

**I will meet
you in a
mere second**

Alia



My mama, Kulsoem, used to say “I will meet you in a mere second” whenever she left the room. I have always found it preparatory. I remember standing in her kitchen and trying to snatch a glazed donut from a plate she warned us was too hot. Or when we would play with the mini spoons of her brass antique set while my aunts and uncle looked in bewilderment at the treasures they could not go near.

Or when we would leave the chair in the left corner open for Boo, my grandfather, for many many years.

In recollection, I make beads as a tribute of Boo's seven sisters, who like him, I had never known. It is a process of giving with no guaranteed receiving and a marking of an unanswered question and unutterable thought. *I will meet you in a mere second* (2025) is a plea, for us to exist in a moment of re-mem-bering, for those of before and those yet to go.

Instructions: for when you are alone

Drift to the stand and spray your hands
with rose water.
Smell the henna as you enter.
Sit on the cloth or walk amongst the beads.
Listen to the sounds of our making.



About

“We do not make the beads because they are pretty, but because they are difficult.” (Alia, in conversation towards *I will meet you in a mere second*, 2025.)

For her own *re-membling*, Alia attempts to recollect her family’s past in relation to the residues of grief, death, and labour. Within the quietness of making, she disguises these memories. Distortion becomes a form of protection. The beads, now, extend safekeeping in a shared engagement.

Initially, Alia made paper beads as a way of connecting with her late grandfather and paying tribute to his seven sisters, who were beadmakers. She emulated their tradition as a communal process, as to grapple with her lost Indian heritage. *I will meet you in a mere second* invites collaboration

beyond her family, asking guests to join her in a ritualistic process of bead-making. The beads facilitate the participation of memory collection, encouraging quiet intimacy and connection. They become receptacles and markers for thoughts and stories that can be written, spoken or acknowledged by participants in the process.

Alia’s grandmother’s Quran stand, ink with ground charcoal, rose water, and henna dyed cotton – these sacred materials and heirlooms are coordinates within the space, and steer the participant within the ritual. “My mother recalls a scrambling, but can’t remember what,” Alia says of the seven sisters collecting scraps and accessible materials to make the beads. *I will meet you in a mere second* makes use of found paper to acknowledge their process.

Once the bead is rolled, it is layered and encased in barley flour and honey, the two ingredients used to make Talbina. The paper bead is not to be seen again. Talbina is a porridge that Alia’s grandmother said can “soften a heart of grief”. Not to move away from grief, but to rather sit and exist within memory. The beads are precious, they are reapers and carriers, confiding in all things not spoken aloud, their potency whispered at, protected within.

Chloe de Villiers, 2025.

Instructions: for when Alia is with you

Dip and lather your hands in a bowl of rose water.



Sift through a stack of collected paper (you are welcome to bring your own too).
Take it to Mama's stand and write of your memory with the sticks and ink provided.



Roll it into a bead.
Collect a dollop of barley flour dough.
Sit near the *kaffan* and use the dough to cover your bead.
Let the bead rest to the side to harden.
I will protect it in a mix of honey and resin, so that it will never be seen again.
I will pierce it into the *kaffan*, so that your bead may meet the next.





we must hold onto the beads and all they
consider, as I or we are truly desperate to find
a footing in a ground that will always displace.
I say a prayer on each bead, yours and mine,
and wish that wherever they are, they are in a
better place.

I will meet you in a mere second – Wayfinder (2025)

Artist: Alia
Curator: Chloe de Villiers
Design: Ben Johnson
Editor: Sara de Beer
Location: Goods at A4, 2025

Instructional texts and quotes by Alia
About text by Chloe de Villiers

The artist retains the right to be recognised as the
maker and speaker of her work and words.

Printed and assembled at A4 Arts Foundation
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**14 June —
26 July '25**