

SARAH BIANCO

Invisible Veil, 2017
Acrylic, graphite, polyurethane,
and oil on wood panel, 27 x 32 in



COURTESY THE ARTIST

MURZBAN F. SHROFF

All That We Own

Anuradha Singhal, Anu to friends, curled her toes and tensed her feet, inching forward on the light, tensile diving board, from where she peered into the shimmering blue softness of the Presidency Club pool. It was May, a hot day. The sun played on Anu's back. She felt its glow on her neck and shoulders, she felt its persistence on her backbone. Anu felt the sun would burn her, brand her; it would leave a mark, like a birthmark, on her translucent white skin, if she didn't take the plunge quickly. She knew she would eventually, after a bit of hedging, as she had in school days, at the pool where she and her classmates were herded to, an army of schoolgirls, clutching their floats nervously, with their coach, a dark, stocky man in speckled trunks, yelling, "Come on, jump in. The water is not going to swallow you. Don't fear it! Make a friend of it!"

Anu liked watching her reflection in the water. Her slim, bronze body, well maintained at thirty-two; her coffee-brown hair, cut shoulder length; her cheekbones, blushing with health; her smooth facial skin, ready to reveal two symmetrical dimples the moment she smiled; and her chin, small and delicately chiseled, which her husband described as "infinitely kissable."

Anu was a fetching woman, dark-eyed and radiant. Her lush, black eyebrows were the most erotic part of her. Men found it irresistible: the way she raised her eyebrows. In courtship days, her husband would stroke them, feel them, tails of soft velvet, and he would marvel at the defining lines and pledge his love by bringing his lips over them. Anu had that kind of effect on men. She was the kind of girl you would want to curl up with, the kind you would want to hold and smother. There was something sleek and inviolable about her beauty.

Her feet left the diving board. Air met body, body heaved and took the full impact of the water. Anu felt the air in her lungs rush to her head. Her lungs felt inflated, overweight. She pushed herself up. And in one cyclical motion she landed on her back.

The waiters at the side of the pool broke from their duties. Old men with sunburned scalps looked up from their newspapers and then away, the warmth spreading to their ears. Sparrows, startled by the splash, left their abodes and flew to less noisy habitats. Crows, navigating the white, wooden tables in search of leftovers, glared and cawed out of habit. The late morning heat bristled all over.