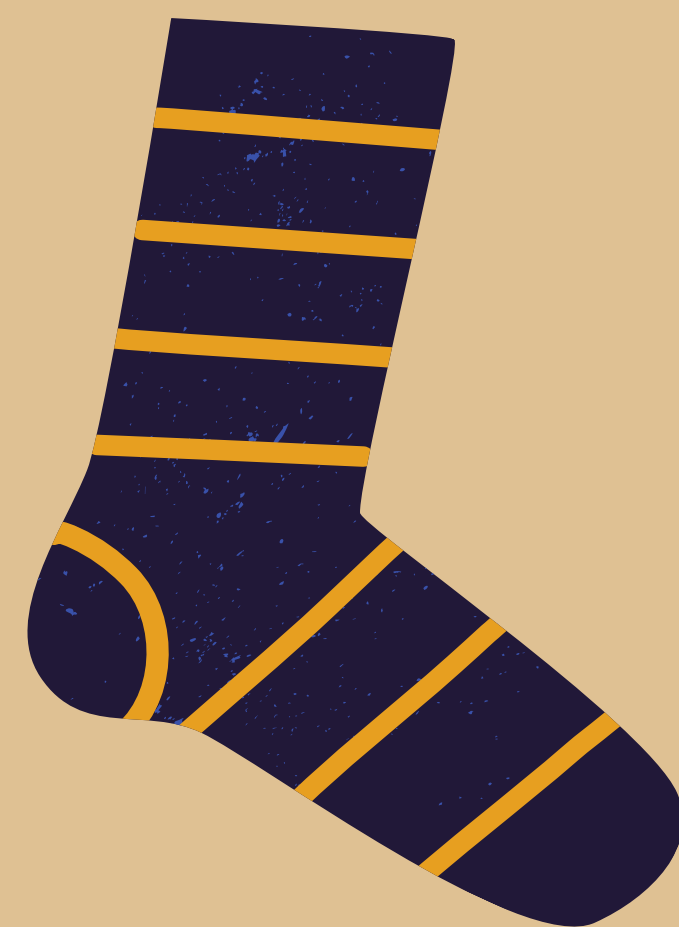
He tells me *playing someone in chess*  
*is an entirely new way of getting to know them.*

And oh, how he knows me, predicting the pieces  
and pouty eyes that cry I miss you. He puts me in check  
with threats of keeping our distance, carries me  
to sleep, though I am unrecognizable  
from the doe-eyed flower girl  
he claimed to love.

He whispers intellectual flirtations,  
promising nothing, mere distractions while  
he steals piece after piece: Bishop, Knight,  
Rook, and Queen, and no wonder I wake  
up to empty sheets and the stench of  
forgotten laundry. I should have known

it's not my fault he took chess lessons, it's not  
my fault I forgot about the damp socks  
and the knight he pinned me with, I didn't  
know better and

he doesn't know me.



I didn't keep the bouquet he sent,  
*from your favorite, stupid boy*: less charming  
than the last. Yes, he has done this before,  
and again. But this time I will take  
the stranded queen he thought I couldn't see:  
the smoking gun in his gentle grip, yes

I will dance around each piece  
with guns drawn, beautiful dancing  
chipping away his masculine stronghold:  
pins and forks he didn't see coming  
until we are face to face, fighting  
over black and white squares.



# Another Woman

I went away  
for the summer  
and came back to  
another woman's shoe rack,

pinned with pointy  
pumps that tumble  
from their perch  
whenever I shuffle  
Homegoods hangers,

my Goodwill  
mary janes now mocking  
their impracticality.

Oh how sweet  
she must have been  
to wear shoes so high.

I stuff them in  
the trunk beneath my  
bed frame: spidery,  
but safe  
and saved  
a scrapbook of  
my younger years.



I went away  
for the summer  
and came back to  
another woman's walls,

splattered with  
Hobby Lobby  
inspirations, now  
strange and ironic:

“the best thing you  
can do is to think  
for yourself  
aloud...”

I'm not sure  
she knew how.

Her photo wall filled  
with faces I hadn't  
seen since  
glittered monograms  
made sense.

I tactfully tear each  
unfamiliar frame, hopeful  
for the hangings  
going up in  
their place.

I went away  
for the summer  
and came back to  
another woman's closet,

sequined dresses, silky  
green scarves I knew  
she rarely wore.

I meet each garment  
again, not sure how  
they might look or feel

or hang on my frame—  
the new, soft body  
I am learning to love.

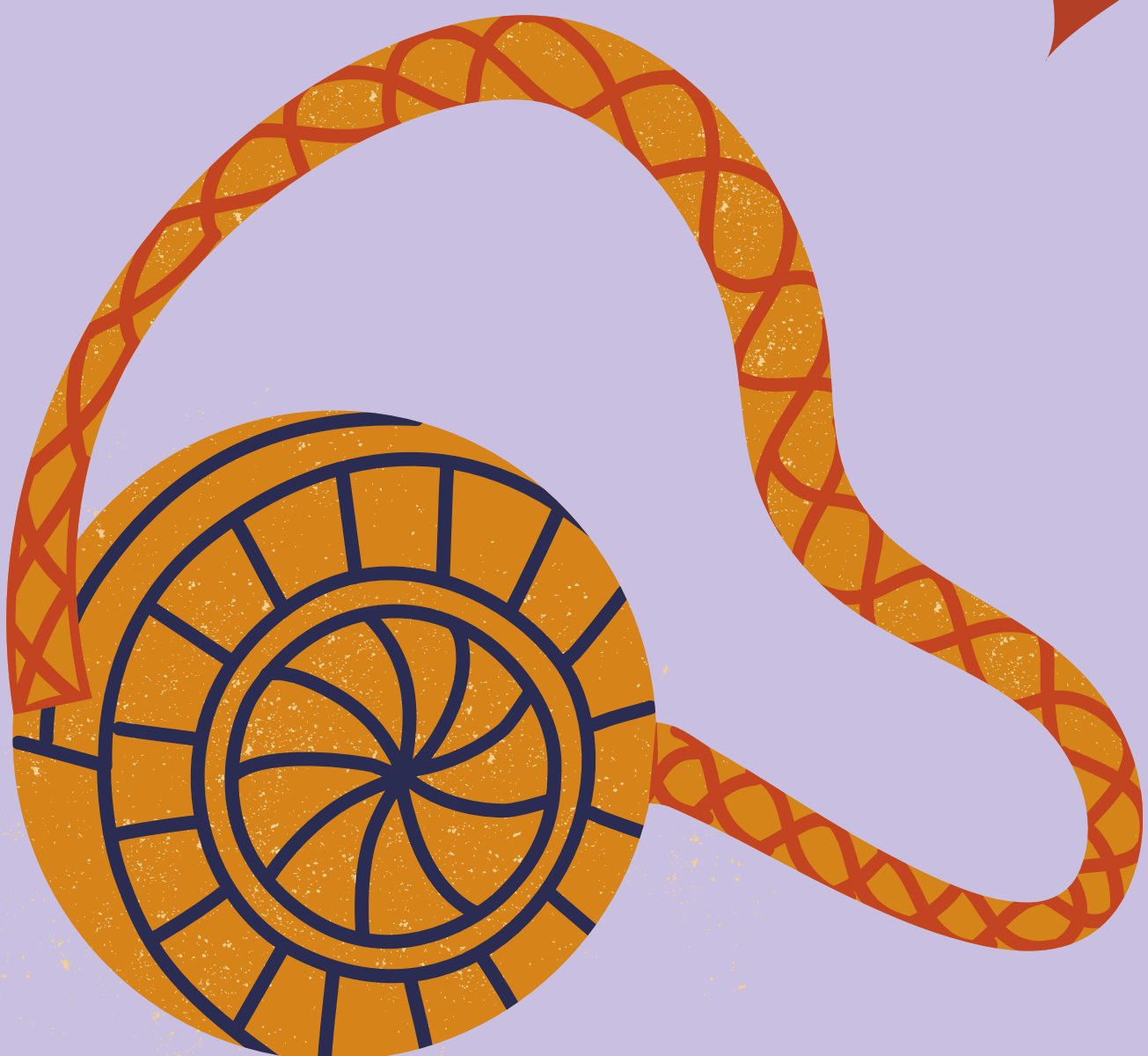
I part the sea of plastic  
hangers, finding room  
for the second-hand  
sweaters and fairy blouses:

the new fabrics  
more familiar than her  
carefully curated wardrobe,

the old remaining,  
folded in forgotten  
corners: a reminder  
of all she left behind and

all I am

looking forward to...



# Acknowledgements

Thank you so much to Romaine Dorsey for her guidance on this piece, as well as Olive Bernhart, Hannah Wilkison, and Phyllis Cha for their continued workshop feedback and support. I would also like to thank Eli Diersing and Solomon Keim for their collaboration on a live, multi-art form production of this chapbook.

