

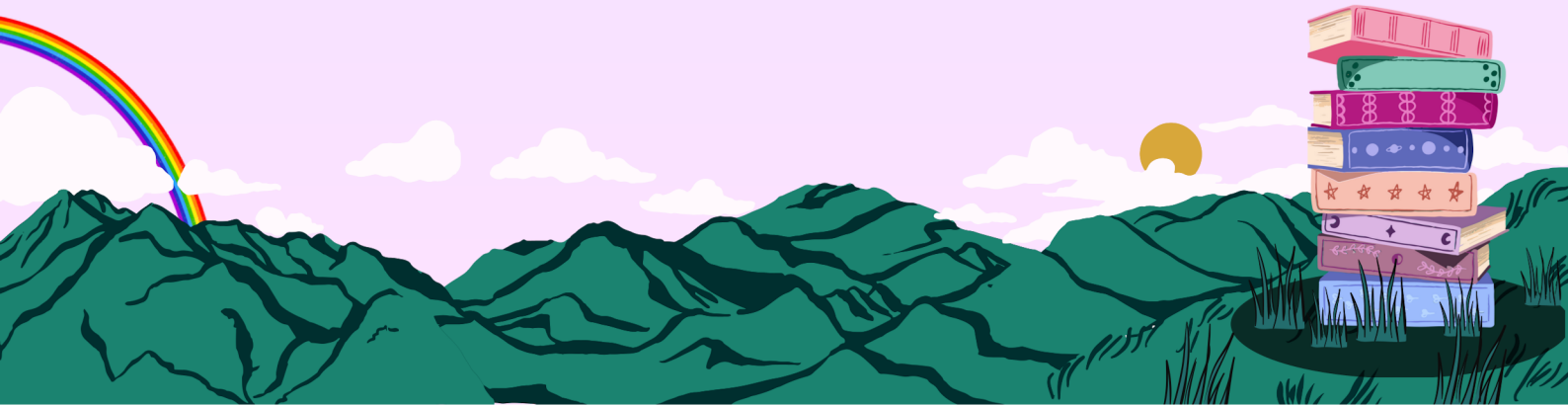
JOURNAL IN SIX PARTS

Charlie Gray Butera

PART ONE: BIRTH

I am not my mother,
but I am
her child; we are leaving
and returning in the same
breath.

I think
of the ocean
how she thinks
of the ocean,
like it will show us the space that holds
both our life
and death.



PART TWO: BODY

I am locked inside
a silhouette I cannot reconcile.

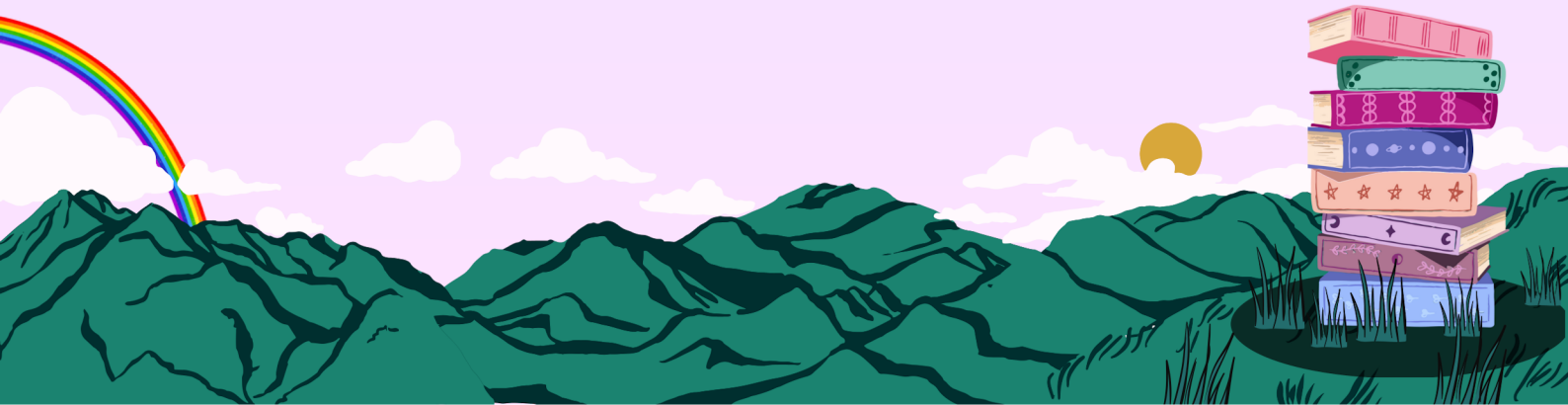
I tell my body it is
still sacred
even when getting called woman.

My body tells me
it is
tired.

I am exhausted by the people
who assign me
woman,
and if I have known anything
in this life,
it is the quicksand
of exhaustion.

I contradict myself,
I run and run out
of energy,
and breath, and
voice.

I am both
the cage
and the one being held hostage.



PART THREE: BEYOND

my skin will show you the fears
that I will not,
but below this appearance
there is something transforming; it's true
I do not look the way

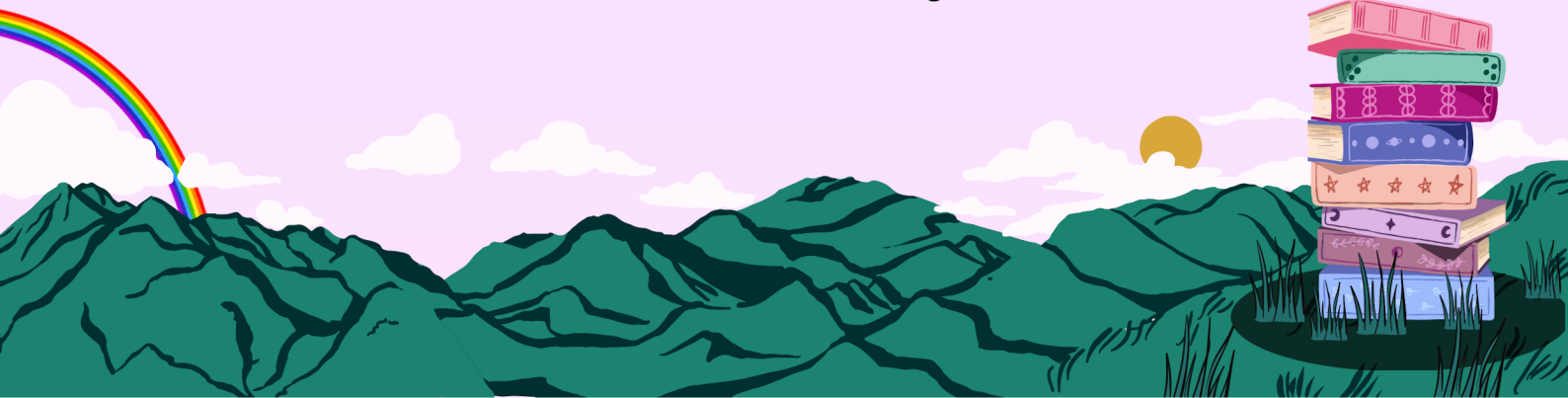
I wish to

untie this thorned web
of woman
(I am not)
and the submissiveness
that has been cloaking me since birth:

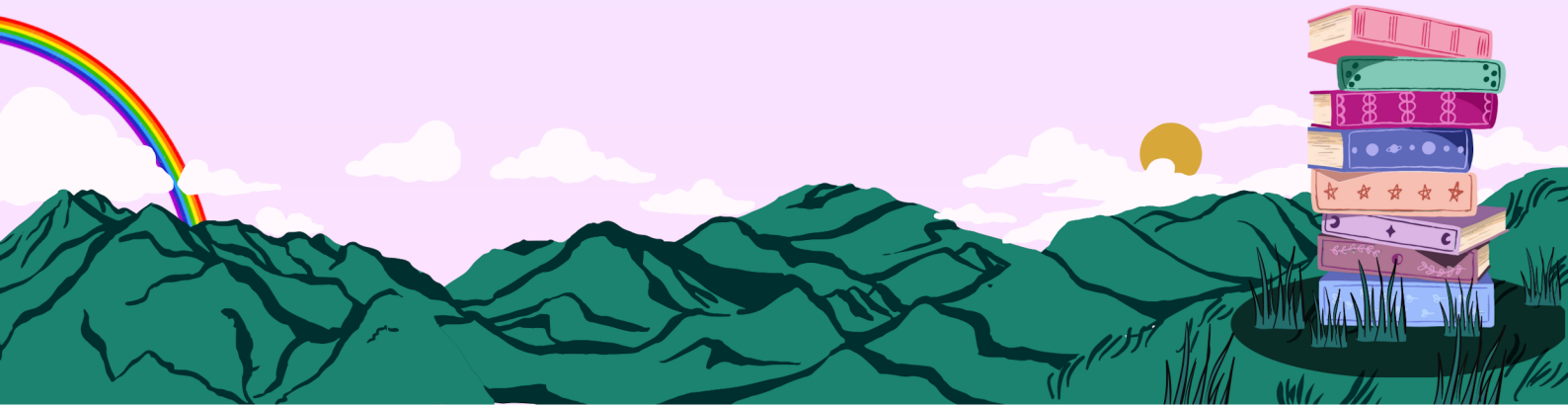
be quiet
be helpful
be
careful.

instead I will
tell myself I am
possible, I am
continuous

jealousy
springs out of me like tree branches,
my brother will never see it.
instead he tells me:
“the world hasn't caught up to you
yet”,
and it feels true tonight.



they outlaw my body
put guns in
the hands of my oppressors
all I ask for
is a place
I am not
a crime.

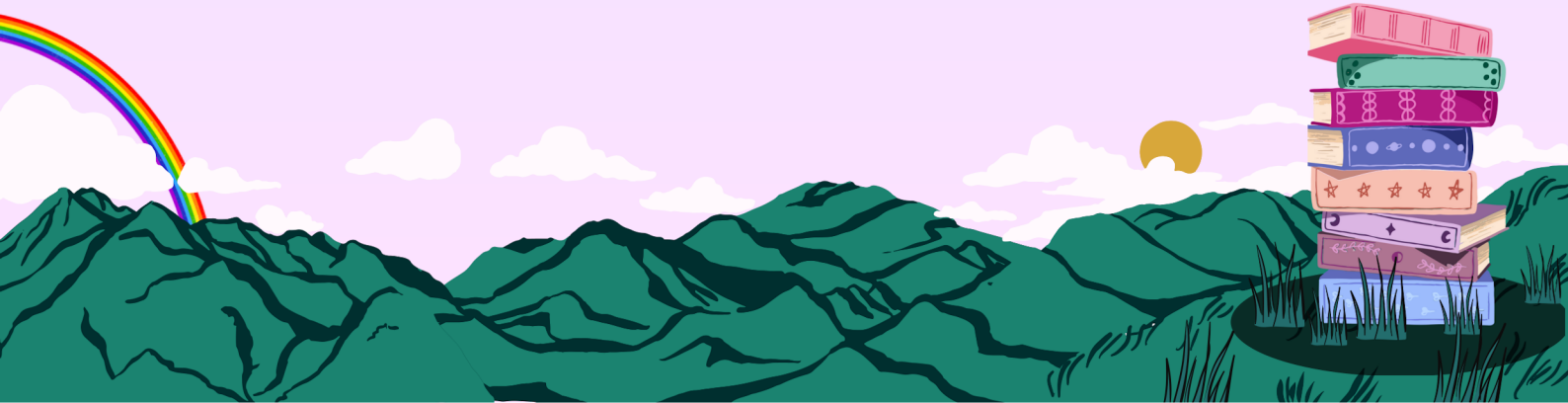


PART FOUR: BELONG

home is
their face close to mine
laughing,
crying,
sitting in comfortable silence;
together
we share it
and I am here,
I am home.

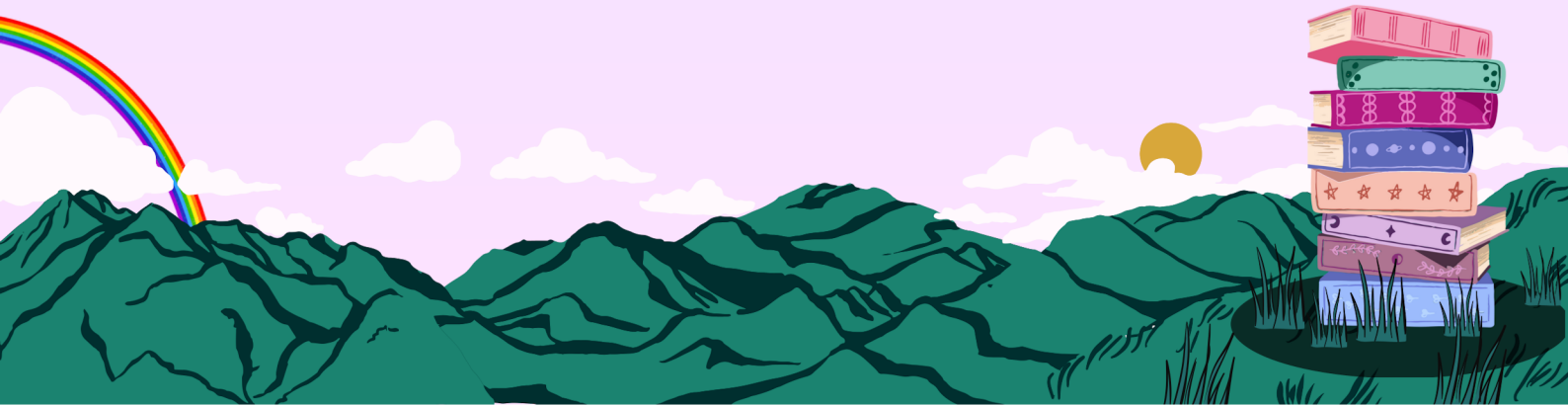
home
is her voice through the phone
like the first warm spring day
and all our golden childhood memories
like a winter coat in snow.

home is taking space
leaving
home
is finding
my self to be mine.



PART FIVE: BAPTISM

cut off the hair
wear father's clothing
like a protest
or a defied prophecy
bathe in glittering green
ocean waters
find transcendence
in the nesting dolls of identity



PART SIX: EPILOGUE, a letter for them

I love you and
I love me
(as much as I can)
so much
it breaks my heart open.

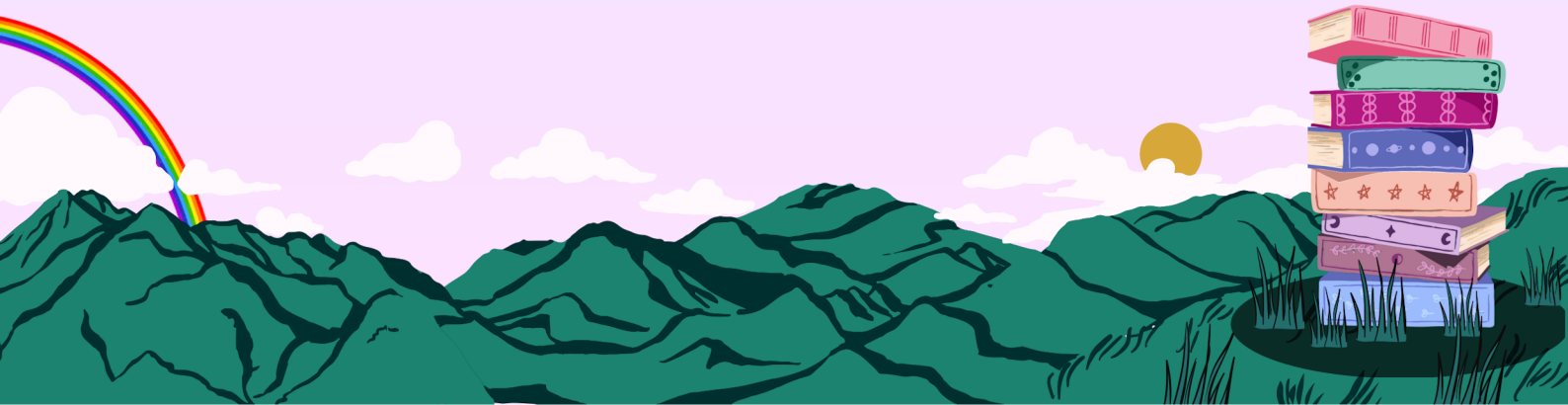
when we are enveloped like this
I want to promise forever,
but eternity is not mine to give,

so I give you today.
I give you my heart
to hold, please take care
and so will I,

because when we are one
I forget their hate
and think only of our love.

I am made whole
I am reborn
or remade
not by a god, but by my own
creation.

and here you are
like sunlight on bare skin
and I never want to leave



I will transition,
together with you,
if you'll have me.

I love me,
and I love you
with all of me.

