

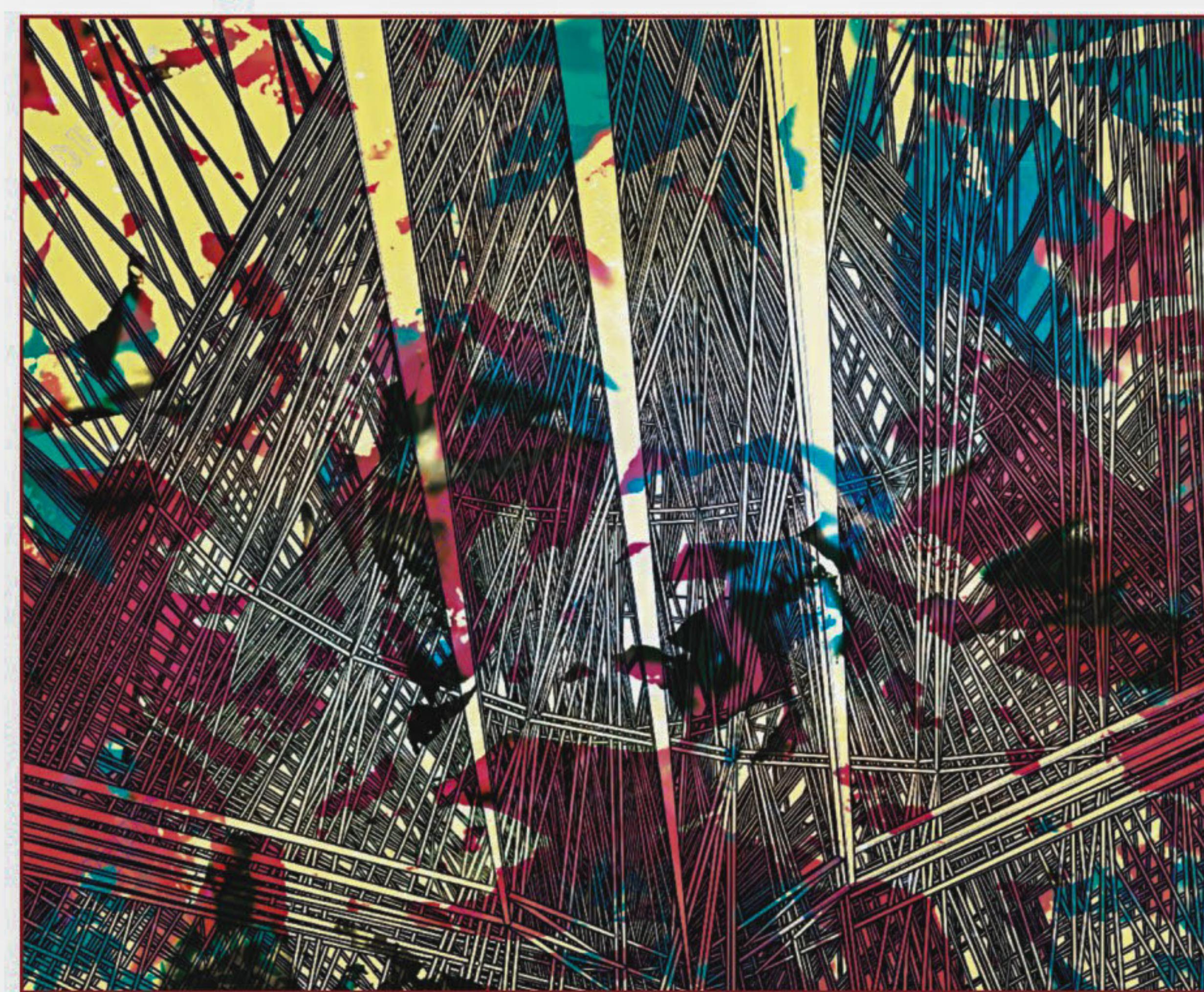
You were never born to die in **mint** condition

AMREETA L. CHOWDHURY

You were never born to die in mint condition.
 You were born to explore and ravage every nook and cranny
 Of both the world and yourself.
 You were born to break your bones, your heart and yourself
 In desperate attempts to find your reason for being.
 You were born to bruise and scar yourself,
 Walk till your knees gave way
 On your journey to find the golden city of El Dorado and the silver lining of
 your life;
 Swim until your skin wrinkled and your eyes burnt
 On your quest to find the lost city of Atlantis
 And the belief you lost in love and dreams and pixie dust;
 Scratch and tear yourself while you dug a hole
 To both the centre of the world and your heart;
 Sail and swim the seven seas
 To find Stevenson's treasure island and Verne's mysterious island
 And hope to lose the fear of drowning you held inside.
 You were born to travel the world time and time again
 Till you believed you could travel it in eighty days with a blindfold on;
 You were born to lose Milton's paradise
 And on your journey through Inferno and Purgatory
 Hope to regain it under Dante's starless skies
 As you hoped to regain the love you lost under Gogh's starry ones.
 You were born to crack skulls and chip nails
 And burn yourself with fire and light as you travelled alongside angels and
 demons
 And learned to coexist with both.
 You were born to tread Whitman's leaves of grass and race through paper
 towns
 As you hoped again to find all that may yet be real in this world.
 You were born to find the chinks in your stardust armour
 As you flew past nebulae and quasars with Perry's little prince,
 On your odyssey through the history of time
 To uncover all the timeless truths no one bothers to look for anymore.
 You were born to strain your vocal chords
 As you learned to sing with the voices of the mountains,
 And splash yourself with colours
 As you painted pictures in the sky with all the colours of the wind,
 Pictures for Death to marvel at as he went about his daily routine of collecting
 souls
 And you went about yours to collect memories.
 You were born to write till you understood why a raven was like a writing desk
 And read till your mind was blown to bits
 As you sat through the burning Alexandrian library
 And hoped for more poems that seemed to detonate your soul;
 You were never born to work a nine to five,
 The compass in your head and the map in your heart
 Would never allow your restless soul to settle down and wear yourself away
 Behind an empty box with a screen.
 You were born to turn to dust only after you had conquered the world,
 And only after you found out that you can never quite conquer the soul.
 My love, you were never born to die in mint condition.



DEFICIT OMNE QUOD NASCITURE



SAGORIKA HAQUE

(everything that is born passes away)

Lights drip off the wall, fluorescent and fluid, setting the ground afire,
 glass spider-webs cover screens; when
 they shatter, the shards will take flight.
 Thirteen channels of static, forty of
 monochromatic bars, the rest but
 blackness
 (and noise. oh, the terrible, terrible
 noise).
 Birds a most curious shade of blue drop
 out of the sky and into the flames,
 camera lenses lose focus; batteries melt
 in their cases; cables snap and dance.
 Rain comes, but rain does not fall.
 Satellites soar to earth; an unplanned
 forecast
 (a sputter of a stove, a flicker of a light, a
 bang, a bang, a bang).

Letters rise off their keys and declare
 a war on fingers,
 Every button comes to life; rainbows
 drench streets; a thousand and one floors
 left; do not collect at go.
 An orchestra of hissing kettles and
 whistling pots and pans set the scene
 (for earless beings, they certainly know
 how to carry a tune).

Vessels of metal become one with
 the ocean; the ocean one with years of
 endeavour,
 names slip off of tongues, memories out
 of minds, faces out of books.
 A switch flips, and the world with it.
 (the skeletons quiver under their
 screams. *the back-ups, too! and their back-ups and their back-ups! stop staring, and fix this, goddammit!*)

Trees sway in silence; pillars of
 solitude in the field of war,
 somewhere a mother screams; they never
 printed the baby photos.
 Men and women with flags on their
 breasts meet in candle-lit rooms, sweat

dribbling into their dress shirts,
 shouting and whispering in broken
 English; every word a spasm, every
 syllable fervid.

(their headphones only of white noise;
 after all, no phones to summon
 translators)

Companies watch with gaping
 mouths as their hopes and dreams (and
 stocks, mind you)
 crash and burn and disappear; no speck
 of dust untouched
 Decades of innovation lie in pools of
 murky greyness; host now to heels and
 dress shoes and knees.
 (*might as well have set them on fire*, one of
 them wail. *could've thrown me in for good
 measure*)

Yellowed nails jab incessantly at
 buttons, but little do they know they've
 gone on strike,
 figures of blemished flesh buzz around
 dead metal boxes, their mouths making
 noises with no meaning.
 "Why is this happening?" one says to
 another, eyes tinged with red. "Is the
 world ending?"
 (they live in fear of sleep for the numbers
 on their clocks have become a's and b's
 and q's)

Azure waters lap lazily on shores of
 pearly sand and lifeless smartphones,
 a man crafts a makeshift guitar from a
 shoebox and rubber bands, hands
 yearning to be used.
 The air hums with cacophonous
 strumming and raw baritone song.
 (*what are we now?* he croons as a chorus
 of crows join him. *oh, what are we now,
 what are we now?*)