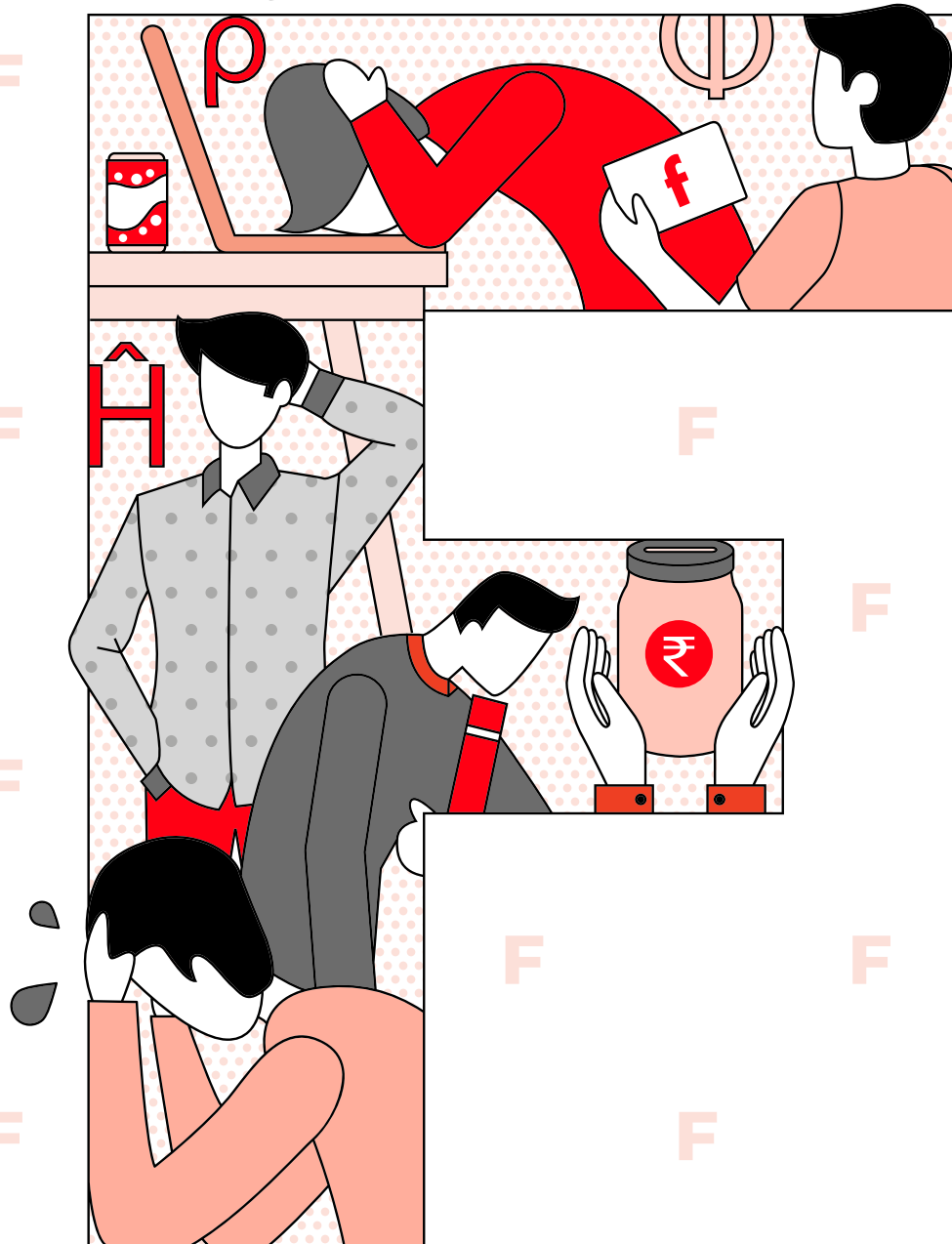


My Failure Resume



I turned 40 in 2020.

Here is a list of things I have failed at.

My Failure Resume!

We all fail, but we all don't succeed. And that told me that failure alone isn't the step to success. It is failure matched with the act of reflection that leads to progress.

On my 40th birthday in 2020, I decided to share a list of my failures - I call it the Failure Resume.

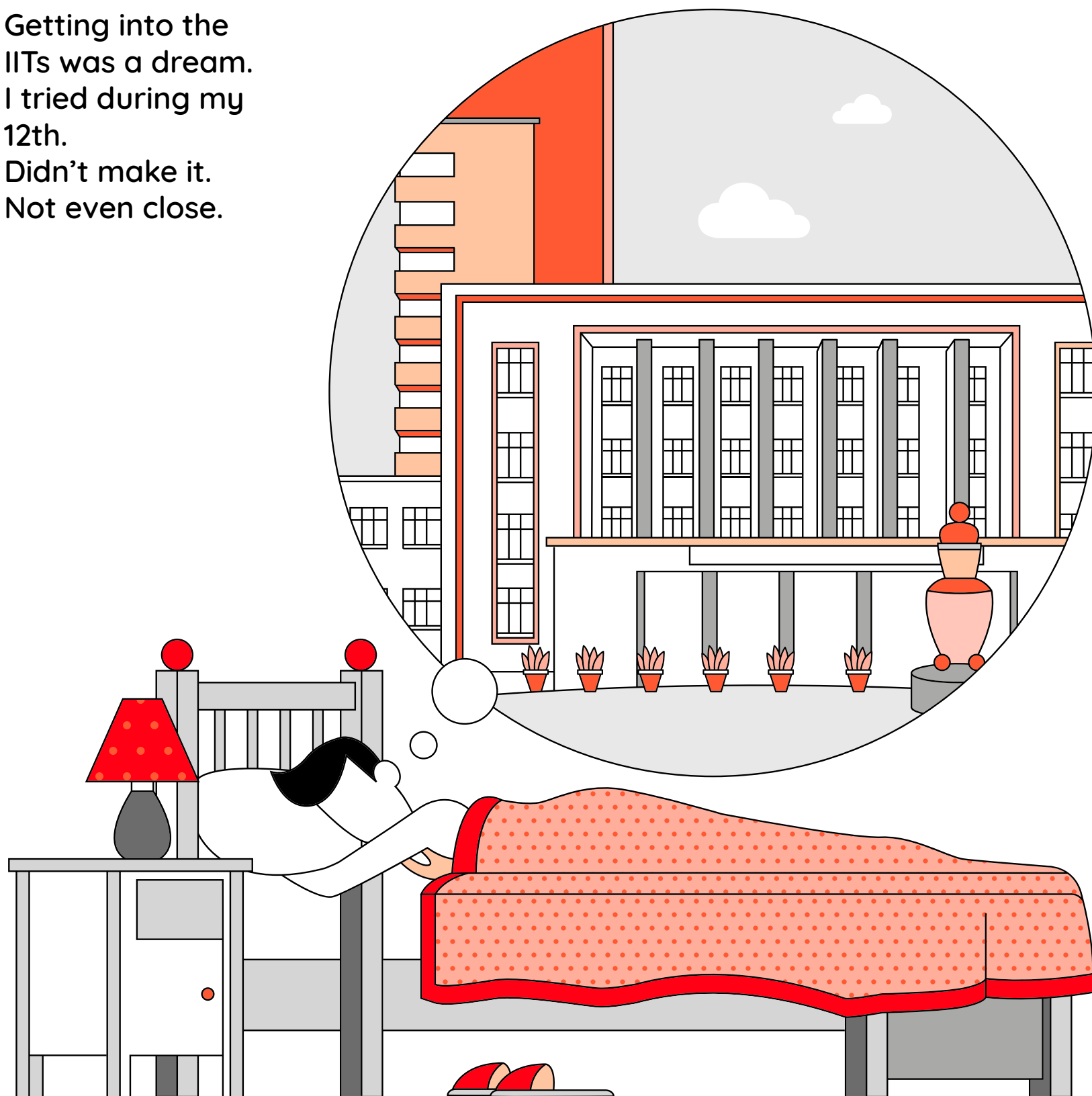
When I look back at these failures, I feel no regret, no shame and no embarrassment. Instead, there is a deep sense of gratitude that I was fortunate enough to realize them as failures and learn from them. And this reflection set me up for bigger things.

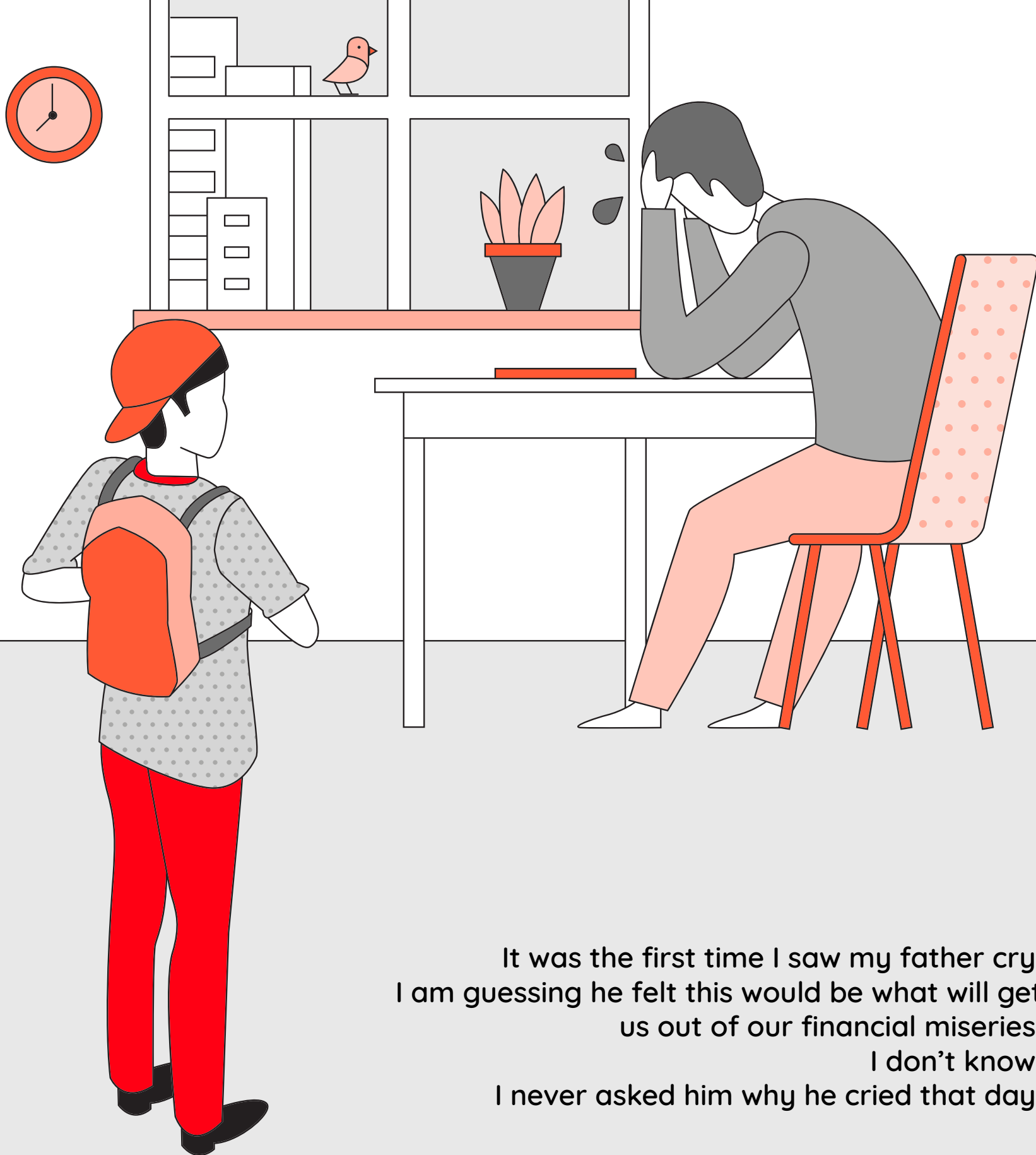
I hope you benefit from these failures just as much as I did.

I partnered with [Shreya](#) again for this book. It is our 6th book together, in 6 months. And it blows my mind how someone can produce such high quality art at such breathtaking consistency. Thank you Shreya. You are truly gold!

Wan? s

Getting into the
IITs was a dream.
I tried during my
12th.
Didn't make it.
Not even close.





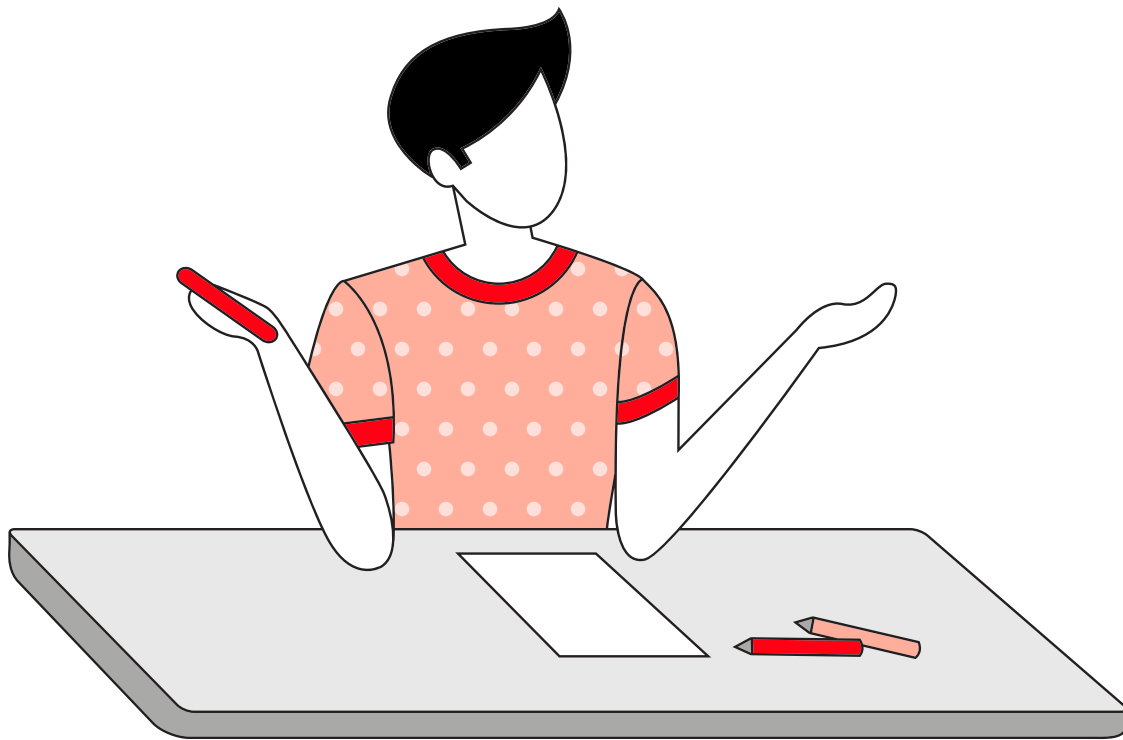
It was the first time I saw my father cry.
I am guessing he felt this would be what will get
us out of our financial miseries.
I don't know.
I never asked him why he cried that day.

I didn't make it to any engineering college.
None that mattered, that I wanted to get into.

So I decided to go for a 3-yr B.Sc. degree.
From St. Stephens.

I was rejected at the interview stage.
Dr. Wilson said, "I don't think you will be good in Physics"





Tried again for the IITs while in 1st year of college.
Didn't make it.
Not even close.

This time no one cried.
Not even me.
Maybe I knew it all along.



Once college was over, I decided to go to the IITs for my Master's in Physics.
Sat for the exams.

Didn't make it to any, except IIT Kanpur, that called me for an interview.

Dr. H.C. Verma asked me a question.

I didn't even know how to begin.

I apologized and left the room.



Began applying to US universities for my PhD in Physics.
Princeton was the top university that I wanted to get into.
Applied to 7 universities in all.

Within a month, 6 of them had rejected me.

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Joined the only university that accepted
me.

One particular course's final exam
Prof asked the rationale behind a
theorem.

I vomited the entire proof of the
theorem. No errors.

Heard back:

"Haven't seen anyone remember this
so well. I wonder how much of it do you
truly understand?"

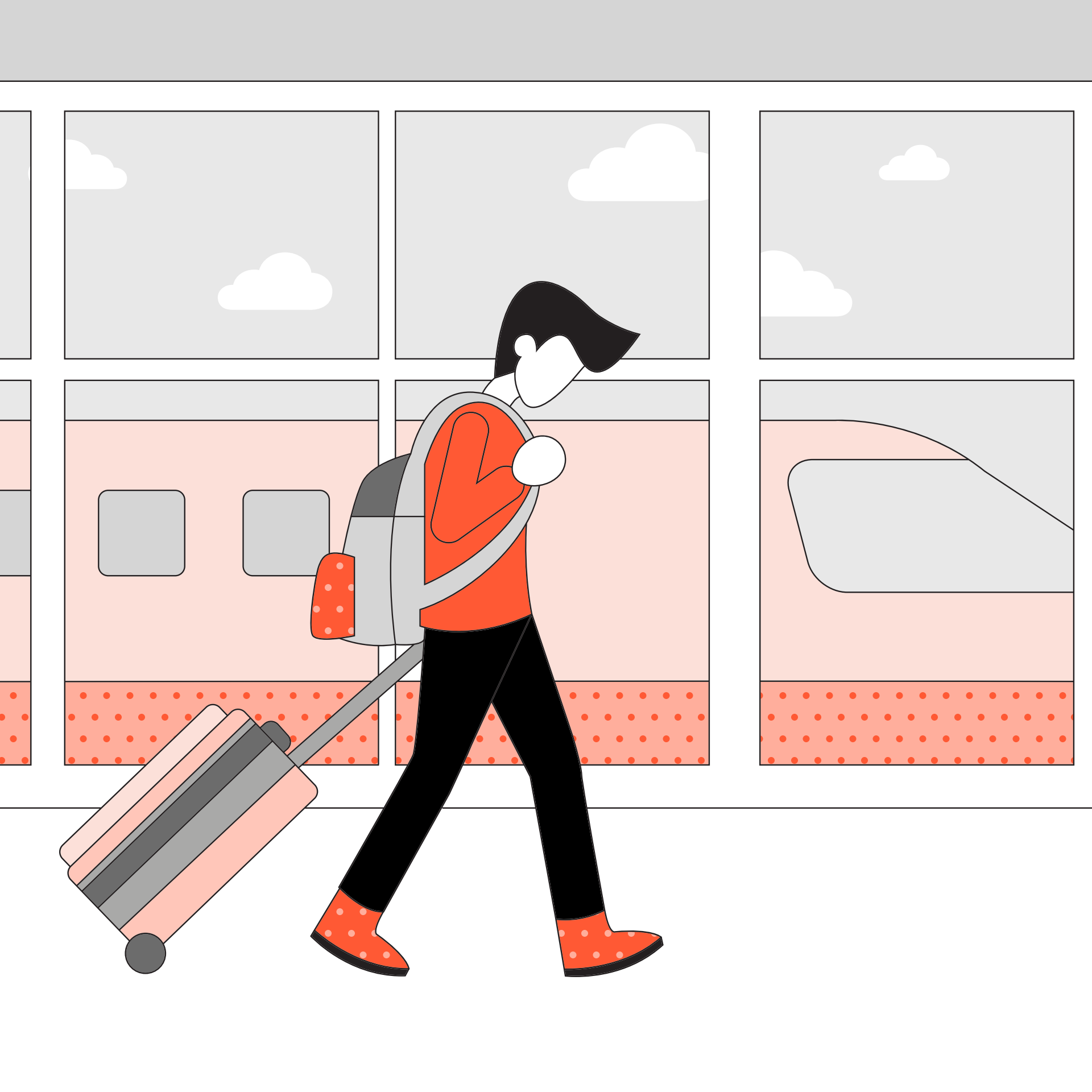
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Dropped out of my PhD.
Came back to India.

Everyone was devastated.

I was 24.
No money.
No plan.
No direction.
No career.
No education.



Decided to do an MBA, to change directions.

Sat for the CAT, to get into the IIMs.

Didn't make it to the interview shortlist of any of them.

None!

Got through ISB (till date do not know how or why)

Figured consulting is what will give me the most exposure, considering I didn't have any experience to be proud of.
Applied to all consulting firms.

Everyone rejected, except BCG and Kearney.

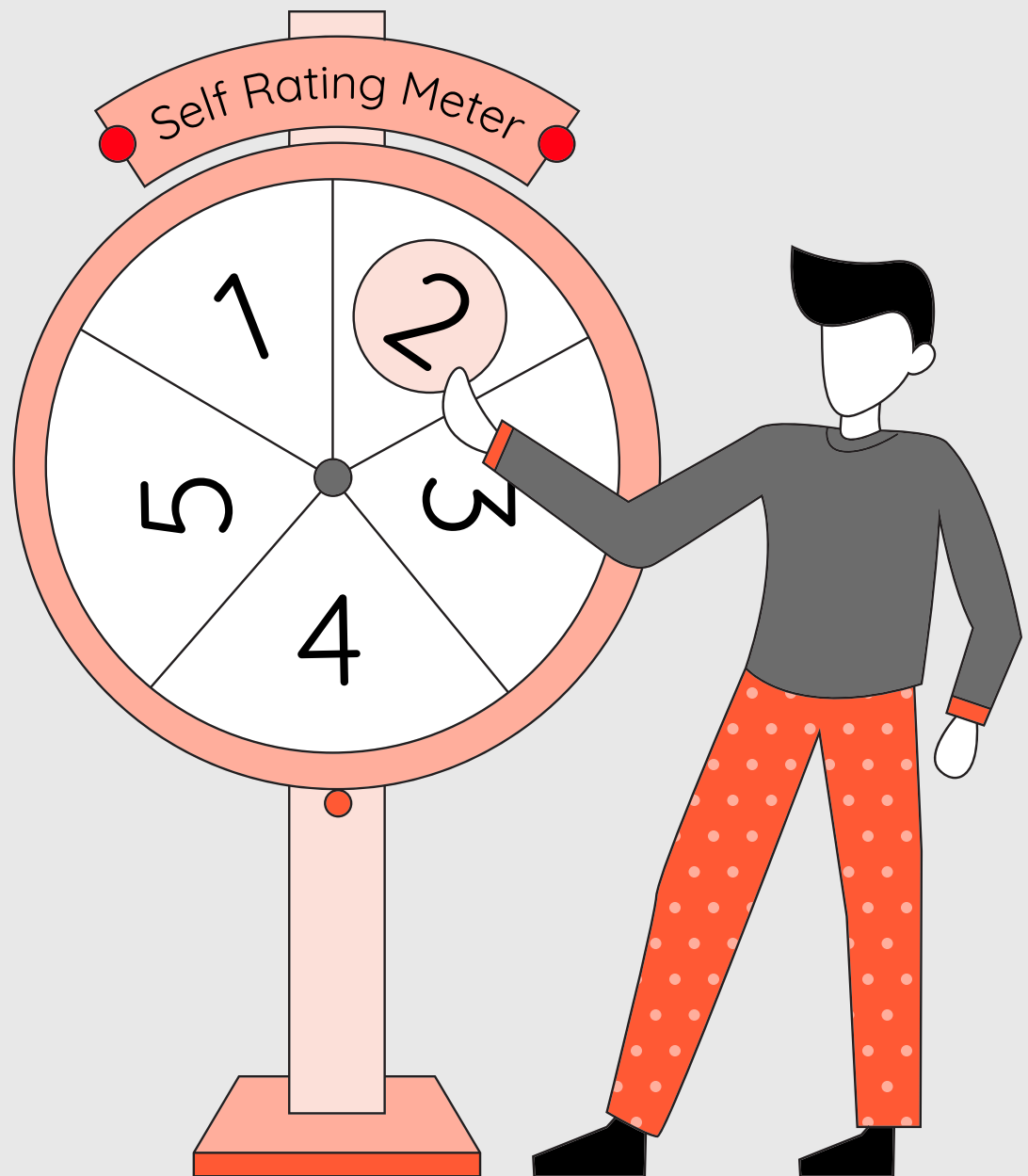


Sat for the BCG interview.

The interviewer at the end of the conversation asked, “How much would you rate your performance today on a scale of 5?”

“2/5, I guess”

“I’d agree”, he replied.



My first project in consulting, I was to build a detailed business plan for a Real Estate Client.
I hated accounting.
And did a sloppy job of it.

Every draft was laden with mistakes.
“If I can’t trust you with your work, it doesn’t matter how smart you are”, my manager remarked.



Joined my MBA batch mate in his startup, as a cofounder.
I didn't use technology to scale, kept fighting problems with my time, didn't admit my mistakes, didn't seek feedback, didn't think I was doing anything wrong.

After a year he fired me.
He did the right thing.



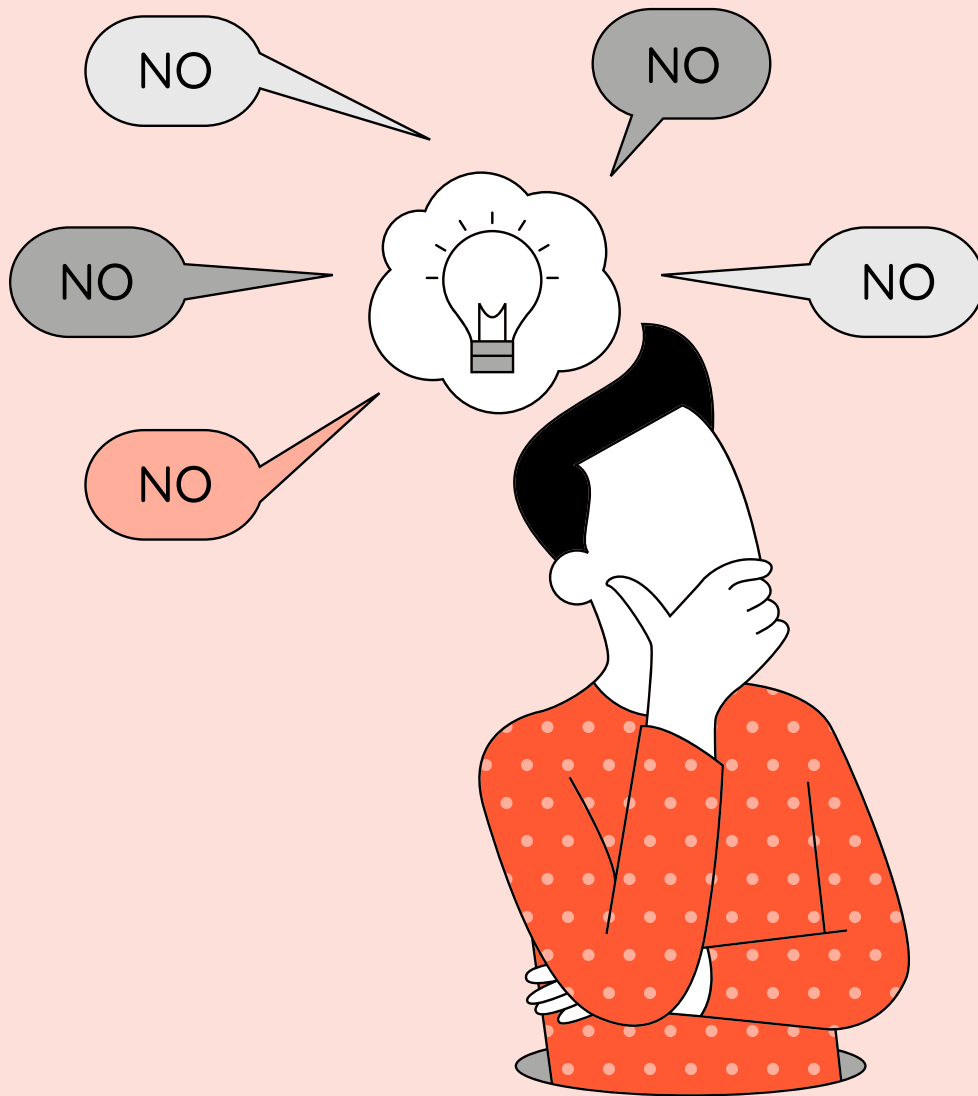
I was 29.
No money.
No plan.
No direction.

Decided to take up a job and
thought Product Management
was the right role for me.

Applied to Google
and Facebook.

Never heard back
from either.





Decided to startup instead.
A food company.

Pitched to Indian Angel Network, Mumbai Angels. And 11 HNIs.

Everyone rejected the idea.
At that time, I thought everyone rejected me.

Got the opportunity to run some of Groupon's APAC markets.
Didn't know how to delegate.
Didn't know how to lead from a distance.
Didn't know how to get results through others.

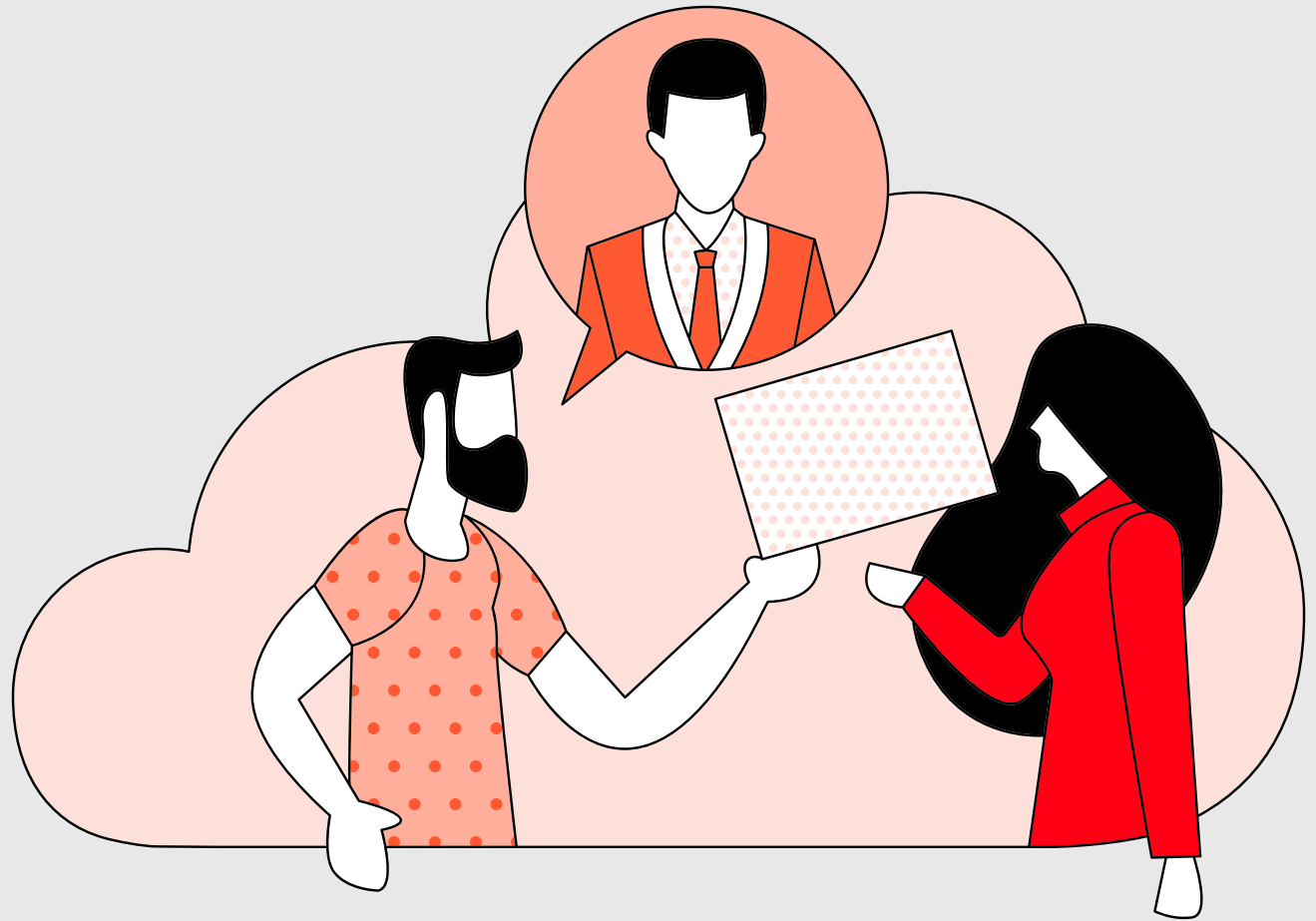
Failed miserably as a
leader and manager.



Got the opportunity to buy Groupon's India business by raising external capital.

Pitched to 23 VCs across the world.

22 said no.



Launched a referral program on nearbuy, without the checks and balances.

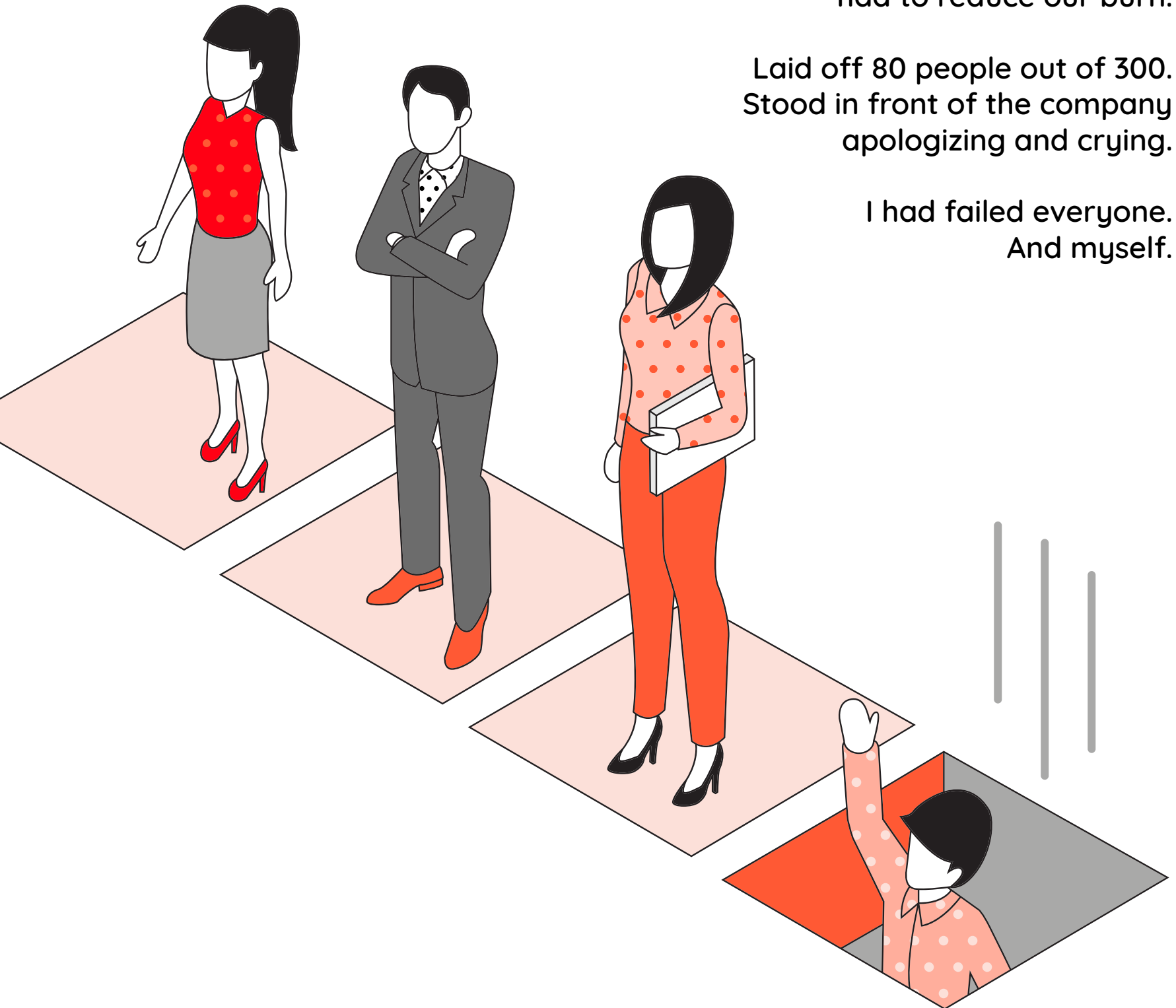
Lost 11Cr of money, in a month!

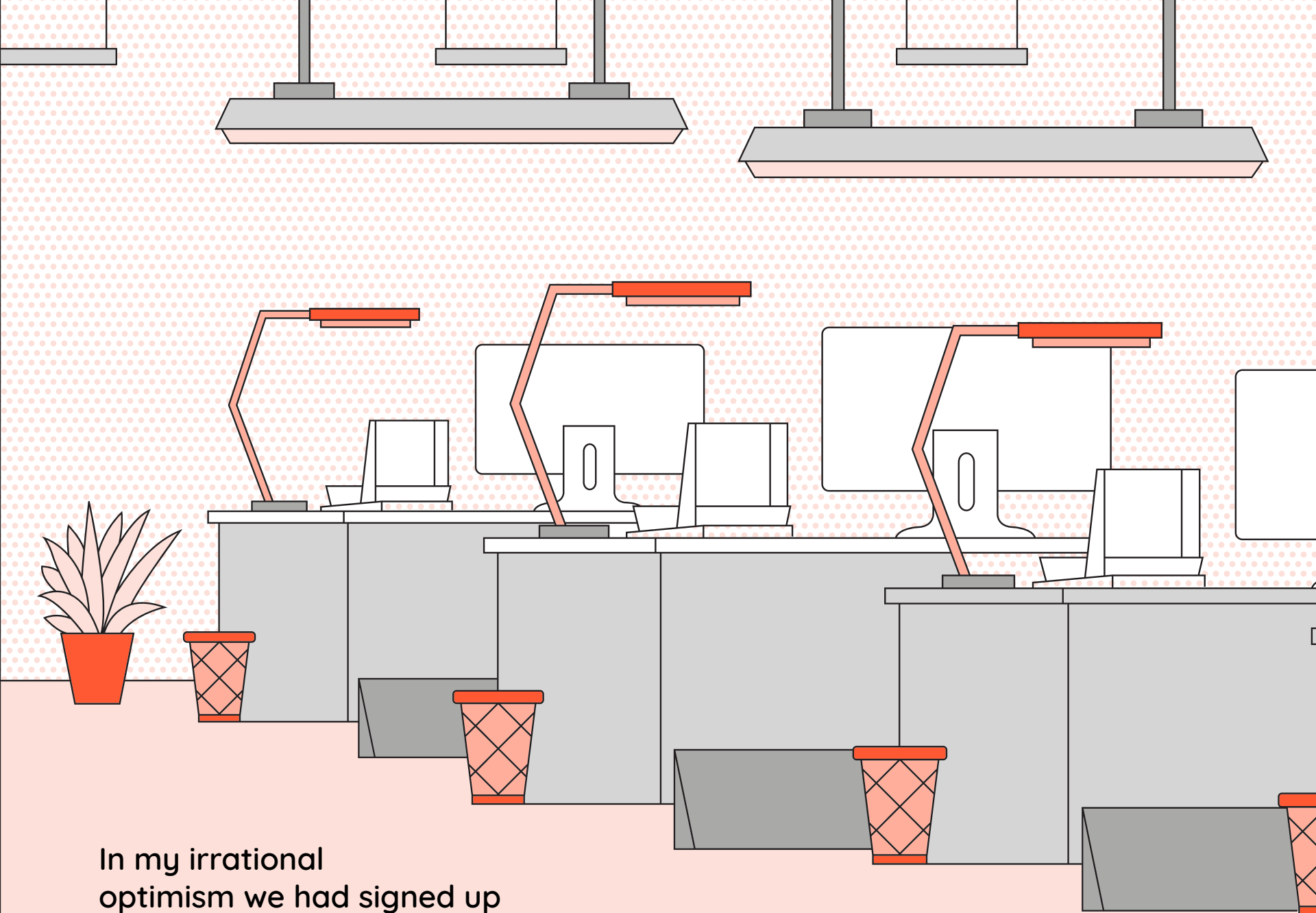
Thought the growth, even if unprofitable, would excite investors.
So money will eventually come.

Running fast out of money, we
had to reduce our burn.

Laid off 80 people out of 300.
Stood in front of the company
apologizing and crying.

I had failed everyone.
And myself.





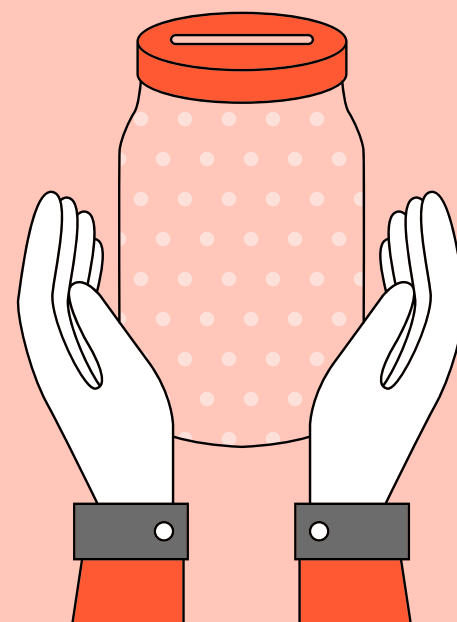
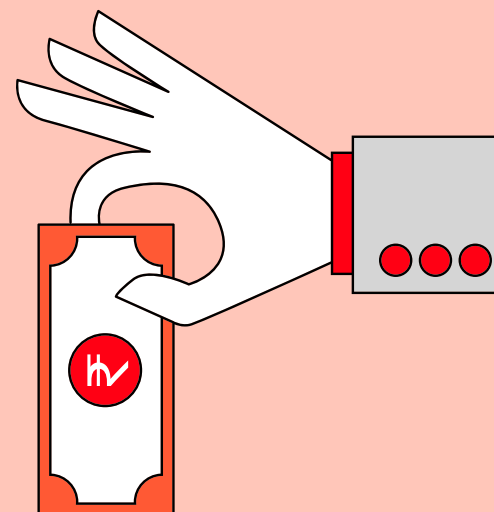
In my irrational
optimism we had signed up
a much larger office than required,
after the buyout.
With no money, we began sub-leasing the office.

Once the lease expired we had to vacate.
Leaving our tenants high and dry.
They thought we would never leave.
I did too.

Began the process of fund-raising again.
Pitched to 68 investors across the world.

67 refused.

1 gave us a term sheet.
And withdrew before we signed.

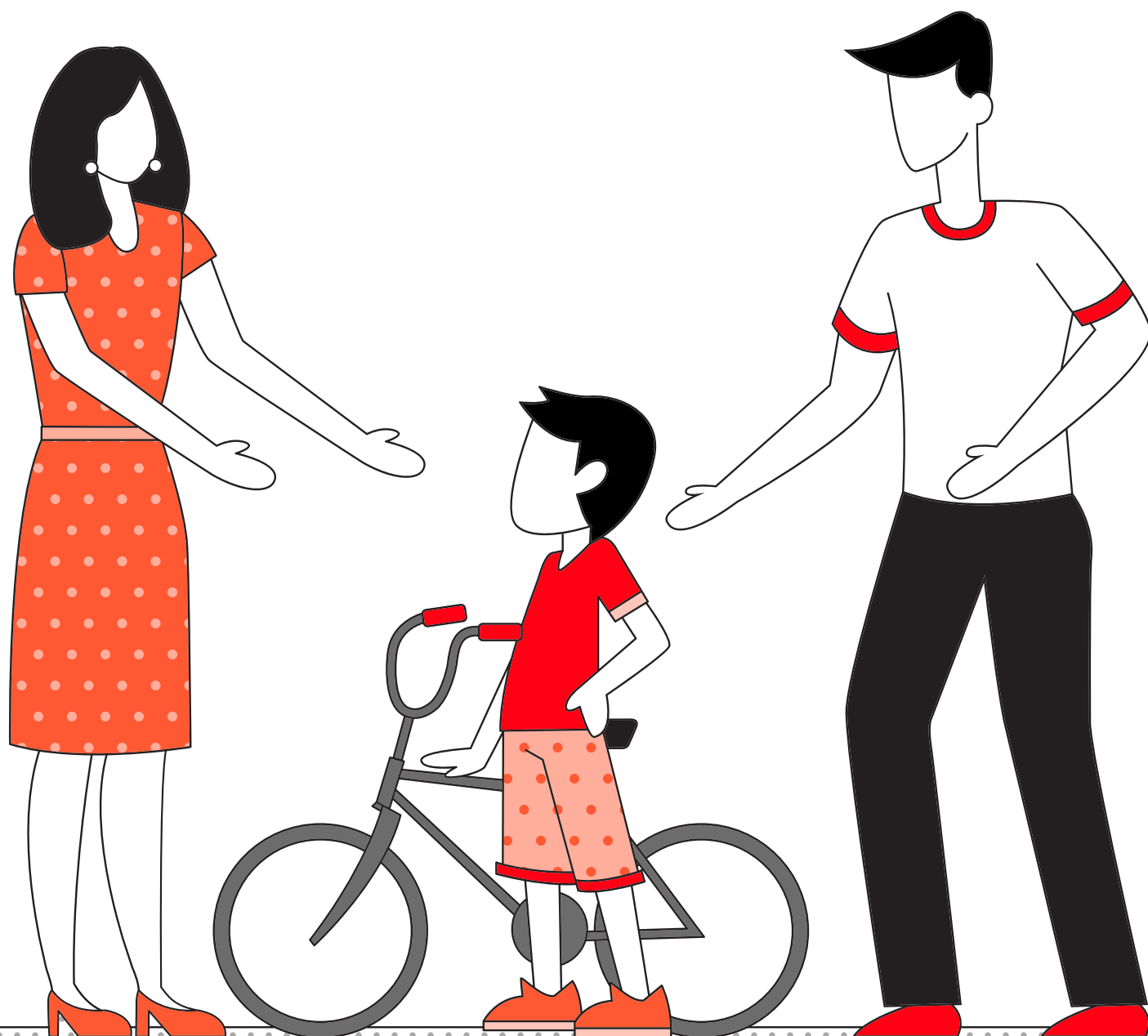


All this while, we took salary cuts to reduce our losses.
And my personal expenses were greater than the income.
I had no savings.
All my savings had been invested in nearbuy (this bit is not a failure!)

I had to borrow from friends.
Both my credit cards maxed out.

I had to keep my parent's house as collateral to raise money for my sister's wedding. To gift Vidur a bicycle on his birthday, something he had been asking for a year, we had to sell Ruchi's gold bangles.

We surprised him when he came from school.
He broke down.
So did we.



Despite my best intentions, nearbuy could not become what I had imagined it to be.

Investors lost their money.

People lost their jobs.

So many lost their confidence and trust.

I failed to make it work.

And realized I should not attempt to anymore.

I was 39.
No money.
No plan.
No direction.



A resume is such an interesting document.

It is a showcase of all the great things you have done, accomplished and are proud of.

But it never talks about how you reached there.

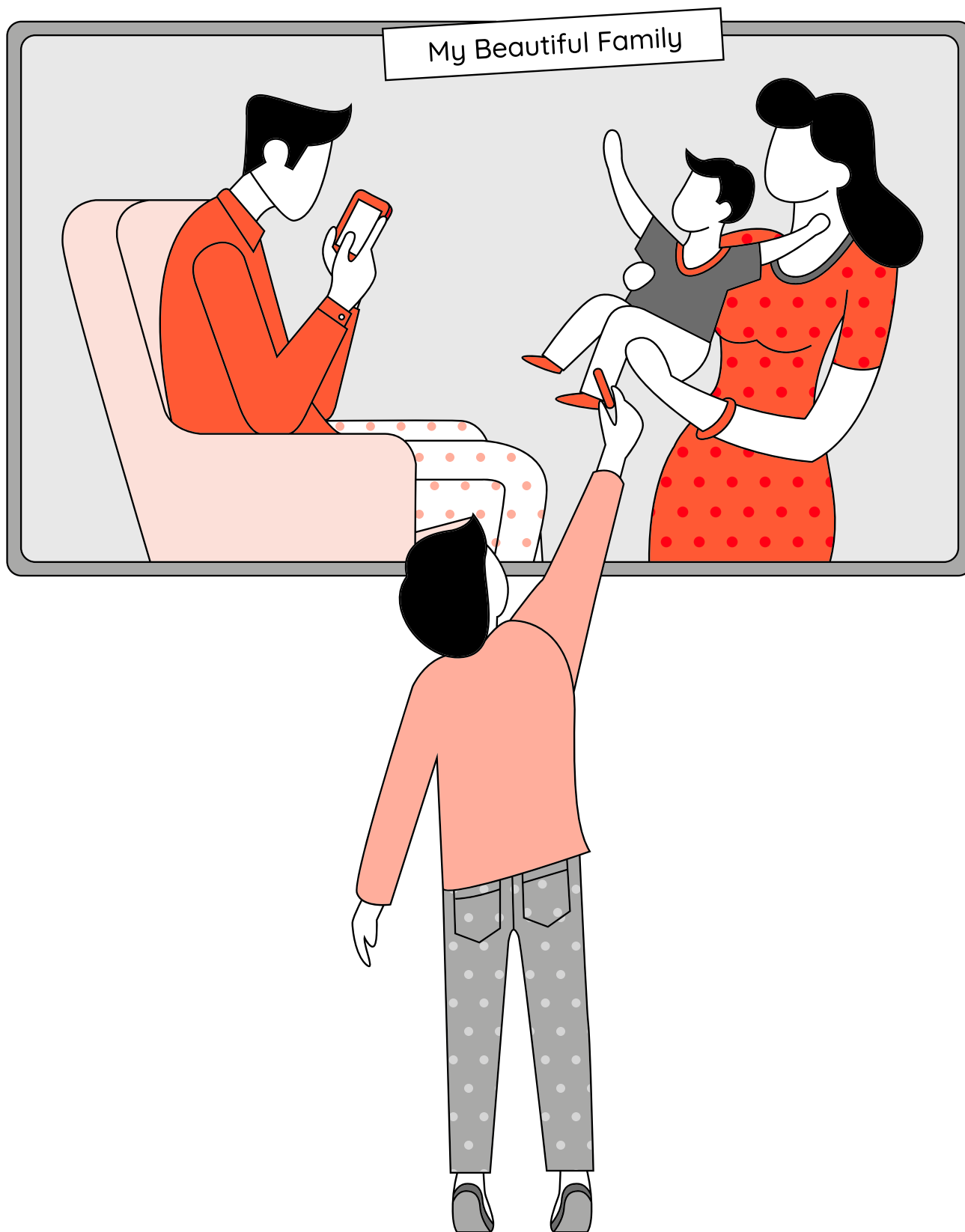
The failures that got you there.



My life is so much more about my failures than any of the little things I have managed to accomplish.

For the first 6 years of his life, Vidur used to draw the family with me holding a phone in my hand.

That is how he remembered his father.



My parents didn't hear from me for days, because I was busy. Trying to make amends around my other failures in life, not realizing that through this I was carving out yet another failure.



My investors and colleagues trusted me, with their money, their careers, their time.

And I failed at keeping their trust intact.

I played with their money, their careers, their trust.

Always hoping that I could do something to redeem myself and get it all back.

But it didn't happen.

And that is my failure.

And that is my story.



I am so so blessed to have lived my life.

Would I go back and change anything?
Most likely not.

I wish I had acted better, been better or done better in the past, but I wouldn't have it any other way.

I am who I am because of these failures.

The scars that you wear
on your body.
Don't regret them.
Don't hate them.
Don't reject them.

They are signs of a battle you
fought.

And even if you lost, the scars were left
behind as a reminder of who you were and
who you can be.

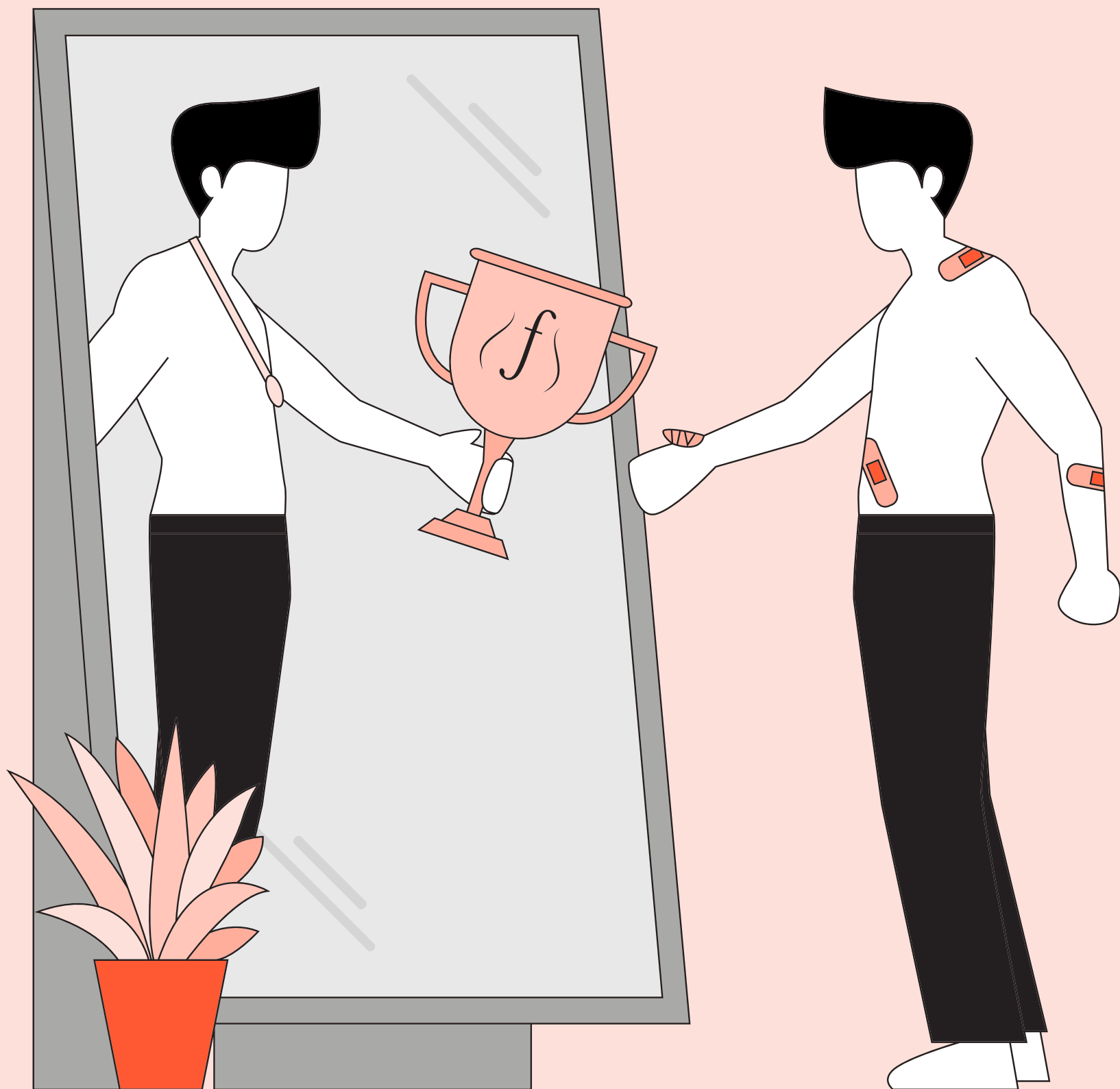


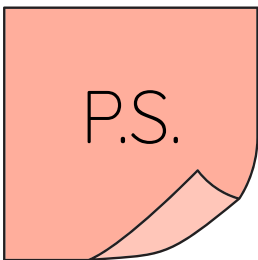
At the end of the day, when you undress yourself, the scars tell a story that only you know of.

Don't wish for more scars.

But be surely aware of the ones you have.

Perhaps one day you will be proud of them as well.

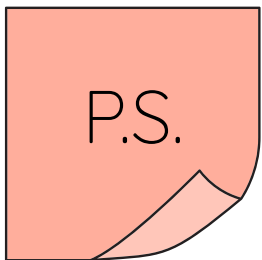




It is easy for someone to assume that where I ended up in life (colleges, companies, investors, etc.) were not my first choices and hence are not the right choices.

That is not true.

I was rejected by everyone. But they accepted me. They are no lesser in my eyes. Never!



I am insanely lucky. So lucky that it shocks me at times.

So it might be easy to conclude that all of this is humblebrag and I have actually enjoyed a lot of success.

My success remains unexplained. I cannot justify it nor can claim it.



I hope my failure resume makes you realize that you are not alone. Even those you thought were impeccable have failed. Even the most successful people go through setbacks. Your failures do not determine who you are. But they can surely determine who you can become!

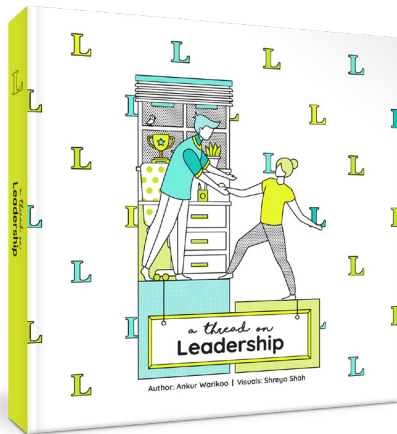
Cheers to more learning.
Cheers to progress.
Cheers to failing, so that we continue to learn!

If you liked this book, please do share it freely with your friends and family. And while you are at it, send a warm thank you to the awesome Shreya, whose illustrations made this book come alive. She can be found on [Instagram](#), or you can send her an email on shreya.shah@spit.ac.in

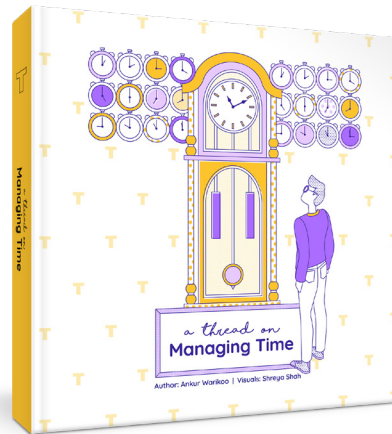
For any feedback or suggestions,
please write to me on warikoo@ankurwarikoo.com

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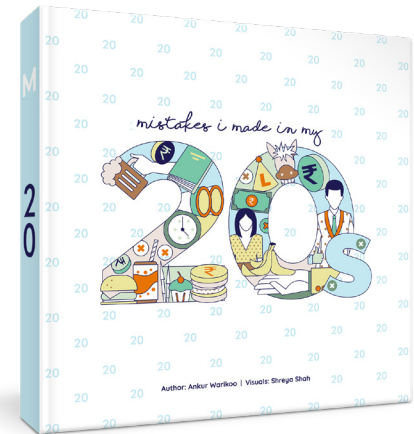
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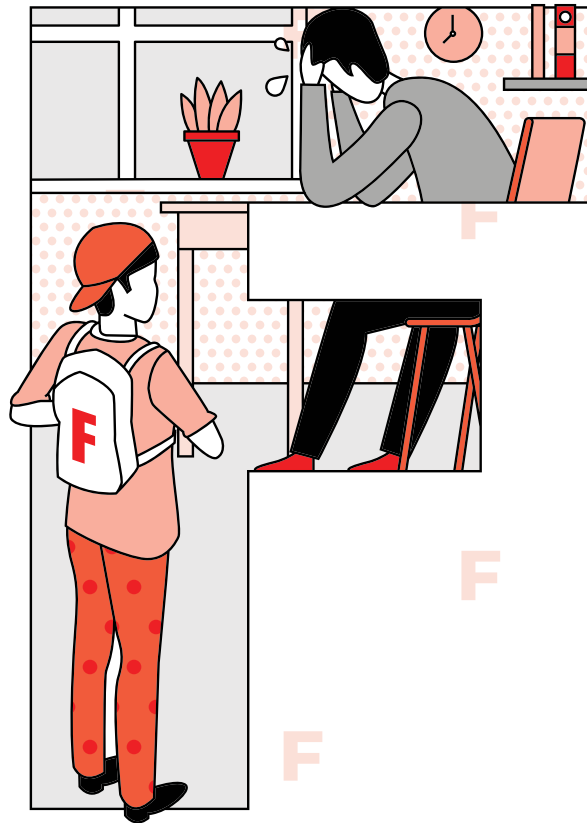


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My Failure Resume



Author & Narrator: Ankur Warikoo
www.twitter.com/warikoo

Visual Storytelling: Shreya Shah
www.instagram.com/visualnarratives23