

PENGUIN BOOKS

NIGHT

Elie Wiesel was born in Romania in 1928. He was deported with his family to Auschwitz when he was still a boy, and then to Buchenwald, where his parents and younger sister were killed. After the war he moved to Paris, where he wrote *Night* (Penguin, 1981), the moving memoir of these experiences.

Elie Wiesel is Andrew W. Mellon Professor in the Humanities at Boston University. He has achieved an international reputation with such books as *A Beggar in Jerusalem*, which won the Prix Medicis for 1969. *Souls on Fire* (Penguin, 1984) is a collection of portraits and legends describing the Hasidic masters who revitalised Judaism, of which Charles Siberman, writing in *The New York Times Book Review*, said, 'Souls on Fire should be read by everyone concerned with the existential question, which is to say, by every sensitive and thinking human being . . . It is a work of genius and of art – an extraordinary man's extraordinary effort to "humanize fate"'. *Somewhere a Master* is the sequel to that masterpiece. His other books include *Dawn*, *The Accident*, *The Town beyond the Wall*, *The Gates of the Forest*, *The Jews of Silence*, *Legends of Our Time*, *One Generation After*, *The Oath*, *Ani Maamin: A Cantata*, *Zalmen, or the Madness of God*, *A Jew Today*, *Four Hasidic Masters*, *The Testament* (Penguin, 1982), which was awarded the Prix-Inter in 1980, *The Fifth Son* (Penguin, 1987), *Against Silence* and *Twilight* (Penguin, 1991).

In 1986 Elie Wiesel was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. In its citation the Nobel Committee described him as 'one of the most important spiritual leaders and guides in an age when violence, repression and racism continue to characterize the world . . . a convincing spokesman for the view of mankind and for the unlimited humanitarianism which are at all times necessary for a lasting and just peace'.

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IN MEMORY OF MY PARENTS  
AND OF MY LITTLE SISTER  
TZIPORA

Elie Wiesel

# NIGHT

Translated from the French by Stella Rodway

They called him Moché the Beadle, as though he had never had a surname in his life.

He was a past master in the art of making himself insignificant, of seeming invisible.

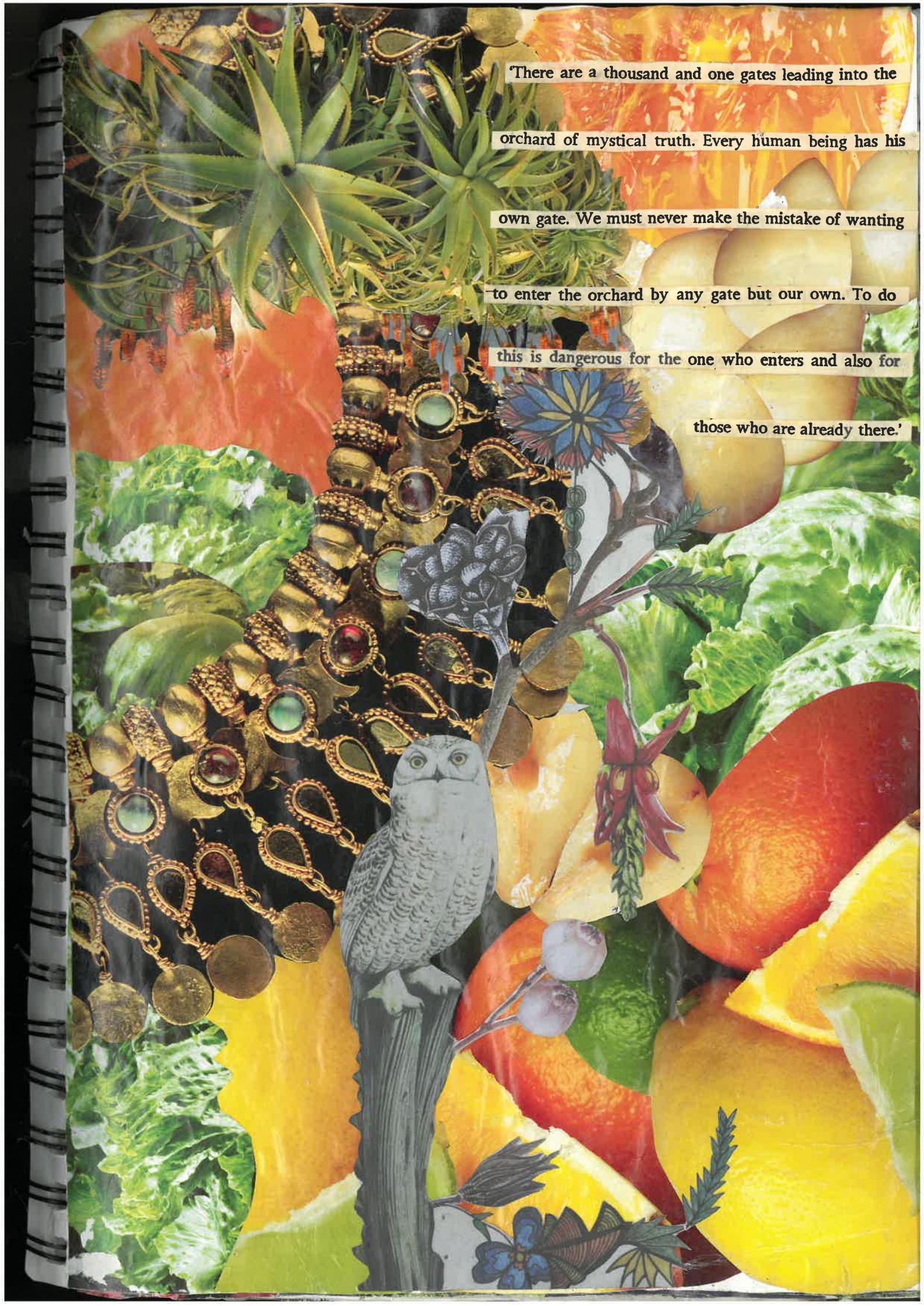
He explained to me with great insistence that every question possessed a power that did not lie in the answer.

Only God could answer you.

'Man raises himself toward God by the questions he asks Him.'

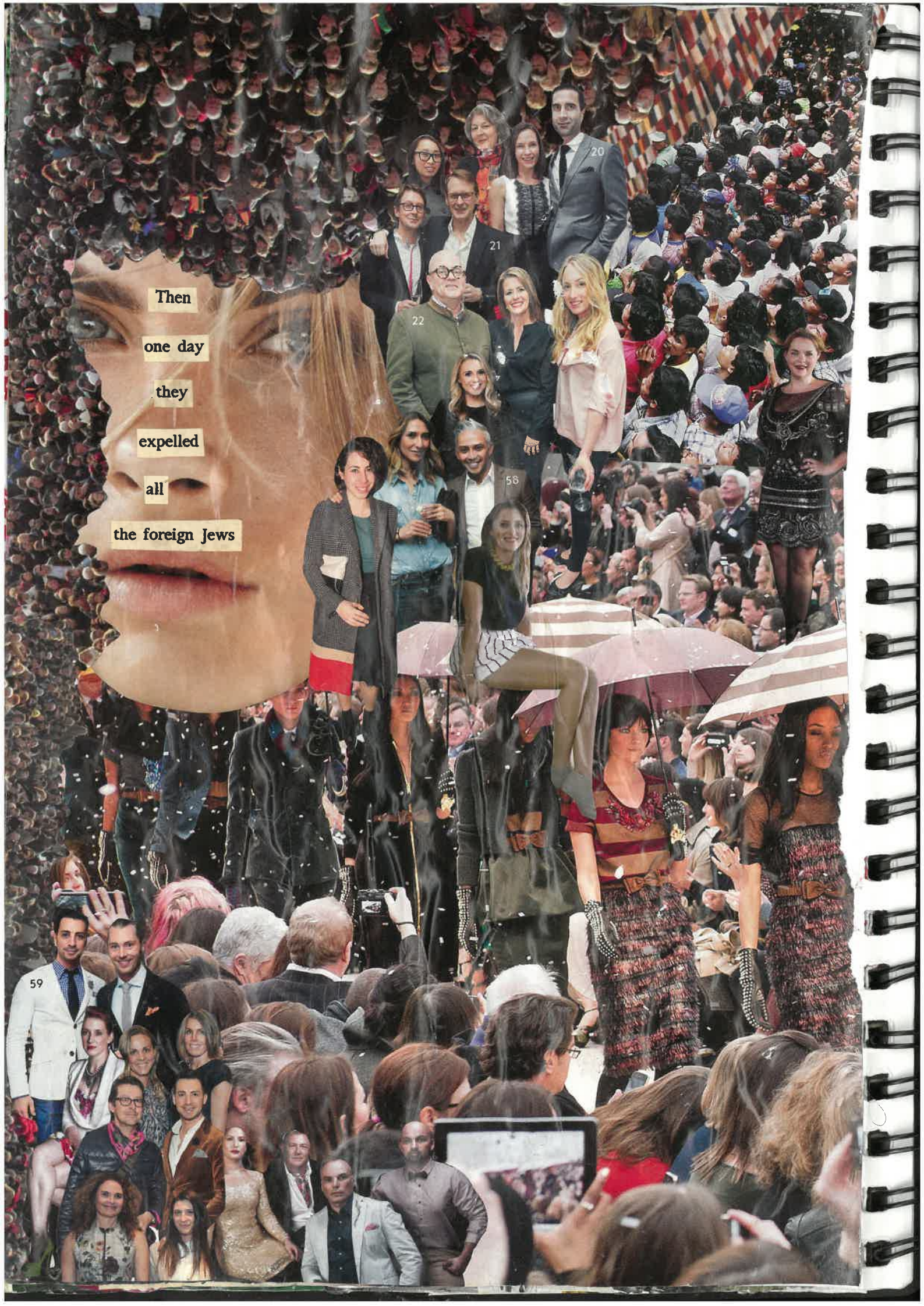
Man questions God and God answers. But we don't understand His answers. We can't understand them. Because they come from the depth of the soul, and they stay there until death.





'There are a thousand and one gates leading into the orchard of mystical truth. Every human being has his own gate. We must never make the mistake of wanting to enter the orchard by any gate but our own. To do this is dangerous for the one who enters and also for those who are already there.'

Then  
one day  
they  
expelled  
all  
the foreign Jews



59

22

21

20

58

The deportees were soon forgotten. A few days after they had gone, people were saying that they had arrived in Galicia, were working there, and were even satisfied with their lot.

Little by little life returned to normal.

The barbed wire which fenced us in did not cause us any real fear.

We drank, we ate, we sang.

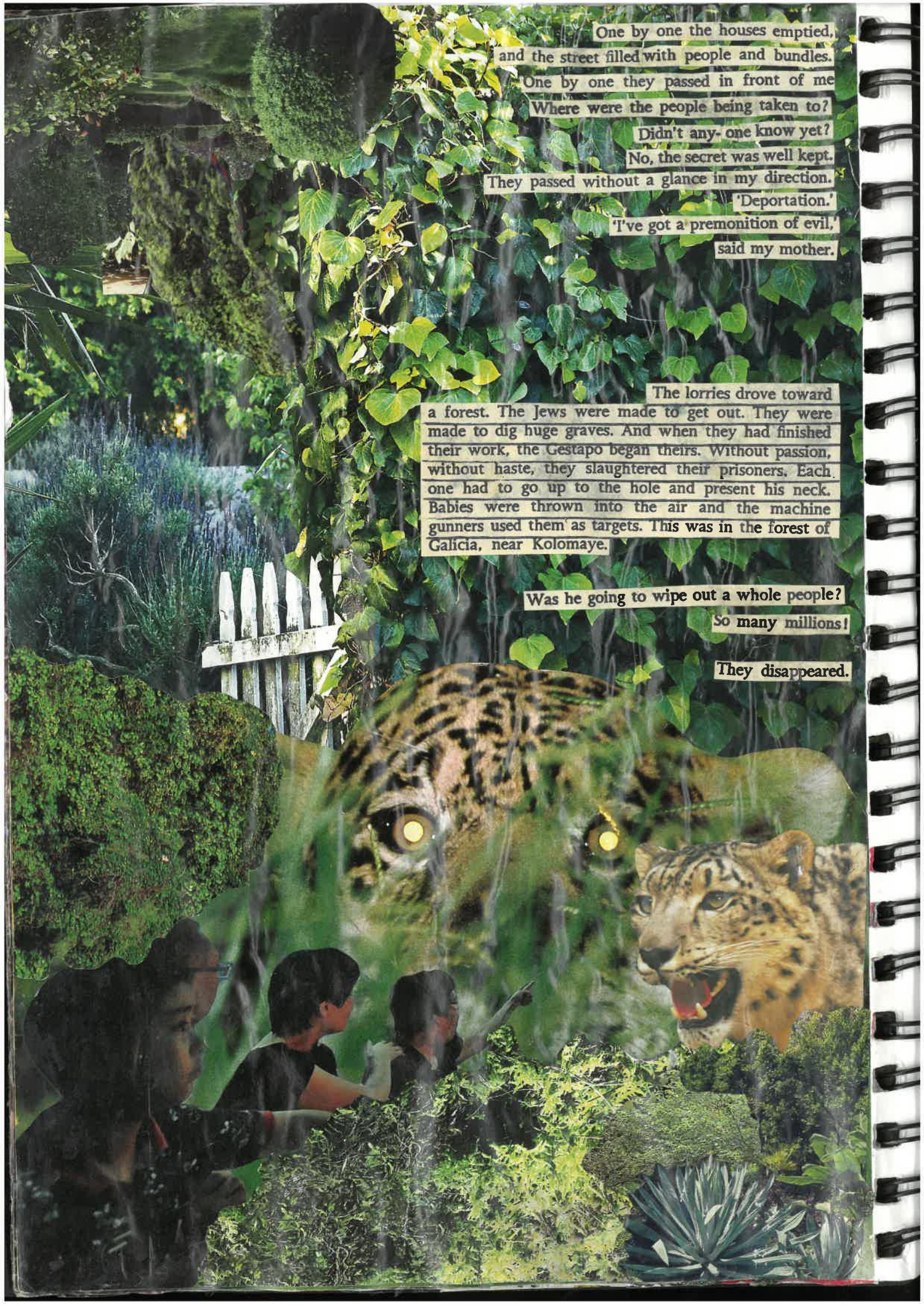
Life had returned to normal.

A wind of calmness and reassurance blew through our houses.

The traders were doing good business, the students lived buried in their books, and the children played in the streets.

I continued to devote myself to my studies.





One by one the houses emptied,  
and the street filled with people and bundles.

One by one they passed in front of me

Where were the people being taken to?

Didn't any- one know yet?

No, the secret was well kept.

They passed without a glance in my direction.

'Deportation.'

'I've got a premonition of evil,'

said my mother.

The lorries drove toward  
a forest. The Jews were made to get out. They were  
made to dig huge graves. And when they had finished  
their work, the Gestapo began theirs. Without passion,  
without haste, they slaughtered their prisoners. Each  
one had to go up to the hole and present his neck.  
Babies were thrown into the air and the machine  
gunners used them as targets. This was in the forest of  
Galicia, near Kolomaye.

Was he going to wipe out a whole people?

So many millions!

They disappeared.

Moché had changed.

There was no longer any joy in his eyes.

He no longer sang.

He no longer talked to me of God or the cabbala,  
but only of what he had seen.

People refused not only  
to believe his stories,  
but even  
to listen to them.

I felt only pity

And as for Moché, he wept.

'The Jews in Budapest are living in an atmosphere of  
fear and terror. There are anti-Semitic incidents every  
day, in the streets, in the trains. The Fascists are attack-  
ing Jewish shops and synagogues. The situation is getting  
very serious.'

Still this was not enough to worry us.

That was toward the end of 1942.

Afterward life returned to normal.

My mother began to think  
that it was high time to find  
a suitable young man for Hilda.

Thus the year 1943 passed by.

Spring 1944.

The trees were in blossom.

people were interested in everything—in strat-  
egy, in diplomacy, in politics, in Zionism—but not in  
their own fate.

Several days passed. Several weeks. Several months.

The Germans were already in the town, the Fascists  
were already in power, the verdict had already been  
pronounced, yet the Jews of Sighet continued to smile.

The race toward death had begun.

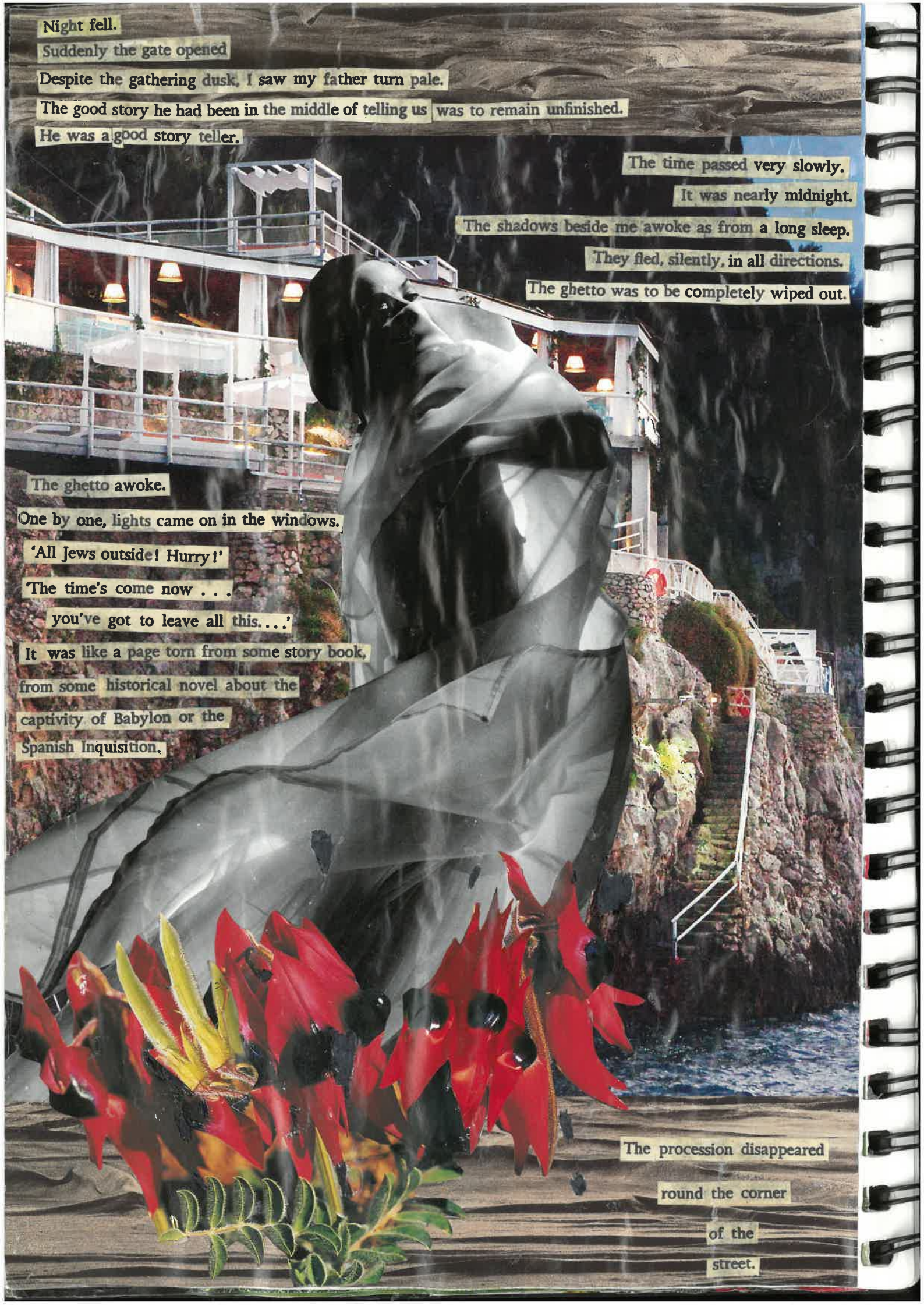
Then came the ghetto.

Everyone marvelled at it. We should no longer have  
before our eyes those hostile faces, those hate-laden  
stares. Our fear and anguish were at an end. We were  
living among Jews, among brothers. . . .

It was neither German nor Jew  
who ruled the ghetto—it was illusion.

The ghetto was not guarded.





Night fell.

Suddenly the gate opened

Despite the gathering dusk, I saw my father turn pale.

The good story he had been in the middle of telling us was to remain unfinished.

He was a good story teller.

The time passed very slowly.

It was nearly midnight.

The shadows beside me awoke as from a long sleep.

They fled, silently, in all directions.

The ghetto was to be completely wiped out.

The ghetto awoke.

One by one, lights came on in the windows.

'All Jews outside! Hurry!'

The time's come now . . .

you've got to leave all this. . .'

It was like a page torn from some story book,

from some historical novel about the

captivity of Babylon or the

Spanish Inquisition.

The procession disappeared

round the corner

of the

street.

as far as those who had already been deported were concerned, it was too bad; no more could be done. But they would probably allow us to live out our wretched little lives here, until the end of the war.

Saturday, the day of rest, was chosen for our expulsion.

Tomorrow might be worse.

Our eyes were opened, but too late.

Our convoy went toward the main synagogue.

We were on our way.

A hot summer sun.

The doors were closed.  
We were caught in a trap,  
right up to our necks.

The doors were nailed up;  
the way back was finally cut off.

The world  
was a cattle wagon  
hermetically sealed.

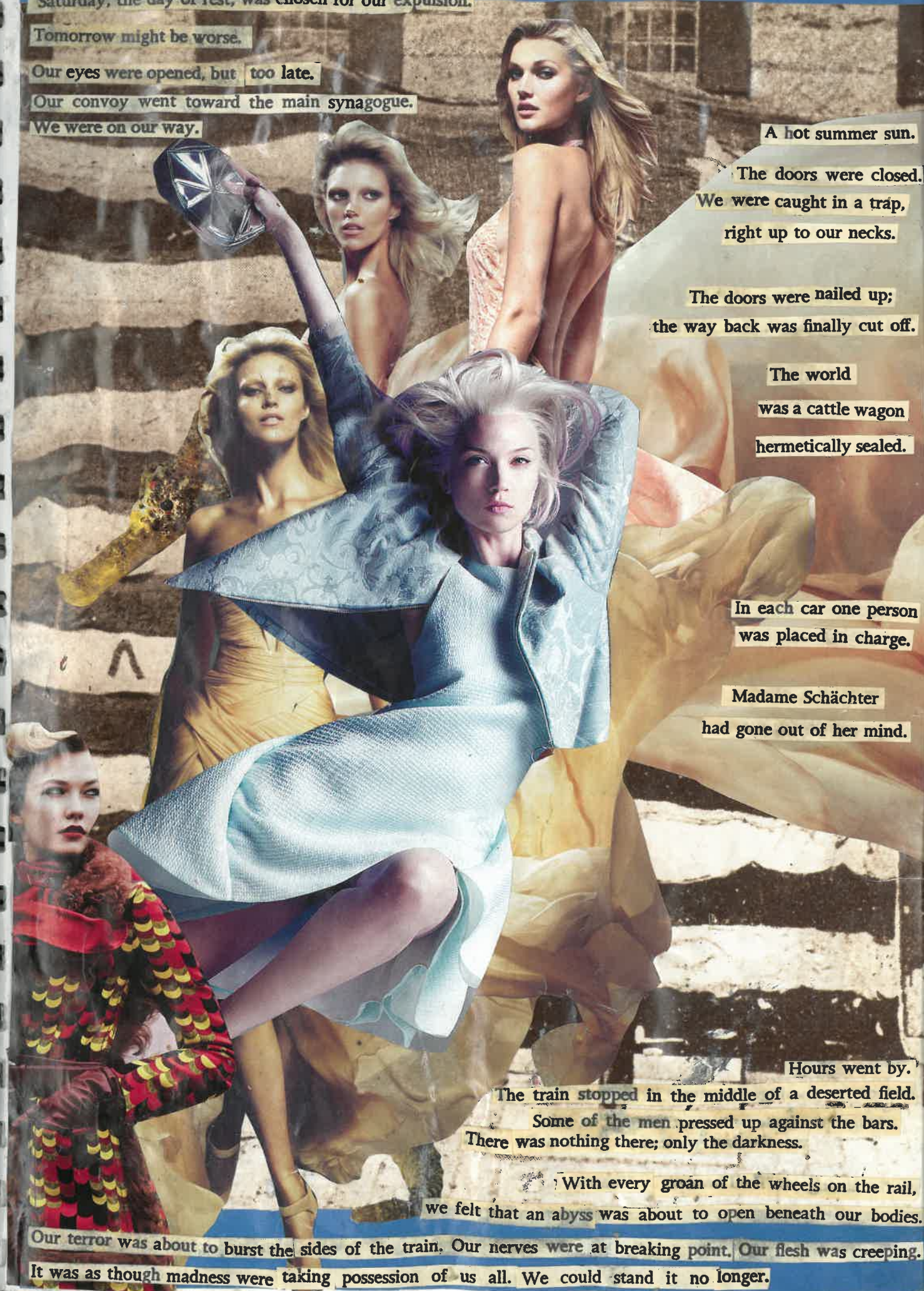
In each car one person  
was placed in charge.


Madame Schächter  
had gone out of her mind.

Hours went by.  
The train stopped in the middle of a deserted field.  
Some of the men pressed up against the bars.  
There was nothing there; only the darkness.

With every groan of the wheels on the rail,  
we felt that an abyss was about to open beneath our bodies.

Our terror was about to burst the sides of the train. Our nerves were at breaking point. Our flesh was creeping.  
It was as though madness were taking possession of us all. We could stand it no longer.



A photograph of three monkeys dressed in elaborate, shimmering gold sequined outfits and heavy diamond jewelry. The monkey on the left wears a crown and a necklace of diamonds. The monkey in the center wears a large diamond crown and a necklace. The monkey on the right wears a diamond crown and a necklace. They are all looking towards the camera.

**Night had fallen.**

**Night.**

**An endless night.**

It was late at night.

The guards came to unload us.

The dead were abandoned in the train.

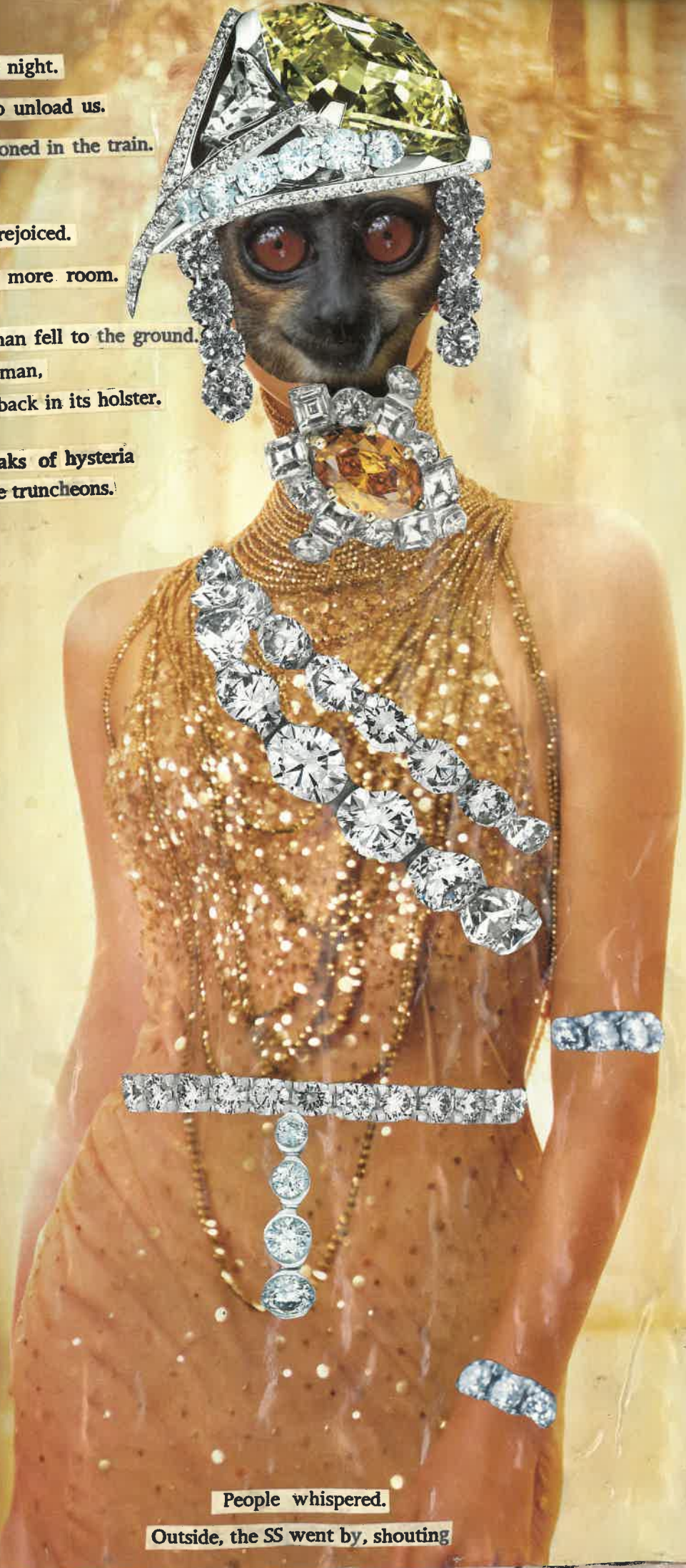
The living rejoiced.

There would be more room.

Behind me, an old man fell to the ground.

Near him was an SS man,  
putting his revolver back in its holster.

There were outbreaks of hysteria  
and blows with the truncheons.



People whispered.

Outside, the SS went by, shouting

'Auschwitz.'

'You're in a concentration camp.

At Auschwitz. . . .

You're going to be burned.

Frizzled away.

We looked at the flames in the darkness.

No, we had not heard.

No one had told us.

A hundred of us had  
got into the wagon.

A dozen of us got out-

Here was a

sudden release from

the terrors of the previous nights.

We gave thanks to God.



And in the middle of the twentieth century!

I did not believe that they could burn people

in our age, that humanity would never tolerate it. . . .

# CHANEL



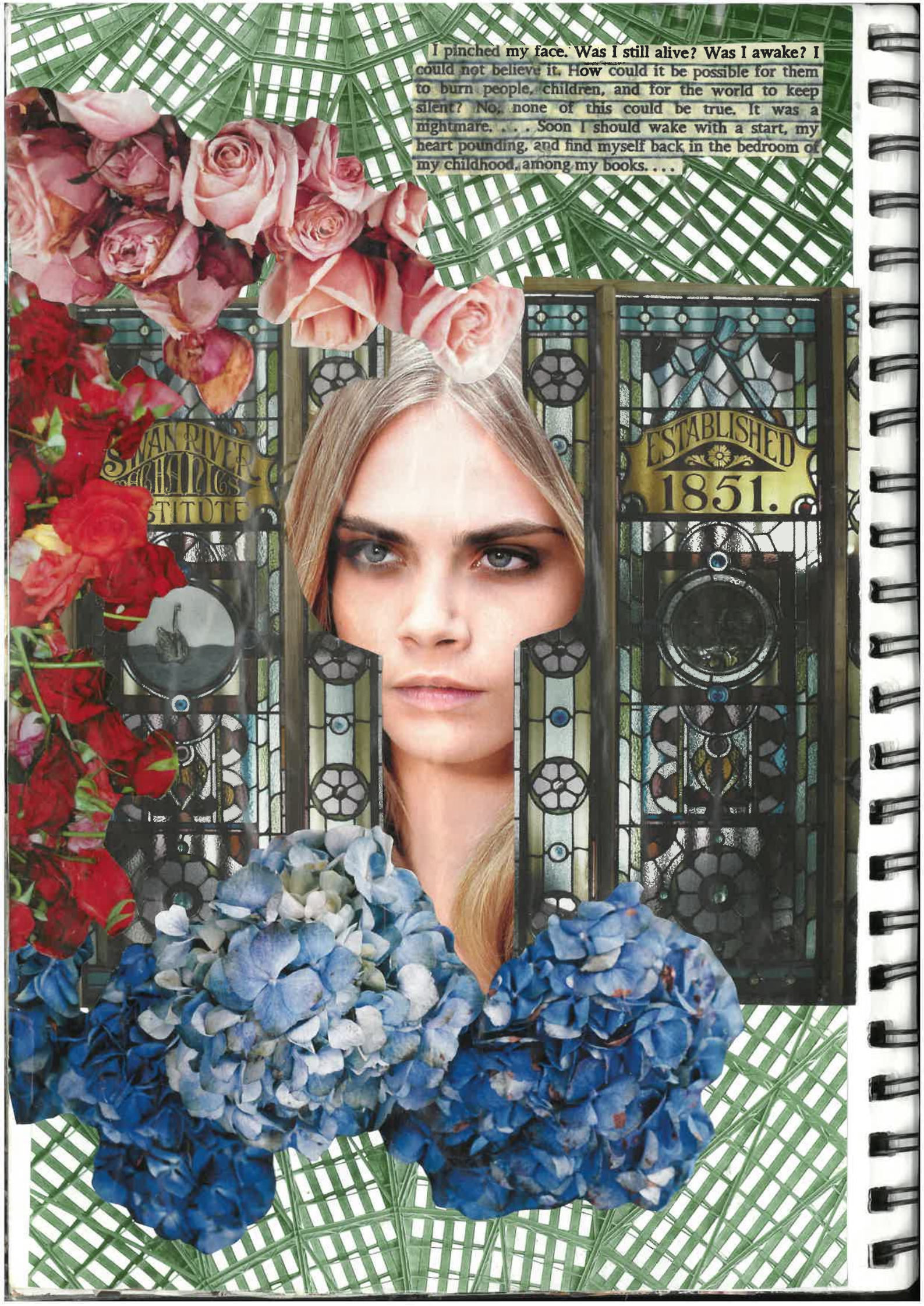
'Humanity?'

Humanity is not concerned  
with us.

Today anything is allowed.

Anything is possible,  
even these crematories. . . .'

I pinched my face. Was I still alive? Was I awake? I could not believe it. How could it be possible for them to burn people, children, and for the world to keep silent? No, none of this could be true. It was a nightmare. . . . Soon I should wake with a start, my heart pounding, and find myself back in the bedroom of my childhood, among my books. . . .



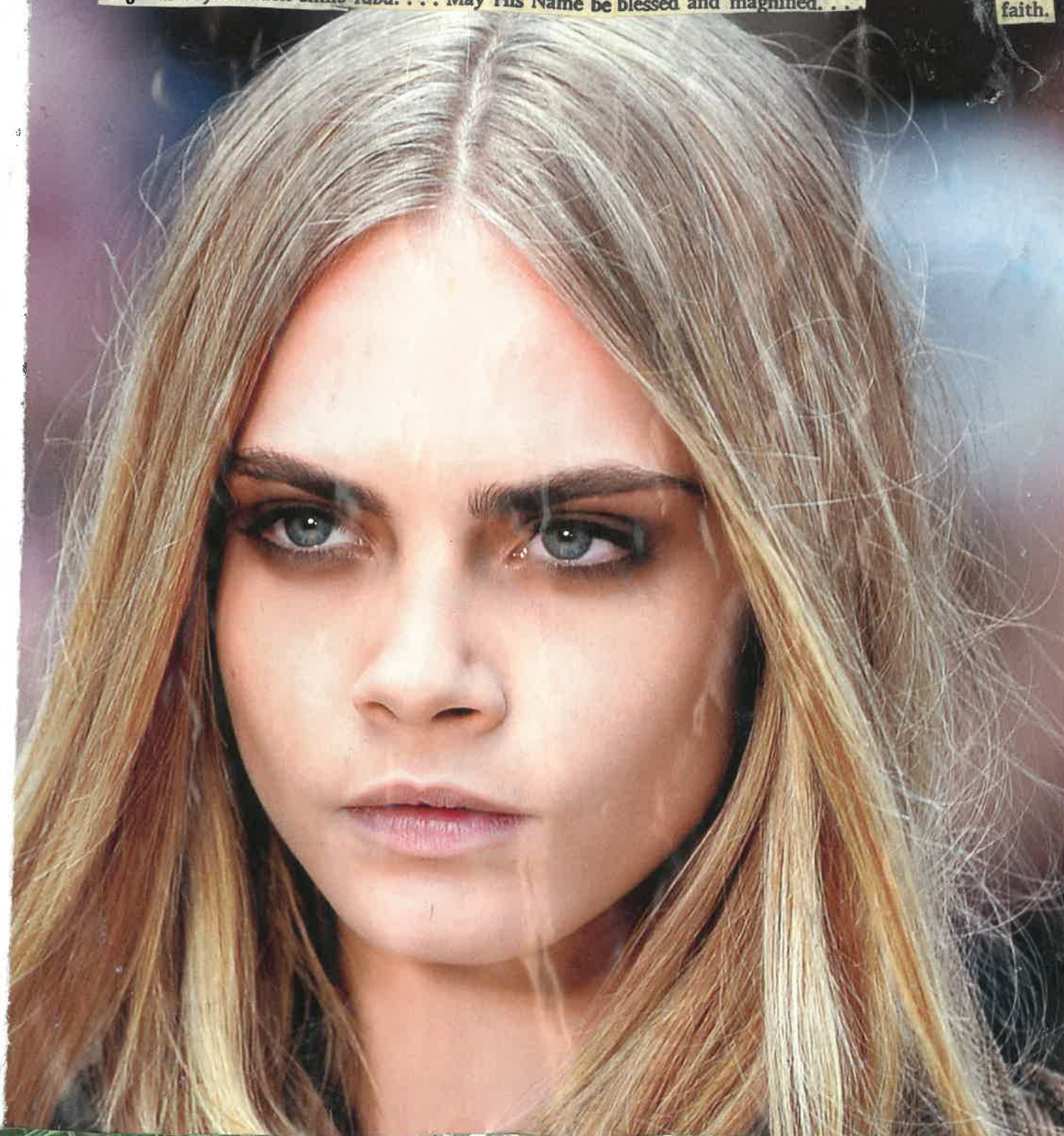
Some were praying.

Someone began to recite the Kaddish, the prayer for the dead. I do not know if it has ever happened before, in the long history of the Jews, that people have ever recited the prayer for the dead for themselves.

*'Yitgadal veyitkadach shmé raba. . . . May His Name be blessed and magnified. . . .'*

*Yitgadal veyitkadach shmé raba. . . . May His Name be blessed and magnified. . . .*

faith.



should I bless His name?

I did not deny God's existence, but I doubted His absolute justice.

The Eternal, Lord of the Universe, the All-Powerful and Terrible, was silent.

'What are You, my God!' I thought angrily, 'compared to this afflicted crowd, proclaiming to You their faith, their anger, their revolt? What does Your greatness mean, Lord of the Universe, in the face of all this weakness, this decomposition, and this decay? Why do You still trouble their sick minds, their crippled bodies?'

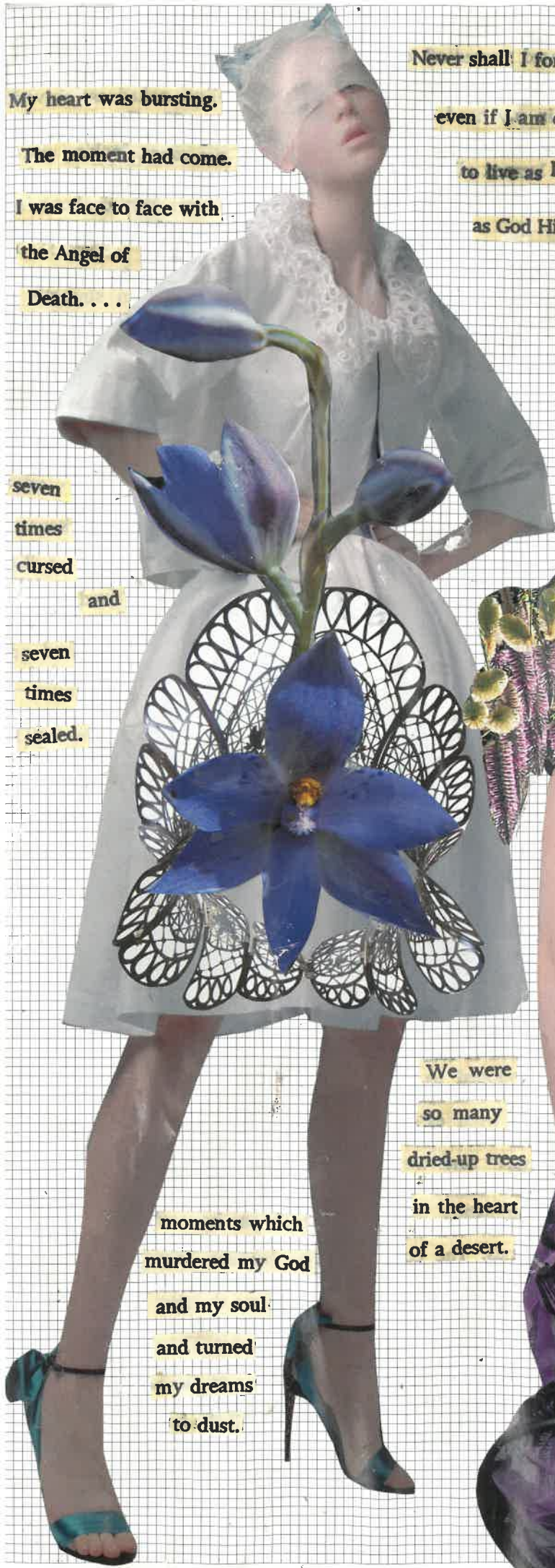


My heart was bursting.  
The moment had come.  
I was face to face with  
the Angel of  
Death. . . .

Never shall I forget these things,  
even if I am condemned  
to live as long  
as God Himself.

Blows  
continued  
to  
rain  
down.

seven  
times  
cursed  
and  
seven  
times  
sealed.

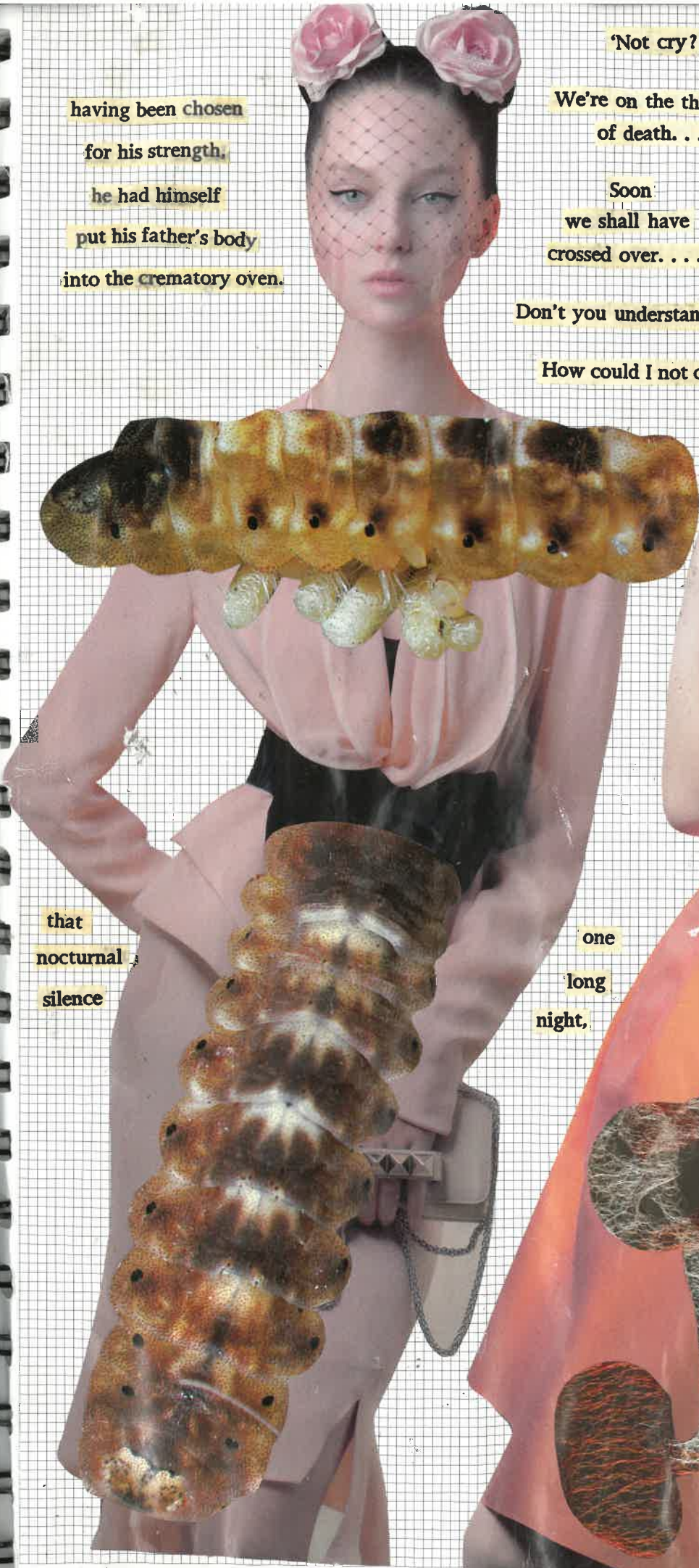


We were  
so many  
dried-up trees  
in the heart  
of a desert.

moments which  
murdered my God  
and my soul  
and turned  
my dreams  
to dust.



having been chosen  
for his strength,  
he had himself  
put his father's body  
into the crematory oven.



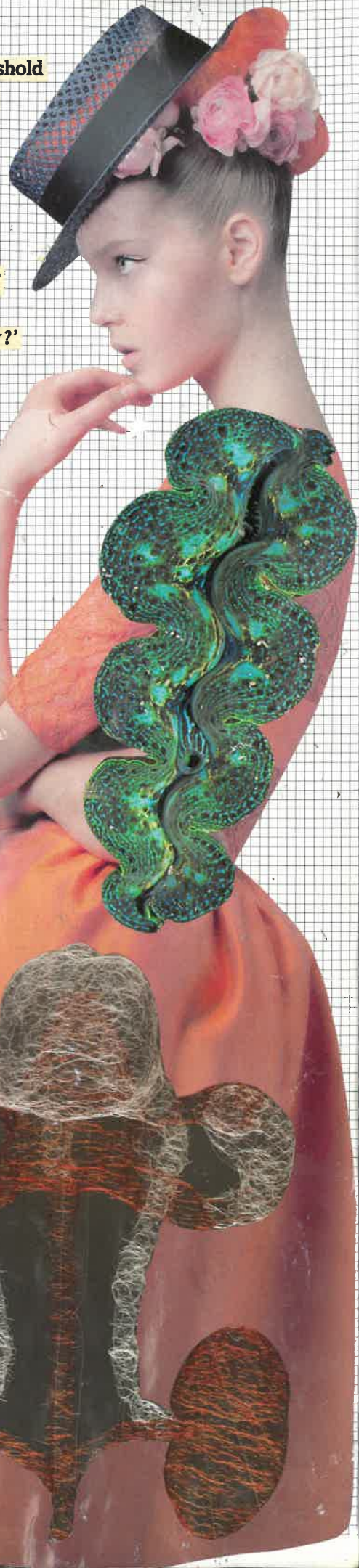
'Not cry?

We're on the threshold  
of death. . . .

Soon  
we shall have  
crossed over. . . .

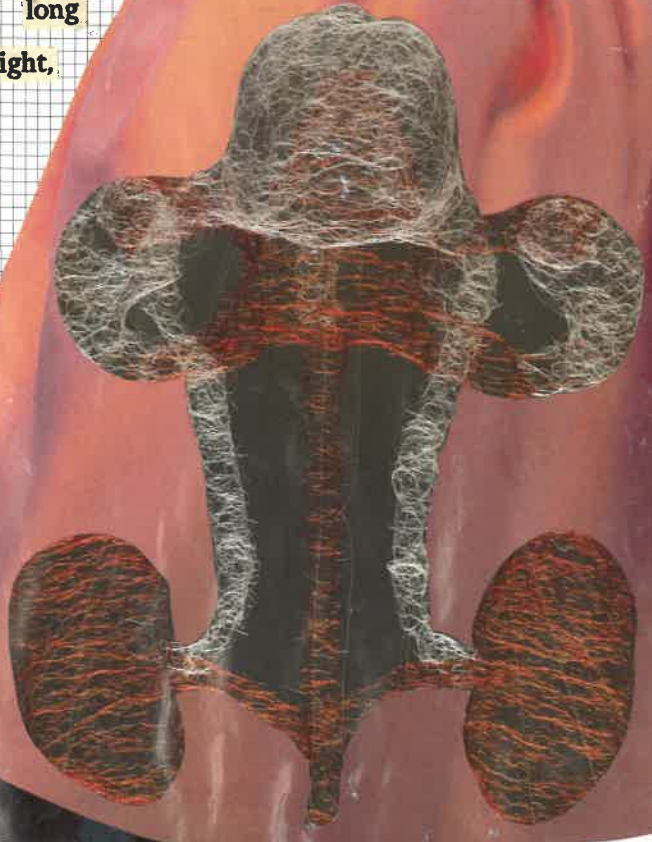
Don't you understand?

How could I not cry?'



that  
nocturnal  
silence

one  
long  
night,




Within a few seconds, we had ceased to be men.

I was transferred to the children's block, where there were six hundred of us.

'I'm not quite fifteen yet.'





Those absent no longer touched even the surface of our memories. We still spoke of them—'Who knows what may have become of them?'—but we had little concern for their fate. We were incapable of thinking of anything at all. Our senses were blunted; everything was blurred as in a fog. It was no longer possible to grasp anything.

The instincts of self-preservation, of self-defence, of pride, had all deserted us. In one ultimate moment of lucidity it seemed to me that we were damned souls wandering in the half-world, souls condemned to wander through space till the generations of man came to an end, seeking their redemption, seeking oblivion—without hope of finding it.



An SS officer had come in and, with him, the odour of the Angel of Death. We stared fixedly at his fleshy lips.

'Remember this,' he went on. 'Remember it forever. Engrave it into your minds. You are at Auschwitz. And Auschwitz is not a convalescent home. It's a concentration camp. Here, you have got to work. If not, you will go straight to the furnace. To the crematory. Work or the crematory—the choice is in your hands.'



Here the word 'furnace' was not a word of empty of meaning: it floated on the air, mingling with the smoke. It was perhaps the only word which did have any real meaning here.

I had not flickered an eyelid.

I had looked on and said nothing.

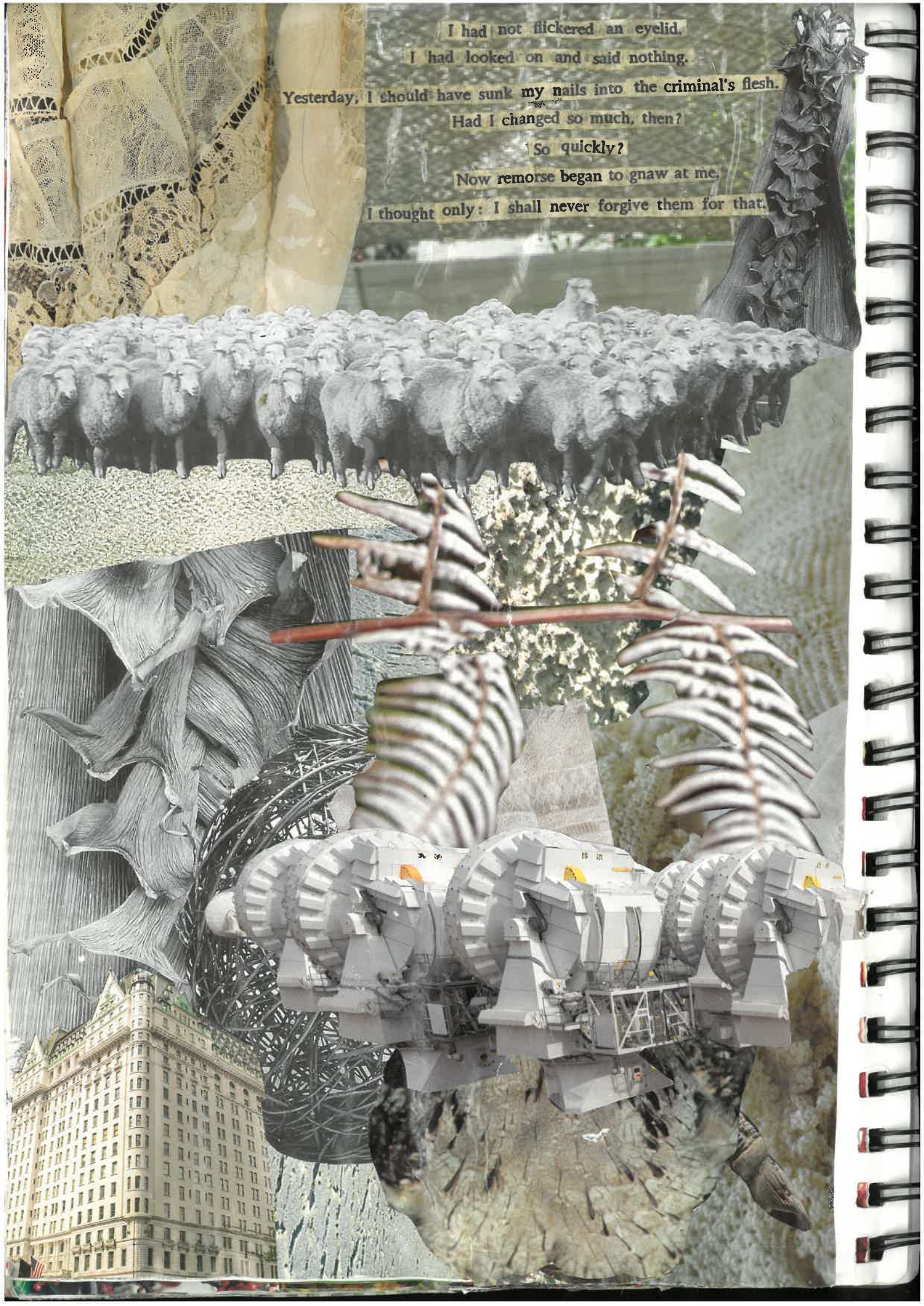
Yesterday, I should have sunk my nails into the criminal's flesh.


Had I changed so much, then?

So quickly?

Now remorse began to gnaw at me.

I thought only: I shall never forgive them for that.





The spring sunshine.

Revolvers,  
machine guns,  
police dogs.

It was a beautiful day in May.

The fragrance of spring  
was in the air.

Hundreds of cries  
rose up  
simultaneously.

Not knowing against  
whom we cried.

Not knowing why.

he roll call took place.

The sun was setting in the west.



Drive out despair,  
and you will keep death away  
from yourselves.

Hell is not for eternity.  
Were there still miracles on this earth?

Outside  
the sunshine  
warmed us.

To burn  
the  
whole  
world!

We talked of  
everything, except  
those who had  
disappeared.

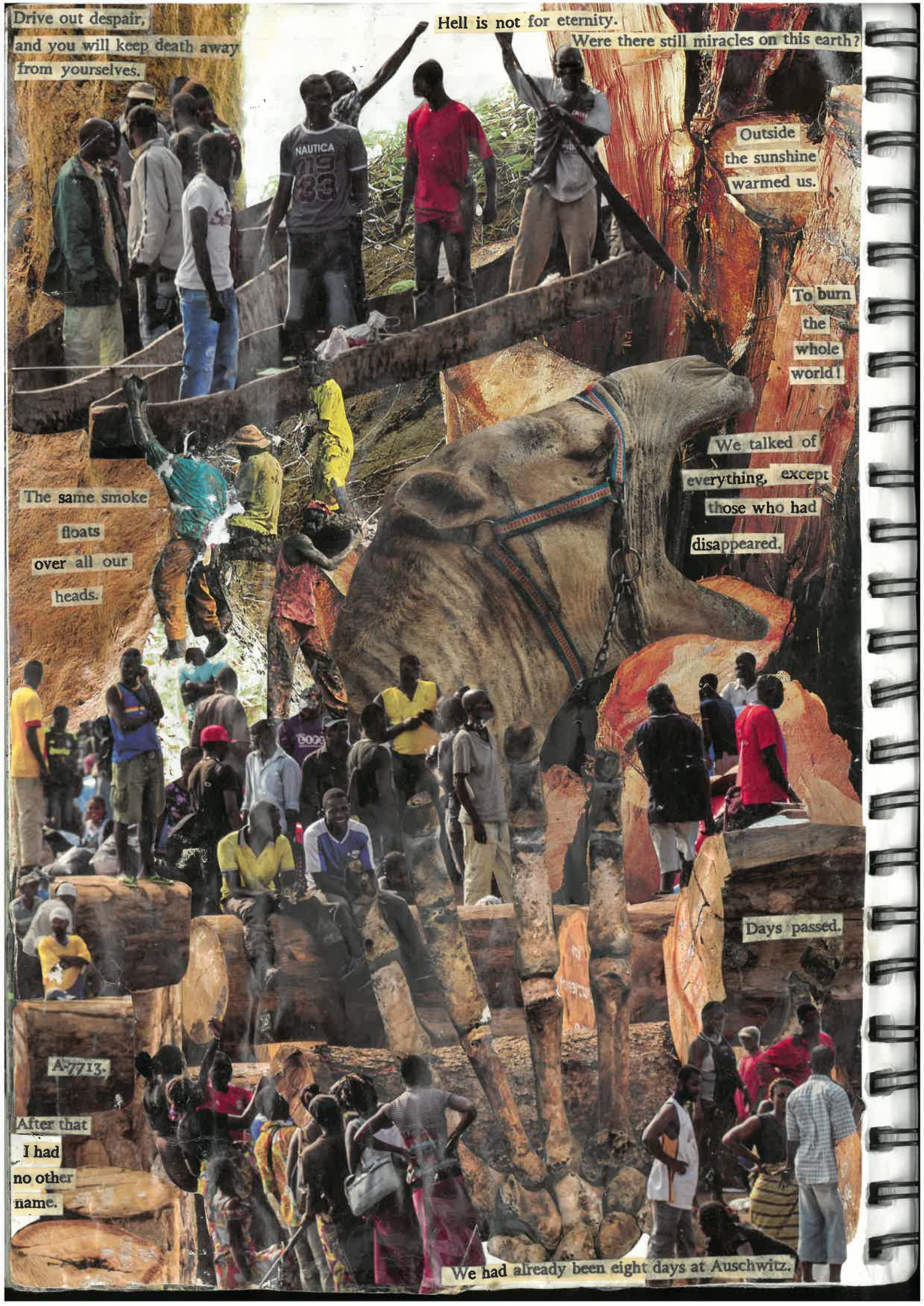
The same smoke  
floats  
over all our  
heads.

Days passed.

A-7713.

After that  
I had  
no other  
name.

We had already been eight days at Auschwitz.



We stayed at Auschwitz for three weeks.

We had nothing to do.

God is testing us.

We slept a great deal

He wants to find out whether we can dominate our base instincts

in the afternoon

and at night.

and kill the Satan within us.

We have no right to despair.

And if He punishes us relentlessly,

it's a sign

that He

loves us all the more.



Take care of your son. He's very weak and dried up.

Eat!

It doesn't matter what or when.

Look after him well, to avoid the selection.

Eat everything you can.

The weak don't hang about for long here. . . .

Man is too small, too humble and inconsiderable to seek to understand the mysterious ways of God.

We were surrounded by about ten SS.

On the door the plaque: 'Work is liberty.' We were counted.

And then, there we were, right out in the country on the sunny road.

In the sky a few little white clouds.

We walked slowly. The guards were in no hurry. We were glad of this.

As we went through the villages, many of the Germans stared at us without surprise.

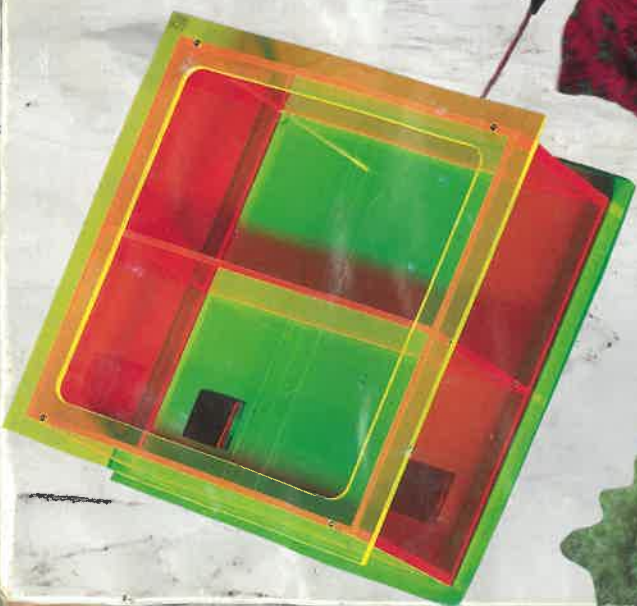
They had probably already seen quite a few of these processions.

The iron gate closed behind us.



Our convoy included a few children ten and twelve years old.

The officer took an interest in them and gave orders for them to be brought food.



We walked for several more hours before arriving.  
Behind their windows, behind their shutters,  
our com patriots looked out at us as we passed.

Who would have dared  
say anything  
to the contrary?

Actually he was not looking for decayed teeth,  
but gold ones.

'Simply take out your gold crown,'  
'But I haven't got toothache.'

The SS officers did the selecting.

'You . . . you . . . you and you . . .'

They pointed a finger,  
as though choosing cattle or merchandise.

You're too thin, you're too weak. . . .

Dozens of units left for the workyards, in step.

Jews were not allowed to play German music;

He paid us about as much attention as a dealer might who was just receiving a delivery of old rags.

Here, there are no fathers, no brothers, no friends.

Everyone lives and dies for himself alone.

You died because you had to die.

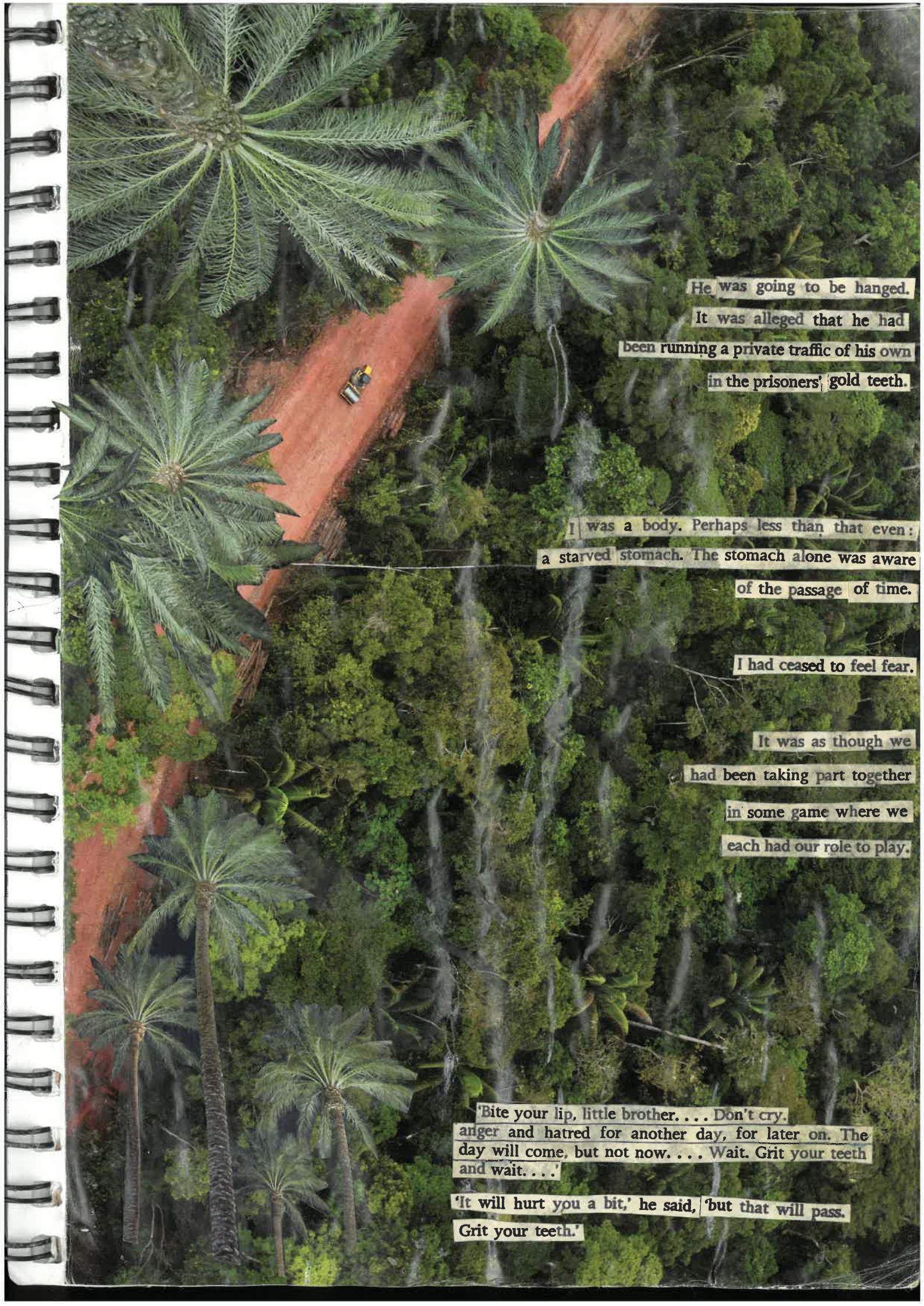
There was no fuss.

In every stiffened corpse

I saw myself.

'A-7713?'  
'That's me.'

the young ones,  
the weak,  
all those who were dreaming  
more about an extra plateful  
than of liberty.

An aerial photograph of a lush tropical forest. A prominent red dirt road winds through the dense green canopy. Several large palm trees are visible, their fronds spreading out. A small vehicle is parked on the road. The image is overlaid with several lines of text in white boxes.

He was going to be hanged.

It was alleged that he had been running a private traffic of his own in the prisoners' gold teeth.

I was a body. Perhaps less than that even: a starved stomach. The stomach alone was aware of the passage of time.

I had ceased to feel fear.

It was as though we had been taking part together in some game where we each had our role to play.

'Bite your lip, little brother. . . . Don't cry, anger and hatred for another day, for later on. The day will come, but not now. . . . Wait. Grit your teeth and wait. . . .'

'It will hurt you a bit,' he said, 'but that will pass. Grit your teeth.'

'Am I Jewish . . . ? Yes, I am Jewish. From a religious family. During the occupation I obtained forged papers and passed myself off as an Aryan. That's how I was enlisted in the forced labour groups, and when I was deported to Germany, I escaped the concentration camp. At the warehouse, no one knew I could speak German. That would have aroused suspicions. Saying those few words to you was risky: but I knew you wouldn't give me away. . . .'



Speaking in a low voice,  
he said,  
You wait and see, kid. . . .  
You'll soon find out  
what leaving your work's  
going to cost you. . . .  
You're going to pay for this  
pretty soon. . . .  
And now, go back to your place.'



At first  
my father crouched  
under the blows,  
then he broke  
in two, like a dry tree  
struck by lightning,  
and collapsed.

'A-7713!'  
I came forward.

Then I was aware  
of nothing but  
the strokes of the  
whip.

He took his time  
between  
each stroke.

the SS had orders to kill  
anyone found outside the blocks.

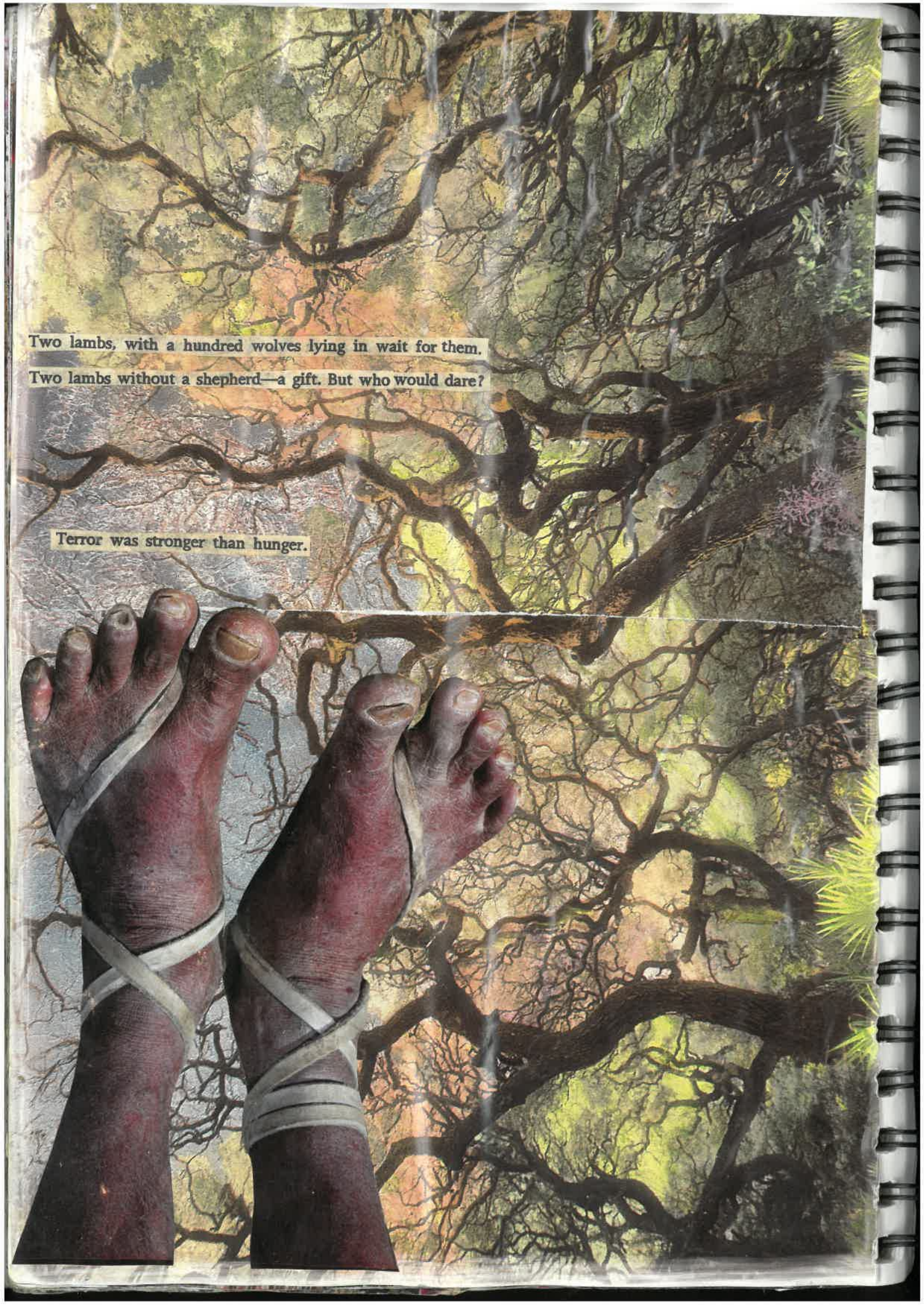
Get up  
you filthy sons of bitches!

'Faster, you filthy sons of bitches!'

Under our feet were men crushed,  
trampled underfoot, dying.  
No one paid any attention.  
I had watched the whole scene  
without moving.  
I kept quiet.  
I did not move.  
I was afraid.  
I could have wept with rage.  
I was silent.








Two lambs, with a hundred wolves lying in wait for them.

Two lambs without a shepherd—a gift. But who would dare?

Terror was stronger than hunger.



Then we began to hear the airplanes.  
But we were no longer afraid of death; at any rate, not of that death.  
Then silence fell once more. The raid lasted over an hour.  
A great trail of black smoke was rising up on the horizon.  
We filled our lungs with the fire- and smoke-laden air,  
and our eyes shone with hope.  
The SS had gone back to their lookout posts, behind their machine guns.  
The interlude was over.



All round me death was moving in,  
silently, without violence.

Ten thousand caps  
were simultaneously removed.

Ten thousand caps  
went back on to their skulls,  
as quick as lightning.

He was a youth from Warsaw.  
He had three years of concentra-  
tion camp life behind him.

His eyes gazed coldly at the hundreds of SS guards,  
the thousands of prisoners who surrounded him.

No one moved.  
I could hear my heart beating.  
The thousands who had died daily at Auschwitz  
and at Birkenau in the crematory ovens  
no longer troubled me.  
But this one, leaning against his gallows—  
he overwhelmed me.

I witnessed other hangings.

Night was falling.

Ten thousand prisoners paid their last respects.

'Where is God? Where is He?' someone behind me asked.

Total silence throughout the camp. On the horizon, the sun was setting.

'Blessed be the Name of the Eternal!'

'Blessed be the Name of the Eternal!'

'Where is He? Here He is—

He is hanging here on

this gallows. ...'

'All the earth and the Universe

are God's!'

'All creation bears witness

to the Greatness of God!'

Once,

I had believed profoundly

that upon one solitary deed of mine,

one solitary prayer,

depended the salvation

of the world.

I no longer

accepted

God's silence.

Why, but why should I bless Him? In every fibre I rebelled. Because He had had thousands of children burned in His pits? Because He kept six crematories working night and day, on Sundays and feast days? Because in His great might He had created Auschwitz, Birkenau, Buna, and so many factories of death? How could I say to Him: 'Blessed art Thou, Eternal, Master of the Universe, Who chose us from among the races to be tortured day and night, to see our fathers, our mothers, our brothers, end in the crematory? Praised be Thy Holy Name, Thou Who hast chosen us to be butchered on Thine altar?'

This day I had ceased to plead. I was no longer capable of lamentation. On the contrary, I felt very strong. I was the accuser, God the accused. My eyes were open and I was alone—terribly alone in a world without God and without man. Without love or mercy. I had ceased to be anything but ashes, yet I felt myself to be stronger than the Almighty, to whom my life had been tied for so long.



The veterans said:

'You're lucky to have been brought here so late. This camp is paradise today, compared with what it was like two years ago. Buna was a real hell then. There was no water, no blankets, less soup and bread. At night we slept almost naked, and it was below thirty degrees. The corpses were collected in hundreds every day. The work was hard. Today, this is a little paradise. The Kapos had orders to kill a certain number of prisoners every day. And every week—selection. A merciless selection....

'Yes, you're lucky.'

'They burst out laughing.

'They were not veterans for nothing.

'Are you scared?

'So were we scared.

'And there was plenty to be scared of in those days.'

An hour's delay.

In an hour,


we should know

the

verdict—

death or a reprieve.

The old men stayed in their corner,  
dumb, motionless, hunted.



There were three SS officers standing round the notorious Dr. Mengele, who had received us at Birkenau.

Mengele was holding a list in his hand: our numbers.

Those whose numbers had been noted stood apart, abandoned by the whole world.

The bell rang, a signal that the selection had been completed throughout the camp.

Several days had elapsed.

We no longer thought about the selection.

Dr. Mengele had not forgotten.

I have a list of numbers here.

Every now and then, he wrote a number down.

'Was I written down?'

He felt that his time was short.

He spoke quickly.

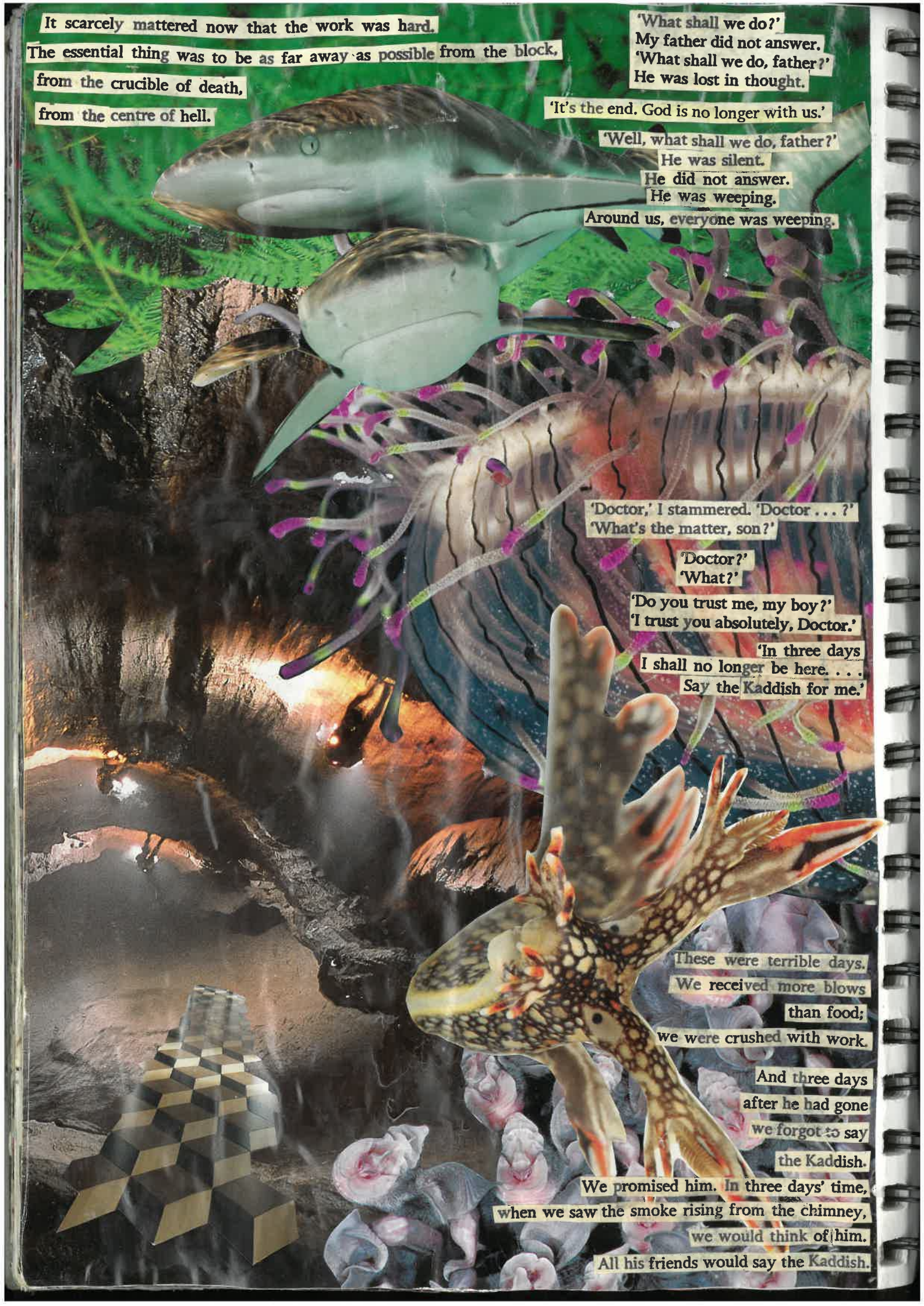
The inheritance.

He was alive.

I gave him back

his knife and spoon.

Do as your father asks.



It scarcely mattered now that the work was hard.  
The essential thing was to be as far away as possible from the block,  
from the crucible of death,  
from the centre of hell.

'What shall we do?'  
My father did not answer.  
'What shall we do, father?'  
He was lost in thought.

'It's the end. God is no longer with us.'

'Well, what shall we do, father?'

He was silent.

He did not answer.

He was weeping.

Around us, everyone was weeping.

'Doctor,' I stammered. 'Doctor . . . ?'  
'What's the matter, son?'

'Doctor?'

'What?'

'Do you trust me, my boy?'  
'I trust you absolutely, Doctor.'

'In three days  
I shall no longer be here. . . .  
Say the Kaddish for me.'

These were terrible days.  
We received more blows  
than food;  
we were crushed with work.

And three days  
after he had gone  
we forgot to say  
the Kaddish.

We promised him. In three days' time,  
when we saw the smoke rising from the chimney,  
we would think of him.

All his friends would say the Kaddish.

Winter had come. The days were short, and the nights had become almost unbearable. In the first hours of dawn, the icy wind cut us like a whip.

But you get used to anything.

During these last few nights, we had heard the guns in the distance.

'I've got more faith in Hitler than in anyone else. He's the only one who's kept his promises, all his promises, to the Jewish people.'

'All the invalids will be summarily killed,' said the faceless one. 'And sent to the crematory in a final batch.'

I learned after the war the fate of those who had stayed behind in the hospital. They were quite simply liberated by the Russians two days after the evacuation.

Some said we were being taken to Czechoslovakia. No, to Gros-Rosen. No, to Gleiwitz. No, to . . .

Two o'clock in the afternoon. The snow was still coming down thickly.

The time was passing quickly now. Dusk had fallen. The day was disappearing in a monochrome of grey.

Night had fallen.

It snowed relentlessly.

Pitch darkness. Every now and then, an explosion in the night. They had orders to fire on any who could not keep up. Their fingers on the triggers, they did not deprive themselves of this pleasure. If one of us stopped for a second, a sharp shot

Death wrapped itself around me till I was stifled. It stuck to me. I felt that I could touch it. The idea of dying, of no longer being, began to fascinate me. Not to exist any longer. Not to feel the horrible pains in my foot. Not to feel anything, neither weariness, nor cold, nor anything. To break the ranks, to let oneself slide to the edge of the road. . . .

An endless road. Letting oneself be pushed by the mob; letting oneself be dragged along by a blind destiny.

Our limbs numb with cold despite the running, our throats parched, famished, breathless, on we went.

We were masters of nature, masters of the world. We had forgotten everything—death, fatigue, our natural needs. Stronger than cold or hunger, stronger than the shots and the desire to die, condemned and wandering, mere numbers, we were the only men on earth.

Around me everything was dancing a dance of death.

stiffened corpses, logs of wood. Not a cry of distress, not a groan, nothing but a mass agony, in silence.

The snow continued to fall in thick flakes over the corpses.





'It happened on the road. We lost sight of one another during the journey. I had stayed a little to the rear of the column. I hadn't any strength left for running. And my son didn't notice. That's all I know. Where has he disappeared? Where can I find him? Perhaps you've seen him somewhere?'

A terrible thought loomed up in my mind: he had wanted to get rid of his father! He had felt that his father was growing weak, he had believed that the end was near and had sought this separation in order to get rid of the burden, to free himself from an encumbrance which could lessen his own chances of survival.



And, in spite of myself, a prayer rose in my heart, to that God in whom I no longer believed.

My God, Lord of the Universe, give me strength never to do what Rabbi Eliahou's son has done.

Shouts rose outside in the yard, where darkness had fallen.

The SS ordered the ranks to form up. The march began again.

The dead stayed in the yard under the snow, like faithful guards assassinated,

The snow never ceased.

'You're crushing me . . . mercy!'

'You're crushing me . . . mercy! mercy!'

'Mercy!'

I felt that I was crushing him.

I was stopping his breath.

But I was crushed myself  
beneath the weight of other bodies.

I wanted to get up.

I could hardly breathe.

I dug my nails into unknown faces.

No one cried out.

I was unable to breathe.

Sweat beaded my brow,

ran down my spine.

This was the end—the end of the road.

A silent death, suffocation.

No way of crying out,

of calling for help.

We stayed at Gleiwitz for three days. Three days without food or drink.

We heard that we were going to be deported into the centre of Germany.

The weak, to the left; those who could walk well, to the right.

After half an hour's marching we arrived right in the middle of a field divided by rails.

We had to wait for the train to arrive.

An infinitely long train, composed of cattle wagons, with no roofs.

Pressed up against the others in an effort to keep out the cold, head empty and heavy at the same time, brain a whirlpool of decaying memories. Indifference deadened the spirit. Here or elsewhere—what difference did it make? To die today or tomorrow, or later?

The night was long

My mind was invaded suddenly by this realization —there was no more reason to live, no more reason to struggle.

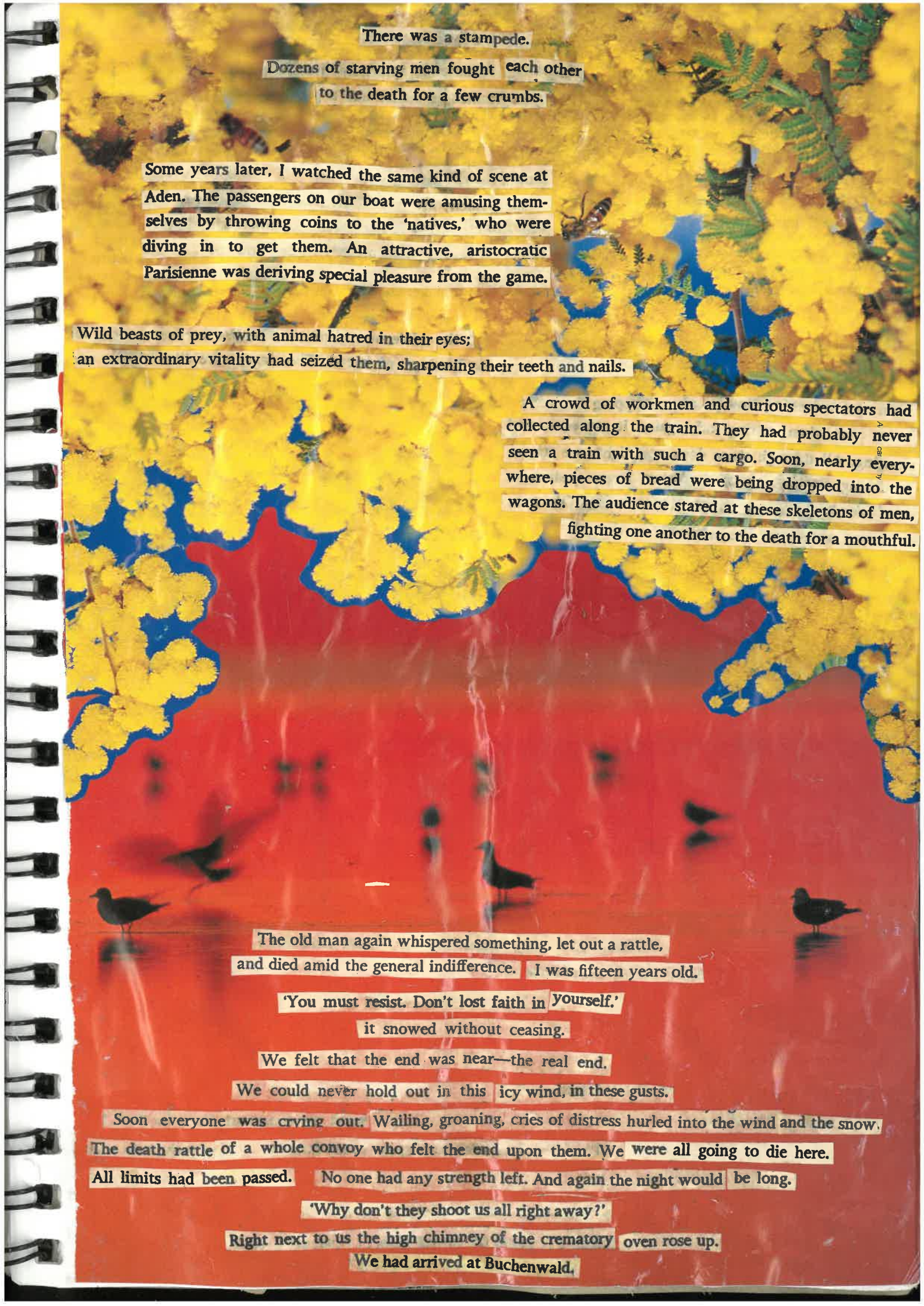
'Throw out all the dead! All corpses outside!'

my father's eyelids moved slightly over his glazed eyes. He was breathing weakly.

Twenty bodies were thrown out of our wagon.

Then the train resumed its journey, leaving behind it a few hundred naked dead, deprived of burial, in the deep snow of a field in Poland.





There was a stampede.

Dozens of starving men fought each other  
to the death for a few crumbs.

Some years later, I watched the same kind of scene at  
Aden. The passengers on our boat were amusing them-  
selves by throwing coins to the 'natives,' who were  
diving in to get them. An attractive, aristocratic  
Parisienne was deriving special pleasure from the game.

Wild beasts of prey, with animal hatred in their eyes;  
an extraordinary vitality had seized them, sharpening their teeth and nails.

A crowd of workmen and curious spectators had  
collected along the train. They had probably never  
seen a train with such a cargo. Soon, nearly every-  
where, pieces of bread were being dropped into the  
wagons. The audience stared at these skeletons of men,  
fighting one another to the death for a mouthful.

The old man again whispered something, let out a rattle,  
and died amid the general indifference. I was fifteen years old.

'You must resist. Don't lost faith in yourself.'

it snowed without ceasing.

We felt that the end was near—the real end.

We could never hold out in this icy wind, in these gusts.

Soon everyone was crying out. Wailing, groaning, cries of distress hurled into the wind and the snow.

The death rattle of a whole convoy who felt the end upon them. We were all going to die here.

All limits had been passed. No one had any strength left. And again the night would be long.

'Why don't they shoot us all right away?'

Right next to us the high chimney of the crematory oven rose up.

We had arrived at Buchenwald.

I spent my days in a state of total idleness,  
And I had but one desire—to eat.  
I no longer thought of my father or of my mother.  
I awoke on January 29 at dawn.  
In my father's place lay another invalid.  
I have nothing to say of my life  
during this period.  
It no longer mattered.

After my father's death,  
nothing could  
touch me any more.  
They must have taken him away before dawn  
and carried him to the crematory.  
He may still have been breathing.  
There were no prayers at his grave.

On April fifth,  
the wheel  
of history  
turned.

This was the end!  
Hitler was going to  
keep his promise.

'Perhaps the Russians will arrive first.'  
'Perhaps.'

On April tenth, there were still about twenty thousand  
of us in the camp, including several hundred children.  
They decided to evacuate us all at once, right on until  
the evening.

Afterward, they were going to  
blow up the camp.

I had to stay at Buchenwald until April eleventh.  
waiting to see the gate open.

Were they going to let the Jews hear the twelfth stroke sound?



The gates of the camp opened.

And the evacuation began.

It seemed that an even darker night  
was waiting for us on the other side.

Buchenwald was to be liquidated.

We were tormented with hunger. We had eaten  
nothing for six days, except a bit of grass or some  
potato peelings found near the kitchens.

Then the resistance movement decided to act.

Armed men

suddenly rose up everywhere.

Bursts of firing. Grenades exploding.

The battle did not last long.

Toward noon everything was quiet again.

The SS had fled and the resistance had  
taken charge of the running of the camp.

At about six o'clock in the evening,

the first American tank  
stood at the gates  
of Buchenwald.



I wanted to see myself in the mirror,  
I had not seen myself since the ghetto.  
From the depths of the mirror,  
a corpse gazed back at me.  
The look in his eyes, as they  
stared into mine, has  
never left me.

