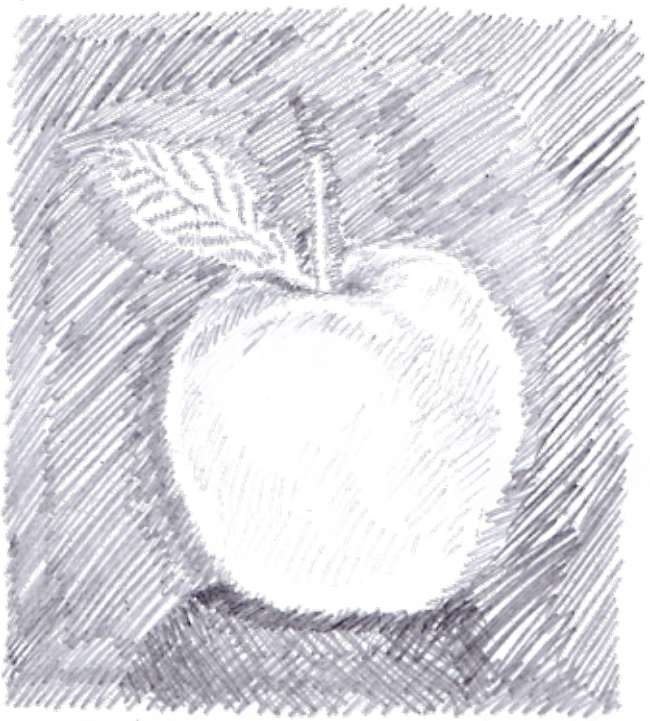
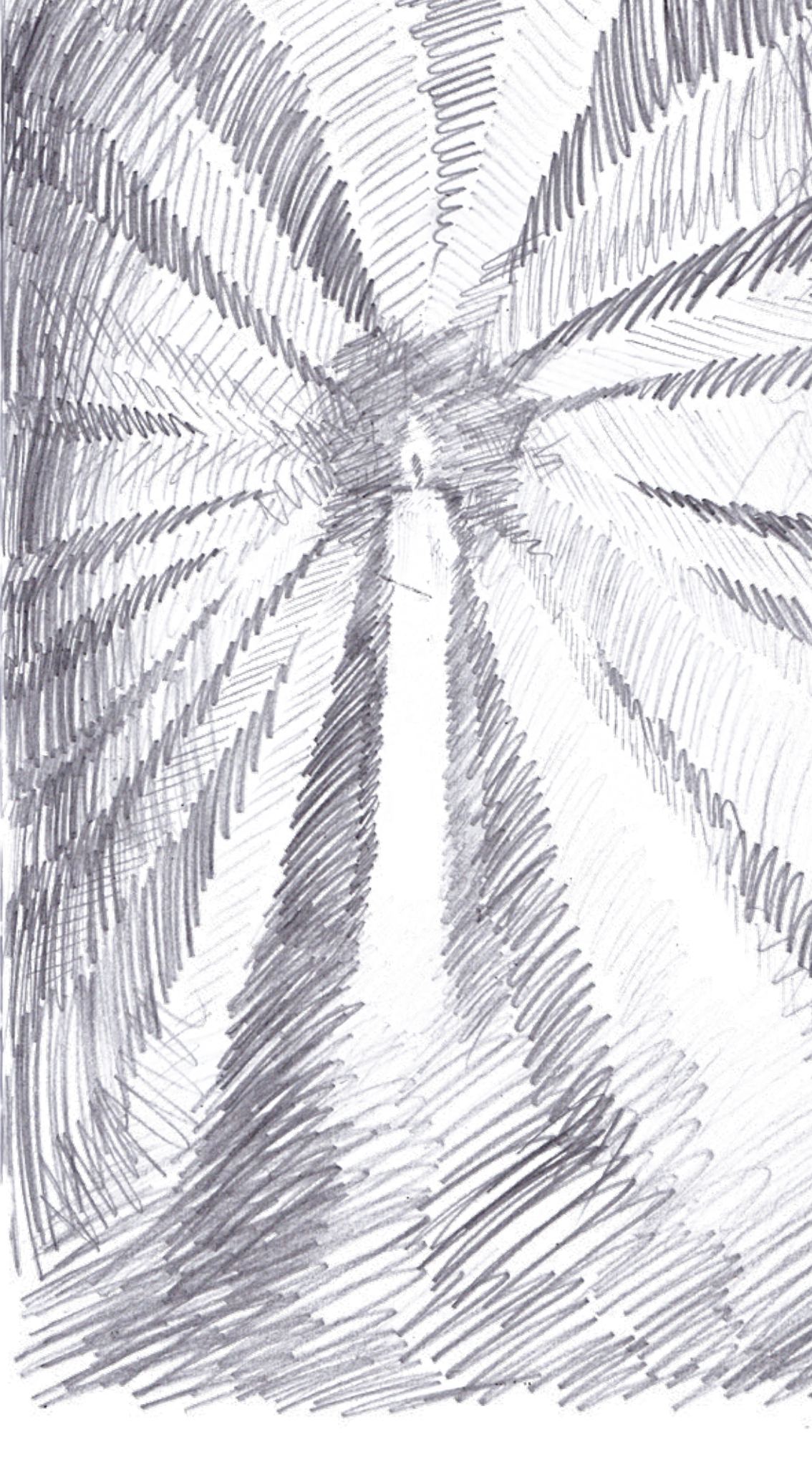
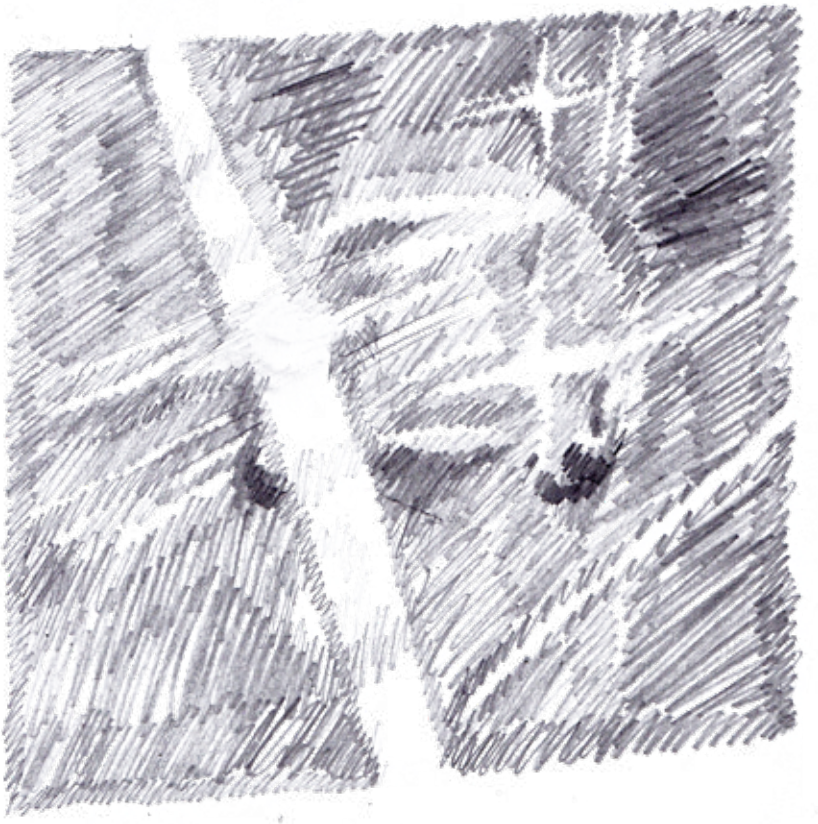




Steadiness of a Table

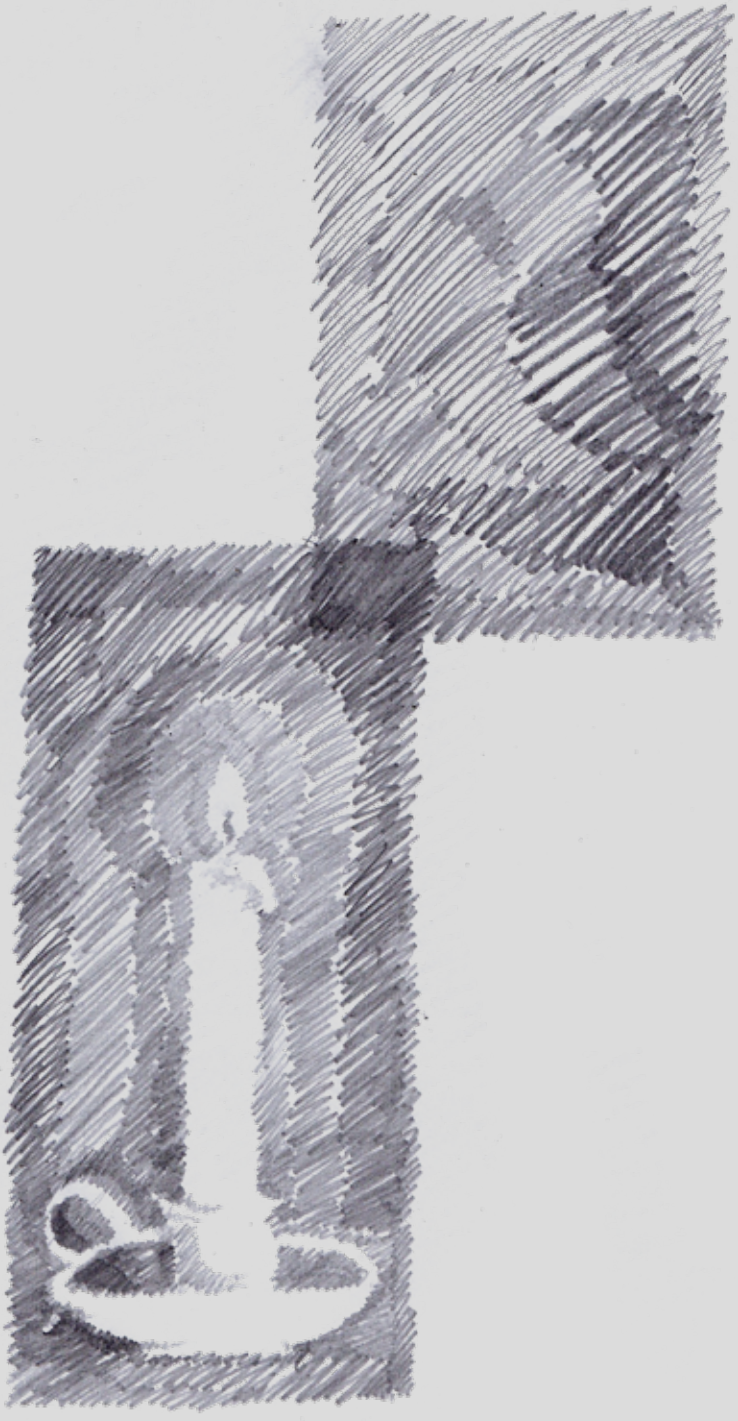


It only takes a soufflé three seconds to deflate once taken out of a hot oven. Woosh! un, deux, trois, plat. Plat, flat, flat as a pancake. Most dishes that rely on the chemical combination of magic and air meet a similar fate, shrinking before a late guest can arrive to the table. The air is knocked out of it. Deflated, disappointed. It's all over so fast. *The change of colour is likely and a difference a very little difference is prepared.* There is change in the air. Something has shifted. With a clock striking the all-important hour, the festivities are over, out with a bang. Now is time to change, refine and re-define. But, *Supposing you do not like to change.* O what then?

A large box is handily made of what is necessary to replace any substance. It is like this every year. The conceit of ambition usurps the communality that came before. Pack up the tree, the trifle, and all the trimmings. The gospeled star is replaced by the warmly glow of an open fridge door. As we peer in, a paternalistic doctor's voice mumbles through the radio *Sugar is not a vegetable.* Bleary-eyed, we try to fight against it, seeking comfort in the small things *(Coffee all coffee and a sample of soup).* We are about to embark on a breakfast of resistance and pure pleasure. *A shining breakfast, a breakfast shining, no dispute,* just practice, a practiced routine of one, two, three crack an egg. Hear it spit in the pan, the pit pat hiss of hot oil turning white to crisp. You inhale wobbling gold sun centres and dark toast licked with butter. *A sudden slice changes the whole plate* and you carry its warmth with you into the cold January day.







But even with the small joy that is brought around this sweet table for two, there is a difference, a lacking. *The difference is spreading.* Not spreading yourself thin, but spreading generously, jam and butter right to the edges. Spreading to make food go further. We can share, there's enough for all of us. It is a strength *to spread a table fuller. Cut the whole space into twenty-four spaces* and pull up a few more chairs. Excitement bubbles like the pots of gold on the hob. This shall be a simple affair, *considering the circumstances there is no occasion for a reduction.* But there is great joy to be taking in the excess and frivolity of cooking.







An occasion for a plate !

O, what shall we bring to the table? *There is a way to see in onion and surely very surely rhubarb and a tomato* the alchemy of transformation. There are more than a hundred ways to cook a potato, but the fugu blowfish must be sliced with deft precision to avoid poisoning. The cooking of a tarte tatin happens under a shroud of golden pastry and it must be flipped over tableside, with flair and to the sound of cheers. *Baking and exhibition and nonchalance and sacrifice and volume* is the formula to this dinner. *If the party is small a clever song is in order!* We shall dance and play cards whilst tiny cries of *a little piece a little piece please* pour over the dessert.

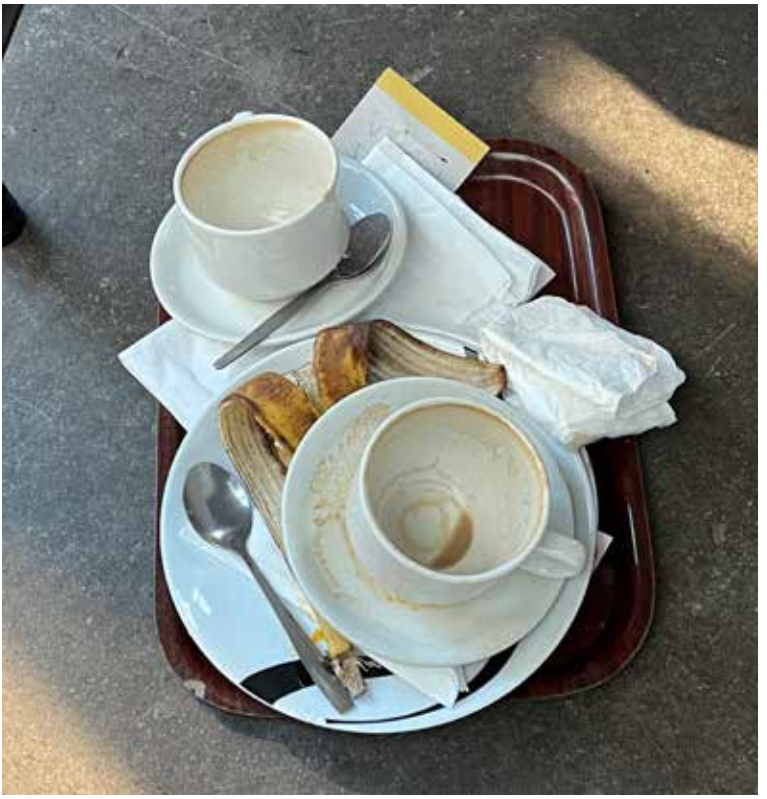
In the evenings that last from dawn to dark, do not let the gloom settle inside. Remember, all it takes is the breaking of bread and the sharing of a meal. *Take no remedy lightly, take no urging intently, take no separation leniently, beware of no lake and no larder.* This is a mantra for entering the new year. Stock your shelves so that you can eat with others. *A calm and a cook and more singularly still a shelter, all these show the need for clamour.* Gather round, and feast.








ANDMAII





A collaboration

Text by Maxime Swift
Drawings by Maria Wrang-Rasmussen

Italicised writing are clippings from Gertrude Stein's Tender Buttons.
A poetry of food, gathering, and occasion.

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