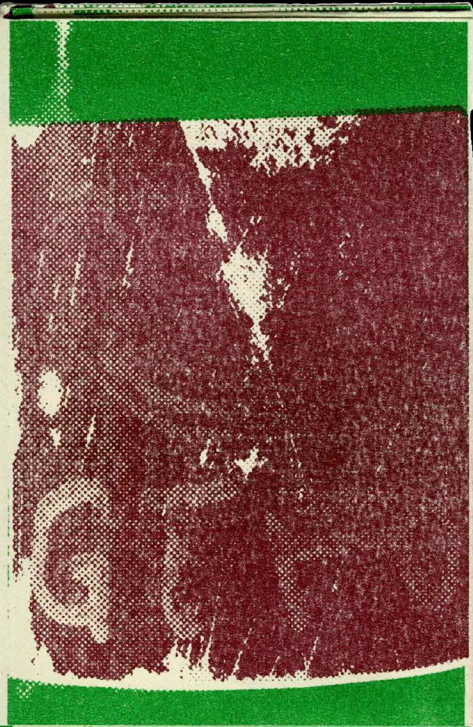


*I am here
&
I will go.*

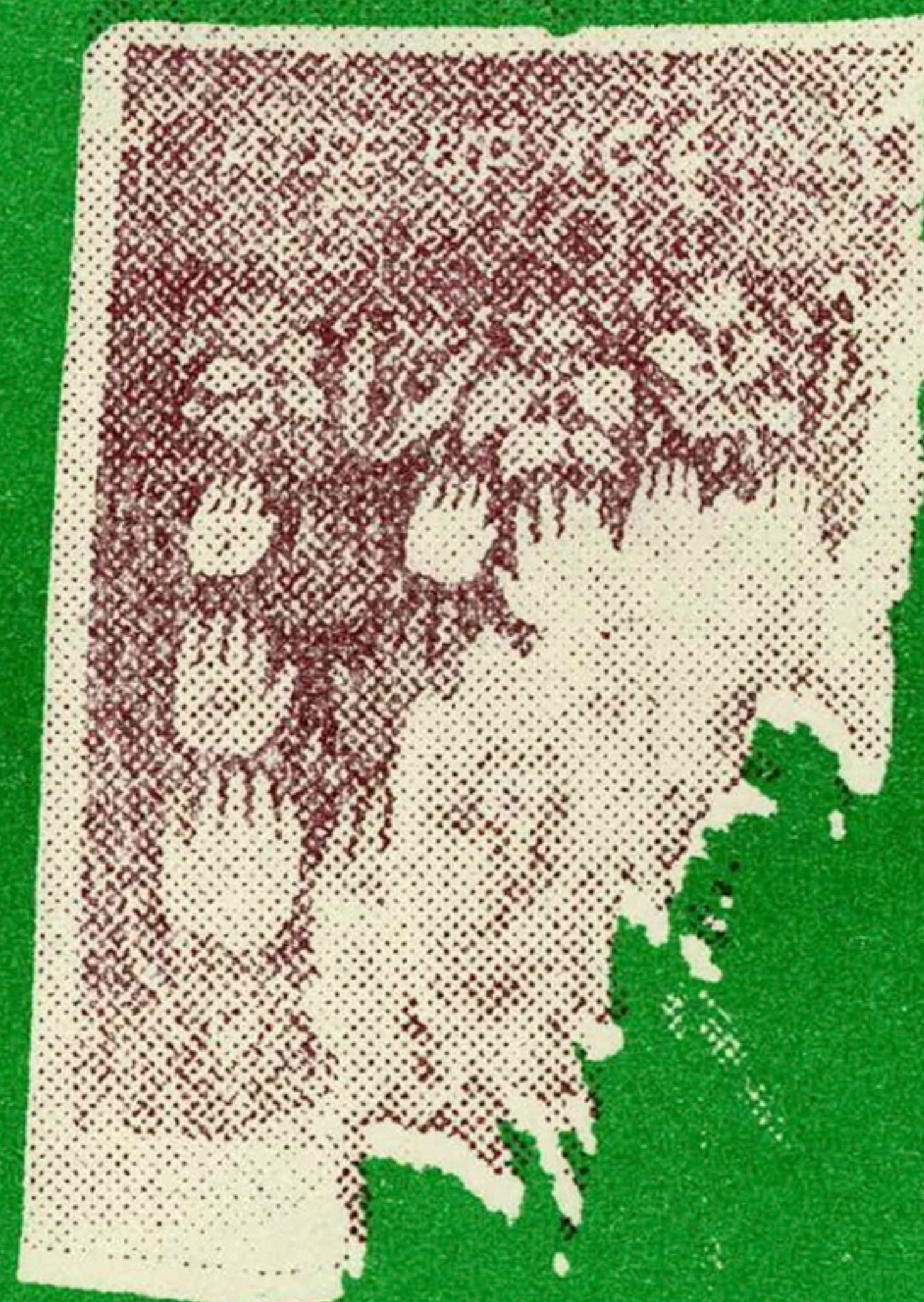
I will go to the house my great grandfather built in Yaffa, the one they only lived in for a few years before being displaced. I will look for the orange tree outside that my gido always talked about, the one that grew the best oranges he's ever had. But it's ok. It won't be there anymore. Cut down decades ago because stealing wasn't enough for them; they had to destroy everything they touched. We find seeds and plant a new tree, water it so its roots grow deep and strong once again, following the same trails below the earth.



I will go to Gaza. To Jabalya and to Rafah where my grandparents grew up in tents, where I have buried relatives I've never met. I will finally walk the same land that was fought and died for, land watered by so much blood the only thing that grows there will be ghosts. But we honor our dead, give thanks to every single one who paid for our freedom with their life and pray they are at peace. We light candles for them, frame their photos, rebuild their homes, wish they could see us now. And even though nothing grows, even though the land feels haunted, the people flock to Gaza. It has always been our heartbeat.



I'll go to Al-Majdal; the seaside village that's been wiped off the map. It would be easier to walk through the rubble, but wherever I look, there'll be buildings, homes, wildlife that doesn't belong here. And even though I'm desperate to rebuild it just like the photos from before, to remake it into the Majdal from my grandparents memories, I know we can't. There's no going back to what it was, now, not after everything. And though it breaks my heart, the chance to build something wholly new is intoxicating.



*I will lay down between
the grass and the flowers
growing from the same earth I
grew from. I will burrow myself
deep into the dirt until it is all I
can see, all I can smell, all I can
breathe, until I dissolve into
earth and dirt and clay myself,
and then I will finally be at
peace.*

*Writing by Yasmeen Amer
Photography by Doreen Alfariz
Type set in Aveniria Serif Libre
2024*

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نَعِيدُكُمْ
وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى