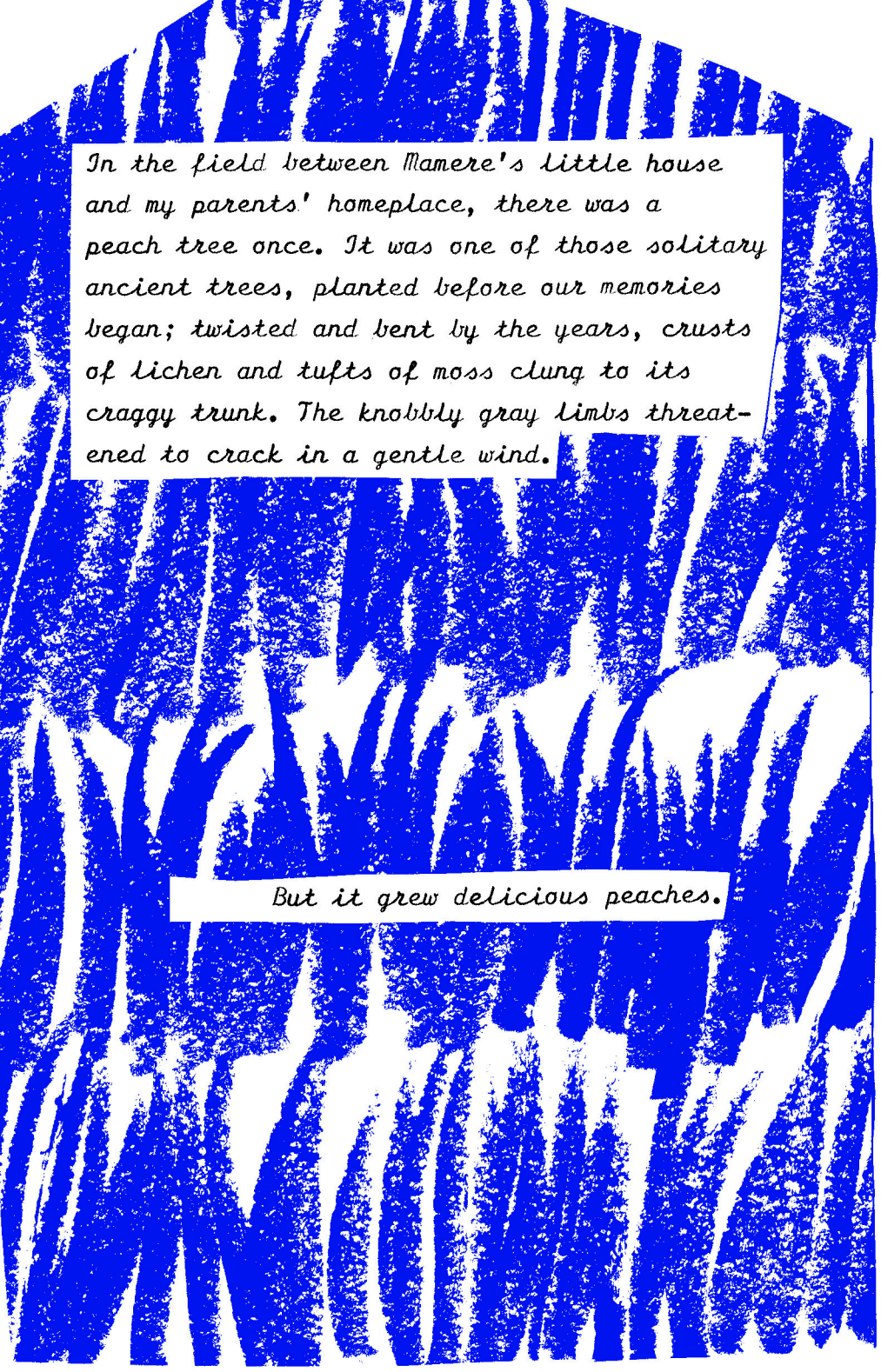



*But it grew*

*By Lyndey  
2024*




*In the field between Mamere's little house and my parents' homeplace, there was a peach tree once. It was one of those solitary ancient trees, planted before our memories began; twisted and bent by the years, crusts of lichen and tufts of moss clung to its craggy trunk. The knobbly gray limbs threatened to crack in a gentle wind.*

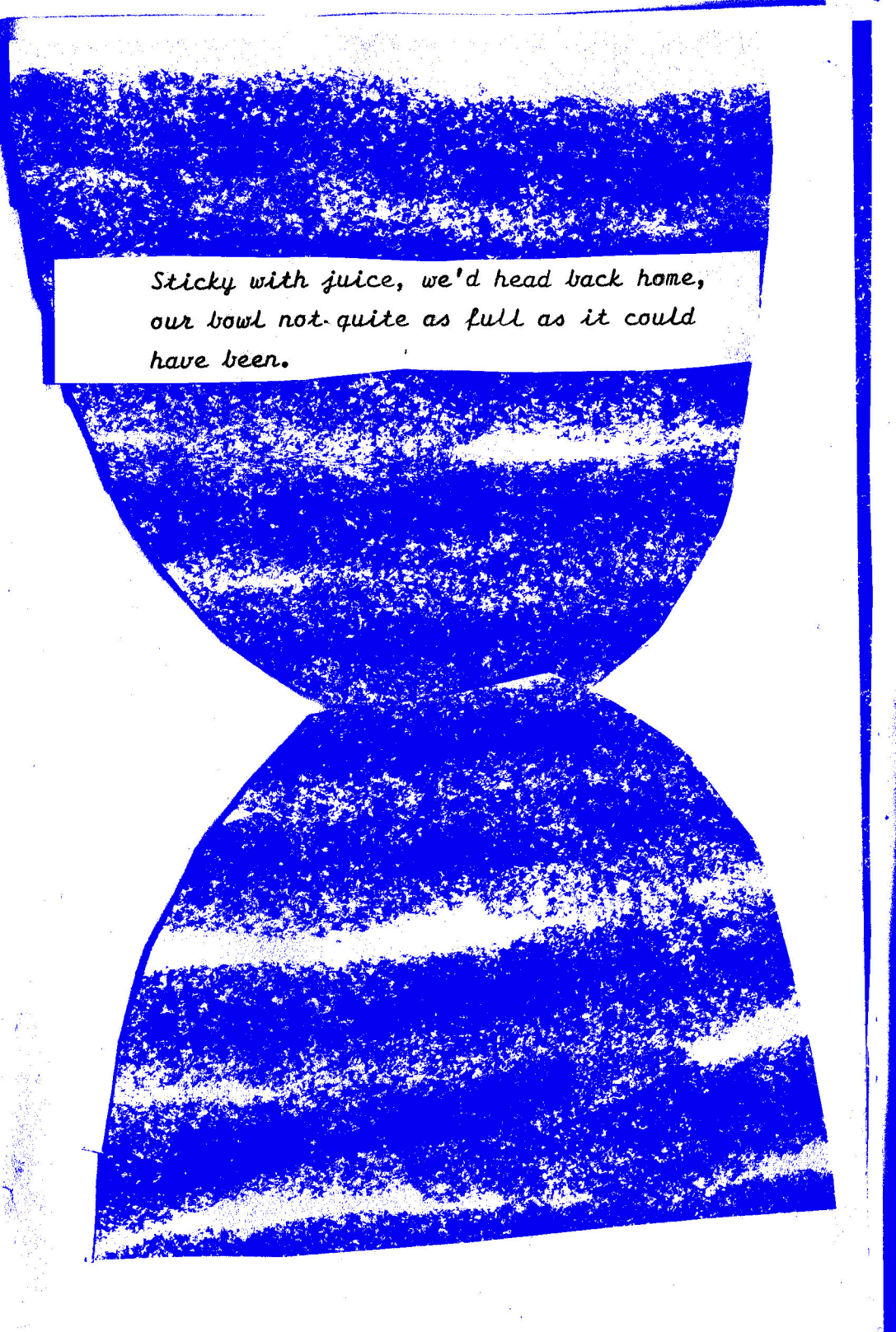
*But it grew delicious peaches.*

A circular arrangement of many small, dark, textured peaches, possibly a basket or a bowl, viewed from above. The peaches are densely packed and have a rough, bumpy surface. A white, irregularly shaped text box is overlaid on the lower right portion of the image.

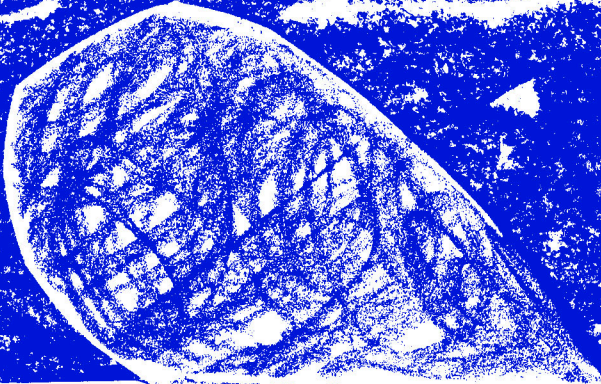
*The fruits  
were small and intensely sweet. Not a  
single one were shaped like a peach from  
the grocery store, Lord no. These peaches  
grew their own wild curves and dips without  
a care for convention.*



My brother Tyler and I would walk through  
the high grasses, stepping ~~care~~ cautiously  
around fire ant beds, carrying the round  
yellow Tupperware bowl—the one with a rut  
burned into its plastic side, like a  
fingertip run across an open tub of Cool Whip.



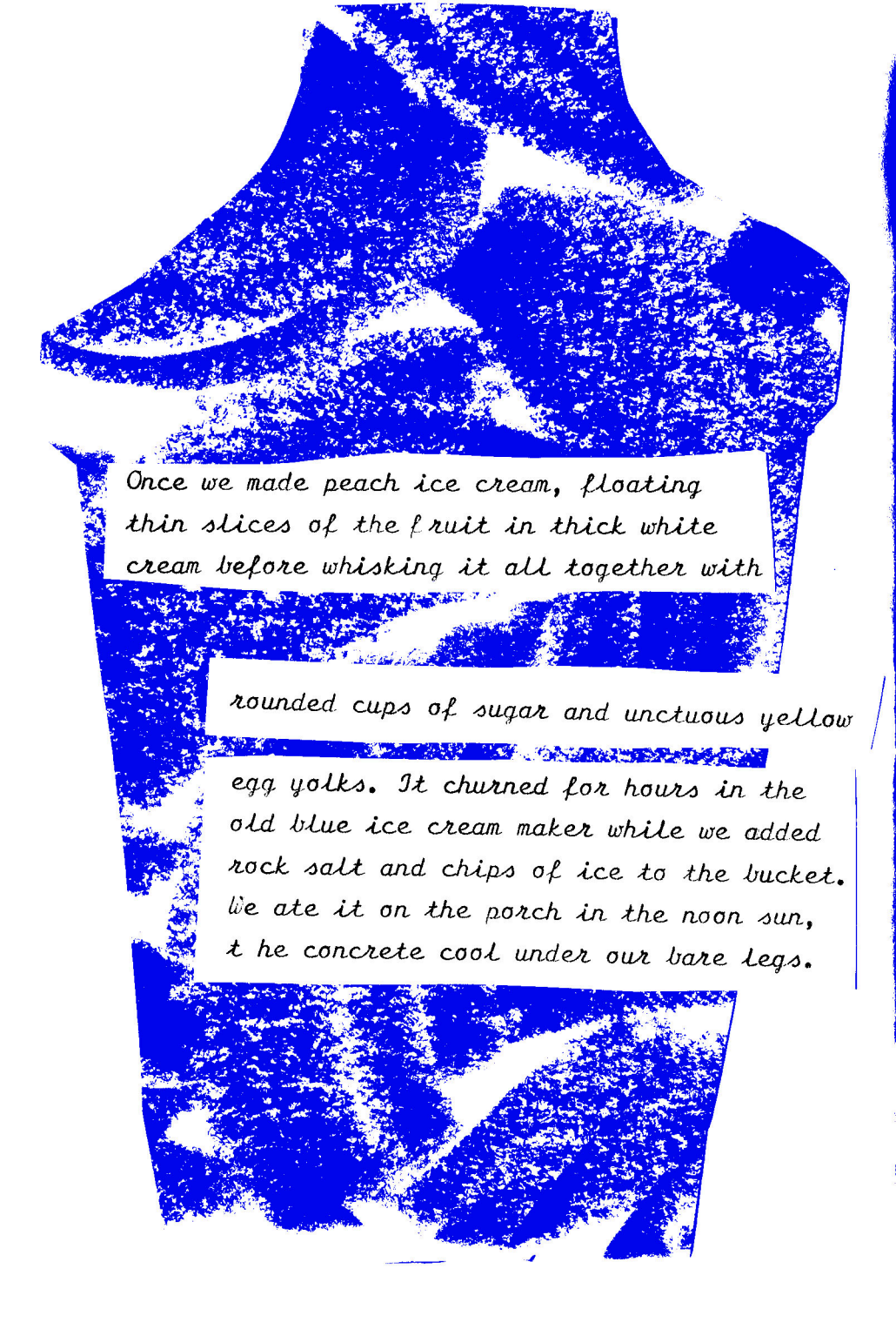
*Sticky with juice, we'd head back home,  
our bowl not quite as full as it could  
have been.*



*We'd pick those small soft peaches and eat one for every one we'd save. We had to avoid the tiny green worms that made their homes in the flesh, picking each one out carefully and tossing them into the weeds.*



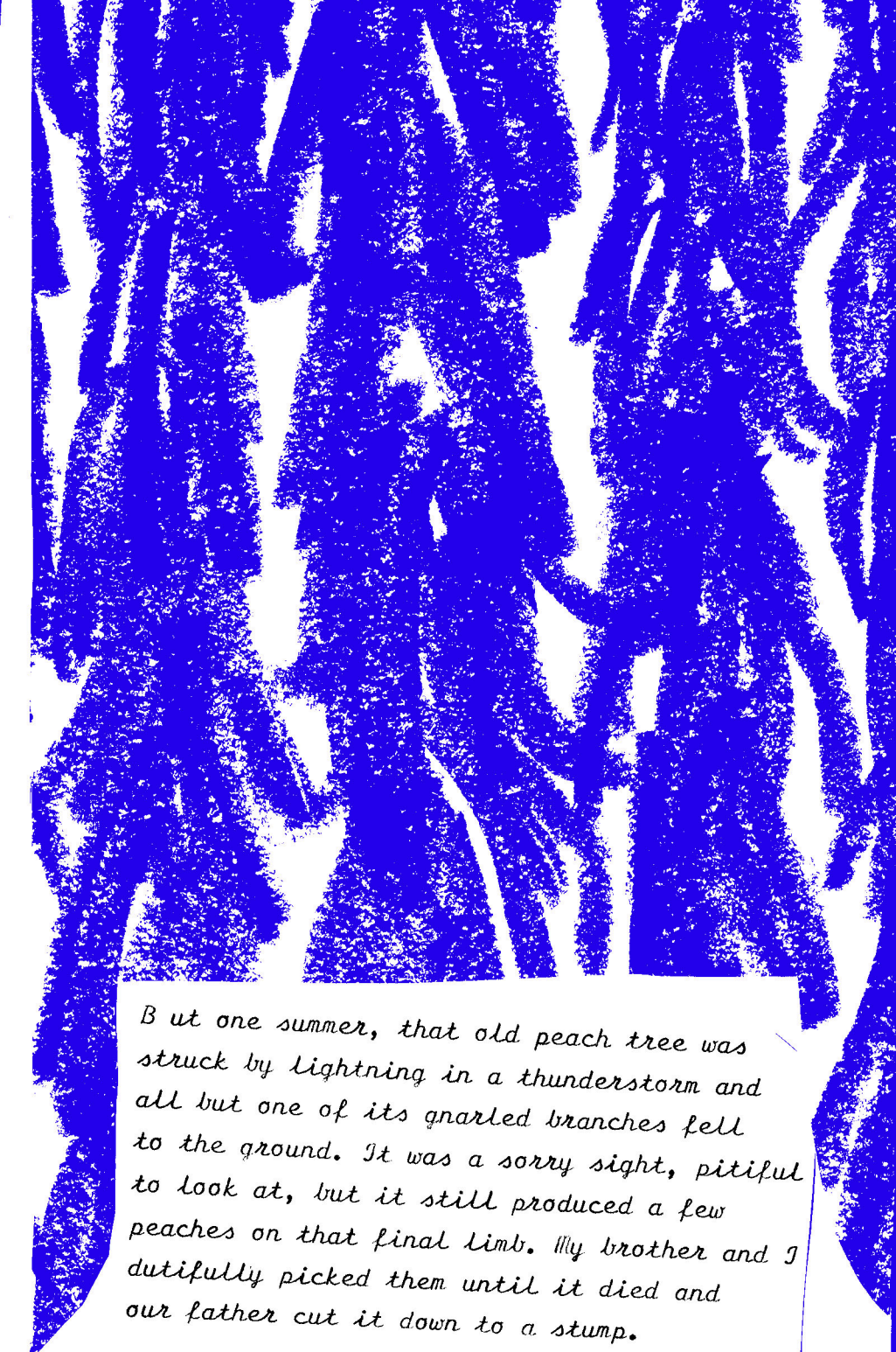
*I'm sure we ate our share too.*



Once we made peach ice cream, floating thin slices of the fruit in thick white cream before whisking it all together with

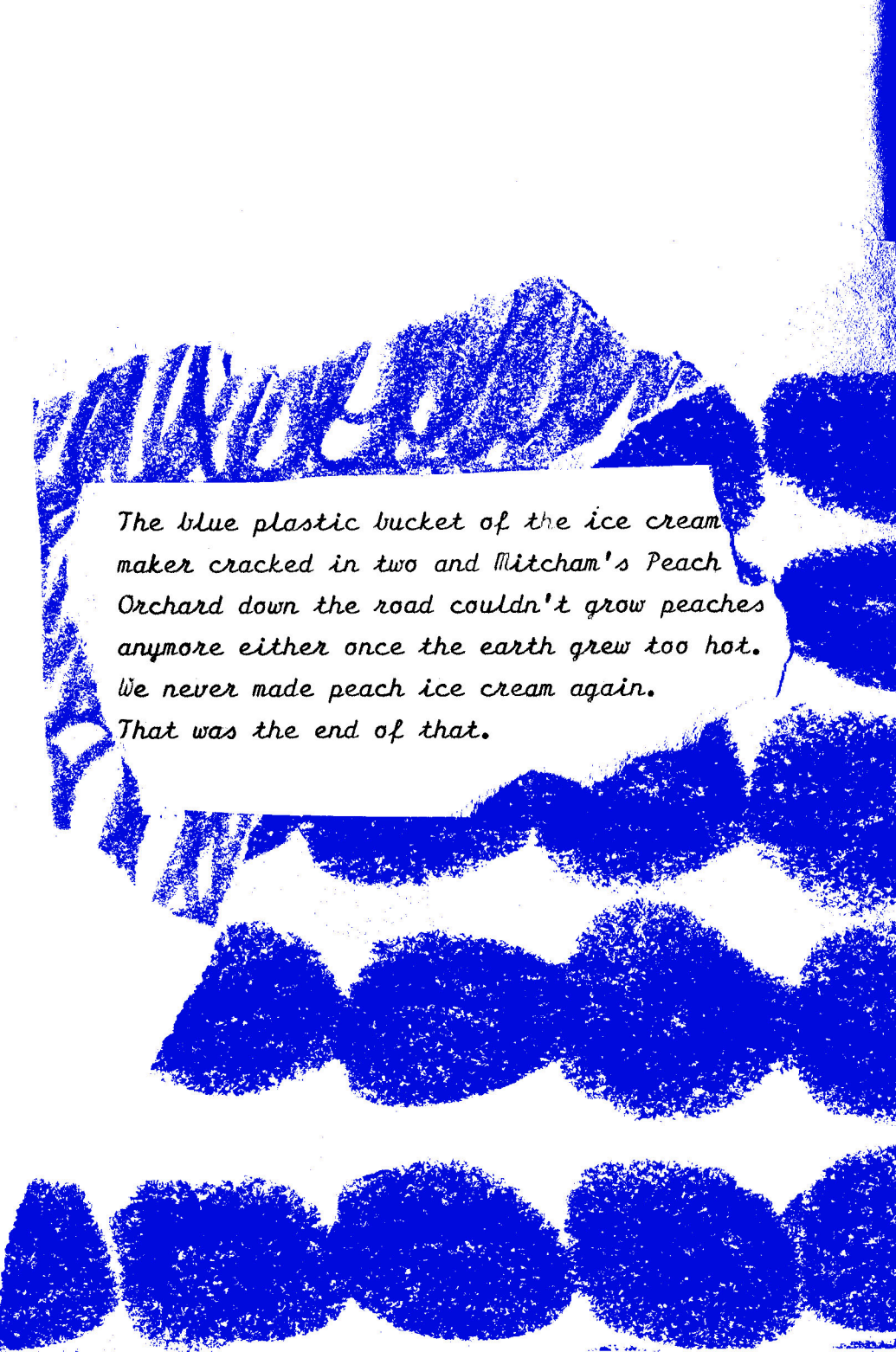
rounded cups of sugar and unctuous yellow

egg yolks. It churned for hours in the old blue ice cream maker while we added rock salt and chips of ice to the bucket. We ate it on the porch in the noon sun, the concrete cool under our bare legs.



But one summer, that old peach tree was struck by lightning in a thunderstorm and all but one of its gnarled branches fell to the ground. It was a sorry sight, pitiful to look at, but it still produced a few peaches on that final limb. My brother and I dutifully picked them until it died and our father cut it down to a stump.





*The blue plastic bucket of the ice cream  
maker cracked in two and Mitcham's Peach  
Orchard down the road couldn't grow peaches  
anymore either once the earth grew too hot.  
We never made peach ice cream again.  
That was the end of that.*

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