



Tapestries

Saint Francis University's Literary Arts Magazine

2021-2022

This issue of *Tapestries* is dedicated to
the memory of **Dr. Grant Julin**,
who frequently served as a judge for the Gunard B. Carlson Contest
and was a beloved professor, scholar, colleague, and campus leader
at Saint Francis University.

2021-2022

Each year the School of STEAM hosts the Gunard B. Carlson Creative Writing and Visual Arts Contest, a competition open to all Saint Francis University undergraduates. Students may submit written entries of up to 3,000 words in the following categories: (1) fiction, (2) creative nonfiction, including personal narratives and memoirs, (3) essay writing, and (4) poetry, with a minimum of five poems per submission. Students also may submit works of visual art, such as photographs, sculptures, paintings (oil, water, and acrylic), sketches, and collages.

The Department of English and World Languages also hosts the annual Father Callan Poetry Contest, which aims to celebrate Father Thomas Callan's love of literature. This contest, funded by the generous donations of SFU alumnus and published poet Paul Martin, is open to all undergraduate and graduate students.

The winners and honorable mentions of each contest are published in our annual edition of *Tapestries*, Saint Francis University's literary and visual arts magazine. This edition includes the winning entries and honorable mentions of our 2021-2022 contests. Opinions expressed in this magazine do not reflect those of the contest judges and magazine editor or those of the Saint Francis University community.

For more information about the Gunard B. Carlson and Fr. Callan Poetry contests, please contact:

Dr. Brennan Thomas
Department of English and World Languages
Saint Francis University
117 Evergreen Drive
P.O. Box 600
Loretto, Pennsylvania 15940
E-mail: bthomas@francis.edu
Phone: (814) 471-1111

Tapestries

Weaving the Threads of Creativity and Innovation

Faculty Editor

Brennan Thomas

Cover Artwork by Cheyanne Gregorich

“St. John’s the Divine (front), Sanctuary” (1st Place Winner in the Visual Arts Category)

Copyright © 2024 by Saint Francis University

Acknowledgements

The sponsorship and coordination of the Gunard B. Carlson and Fr. Callan Poetry contests and the subsequent publication of *Tapestries* would not be possible without the following individuals:

Mrs. Barbara C. Travaglini and her son, Frederick C. Travaglini, directors of the Gunard B. Carlson Memorial Foundation, for their continued funding and support of this contest to recognize the talents of our university's writers and artists;

Mr. Paul Martin, for his establishment and sponsorship of the Fr. Callan Poetry Contest, for which he also judged all submitted entries;

Drs. Patrick Farabaugh, Theresa Horner, Grant Julin, Art Remillard, and Kent Tonkin, who judged all writing submissions for the Gunard B. Carlson Contest and selected the winners and honorable mention recipients in this category;

Ms. Carol Stoltz, for judging all visual art entries for the Gunard B. Carlson Contest and selecting the overall visual arts winner and honorable mention recipients;

Ms. Karen Holtz, Ms. Colleen Krug and Ms. Melita O'Donnell, for carefully overseeing that all winners and honorable mention recipients received their award certificates and other prizes;

Ms. Marie Young and other members of the Marketing and IT teams, who published our magazine on the university's site for all students, faculty, and staff to access; and

All students who submitted writing and artwork for the Gunard B. Carlson and Fr. Callan Poetry contests. Your exceptional artistry, creativity, and critical insights both awed and inspired our judging panel.

Gunard B. Carlson Writing Judges

Dr. Patrick Farabaugh, Professor of Communication Arts

Dr. Theresa Horner, Assistant Professor of Public Health

Dr. Grant Julin, Associate Professor of Philosophy

Dr. Art Remillard, Professor of Philosophy

Dr. Kent Tonkin, Associate Professor of Business

Gunard B. Carlson Visual Arts Judge

Ms. Carol Stoltz, Head of Library Access Services

Fr. Callan Poetry Judge

Mr. Paul Martin, SFU Alumnus and Published Poet

Contest Coordinator & Magazine Editor

Dr. Brennan Thomas, Associate Professor of English and Writing Center Director

Contents

Writing

Author	Title	Page
Wendelyn Bintrim	<i>The Freeze, the Fleas, and the Pleas</i>	7
Thomas Swope	<i>The Slow Death of an Empire</i>	11
Marjorie Mika	<i>demu – 2nd Place Winner, Fr. Callan Poetry Contest</i>	19
Renee Hoffman	<i>The Secretary</i>	20
Scott Riner	<i>Rust – 2nd Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest</i>	25
Olivia Baldini	<i>What Do You Do with the Sad That You Feel?</i>	30
Julianne Dee	<i>The Hidden Value of Wonder</i>	34
Brynn Hershbine	<i>Where I Am From – 1st Place Winner, Fr. Callan Poetry Contest</i>	45
Rory Schaeffer	<i>Reflections of the Subconscious – 4th Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest</i>	47
Annah Lovette	<i>The Fine Art of Conversation– 3rd Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest</i>	53
Gabriel Graham	<i>It is Time – 1st Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest</i>	63

Artwork

Artist	Title	Page
Cheyenne Gregorich	<i>St. John's the Divine, Sanctuary – 1st Place Winner (Visual Arts), Gunard Carlson Contest</i>	10
	<i>White Blank Page</i>	18
	<i>Keep Your Face Always to the Sunshine</i>	29
	<i>A Portrait of Self-Destruction</i>	52
Vittoria LaRosa	<i>Portrait of a Woman</i>	24
Angelica Ybarra	<i>Clear Blue</i>	46
Julia Chmielowiec	<i>Green Glass</i>	51
Taylor Kennedy	<i>My Favorite/Inspirational Anime</i>	59
Katelyn Diehl	<i>Saint Francis University Bell Tower</i>	62

The Freeze, the Fleas, and the Pleas: A Review of Andres Tvauri's "The Impact of the Climate Catastrophe of 536-537 AD in Estonia and Neighbouring Areas"

by Wendelyn Bintrim

Dust veils the sky, darkening the earth, in many incidents sprinkled throughout time. The time frames and social consequences of these events vary. In revolutionary New England of 1780, a single dim day unleashed a torrent of religious fervor, and in 1816, the "Year Without a Summer" may have set the macabre mood in which Mary Shelley penned *Frankenstein* (Campanella 2007, 51). My essay will review an article on one such disturbingly dark period: 536-537 AD. The natural cooling of 536 was most likely caused by the dramatic explosion of the Ilopango caldera in El Salvador; Salvadorans in its path were probably killed by the pyroclastic surge, then buried under a layer of tephra that was at least two meters deep (Dull, Southon, and Sheets 2001, 32; Tvauri 2014, 31). Outside the kill zone, many societies felt the strain of the cold and drought produced by the resulting dust veil: Mexican commoners revolted against elites and looted tombs, while some people in northern China starved (Marshall 2013). For inhabitants of the northern hemisphere, who fared worse than their southern counterparts, the frigid weather of 536 lasted until 545 (Marshall 2013; Tvauri 2014, 2).

This paper will review Andres Tvauri's "The Impact of the Climate Catastrophe of 536-537 AD in Estonia and Neighbouring Areas." First, I will discuss the theory that the 536-537 AD climatic cooling in Europe inspired the Norse myth of Fimbulwinter (Tvauri 2014, 41). Then I will describe the climate event's real-life impacts on Europeans. Religion and farming changed, and famines and plague epidemics broke out in some areas (Tvauri 2014, 1, 11, 19). I will compare the case for the disaster of 536 inspiring Fimbulwinter with the competing evidence suggesting that Fimbulwinter could be euhemerized as a reflection of the 939 Eldjá volcanic explosion in Iceland.

Tvauri's piece is a synthesis of primary and secondary sources. He uses such primary sources as slow-growing tree cross-sections from both hemispheres and a firsthand written report by the bishop of Milan claiming that famished mothers ate their children (Tvauri 2014, 31-32). Considering the harsh effects of the cold on Estonians and other Europeans, Tvauri's argument is that the climate catastrophe in Estonia in 536 upset society enough that it furnishes a convenient chronological milestone. His idea is that the catastrophe of 536 could place the border date between the Migration Period and Pre-Viking Age at about 550. Setting this border date at 550 would align the periodization of the Estonian Iron Age with dates used for the Fennoscandian countries (Tvauri, 2014, 30). Tvauri also thinks that the unusually low temperatures could have impacted Norse

mythology centuries later: He agrees with the archaeologist Bo Gräslund that the description of Ragnarök, preceded by Fimbulwinter—a series of winters with no intervening summers—reads suspiciously like a recollection of 536-537 (Tvauri 2014, 41).

Europeans could do little in response to the climate change catastrophe. Scandinavians imagined they had agency to bring the sun back by sacrificing gold to bogs and bodies of water, similar to the modern practice of throwing coins in wishing wells (Tvauri 2014, 41-42). Presumably, they were using sympathetic magic because gold is shiny and yellow like the sun. At some point in the 500s, disappointed and having mostly exhausted their gold supplies, Scandinavians gave up on gold sacrifice and a long tradition of sun worship (Tvauri 2014, 41-42). One of the few ways Europeans at the time could actually exhibit agency was the Estonians' choice to intensify their cultivation of the cold-hardy grain rye (Tvauri 2014, 30).

Unlike people of our era, who know that they are causing their own climatic downfall and who could choose to phase out fossil fuels if they cared enough, Europeans 1,486 years ago were at the mercy of natural climate change. By chance, southern Finns weathered the storm because their food sources were more diversified than those of people in Scandinavia proper; these Finns did not rely on cereal crops quite so much and supplemented their diets with foraging and raising cattle (Tvauri 2014, 40). Southern Finns got lucky because the (pre-existing) climate conditions and agricultural technology of the time did not allow them to rely on agriculture alone (Tvauri 2014, 40). And in northern Fennoscandia, which lacked agriculture, population levels remained stable in the 500s (Tvauri 2014, 40). However, half of the overall Scandinavian population may have perished due to the climate catastrophe (Tvauri 2014, 37).

As mentioned above, Tvauri's article states that the 536 disaster was accompanied by human disease. A suggested trigger in another article for the Justinianic Plague of 541-544 that stretched from Constantinople to Finland was that cool weather helped rat survival, flea reproduction, and thus the propagation of *Yersinia pestis* (Helama, Arrpe, Uusitalo et al. 2018, 8). Insufficient vitamin D levels due to lack of sunlight may have weakened Europeans' immune systems, making them more vulnerable to the disease (Helama, Arrpe, Uusitalo et al. 2018, 8). Lacking the science to know that the fleas were vectors of the plague, as well as having no clue what vitamins were at the time, people were helpless.

Unfortunately, Tvauri's article came out four years before the article "The Eldgjá Eruption: Timing, Long-Range Impacts and Influence on the Christianisation of Iceland" was published, so Tvauri was unable to comment on Oppenheimer et al.'s competing theory that the Eldgjá volcanic explosion in Iceland in 939-940 was instead the prototype for Fimbulwinter (Oppenheimer et al. 2018, 369, 377). Had Tvauri been able to read the later article by Oppenheimer et al., he might have had a hard time insisting on the credibility of the idea that the cooling of 536 was the one described in the apocalyptic Old

Norse poem “Völuspá.” While Tvauri, citing Gräslund and Price, says that the material culture contained in that poem is decidedly 6th-century, Oppenheimer et al. argue that because the “Völuspá” seems to describe a volcanic explosion as a portent of Christianization in Iceland in ca. 1000, the poem’s origin was later and closer to its being written down (Tvauri 2014, 41; Oppenheimer et al. 2018, 378). Oppenheimer’s claim sounds much simpler because one can presume that Icelanders were more awestruck by then-recent events than events that had affected Europeans long ago. However, I wonder if Fimbulwinter in the “Völuspá” could have a touch of both 536 and 939. The “Völuspá” laments how “sister’s children sibship shame”—i.e., people committed incest at the end of the world (Coomaraswamy 1909, 23). As I noted earlier, in 536, the Scandinavian population was cut in half by the cooling. Perhaps this is a bit of a stretch, but after reading Jared Diamond’s *Collapse*, which discusses instances of other severe population contractions in world history leading to either inbreeding or resignation to childlessness, I speculate that the incest detail in the “Völuspá” might have been an outgrowth of the halving of the Scandinavian population (Diamond 2011, 134).

Tvauri’s article has many merits, but it is very long and relates mostly to European history. An international perspective on how the haze affected other areas and peoples would be interesting. Perhaps the crisis affected other mythologies and folklores in ways nobody has considered yet.

Works Cited

- Campanella, Thomas J. 2007. “‘Mark Well the Gloom’: Shedding Light on the Great Dark Day of 1780.” *Environmental History* 12: 35-58.
- Coomaraswamy, Ananda Kentish. 1909. *Völuspa: Done into English out of the Icelandic of the Elder Edda*. London: Essex House Press.
- Diamond, Jared. *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*. New York: Penguin, 2011.
- Dull, Robert A., John R. Southon, and Payson Sheets. 2001. “Volcanism, Ecology and Culture: A Reassessment of the Volcán Ilopango TBJ Eruption in the Southern Maya Realm.” *Latin American Antiquity* 12 (1): 25-44. <https://doi.org/10.2307/971755>.
- Gräslund, Bo and Neil Price. 2012. "Twilight of the Gods? the 'Dust Veil Event' of AD 536 in Critical Perspective." *Antiquity* 86 (332) (06): 428-443.
- Helama, Samuli, Laura Arppe, Joonas Uusitalo, Jari Holopainen, Hanna Mäkelä M., Harri Mäkinen, Kari Mielikäinen, et al. 2018. "Volcanic Dust Veils from Sixth Century Tree-Ring Isotopes Linked to Reduced Irradiance, Primary Production and Human Health." *Scientific Reports (Nature Publisher Group)* 8 (01): 1-12. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/s41598-018-19760-w>.
- Marshall, Lisa. 2013. “Deadly Eruption.” University of Colorado Boulder. December 1, 2013. <https://www.colorado.edu/coloradan/2013/12/01/deadly-eruption>.
- Tvauri, Andres. 2014. "The Impact of the Climate Catastrophe of 536-537 AD in Estonia and Neighbouring Areas." *Estonian Journal of Archaeology* 18 (1): 30-56.



St. John's the Divine (front), Sanctuary

by Cheyanne Gregorich

1st Place Winner (Visual Category), Gunard Carlson Contest

The Slow Death of an Empire

by Thomas Swope

Throughout human history, we have considered many things to last forever, and sometimes we take for granted what can last only a few centuries. This statement includes empires, even the ones that in the beginning were thought to be able to last until the end of time. The Ottoman Empire is an example of one of these empires. The Ottoman Empire was founded in 1299 by Osman I, a Turkish warlord of the tribes of Anatolia. At its peak in 1683, it was about two million square miles, covering the southeastern part of Europe, most of the Middle East, and the northern tip of Africa. The empire had a powerful military, a strong economy, and a very devout religious populace that supported the government in its early years. The Ottoman Empire was feared by Christian Europe and many European empires due to its strength and power as it dominated most of the Mediterranean Sea and had the strongest land force that was ever seen in Europe. However, even the strongest and most important trees will eventually rot and fall down. That rot was slow for the Ottoman Empire, as it was suffering from a number of factors that led to its collapse in the early twentieth century. There are many factors that caused the decline of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, but there are four that caused the most damage: the empire lacked internal cohesion, which deteriorated over the years; the empire had a medieval style economy that did not adapt to the modernization of the world around it; when it lost the Siege of Vienna, many European empires were deliberately weakening the empire to the point that it would collapse in a matter of years; and most of its territories were taken by the Allied Powers after World War I. The collapse of the Ottoman Empire was a symbol that the old traditions of the medieval world no longer held importance in the modern world.

One of the reasons for the decline of the Ottoman Empire was that it was lacking any form of internal cohesion. The total population of the Ottoman Empire during the 1600s was around thirty million people with many different ethnicities. The people of the territories it conquered had their own cultures and societies before the empire entered their lands. The ethnic groups of the Ottoman Empire were Turks, Kurds, Albanians, Armenians, Greeks, Circassians, Slavs, Arabs and many others. The Turks usually dominated the political sphere of the empire. These groups all had their different beliefs, though they were mainly either Muslim or Christian, and all had their own unique traditions, which made one united government challenging. Early on, the empire had laws that protected the people of different religions, such as the Christians and Jews, so they could practice their religions, but they were given second-class citizen rights. It was not uncommon for these groups to come into conflict with one another and there were instances of ethnic violence between them. The people of these lands, such as the Balkans, exhibited growing dissent towards the imperial rule of the Ottoman Turks. Because of this, the empire had to lose some of the territories it acquired in order to centralize their

authority in their lands and halt this spread of nationalism. During the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, the governments of the Balkan Peninsula removed the Ottoman Turks from power to become independent. However, Albanians then residing in the Balkans did not want Balkan control, so the war led to the migration of Albanians into Ottoman territory.¹ This migration did not please the Arab population because they did not want the Albanians in the empire. The Albanians were Christian, and this clashed with the Muslim Arabs, so there was much violence because of the rivaling religions. This is evidenced by past events in the Middle East, such as the Crusade of Varna, when the Christians burned Muslim villages, and many other small ethnic conflicts within the Ottoman Empire. This increasing lack of unity due to nationalistic movements that led to wars within the empire's borders is a similar trait among most empires that collapse.

The Ottoman Empire during World War I was also suffering from an incredibly weak economy that was mostly medieval in its structure and the significant devaluation of its currency. The economy of the empire was very backward when compared to the other economies of the European empires. Europe was growing and changing to adapt to the more modern times. An example of this was the European voyages to the Americas, which brought back very large amounts of silver and gold to Europe in the seventeenth century. This flow of American silver was damaging to the asper, which was the silver coin currency of the Ottoman Empire, causing it to be devalued and putting the empire in a financial crisis.² This financial crisis was a tipping point in the Ottoman Turks' downfall, as they had to figure out a correct response to this crisis in order to compete with the empires of Europe. The major European powers stopped trading with the Ottoman Turks, leading to the closing of the international trade routes that went throughout the Mediterranean Sea and waters that were under the control of the Ottoman navy. This caused the economy to suffer from inflation as the European countries relied on other countries for their precious metals, such as silver and gold. This heavily impacted the trade distribution between Europe and the Ottoman Empire. The treasurers of the Ottoman Empire struggled to fix the inflation by debasing the currency of the empire. They also had to increase taxation among the local population, which led to unrest and resulted in a large number of people being underpaid and sometimes jobless. Also, there was corruption that was plaguing the legal system of the local government that would affect the empire for a very long time, right up until World War I. Because of this, after World War I, the empire became a political playground for the European nations and the Soviet Union, as they were still interested in its vital natural resource: oil. The Ottoman Empire's failure to adapt and advance to the changes of the amount of wealth going to the new world kept it from advancing as a fully industrialized country. The Ottoman Empire

¹ Ryan Gingeras, "The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East." *Boulder: Basic Books*, 2015. Accessed October 20, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/francis-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866936>. pg. 153

² Bernard Lewis, "Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire 1912-1923." *Oxford Scholarship Online*, May 2009. Accessed September 22, 2020. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199561520.001.0001. pg. 119

was able to survive the financial crisis only by pressing forward some reforms, such as curbing corruption, and improving the lives of its citizens by changing its taxing structure. This, at least, helped ensure its existence into the twentieth century. However, that only delayed the inevitable as it was just a matter of time before the economy was unable to survive. The empire found itself surrounded by numerous enemy countries. As World War I was approaching, the Ottoman Turks believed that the Central Powers had much needed industrial and military stretch, which they badly needed, so they chose to support them in hope of sustaining the empire. They chose incorrectly, and when the Central Powers lost World War I, this not only resulted in a loss of large amounts of its territories, but a complete and total breakdown of all levels of government. In the early twentieth century the entire region was an unstable warzone between various factions and tribes that had lived in the Middle East for centuries, each having their own ideas. The spread of nationalism reaching the Middle East caused all these factions to fight each other, as well as any other Western power in the area at that time.

The Ottoman Empire's military strength and economic might were deliberately weakened because of European aggression into territories due to the large numbers of wars it had to fight in to protect itself from the European empires. This is similar to how the Roman Empire, which suffered from numerous invasions and attacks from barbarian tribes during the fourth century, eventually fell. Like other empires that collapsed throughout history, the Ottoman Empire had a strong military and was aggressively conquering other lands, but then as time passed, it became weak and vulnerable to attacks, as it was just too large.

Historically, the Ottoman Empire was seen as a major threat to the Christian kingdoms in lower Eastern Europe that were right at the empire's doorstep, so to speak. The empire eventually conquered large portions of Eastern and Central Europe. It was a threat to all major European empires that were expanding overseas, especially in Africa, and the Ottoman Empire was blocking the only sea routes for Europeans to reach Africa. Because of the empire's blockade from the Mediterranean Sea to the Black Sea, these European countries feared the Ottoman Empire. This did not last forever, as with all empires, the Ottoman Empire reached a limit in their expansion. Its borders were so vast that it was difficult for the military to protect from invaders, accompanied by its declining economy. Despite its weakening state in the last part of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the empire was still powerful enough to survive a few more years into the modern age.

The Ottoman Empire reached the limits of its expansion when it lost the Siege of Vienna in 1529, losing to a coalition of European states. When the other European empires started to take notice of this development, they began to move into territories that the Ottoman Empire had in Africa and Asia. This was the beginning of the slow decline that lasted centuries until its ultimate collapse. The British took areas such as Egypt and

Cyprus in the late nineteenth century, then France took Tunisia in that same time frame.³ Many of the European powers that would become the Allied Powers during World War I expanded into other parts of Africa and the Ottoman Empire found itself to the point of breaking. They started to take small parts of territory around the empire in parts of Africa and the far Middle East as way to put holes in the empire's strength without having to actively go to war with the Ottoman Turks. A great example of this would be the Crimean War, which started when the Russian Empire declared that the Crimean Peninsula belonged to them, as it was an important coastal point along the Black Sea, and caused a war with the Ottoman Empire that lasted from 1853 to 1856.⁴ The reason that the Ottoman Empire managed to hold out as long as it did was that the British Empire and the French Empire assisted only to stop Russian influence from spreading across its borders and into Western Europe. This was not without a price, though, as France and Great Britain took advantage of the Ottoman Empire and managed to claim some territory after the war. The European empires continued their onslaught on the territories of the Ottoman Empire, and that weakened it to the point of absolute collapse that happened after World War I ended.

Lastly, the demise of the Ottoman Empire occurred because they chose the wrong side in World War I. When the Allied Powers won, they took a majority of the empire's territories, which reduced its size considerably and created even more instability in the Middle East. This was covered in the Treaty of Sevres that was signed on August 10, 1920. The treaty stated that large portions of the Ottoman Empire's territories would be given to France, Italy, and Great Britain, as well as creating occupation zones in the remaining territories of the Ottoman Empire. These zones were created to give the Allied Powers enough land for each of them to recover from World War I. The British Empire itself, already having a hand in that area during World War I, began with the exploits of T. E. Lawrence (commonly known as Lawrence of Arabia) who organized the various tribes of the Arabian Peninsula, starting resistance against the Ottoman Turks. This helped to hasten the downfall of the empire because it spread dissent among the local population. Lawrence did not keep his promise of sovereignty to the local tribes, as the British were interested in owning large portions of land to strengthen its own economy that had suffered heavy losses during World War I. In other regions of the Ottoman Empire, such as Egypt, civil unrest and nationalistic movements were taking place as well. In fact, British influence in these regions would later create most of the modern Middle Eastern nations that exist now, such as Iraq, Palestine, and Egypt. The British required that these areas that would later be Palestine and Iraq to give them a large majority of their resources as a reward for their assistance in helping them become independent nations and bringing peace to the Middle East. Needless to say, the reaction of these newly formed countries of these mandates was occasionally violent, as there were many ethnic groups and tribes

³ Eugene Rogan, "The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East." *Boulder: Basic Books*, 2015. Accessed October 20, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/francis-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866936>. 14

⁴ Ralph Amelan, "Did the Ottoman Empire Fall Or was it Pushed? [Daily Edition]." *Jerusalem Post*, Aug 25, 2000. <http://francis.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/docview/319286397?accountid=4216>. par. 2.

that were bitter from the downfall of the Ottoman Empire, because they had relied on what they perceived as false promises from the British of peaceful independent sovereignty, when really, Great Britain just wanted their resources. Tensions were already high since the Turkish people of the Anatolia Peninsula did not look favorably on the Treaty of Serves, as they saw it as more of the Western powers invading on their land. This led to the Turkish War of Independence, which lasted from May 1919 to October 1923 and led to the defeat of the European armies in the Middle East and the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Iraq, and Palestine. Today, these countries are now ruled by dictatorships and militant religious extremists who seek to remove any presence of Western influence in the major Middle East areas. This is very familiar to that of the modern Middle East in our world today, as this area is still suffering from the effects of the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

After the war, Winston Churchill and the British government had plans for the postwar Middle East, now that the most powerful faction in that area, the Ottoman Empire, was nothing but a memory. For many of the regions that were part of the Ottoman Empire, the plans were to turn a vast majority of the area into a wall to stop Soviet influence from spreading all the way down into Africa.⁵ It shows that the Middle East was once used to test for new political ideas that clashed between both world wars, and the political chaos from both sides have caused a complete mishmash of political ideologies. The remains of the Ottoman Empire were taken by the victors of World War I and turned completely upside down for multiple political purposes, allowing both sides to turn the resources of that region of the world to their advantage. As stated in the above paragraph, the Treaty of Serves led to the disbandment and deconstruction of the Ottoman Empire, with vast swaths of land being given the victorious Allied Powers after the end of World War I. It was a treaty that the peoples of the Middle East, and especially the Turkish peoples, believed was an insult to the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, as it was the most important governmental entity to have existed in the Middle East for longer than most of the peoples who lived through World War I could remember and it was a vital part of the Turkish culture. Again, to reiterate what was previously stated, the treaty had led to a violent war between the Allied Powers and the Turkish nationals that turned the entire Anatolia Peninsula into a warzone, resulting in the deaths of over a hundred thousand peoples from both sides. Once this war was over, another treaty was established that led to the founding of the Republic of Turkey and the foundation of what had become the modern Middle East.

Overall, the Ottoman Empire collapsed due to a variety of reasons that have caused the similar fall of various other empires. Although it is a cliché that history repeats itself, in this instance, it is accurate. Empires fall and they do so for similar reasons. An empire expands too greatly, which then leads to numerous wars that weaken the empire, and it loses large amounts of territories. While the conflicts are occurring, the empire's

⁵ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914-1922* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1989), 19.

governmental structure was filled with corruption. The economy throughout the years was slowly being debilitated by the closing of the old trade routes all along the Mediterranean Sea. The Western European powers were enticed by the new precious metals, such as gold, silver, and working metals, located in the Western hemisphere; these were used in the construction of large-scale buildings. The topography of the Ottoman Empire was such that it was more difficult to build a more modern infrastructure as these metals were scarce. By the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire was structurally failing on so many levels that it was very unstable and so was easy prey for the European countries. The alliance with the Central Powers finalized its demise as the European powers swept in after World War I.

As it has been shown, the Ottoman Empire collapsed from a combination of multiple factors. The internal strife that was destroying the bureaucratic system of government had grown over hundreds of years and could not take the changing political ideology existing among multiple ethnicities. Its leading members of the government had to flee into exile to escape these the rising nationalistic movements that were tearing the empire apart. Coupled with the movements was the severely weak economy that refused to modernize and remained how it was for centuries. The empire was too large for a weak economy, and by the time World War I came, its currency was no longer of any value, and so its territories were unable to sustain their fight in the war. Finally, the constant wars the empire endured with the European nations that led to the loss of territories increased the instability of the Ottoman Empire. By the beginning of World War I, it was only a former shadow of its past glory, just trying to survive in the changing world that had no place for the empires of old. Immediately after World War I, the empire had lost the remainder of its territories and lands to the Allied Powers. The old empire's lands were divided by the Allied Powers as they attempted to establish some form of order in the region. They only accomplished the creation of new countries in the Middle East, which would breed violence that still exists today.

This is not unique among other empires, as the fate of the Ottoman Empire was the same as seen throughout history; it was a fate that was inevitable among empires that continued to expand until they reached their limit and collapsed in on themselves. The fate and story of the empire was common. Its military was already on the verge of collapse when World War I began, and they dragged themselves into an open conflict that seemingly resulted in nothing but bringing about the end of the Ottoman Empire. That result was dismantling of the lands of the former empire to the victors, who made the Middle East even more unstable than when it was part of the Ottoman Empire.

Bibliography

- Amelan, Ralph. "Did the Ottoman Empire Fall, or Was It Pushed?: [Daily Edition]." *Jerusalem Post*, Aug 25, 2000. <http://francis.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/docview/319286397?accountid=4216>.
- Fromkin, David. *A Peace to End All Peace: Creating the Modern Middle East 1914-1922*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1989.
- Gingeras, Ryan. "Sorrowful Shores: Violence, Ethnicity, and the End of the Ottoman Empire 1912-1923." *Oxford Scholarship Online*, May 2009. Accessed September 22, 2020. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199561520.001.0001.
- Lewis, Bernard. "Some Reflections on the Decline of the Ottoman Empire." *Studia Islamica*, no. 9 (1958): 111-27. Accessed September 22, 2020. doi:10.2307/1594978.
- Photograph of Mehmed VI Vahideddin. 1922. Istanbul, Turkey. "The Economist 1924: The Abolition of the Caliphate." *Islamic Civilization*, March 6, 2018. Accessed September 22, 2020. <https://islamciv.com/2018/03/06/the-economist-1924-the-abolition-of-the-caliphate/>.
- Rogan, Eugene. "The Fall of the Ottomans: The Great War in the Middle East." *Boulder: Basic Books*, 2015. Accessed September 22, 2020. ProQuest Ebook Central. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/francis-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1866936>.



White Blank Page by Cheyanne Gregorich

Дети

by Marjorie Mika

2nd Place Winner, Father Callan Poetry Contest

On March fourteenth inside a theatre
Where hundreds hid from wartime leaders
A man took paint and went outside
Knowing then he could have died
And wrote a word in letters grand
So as from air to see on land
The dirty price the war has cost
That in an instant all was lost
The building fell with deafening sound
And “children” written on the ground

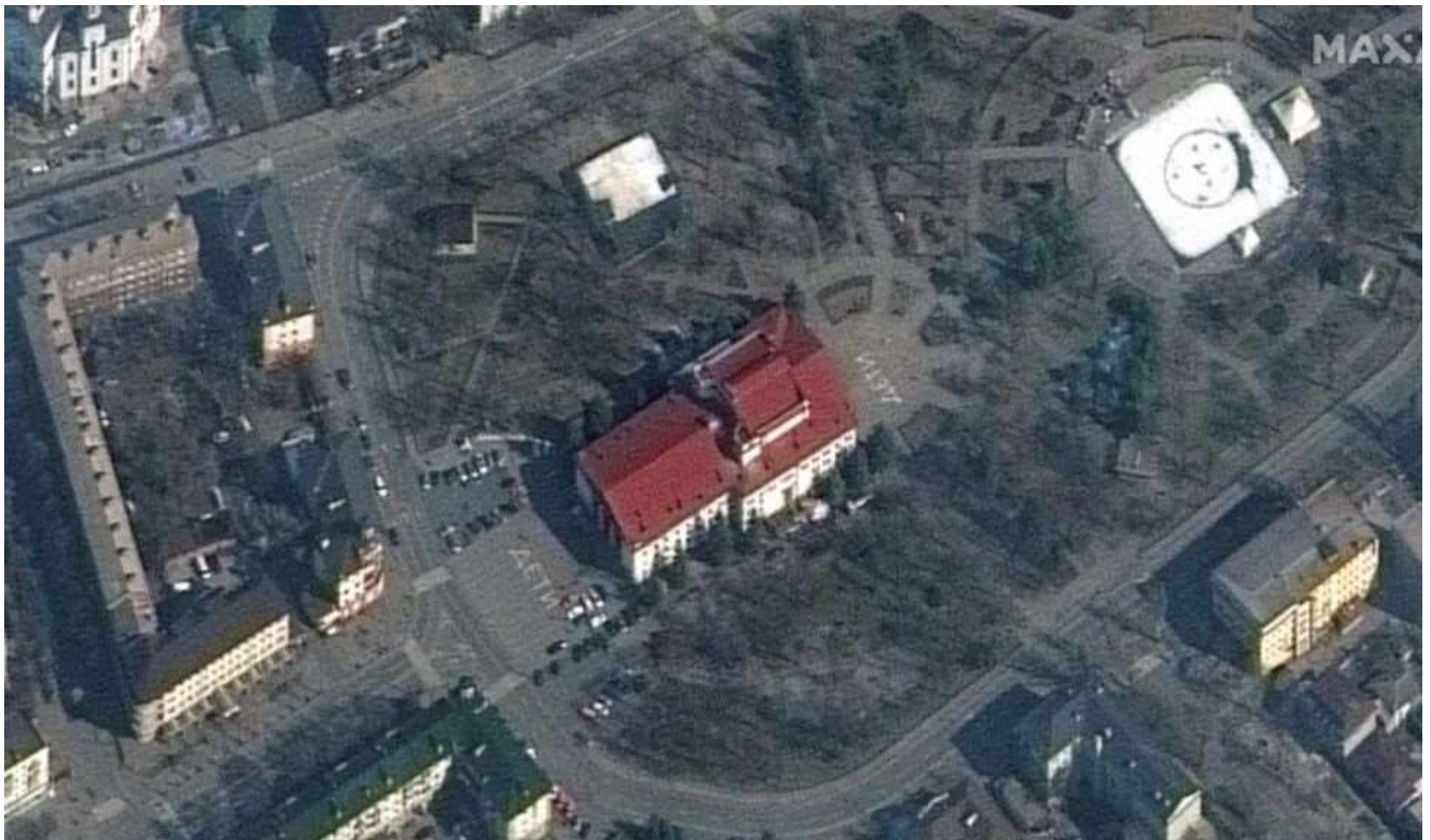


Photo from US news: Ukrainian shelter before being bombed, with the Russian word for children written with paint on the pavement outside.

The Secretary

by Renee Hoffman

Emily

1942

I heard the determined rap on the door and felt the damp blast of air on that bleak November day. Emily opened the door herself and let them in. She shrank back and shrieked, then fainted at the sight of them. Mama came running in from the kitchen to see what the commotion was about. She had been preparing dinner—the aroma of fried chicken permeated the air. I used to love that smell. After that day, it would make me feel nauseated.

MaryAnn and Pauline helped Emily to the couch while Mama addressed the two uniformed officers.

“You have bad news, don’t you?”

“I’m afraid so, ma’am,” replied the sergeant stoically.

As he handed her the paper, he spoke those dreaded words that began, “I’m afraid to inform you that Jack Sullivan...”

Mama finished reading aloud, her voice shaky and tearful: “... was shot down in combat and killed in action over Germany on September 25, 1942.”

I thought of all the love letters that Emily had written on my surface. The words were a part of me now; they had cut through the surface of my wood right to the very depth of me. The deep commitment they shared, the plans for their future, the happiness and joy that erupted from her fingers as she wrote to him. I could feel the pining in her very soul; how she missed him! And now she would never see him again.

Emily was never the same after that day. They had been so in love. She stayed in her room for weeks afterward, and although she would eventually marry and have five children, she would think of Jack every day. The curve of his masculine face and those deep green eyes. He was so handsome. Such a senseless death. How she hated this war. Mama had worked in the “greasers,” riveting airplane parts, a true “Rosie the Riveter.” Daddy, somewhat of a Socialist, constantly railed against the government and the war. Peace eluded them all. Emily’s sense of normalcy shattered, she felt insecure, inside and outside her home.

She hated her job as a secretary at Crucible Steel and wanted more than anything to marry and have children. That’s when she met John. They married and lived here for a while with us. It was a crowded household, now with Mama remarried to Nick and his

three children in the house, although Nick and Mama usually spent their nights at the hotel business they owned not far from here. When their first child, Taffy, was born, joy and laughter returned to the home; it was palpable, and I could feel it. Now, instead of serving as a desk, I held baby dolls and playdough and coloring books on my shelves. When Paul came along, I felt the occasional ball or truck hit my side, depending on his toddler mood. The ball brought a happy knock and deep joy, the truck not so much as I heard Paul screaming and thrashing about as I watched his tantrum.

I recall the day Emily purchased me from that frog, Mr. Marino. She came into the shop with her hard-earned cash from Seed and Supply where she worked and exclaimed, “Oh Mama! Look at this!” It was love at first sight. Speaking of love at first sight, at that moment Mr. Marino slithered around the corner into view—that despicable reptile, with his bulging eyes and raspy voice. Short, fat, bald and gross, Mr. Marino drooled at the sight of her, in her beautiful red sweater. He stepped close to her and said, “So, you like that do you? For you, \$50.” She bought me on the spot and placed me in the living room for all to admire—so began my wonderful life. As she lovingly shined me up, she recounted the encounter with old Frog Face to Pauline and MaryAnn. How I warmed at the sight of the three sisters gossiping and giggling.

The next day I overheard the conversation from the kitchen. Mama said, “Oh Nick, don’t tease her,” as Emily shrieked and ran to her room. “Can you imagine that green little toad offering us \$10,000 to marry our Emily?” Nick just chuckled and went on reading his newspaper.

Elizabeth

1991

I watched him from birth: the beautiful boy that she brought home surrounded by so much love and joy. Older sister just doted on him. Elizabeth quit her job at the airline to become a stay-at-home mother with the children. She loved her role as mother and housewife more than anything in life. She was a hands-on mother, the kind who not only performed the day-to-day duties required of motherhood but also genuinely enjoyed being with her children. I watched through the window as they flew kites, swam, and played tag and hopscotch on the driveway. I listened contentedly to the shrieks of excitement on Christmas morning, the squeals of laughter as well as the tears that came with growing up and life’s struggles.

She was there through it all—the one who got everyone through all of life’s ups and downs. Ever present, ever supportive, ever loyal and ever faithful. Strong, solid, positive, full of joy and integrity. But she could be tough. She had rules and followed through with consequences when they were broken. She wanted to raise her children with good common sense, integrity and ethical values. And she was always fair.

Most importantly to her was her unshakable faith in God. She prayed with and over her children daily, always before they left the house for school in the morning. It was her routine. She wanted her children to have something bigger to believe in, something they could count on when people let them down. *But what happens when God lets you down?*

2010

That fateful day when the walls came tumbling down, I never knew a person's heart could break so suddenly and violently. I doubted it would ever be put back together. Her beautiful boy, now 19, was away at college and struggling. Hard. She knew deep down that it was drugs and if she did not intervene, he would die, like so many others addicted to opioids. For three years, I watched as she did everything possible to help him get clean, with no support from his father. As usual, he railed against her and influenced her other two children as well.

"You're crazy! Our son does not have a drug problem; he has a mama problem!"

But this mother's love was too strong for any evil outside influences to sway her. She knew what she had to do when he called and said, "Momma, I need you to come this weekend." She knew in his voice that something was very, very wrong.

* * *

It was a sunny day when the letter came, the beginning of spring, the last weekend in April. She arrived home and as usual collected the mail from the mailbox. I observed as she sorted through—ah, a letter from her boy. As she excitedly tore the letter open, I watched her demeanor change and grow increasingly concerned. Her shoulders dropped as she slid off the couch to the floor and I could actually hear the pounding of her heart. And then I heard her mother's heart split in two—straight down the middle. Then the fury came—I was never so scared and wished ever so much for legs so that I could run far, far away.

The crash of glass against my side lacerated me; if I could bleed, the gash that it left would have killed me. Lamps, crystal, books, anything that she could grab and hurl went flying through the room. I didn't escape with just one hit; various and sundry items nicked my surface, some leaving deep scars. None of it compared to the deep, palpable pain that I felt as I watched her weep in pain. I saw in her mind's eye the memory of that day when she arrived on campus as he jumped into her car, threw his arms around her and sobbed. She saved his life. Simultaneously, hers became shattered and fragmented into a million pieces. Yes, her mother's heart was severed, never to be restored. The pain was too deep.

I didn't see her again for several weeks. I sat there alone, cold, untouched and so very worried about her. When she did appear again, she looked thinner, fragile and spent, like someone who has given up on everything—life, people, God. I could see that she had lost her faith in all—she went through the motions, but there was nothing inside—because the reason for her being—her very life—was no longer. Yes, her mother's heart could no longer provide her with the will to live.

2021

I wake up stunned, turned upside down on my head in a dark damp room. I can feel my surface warping, peeling away like skin on a burn victim. In her grief, she has forgotten me. Beyond feeling sad and abandoned, my feelings of grief and concern for her overwhelm me. I guess this is how it ends. Slowly dying in a cold, forlorn space, upside down, just as I watched her die inside as her world turned upside down. I don't know if she's even alive.

I hear voices. Yes, they are coming nearer; someone opens a door and I feel the warm sunshine on my surface. It goes straight to my core. And there she is! She lovingly turns me right side up and exuberance rushes through my being. She gently lays me in the back of her car. I don't care where she takes me, as long as I am with her. Out in the yard she gently cleans me off and I hear her say, "Hmm, my friend, you need some serious restoration."

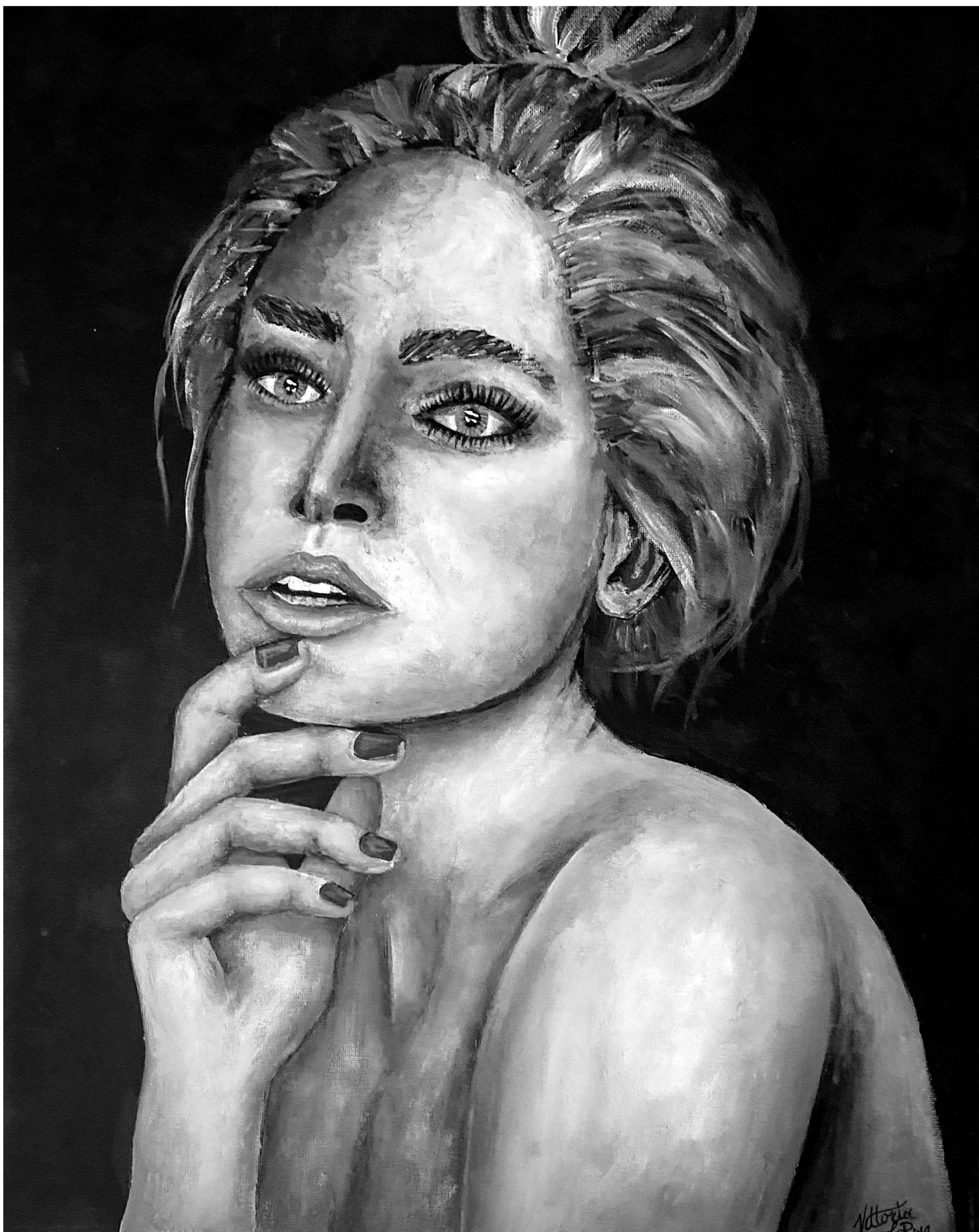
The sander feels wonderful, like a gentle massage over every part of me—inside and out. Releasing all of the old hurt and pain into the air to be transmuted into new life. Starting over feels wonderful as she sands me bare and breathes new life into me. I stand tall and regal again, protected by the natural stain she has applied after releasing me from the torture and pain of the past. She looks at me with pride and joy in her face and my heart is full again. A few days later, I am standing tall and beautiful in the place of honor in her new home—excited to begin a new life with her.

Sometimes life is cyclical, just like the seasons that recur year after year. She now sits in front of me journaling and writing, not letters for another to read, like Emily, but letters to herself. Out pour her joy and sadness, her deepest triumphs and tragedies. She knows I keep her confidence as I live what she lives, feel what she feels.

* * *

As the blustery wind blows and whistles outside, I see the outline of the trees swaying in the twilight. Today is the day. Once a year on the date of that dreadful day many years ago, I feel her open me up and expose the secret drawer that stays safely closed 364 days a year. I feel empty as she pulls the letter out; I watch closely as she sits in the twilight and opens the letter. Tears stream down her beautiful silhouette and together we experience the deep hurt as I watch her heart's scar reopen.

Her heart bleed.



Portrait of a Woman by Vittoria LaRosa

Rust

by Scott Riner

2nd Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest

The car I drive is beginning to rust.

I noticed it just the other day. I had climbed beneath the car to change its oil only to discover that the orangish-brown of corruption had begun eating away bits of the frame.

I blame the rust on the road salt that the state transportation department deems fit to spread so liberally during the winter months. The man I had bought my car from (a little more than a year ago now) had never taken it out after November; as such, it had been completely devoid of rust when I purchased it, save a small spot about the size of a nickel located near the gas cap, where drippings of fuel had slowly eroded away the metal's integrity.

Seeing the rust spiderwebbing the underside of my car horrified me. I do not like rust. I do not like how it smells: metallic, diseased.

I am not alone in my aversion of rust. It is, I should think, the bane of proud vehicle owners everywhere, my father included.

"You have to watch out for rust," he explained to me once, back when I was a newly-licensed driver in search of a car. I had been seventeen and had questioned him about why he insisted on crawling underneath every vehicle we looked at before checking any of the important things, like the radio or the seats. "You have to watch out for rust. It doesn't take long for a little speck of rust to spread all over and infect the rest of the car."

That's what he said: *Infect*. I remember that because I thought it was an odd choice of words. Now I understand it was anything but: What is rust if not an infection?

The car I drive is beginning to rust. It won't be long now until the whole thing has withered away into a heap of iron oxide.

I hope this will not be the fate of my mother. She's beginning to rust, too, you see.

She told my brother and my sisters and me a few months back, after spending a few days in the hospital. She hadn't been feeling well—some intestinal discomfort—and went to the emergency room in the early hours of the night.

"We'll be home in the morning," Mom told me. She looked pale and pained. I do not remember what I said, only vaguely aware something was not quite right, though Mom assured me it was really nothing serious, not really. And with that she and my father left.

They were not home the following morning. A text message explained that the doctors had run some tests during the night in an effort to pinpoint the source of her discomfort. What they found was rust.

Of course, the doctors didn't call it that. They had a different name, a more medically appropriate term, but it was essentially rust.

I cried when I read the message. I wondered how such a thing could possibly happen. Our family had no history of rust. Certainly, it was a mistake, some mix-up on the hospital's part. Mom couldn't possibly have rust.

The next two days were spent in the company of my siblings. None of us went to work—how could we?—but instead passed the time by convincing one another that the doctors had misread her scan.

Our denial was put to rest the evening my mom came home from the hospital. She sat us all down, like we were children again, and, after taking a deep breath, said:

"I don't know how to tell you kids this. I don't *want* to tell any of you this, but I need to. I need to." Her voice hitched as she spoke. I saw that she was fighting off tears. Dad, too. "They found rust all through me. *All* through me. In my colon, my liver, my lungs."

I felt nothing as she told us this. That was the worst part, I think: the numbness, the desperation to feel something, *anything*—sympathy, fear, guilt—but coming up emptyhanded.

"Rust? In your lungs?" Adam, my brother, asked. I suspect it was a question we were all thinking. Mom didn't smoke, not even the single puff of a celebratory cigar. How could there be rust in her lungs?

"It started in my colon," Mom said. There were tears coming now. From her, from my dad—all of us. "There was a small speck of rust—no bigger than a nickel—and it spread all over."

"One of the women I work with's father had rust in his colon, too," said Megan, my eldest sister. "He ended up rusting out completely. When you told us they found some rust in your colon, I asked her—"

But I didn't want to hear what Megan had to say. It was all moving so fast. *Too* fast.

"Shut up, Megan!" I snapped, cutting her off before she could utter another blasphemous syllable. Where was her hope? Her optimism? Mom was not like her co-worker's dad; Mom would get through this. She wouldn't rust out.

"No," Mom said calmly, as though she were speaking about matters far more trivial. "I want to hear what she has to say. I want to know what to expect."

But I didn't—I couldn't. So I left.

I heard my dad call out for me. He wanted me to sit down, wanted all of us to be together. I wanted that, too, but I also wanted to be alone. I needed to be alone. I needed

some space to digest everything I had been told: My mom—the kindest person I had ever known—was rusting away.

No, I told myself firmly. She was not rusting away, there were just some spots of rust throughout her body. Rust could be sanded off, painted over, if not completely fixed. There was no need to be scared.

But I was scared. No amount of logic or reasoning could prevent the fear that gripped me, could prevent the fears from flowing down my face. Is there anyone in the world who can hear that word—the dreaded word that I can't even write—and be unmoved?

From the hallway entered Adam. He, too, was crying. He pulled me into an embrace and told me gently that everything was going to be okay, that everything was going to be just fine. He said this over and over and over, as though he were trying to convince himself. "Mom is strong," he said. "Strongest person in the whole world."

"She is," I agreed. My eyes were closed, and when I opened them again I saw through my blurred vision that Dad was with us now.

"We're gonna get through this," he said, joining our embrace. "We're gonna get through this. We just gotta be strong for Mom."

We stayed like that—the three of us, holding desperately onto one another—for some time. Perhaps it was only a moment, perhaps an hour. All that mattered was that we were together, and that we could get through this if we stayed like that.

Eventually we made our way back to the rest of the family. Mom was talking with Megan about her options, how her nurse had put her in touch with one of the best specialists around, how the doctor already had a plan in place for her.

"There is one more thing," Mom said, and I felt in that moment I could not bear to hear anything else. I just simply wasn't strong enough. "There is a chance that you all might end up with rust someday, too, now that there's a history of it."

And there it was: One day I might rust. Like the car I drive. Like my mother.

What frightens me the most is the knowing, the awareness that one day I might wake up and go to the doctor only for them to discover spots of rust forming on my insides. With the knowing comes fear: fear of the rust in my mother and the future, both hers and mine. I fear that her rust will grow like that which permeates the frame of my car. And above all, I fear that the digestion problems I suffer from from time to time are precursors of a larger issue.

I live in fear.

But I also live in hope. I live in hope because my car, though rusting, is drivable; it gets me from school to home without so much as a hesitation. I live in hope because my mother, though rusting, is still alive. I live in hope because a diagnosis is not a death

sentence, rather a statement that life will be different for a while. I live in hope because, though there's a chance I will develop rust, there's also a chance I won't. I live in hope because that's the way my mother and father taught me how to live.

So maybe my car's beginning to rust. And maybe my mother is, too. And maybe *I* might even rust one day—who knows? But I have millions of miles left to travel before that happens.

I think we all do.



Keep Your Face Always to the Sunshine

by Cheyanne Gregorich

What Do You Do with the Sad That You Feel?

by Olivia Baldini

September 11th, 2020, a phone call and crying. My mum called me, her voice shaking and her eyes certainly filling with tears. I automatically knew what happened. She was about to say words that I dreaded hearing as tears started to well into my eyes. My cousin with cystic fibrosis had died; he hadn't been doing well.

Then, she said it, the phrase that broke me: "Liv, Uncle Marty died." I was caught off guard, this was not what I was expecting.

What happened?

Why him?

Why now?

He was so young.

That's when the uncontrollable tears began—and continued for hours. I remember not being able to breathe between sobs or see through my tears. This was the first loss in my life that I would remember for the rest of my life. The grief still hits me to this day.

I did not handle his death in a healthy way.

My Uncle Marty was a unique man with some interesting hobbies, the most prominent being his interest in baseball. Marty was a die-hard Toronto Blue Jays fan. He watched all the games on television and went to a lot of games, even the away ones. His dream was to visit every major league baseball stadium, which he almost achieved.

The only one he did not have the opportunity to visit was Yankee Stadium. Marty also collected baseball memorabilia, mostly cards, but also jerseys and even gloves. He even wrote and published a book called *George 'Mooney' Gibson: Canadian Catcher for the Deadball Era Pirates*. He was in the midst of writing a second book when he passed away.

Baseball was his passion and it led him to pursue an education at Algonquin College in Museum Studies. He had handed in one assignment before he passed away. When my uncle died, I did not stop doing assignments; I did not take one day off of school or sports or work. I was numb—my emotions were completely shut off. I also did not go back to my mum's house for close to two months. I told myself I did this because Mum was mad at me and did not want me around, but in reality, I was avoiding feeling all of the emotions that I needed to feel in order to heal myself. If I did not go back to Mum's, I wouldn't have to go to my grandparents' house (where my uncle had lived) and therefore, he wasn't dead.

Crazy what grief does to your brain, isn't it?

This time in my life put such a strain on the relationship between my mother and me. She still has not forgiven me for what I did. In fact, I still have not forgiven myself.

What I could not see a year ago is that my actions were not justified at all. My Uncle, my mum's brother, died and what did I do?

I left.

I left my family in a time when we all should have been together supporting each other. I left because I did not want to deal with my own emotions. I was selfish and weak, and I regret it. Then, a whole year later, during my first week of university, I started learning about Fred Rogers—or rather, Mister Rogers. I learned about how he saw life, how he taught children to deal with their emotions, and how to deal with the mad they felt. Mr. Rogers always asked, “What do you do with the mad that you feel?”

The deeper we dove into this topic, the more I became interested. And then finally, something clicked.

I was not dealing with the mad I felt.

I was dealing with the sad.

Except I wasn't actually dealing with it. I was shoving it deep down and trying to ignore it. A way that emotions should never be dealt with, especially negative ones, is shoving them deep down into yourself and never letting them be felt. It causes depression, sadness and pent-up anger that will eventually blow up and come out in a bad way.

Hurt people, they say, hurt people.

This was a point made by Swiss-American psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, who is best known for developing the five stages of grief: denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. It is also referred to as the Kübler-Ross “Grief Cycle.”

Kübler-Ross wanted people to understand that feeling emotions such as those are normal and, in fact, healthy when dealing with the loss of a loved one. She wanted people to feel their emotions freely, and without reluctance. “Just be you,” she exclaimed. “If you feel like screaming, you scream. If you feel like crying, you cry. Don't try to follow a textbook or have somebody else tell you what to do. Trust yourself, your own natural emotions.”

This was not something that I was doing, even a year after my Uncle Marty's passing. But then came Christmas time and a moment at my grandmother's house that would change how I was handling my emotions. My whole family was at my grandparents' house and my little cousins began opening their stockings—all the normal stuff, candy, small games. And then they each pulled out a Toronto Blue Jays t-shirt.

That was it for me.

I couldn't hold my emotions in anymore.

Tears streamed down my face as I ran to the kitchen where my grandmother eventually found me. She just held me and let me cry and told me everything was going to be okay, and that was exactly what I needed.

I needed that support.

That is what family is for, and that is what I skipped out on when I left for those two months. That was the moment the denial stage ended for me, and I moved on to acceptance. I am one of the lucky people who did not have to experience all of the stages of grief. These stages are not linear; you do not need to experience all of them, and you can experience stages more than once.

It's a frustrating cycle, but grief is frustrating. All you want is for it to go away, but the truth is...

It never does.

When I finally began to open up about my uncle's passing, my mum explained grief to me in a way that I will never forget.

There is this box.

This box has a button.

When you press this button, it triggers grief.

There is also a ball in this box that bounces around and occasionally hits the button. Right after you lose someone, the box is tiny, so the ball is constantly hitting the button. However, as time goes on, the box gets bigger and bigger and the frequency of the ball hitting the button becomes less. But the grief and sadness of the loss will never truly go away.

Because you will always miss that person, the ball will always be in the box—no matter how big it is.

My box is medium sized.

Since I began writing this essay, it has felt much smaller, and I have allowed myself to cry while sharing this story multiple times.

While I was writing this essay, my mum sent me a sign that my uncle was watching over me. She had no idea that I was writing it, and she mailed me my uncle's jacket. I took this double extra-large, blue and black plaid Dickie's jacket when he passed away. I wore it every day at home but didn't bring it to college with fears that I would lose it, and yet she still sent it to me. I can't possibly wrap my head around why she did. But she mailed it, and it was the best surprise I never knew I needed.

When I opened the package, I just put the jacket on, and I cried. I allowed my button to be pushed, and I let myself feel the sadness that I had been concealing for so long and it felt right. It felt like something I *needed* to do.

This feeling made me think of Mr. Rogers' song "What Do You Do with the Sad That You Feel?", particularly the line "And what a good feeling to feel like this and know that the feeling is really mine." Mr. Rogers wanted kids to know that it was completely okay to feel their emotions and that releasing them in a healthy way felt good.

This is exactly what I have learned throughout my short time learning about him. He has helped me understand that I have to deal with my emotions in a healthier way and that I simply cannot run away from all of my problems.

Running away solves nothing.

Why?

Because all of that unresolved emotion will still be there when you eventually go back to its source.

Fred Rogers helped me cope with the death of my Uncle Marty by helping me learn to feel my emotions and face them head on. I now know that it's okay to feel and that no matter what, my uncle will always be with me.

Uncle Marty,

I miss you, I love you and I will never forget you.

You will always be Uncle Smarty, the peculiar uncle that gave Christmas cards as birthday cards. I will forever think of you when I am watching baseball, and Mum, Uncle Paul and Uncle Rick will make sure that you get to visit Yankee Stadium when they spread your ashes there. I know that you're proud of me and that you will always be watching over me as a beautiful blue jay soaring through the sky.

Uncle Marty, you will always be my blue jay.

Works Cited

Cusick, Rachel, director. *The Queen of Dying*. WNYC Studios, Radiolab, 23 July 2021, www.wnycstudios.org/podcasts/radiolab/articles/queen-dying.

Gregory, Christina. "Five Stages of Grief - Understanding the Kubler-Ross Model." *Psycom.net*, 4 May 2021, www.psycom.net/depression.central.grief.html.

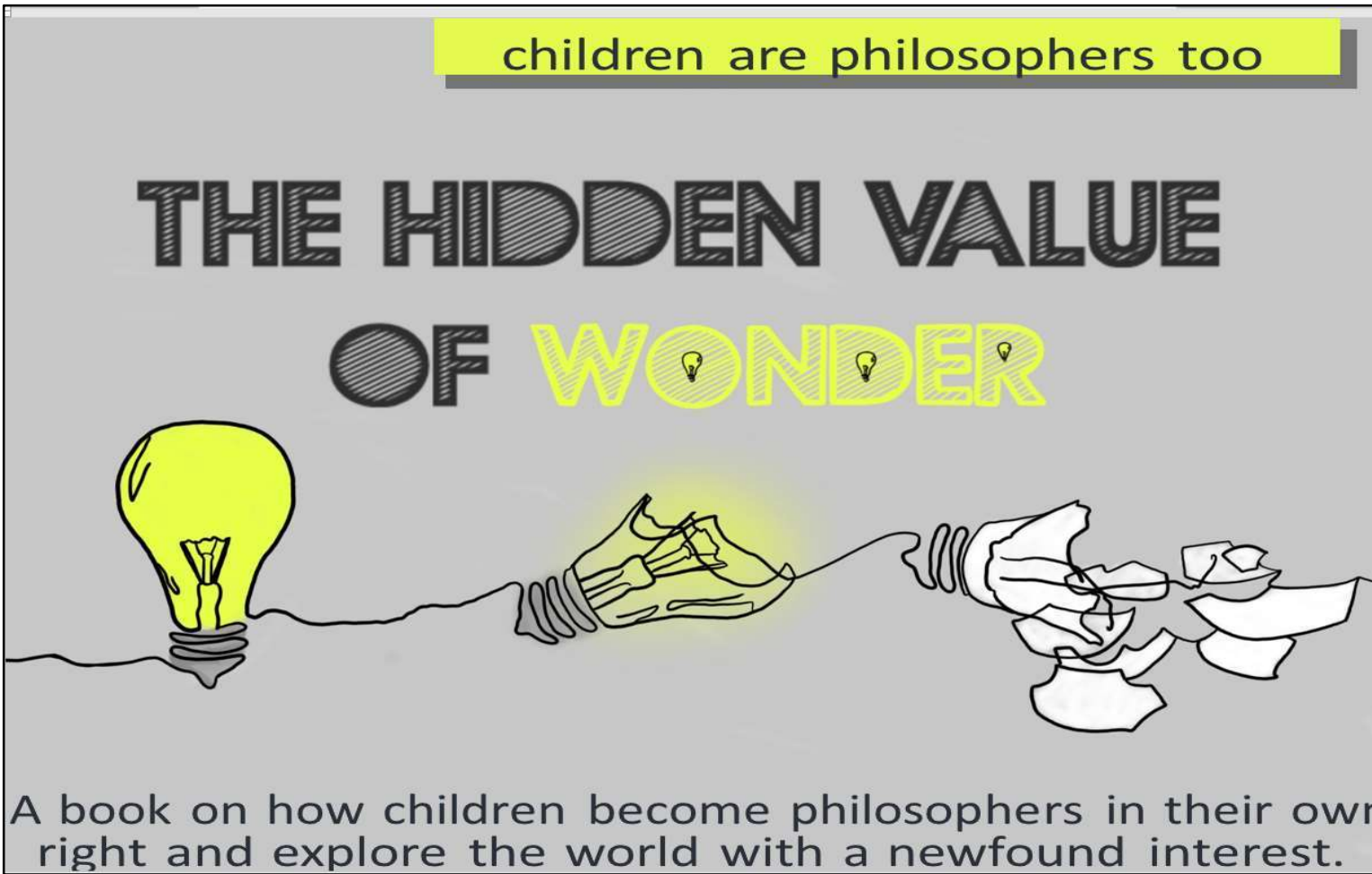
Litner, Jennifer. "Hey You! Quit Hiding Your Feelings." *Healthline*, Healthline Media, 30 July 2020, www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/hiding-feelings.

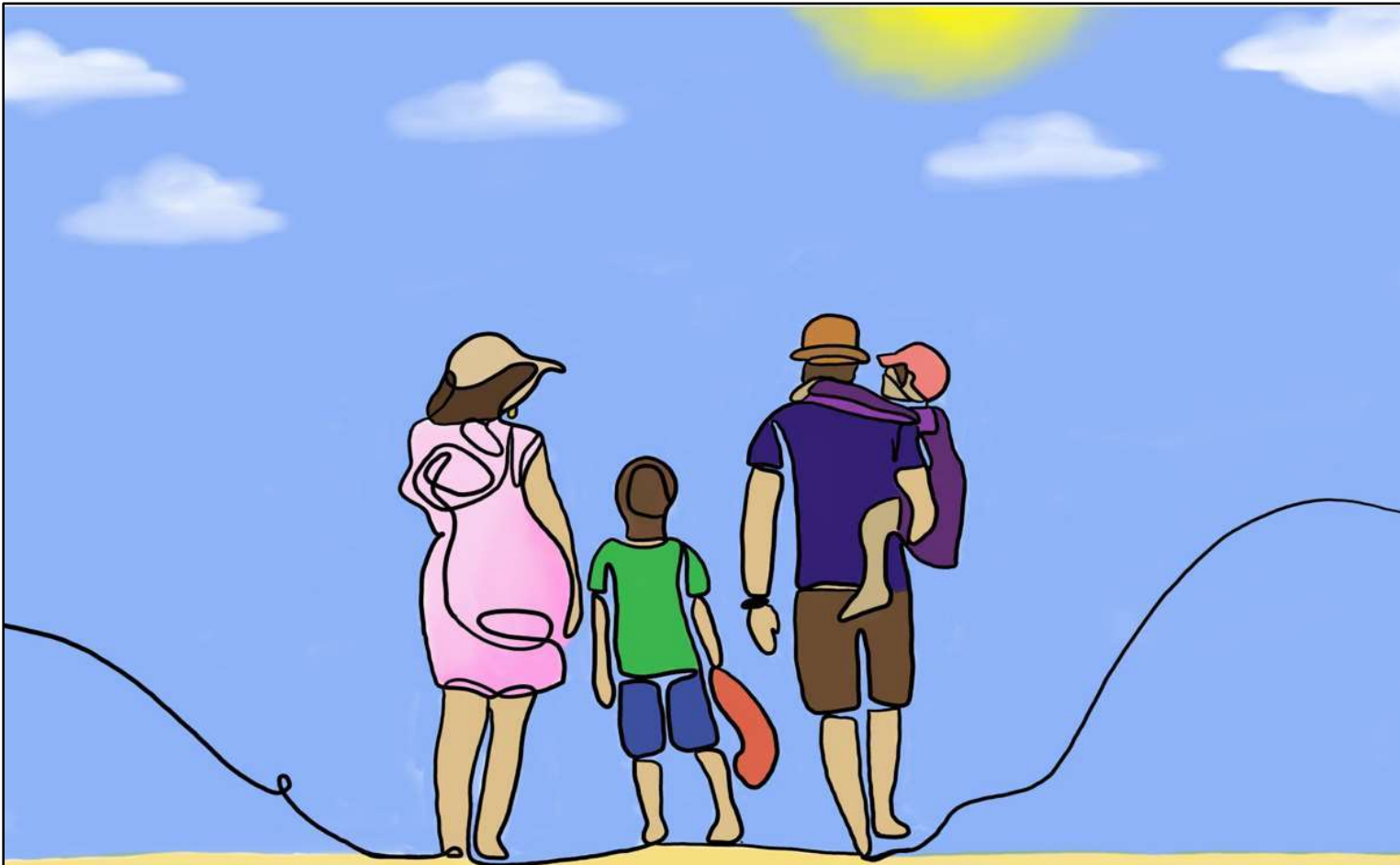
Rogers, Fred. "What Do You Do with the Mad That You Feel? (Song)." *The Mister Rogers' Neighborhood Archive*, www.neighborhoodarchive.com/music/songs/what_do_you_do.html.

Scott, Elizabeth. "How to Deal with Negative Emotions and Stress." *Verywell Mind*, 15 Oct. 2019, www.verywellmind.com/how-should-i-deal-with-negativeemotions-3144603.

The Hidden Value of Wonder: A Children’s Book

by Julianne Dee

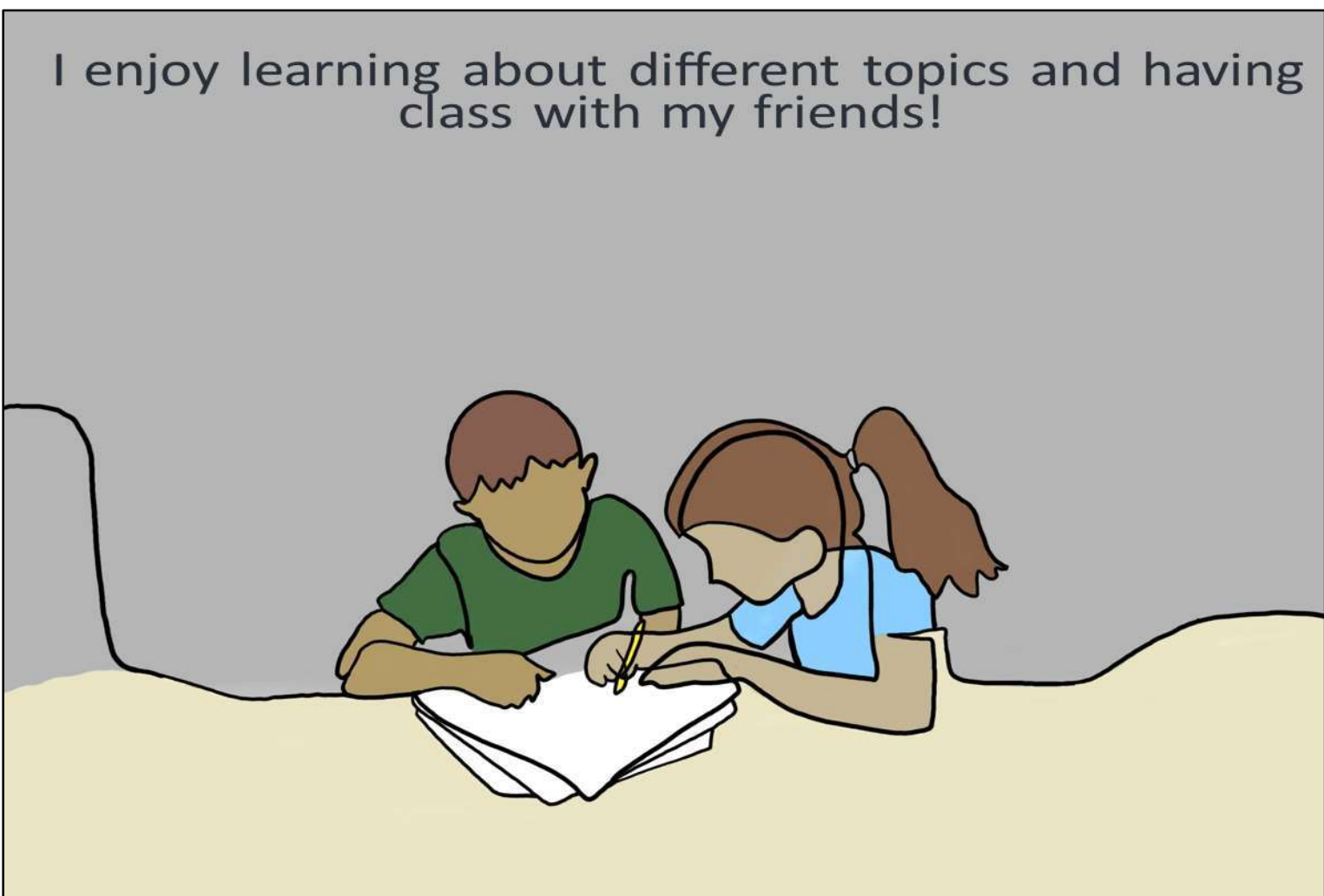




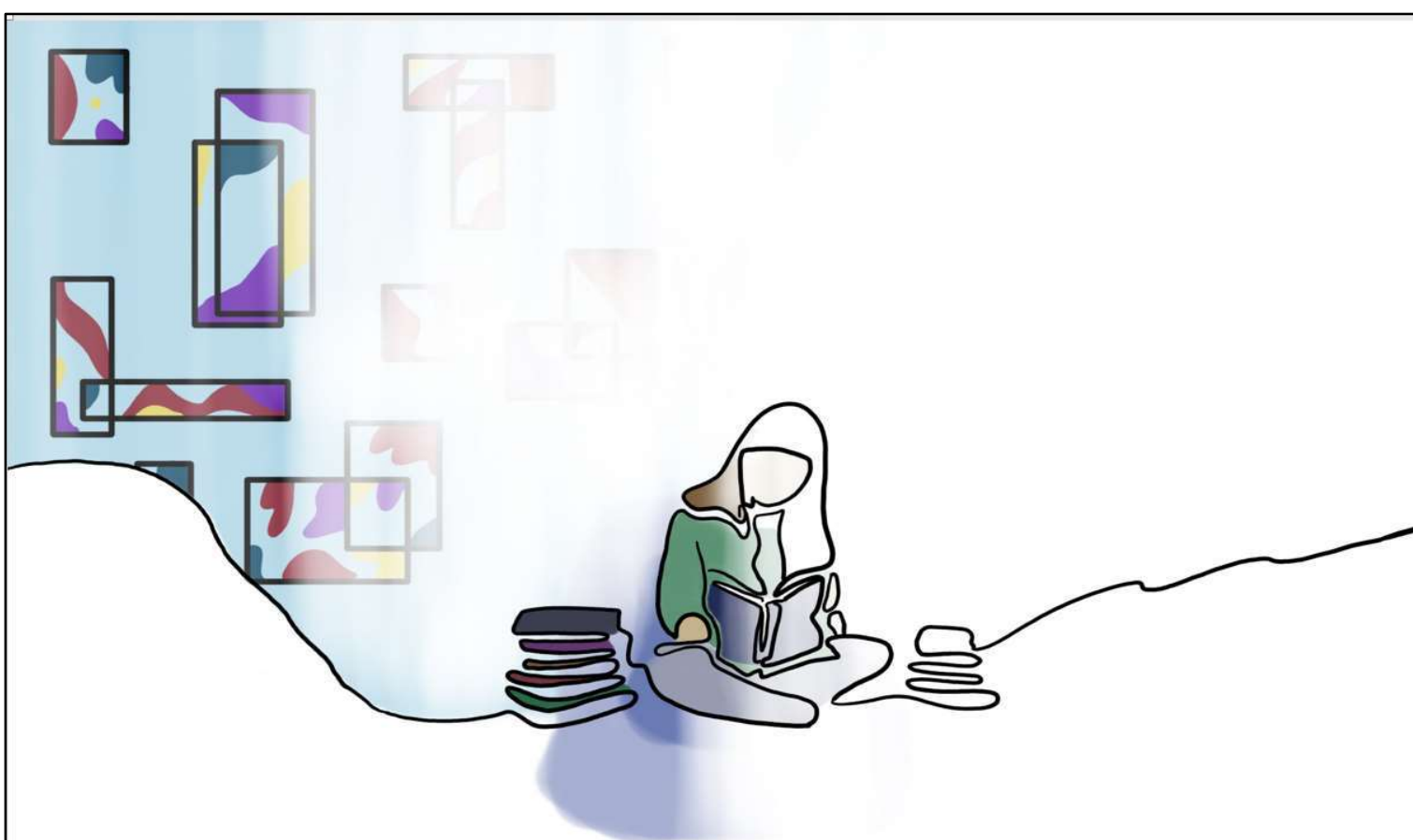
This is my first time at the beach, and I'm wondering about the world.



I wonder why the sand is so soft.
I wonder why the sky is blue.
i wonder what we are trying to build.



By middle school, I am excited to learn on my own about airplanes and flying kites.



But by high school, I never have time to really explore the world.
My day falls into a rigid schedule.

I'm worried about studying for tests and getting good grades.



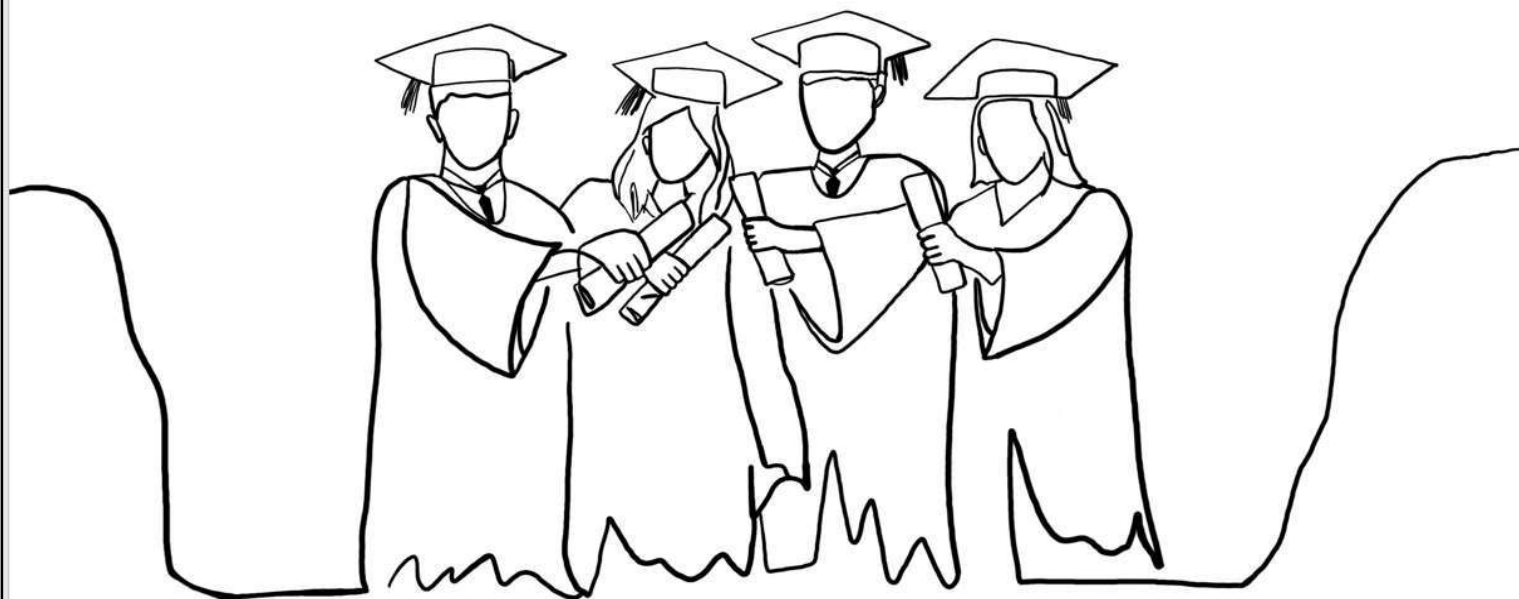
I am worried about balancing my time between soccer practice and school.



I'm worried about daily responsibilities like taking care of my dog.



Graduation from high school feels like the weight of the world has been lifted off my shoulders.

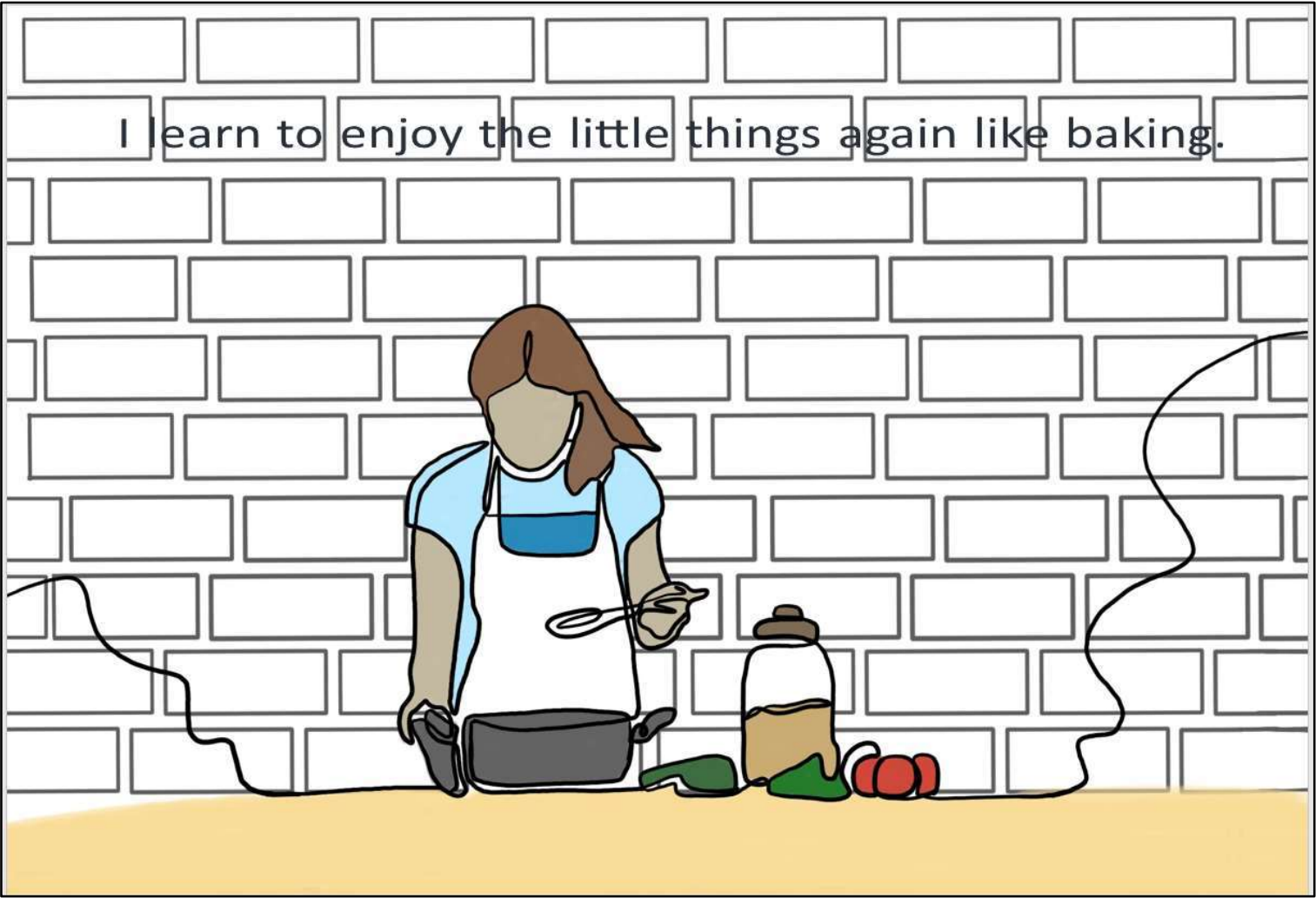


I have finally made it to college! All my time spent with strict schedules fully paid off. I run to my first class, just to be transported back to my youth and...
Mr. Rogers.



I begin to revisit my youth, learning about Mr. Rogers and the philosophies he taught. It has sparked a newfound interest in me about the world again.



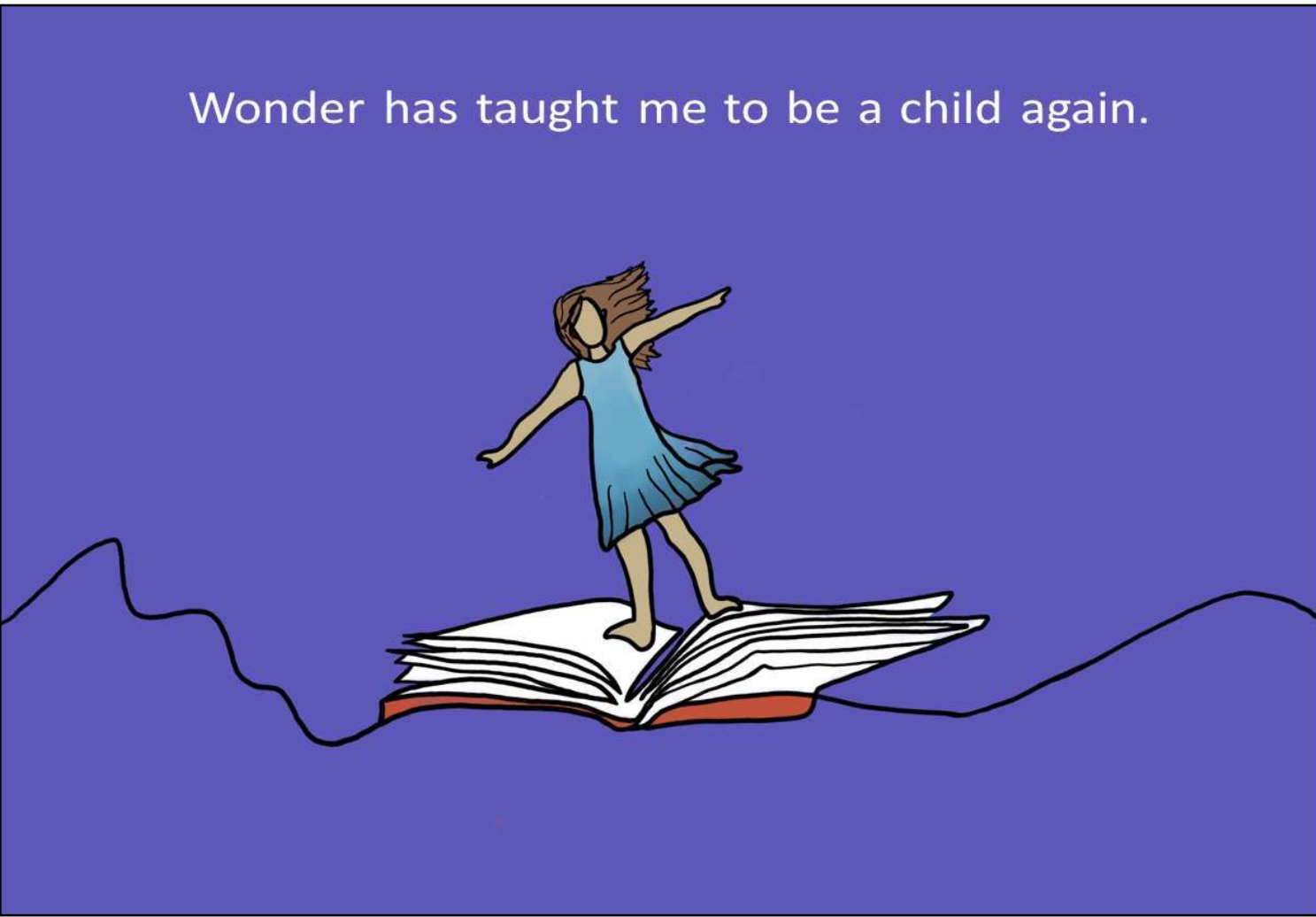
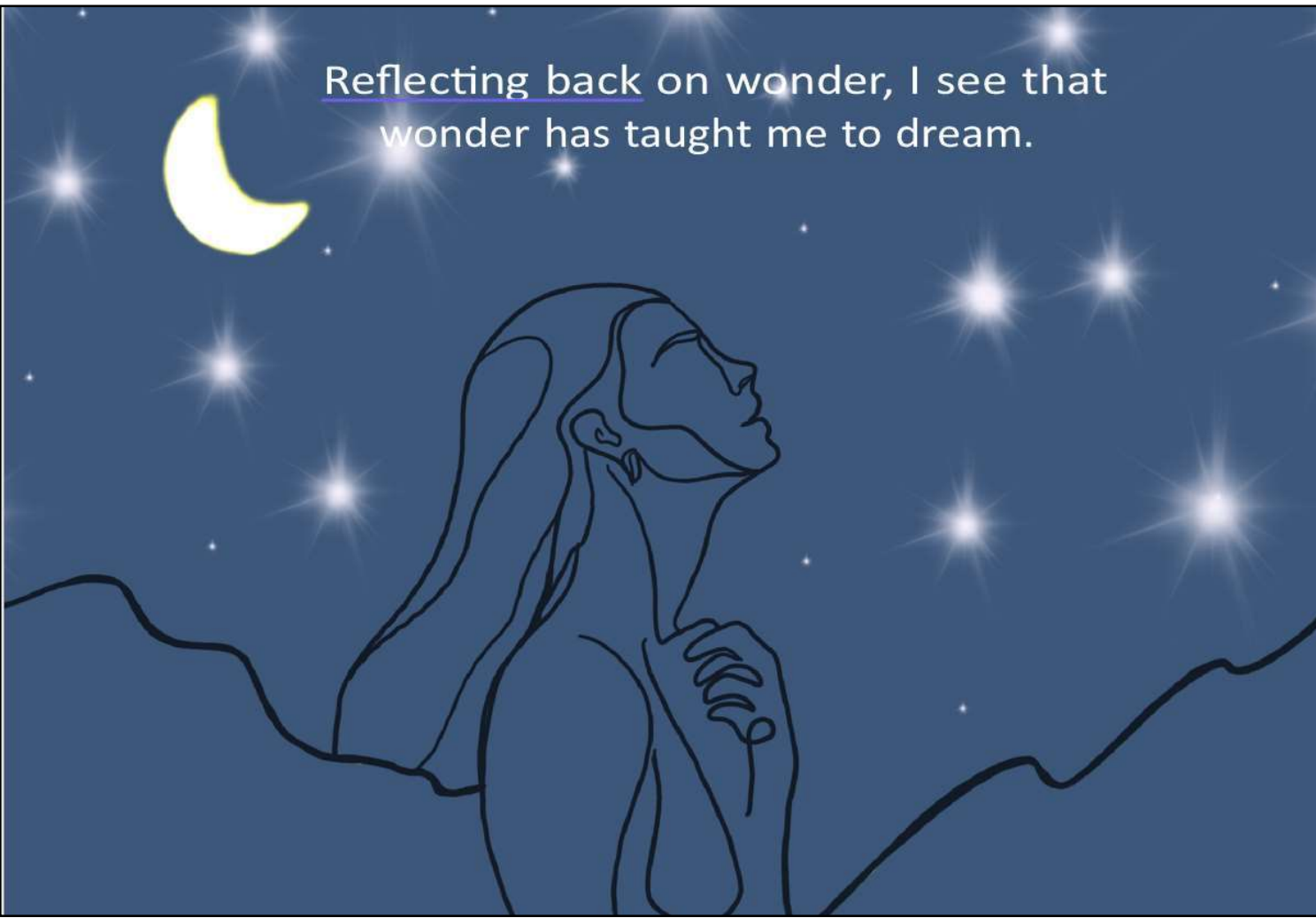


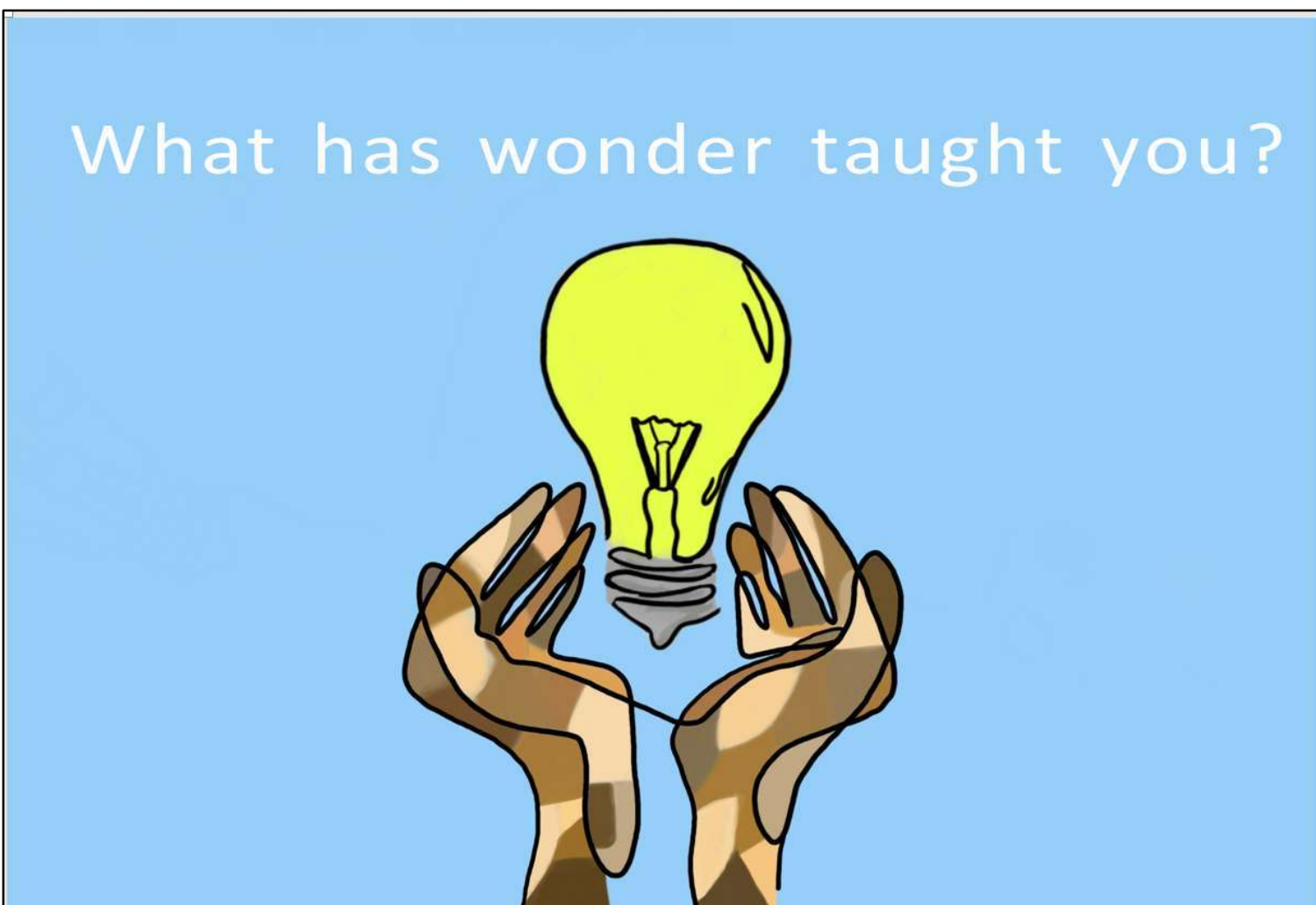
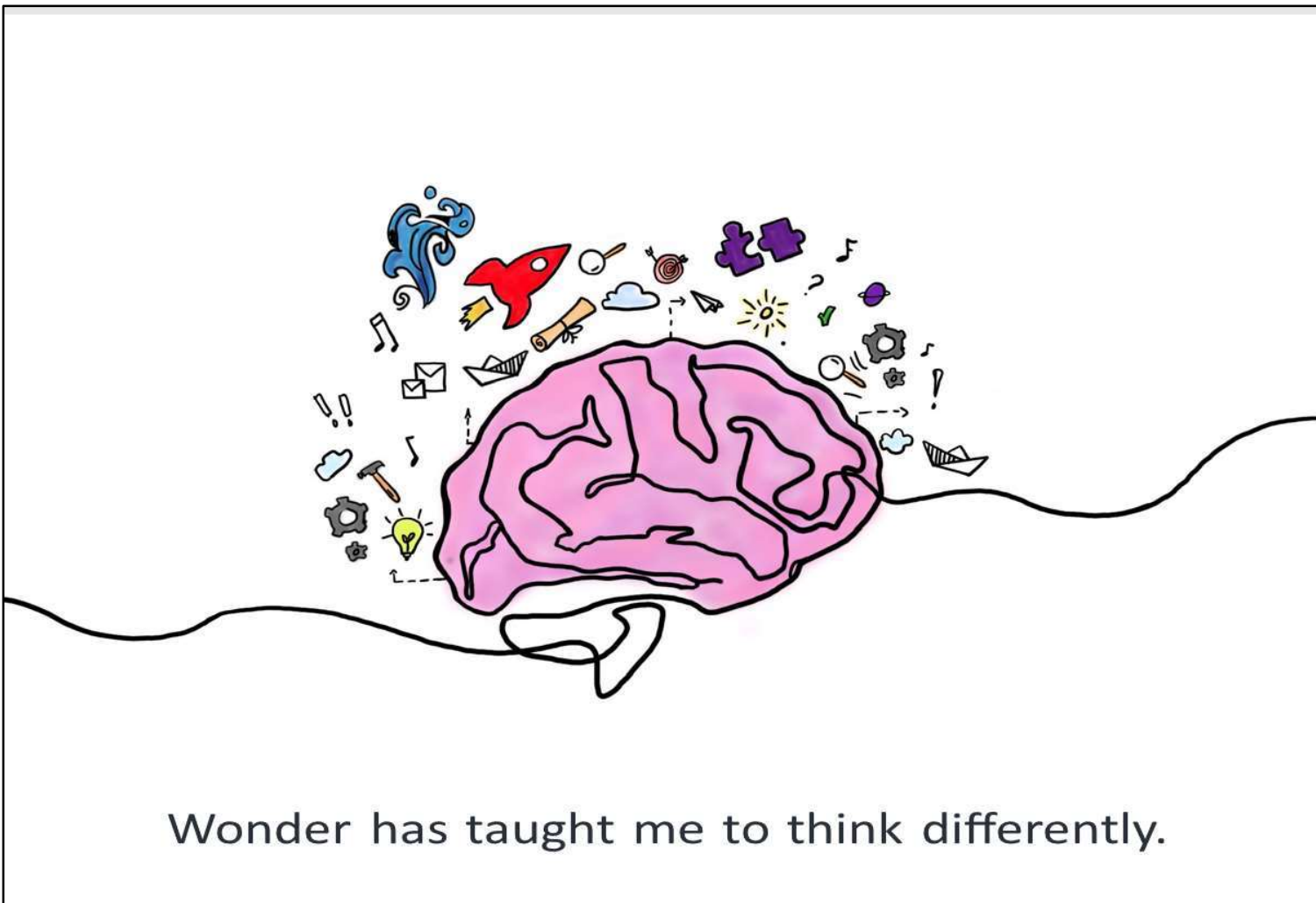
I learn to take more time for myself again.



I learn to spend time with my friends again.







Where I'm From

by Brynn Hershbine

1st Place Winner, Father Callan Poetry Contest

I am from a warm living room,
From family dinners and wholesome meals.
I am from a quiet neighborhood,
Far away from noisy streets and dangerous alleys.
I am from a large back yard,
Plenty of space
In which I played
And grew from a child to a young adult.

I am from boots and a barn,
And the mother who rode before me.
I push forward.
I am from a quiet girl and a wild boy.
From straight A's and a broken school window.
I'm from recollections of my parents' youth.
Stories that make up their lives
Now shape mine.

I'm from mountain men and fishermen.
Country folk who still occupy their hometown.
From the hunting rifles of my uncles,
To the pickup trucks in their garages.

On my shelf there are albums,
Each with hundreds of photos.
These show everything I have accomplished
Throughout my many years.
But if I flip back further, I can plainly see,
I am not the world revolving,
But a leaf upon a tree.



Clear Blue by Angelica Ybarra

Reflections of the Subconscious

by Rory Schaeffer

4th Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest

#1 Universe

The odds of existing are slim.

The odds of me existing are even slimmer.

and the odds of us existing at the same time are next to impossible and, to me, that is beautiful.

Maybe somehow the universe does work in my favor—because, after all, I get to know you.

#2 One Sided

I finally realized: the moon thinks it's chasing the earth.

Yet it stays at a distance; never daring to come closer.

Never quite moving on.

Carefully rotating around their bustling, benign world

Quietly filling the night with a leery, luminescent white.

I suppose that you are my ever-consuming earth

And I am your maddening moon.

drifting out in an unreachable space.

Chasing your sun day and night.

I know she is your sun.

and that I will always be your moon.

#3 Yellow

I never liked the color yellow

But I liked you

And you loved the color yellow.

So I fell in love with the color.

I fell in love with you.

But you fell in love with someone who loved the color red.

Who am I kidding?

I was never red.

And now I'm surrounded by ghosts that were supposed to be my yellow.

#4 *Venom*

My heart drowned in the venom of your words
As they slithered their way into my self-worth
Broke my faith in kindness and tainted my innocence
They ran through my veins
Like poison
And cast the darkest shadow over my soul as you shoved your deadly diction down my throat
I was Socrates and you were the Athenian philosophers,
forcing me to drink your hemlock.
I choked and couldn't breathe
your words were strong
But mine were stronger
And finally the pieces of my soul revolted and reclaimed the throne of my dignity that you had unlawfully occupied for far too long.

#5 *Material Confines*

This morning I told her she looked so pretty
and it broke my heart.
Her eyes glimmered and glowed a silky green.
The kind of green that reminds you of the richest emeralds and the most revered jaded jewels
A smile inched up her face, slowly but surely, and beamed up back at me.

it was unusual how much she cared.
and it manifested a rotting pit in my stomach.
She claimed independence over the confines of capitalism
However, her sovereignty lay in the depths of another person's words
it was the fact that I could use two different syllables and her day would completely change
Just like a switch
And just like that.

She stood there stupidly grinning and thanked me
As she said those two words I couldn't help but feel my face drop. I couldn't understand.
and I didn't want to—I still don't want to

How could an action so immersed in everyday life be so meaningless to one, but mean the world to another?
She was pretty, a tantalizing beauty, even. Inside the freckles that lined her jaw and the streaks of gold intertwined in her hair I found a home.

Although I cared for her looks, her heart, which remained unseen, was the prettiest of them all
And I wondered how could she not see that?
I yearned so badly that she one day would see the beauty that was tenfold her physical virtues.

#6 Otherworldly

The prettiest part of nature didn't really mean that much to me, my dear
Especially when the most beautiful dark ebony on the trees reminded me of your deep mahogany hair
Or the depths of the oak reminded me of your intricate completion
Or the small red flowers reminded me of the spark that was in those flaming eyes of yours
The depths of the lake that laid near my house with vicious waves recalled how dangerous and inviting your laugh was.
Now that I think about it you might even be better than the earth that I call home
I never thought I'd be able to hold the world
But with you in my arms, I am holding the world because you are everything I will ever want and ever need.

#7 Hedonistic in Hell, Perishing in Purgatory, Halcyon in Heaven

She was so special
A combination of a tempting angel and an enthralling devil
With a touch that slowly draws you in.
So lovely and sweet as it caresses.

I'd wait for you in heaven and hell
If it meant I could gaze into your transcendent eyes one more time
But I guess that means I'm stuck in purgatory.

I'll wait for you until you decide
and waiting an eternity
would be worth it
if it meant at the end of eternity I'd get to see you.

Maybe one day

#8 Weed Me Out

To feel the pleasure of a gentle hand upon these worn fingers calloused through injury and tarnished by time;

An embrace to carve every rough edge that scratches my cheek as I wipe away a tear

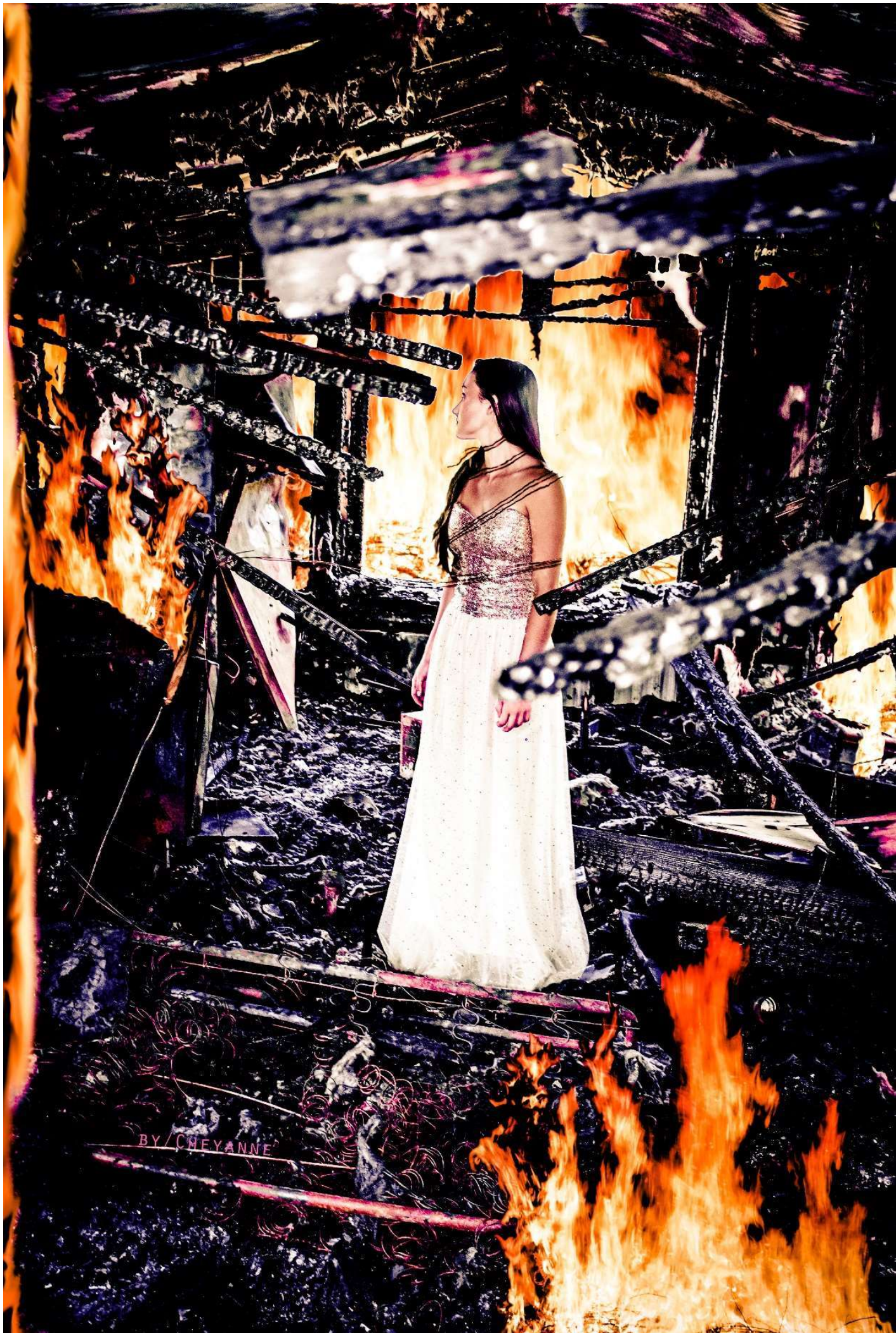
I realize that I yearn for the ideation of settling down,
To muse over deep thoughts of nothing as the summer settles in;
The sun would heal all the wounds given
Throughout the taunting tundra months.

I have grown up a ragged weed
Punching the wind in an effort to grow into the mimic of a flower;
With hopes and aspirations that one day I would be pretty enough not to be ripped from
the ground
Every summer I am yanked away from my mossy home, so that the lovely suburban
mothers have the prettiest land in their neighborhood.
I yearn to feel wanted and loved—how do I grow into something people love.

We are the pugnacious few
Who others cannot love so tenderly
Can we finally find love?
A love that is gentle
one that is simple
It beckons the ones who see us as more than just a weed
And in its most simple form is pure.



Green Glass by Julia Chmielowiec



A Portrait of Self-Destruction by Cheyanne Gregorich

The Fine Art of Conversation

by Annah Lovette

3rd Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest

The table's corners were tarnished, much of the stain rubbed off by the incessant touching of oily hands and fingers. Scrapes and notches scarred its mahogany surface, communicating a rough history--one that had damaged not only the color but the wood itself.

Marked by dark splotches that almost certainly belonged to mold, the cloth that covered the tabletop did little to obscure the full extent of the damage.

Furrowing his brow, Gideon let out a huff. Metal instruments were neatly organized in a single line, barely catching the beams of sunlight that snuck through the tiny basement window. His eyes—two watchful, scrutinizing things—studied each of them with intention: pliers, a bone saw, rope, a few rusty nails, and a scalpel. The latter seemed out of place amidst the rest of the toolset, sharp and medical and *perfect*.

His pupils dilated ever so slightly.

With a gloved hand, he reached towards his item of choice.

"You sure are taking your time." The remark came from his unfortunately assigned partner. She stood behind him with crossed arms, scarred and worn from God knows what.

"... And I will take it as I fancy, thank you," he replied curtly, words thick with an accent that brought forth imagery of the deep Southeast—alligators, Mardi Gras, and all. "Unless you have some strange aversion to my patient decision-making process that you would like to disclose?" He pinched the handle of the scalpel between two fingers and lifted it from the cloth, leaving a void in its place.

"It's fine," she said, her tone flat and unconvincing.

"Aw, come on now." Even as Gideon spoke, he did not bother to look her in the eye just yet. "I do not take so kindly to condescension, and I have a hunch that you may hold the same sentiment." He glanced between the sharp object in his hand and the pliers, contrastingly blunt. The agony that *they* could produce—oh, it would be drawn out and excruciating in comparison to the scalpel. Subtle, and yet so violent. Pulled teeth, busted capillaries, and most importantly, answers. His mind buzzed with the possibilities.

"I only wonder if we're cutting it too close." The woman tapped her boot once, firm, causing its spur to jingle through the muted sounds of chatter from above. "I mean no disrespect, of course. I only have a reputation to uphold."

"If it's not a bother, remind me of your name again."

“Mottaka-sikómitaa.”

“That is quite the mouthful.” Finally, he broke away from the table and all of its instruments, scalpel in hand. “How does ‘Mottak’ sound?”

Her stoic expression faltered at the hideous pronunciation that graced the name. Fingernails softly dug into the exposed darkness of her forearms as she squeezed herself, bristling with irritation that she knew would be more useful if applied to her work rather than... Him.

“If I say ‘yes,’ will we get through this faster?”

“Certainly.” Gideon smirked, cold and calculated.

“Great.” Defeated, her arms fell to her sides, rustling the patterned fabric of her poncho.

A few of the shotgun shells that fell along the bandolier on her chest glimmered in the thin beams of sunlight. “‘Mottak’ it is, then.”

For a few short moments, neither of them talked, only taking the time to analyze each other. Mottak decided that the color palette of his suit was tacky, and frankly, impractical. Who wears a black and red suit? More importantly, who wears a suit while doing *bounty hunting* work? Gideon squinted, as if aware of the perceptions that echoed through her mind.

A faint plinking of piano keys started soon after, an abrupt noise that earned a cheer from the patrons that surrounded the bar upstairs. Mottak glanced at the ceiling, searching for the source. Tiny fragments of lantern light poured through gaps in the saloon’s floorboards, blocked by an occasional well-placed step or falling shadow. The place was positively swarming.

Luckily for them, that inspired a lot of noise. Gideon, too, was staring upwards, hazel eyes glittering in a way that suggested deep contemplation. He scoffed. “Well then, Mottak,” he began, “I must admit that you made an excellent point. How rude of us to keep Mr. Santiago waiting for such pertinent information?”

“It would be nothing short of cruel.”

“But of course.” Without another word, Gideon pulled himself out of the long, black coat that hung from him. It fell to the floor in a heap, leaving him able to roll up the sleeves of his shirt. The scalpel remained in his grasp: ever patient, tolerant. “Check if our friend there is still with us, would you kindly?”

The pair turned their attention to the wooden chair in the far corner, occupied by one very unfortunate man. His blonde hair was unkempt and messy, his skin drenched with sweat that glistened from across the room. The bruising on his face, purple in hue, appeared severe.

The bridge of his nose had fared the worst, a deep, dark color that indicated internal damage severe enough to convince his sinuses to bleed--and bled they had. Crimson trailed from his nostrils to his chin, collecting in the dry, cracking parts of his lips and his cupid's bow. The source had run dry, however, and the old blood had cured a shade of rusty brown. His eyes were closed, his head lolled to the side as he existed in a placid state of unconsciousness. If not for the injuries, he may have looked peaceful. Mottak, though, cared little for appearances. Unslinging the hatchet from her hip, she approached.

The hatchet's blade stuck into one of the chair's arms with a loud "thud" and the sound of splitting wood. The chair's occupant sputtered to life, violently thrashing against the ropes that declared him captive.

"Sorry to cut your nap short," Mottak began, prying the hatchet from the wood with a hard tug, "but there is work to be done."

The bound man flinched at the sudden movement of the weapon, attempting to maintain whatever fragments remained of his composure. "I already told you, I don't know anything. You and your group—you've got the wrong fella. Very simple mix-up." He smiled weakly, displaying bloody teeth and worried eyebrows. "I am not a man of grudges... i-if you let me free, I won't tell a soul."

Mottak raised an eyebrow, thoroughly unconvinced. "I'm going to try this one more time. If you speak, I'll consider letting you off with a broken nose. If you don't, well..." She cracked a subtle smirk, cleaning sawdust from the head of her hatched with a free hand. "If you're lucky to walk out of here alive, it will be with fewer appendages than when you were dragged in. How does that sound?"

"Not the best," he whined.

The smirk on the woman's face fell away to nothingness. "*Where* is Horatio Menendez?" Something wicked flashed in her eyes, something that sent potent fear spiraling through her captive's marrow. He swallowed, dry, and produced a smile that was smothered by the terrified trembling of his lip.

"I have never heard that name in my life, ma'am—honest." He glanced around. "Y'know, I could've sworn there were two of y'all."

Two gloved hands appeared from the shadows to set themselves on his shoulders. The man attempted to lurch forward, away from the sensation, but the bindings held firm. "You'd be right, friend," Gideon hissed. He leaned down to almost whisper into the captive's ear, clenching his fingers tighter. "Your observation skills are laughable—I take it that *nothing* gets by you."

"And what do *you* want from me?"

"The same thing she does." His right hand momentarily abandoned its quarry, returning armed. The scalpel appeared in the corner of Isaac's vision, earning a whine. "*Answers.*"

“If you’re tryin’ to spook the information out of me, it’s not going to work.”

“Where’s your boss, pal? Tall fella, big hat, blonde hair—*fantastic* mustache. A very distinctive looking man. It would be impossible to forget a face like that one.”

“... I don’t know who that is.”

Gideon raised his arm. “Wrong answer.” In mere seconds, the scalpel’s sharpened point found its place in the man’s shoulder. It tore through his dress shirt and stabbed into the thick layers of muscle that lay beneath, bringing with it a stream of red. Isaac howled in agony, yet Gideon remained unswayed. Mottak, too, seemed unphased, not having moved from where she’d been standing before. Part of her knew that her work was done.

The top of Gideon’s shoe found one of the chair’s back legs. In one, swift motion, he spun it to face him. “I do *not* intend to waste my time coming up with ways to make you talk, understand?” Gideon found the pearl handle of his revolver with startling quickness. The man in the chair flinched with his whole body, trying and failing to pull his limbs closer together.

“Now, I will ask you *again*, dear friend of mine--” the southerner’s mouth curled into a sneer, framed by neatly trimmed facial hair, “--what exactly do they call you?”

“I-Isaac.”

“*Isaac*, you say?” Gideon’s head tilted as he uttered the poor man’s name, the title dripping with venom fetid enough to nearly kill him on the spot. “Abraham’s sacrificial lamb, as the Lord willed him. Tell me, boy, are you ready to die for the things that you believe in so strongly? Would you like to become a martyr in this derelict saloon basement?”

“Listen to me, you crooked *fool*,” Isaac barked. “These people that you’re after, when they find out what you’ve done to me, they’ll--”

“I asked you a question,” Gideon reminded him. “Would you or would you not like to die here? It is a rather simple query and I do not take you for a stupid man.”

Isaac narrowed his eyes. Gideon’s stare did not falter. “... No.”

“Then answer my goddamn question.” The barrel of Gideon’s revolver pressed into Isaac’s forehead, the metal frigid against his sickly pale skin. Isaac pulled his head away, but Gideon made it a point to keep the weapon fatally close. “This is your last chance. I have been more than accommodating.”

“You don’t understand, fella. If they find out I told they’ll--”

“Can I be frank with you?” Gideon asked, though he did not bother to wait for Isaac’s reply. “It is clear to me that you will die either way, whether it be at my hand or at the hands of your boss and all of his pawns. I could not care less.”

“But—”

“No,” Gideon growled. “*Where. Is. Horatio. Menendez?*” Each word was spoken with a slow, emphasized deliberation, seething with violent aggravation that Gideon could barely keep concealed. Sweat dripped down the side of his tan face, mingling with the thin hair of his sideburns.

Above, glass could be heard shattering, followed by a rather slurred series of expletives. Liquid trickled through the cracks in the ceiling, landing at Mottak’s feet. It reeked of cinnamon.

“... He’s— he’s on a *train*. The 4 o’ clock one.” The phrases nearly came out of Isaac’s mouth as sobs. “I was supposed to be there with him. We all were. I know that they’re out lookin’ for me.”

“And why would he be on the 4 o’ clock train when it is only noon?”

“Safety. He knows you want his head.”

“And where is this train headed?”

“New Orleans.”

Gideon raised his eyebrows. “Lovely place if I do say so myself.” He offered no elaboration, only choosing to stare into his victim’s eyes with a blankness that was almost frustrating. Impatient, Isaac opened his mouth to speak.

“I gave you everything you wanted—I’ve *earned* my freedom. When can I leave?”

“I haven’t quite decided yet.”

Isaac’s expression fell. “... *What?*” Dread laced the word.

“You heard me.”

“You twisted son of a bitch, we had a deal!”

“To my knowledge, we had no such thing.” The southerner craned his head to glance behind him. “What do you think, Mottak? Do you remember making a deal with our fine fugitive friend?”

From the shadows, the tall woman shook her head. “I don’t think I do.”

“Lots of money attached to that name of yours, y’know.”

“I’ll kill you. I’ll gut you like a goddamn fish—you *and* your half-breed lacky, you yellow, ass-kissing—”

Scowling, Gideon’s thumb pulled back the hammer of his revolver. As it set into place, it released a gentle “click.” Horror smothered his captive’s fierceness as the reality of his situation set in. The weapon aimed at his head was no longer a warning, but a promise.

“P-Please,” Isaac begged. His face had gone entirely pale, the pupils in his eyes shrunk to pinpricks. “I—I have a family that needs providin’ for. You don’t gotta do

this." He pressed his tied hands together as best as he could manage. "I have money! I—I have *money—real* money."

"*Where?*" The word was a hiss as the gunslinger jabbed him with the end of the gun. It sat in the dead-center of his brow now, flush against his skull.

"I—In my left boot. Fifty whole dollars--all yours!" Despite his best efforts, tears trailed down Isaac's face, collecting at the edge of his jawline. "And two tickets for Menendez's train. You'd be set. I'd never think about this or him or your friend or whoever in Christ's name put you up to this ever again. I swear on my life."

Silence hung in the air.

Gideon stood perfectly still. His finger remained on the trigger, frozen in place, ready to act at any moment. Watching from behind, Mottak could swear that he'd stopped breathing.

"Mottak?" The woman's name was paired with a sigh.

"Yes?" Staring into Isaac's eyes, she cocked her head. He cringed.

"Untie him."

"Really?" She nearly scoffed. "You're sure?"

Mottak watched Gideon hesitate. His eyes narrowed, shooting daggers into the trembling man before him. The dust in the air had settled at the lack of movement, plainly floating in the air now rather than swirling about. Through gritted teeth, he finally spoke. "...I am certain."

Without another word, he abandoned his post to make way for Mottak's arrival. She strode towards him with an uncanny calmness, letting the hatchet's handle partly slide from her grip for the sake of flair. "I'm almost disappointed to see you walk."

"Ah," Isaac replied. "Upset that your friend isn't lettin' you sever any limbs today?" She scrunched her nose at his newfound cockiness, eager to get this over with. Her calloused hand grasped at the binding on his wrists harshly. Isaac's eyes widened.

"He made no such promises." The hatchet's sharpened blade was set along the rope. "It wouldn't take long to make you an amputee. I hear gangrene sets in rather quickly these days."

"Just cut the damn thing, will ya?" As he finished the phrase, the regret on his face was plain and visible, as was Mottak's thinly veiled aggravation. The grip on the hatchet had tightened enough to show the whites of her knuckles. "*Please?*"

The blade sliced down, cutting through the rough material that held his forearms in place. Isaac's hands quickly found the arms of the chair, thrilled to be further away from the wrath of Mottak's weapon.



My Favorite/Inspirational Anime by Taylor Kennedy

She gave him little time to recover, however, immediately grasping at the soiled collar of his shirt. “You are going to listen to me and you are going to do it well.” Her fist clenched around the fabric, summoning a foul mixture of sweat and blood to leech from its fibers. It dribbled down her fingers. “Is that understood?”

Isaac forced himself to nod.

“I am going to cut your legs free. You are going to stand up, give us the money and those train tickets. Then you are going to leave. You will go far away from this place and Menendez will be none the wiser.” The woman paused her instructions to study his reaction, finding that terror had snuffed out the embers of his courage—his foolishness. A bead of sweat trailed down the side of her face, rolling from her temple to the height of her cheekbones. “If you even dare to *breathe* a word of these events to a single living soul, I promise that I will find you. I will find you way out there, in the cold endlessness of the desert and sand...” Mottak chuckled, flashing white, predatory teeth. “And there will be no one to stop me from finishing the job.”

“With great displeasure,” Gideon began, “I must announce that I’ve changed my mind.”

“What do you mean? I’m already halfway through.”

“Turn around.” The southerner had almost whispered the phrase.

Confused, Mottak did as she was told. Her head whipped around to be greeted by the shiny barrel of Gideon’s pistol, disturbingly close. “*What the—*”

“Move.”

The revolver fired with utmost precision. Viscera exploded into the air in the form of a fine, red mist, gracing the room with the stench of gunpowder, tarnished change, and fresh meat. The sound had dragged the saloon upstairs to a heavy, dread-filled silence. It was enough to inspire ringing in Gideon’s ears—to him, the lilting song of success.

A ragged chasm sat squarely between Isaac’s perpetually widened eyes, acting as a spicket for deep-red liquid and cranial tissue. The entire sight dipped inwards, a testament to the true caliber of those bullets. Gideon placed his gun in its holster before wiping the splattering of blood from his face, a congratulations on a job well done. As quickly as it had appeared, the silence in the bar had fizzled away, replaced once more with the stammering conversations of the inebriated.

Mottak, thoroughly shaken, had managed to displace herself to the left of the chair in the chaos, sparing herself of a similar fate. “I appreciate your taste for drama,” she mumbled, likewise rubbing tiny dots of red from her face, “but can I ask why you did that?”

Her gaze settled on the once-white dress shirt that Isaac wore. A brown stain had formed around his ruffled collar, smeared by what were certainly her fingerprints. The

scalpel that stuck out of his shoulder, too, had leaked enough red to soil the surrounding fabric, though Mottak knew that the dead had little care for appearances.

“If I was being poetic, I’d say that ‘God had different plans for Isaac this time around,’ but I simply enjoy the game. It’s more entertaining when they’re hopeful.” Gideon leaned down to untie Isaac’s legs. “But I was also getting rather sick of his disrespect—just as you were, I presume. So I took the necessary steps to rid the world of his misery.” He stepped back and placed a foot on the chair. With a gentle push, he knocked it backwards, leaving the body flat on its back. “We’d already received our information. Horatio Menendez will be heading out to New Orleans at 4 o’ clock. All we have to do is catch that train.”

“And when are we doing that?”

“There is no need to rush.” With a grunt, Gideon pried the boot from Isaac’s left foot. He tipped it over rather unceremoniously, rewarding him with exactly what had been promised: two twenty-dollar bills, one ten-dollar bill, and a pair of train tickets. They were slightly damp and radiated a warmth that was almost sickening, but he tucked them into his pockets with little remorse. “And besides, what’s better to do in a saloon but have a few drinks? I’ll pay. Honest.”

“You know what? Sure. As long as we get out of this goddamn basement.”

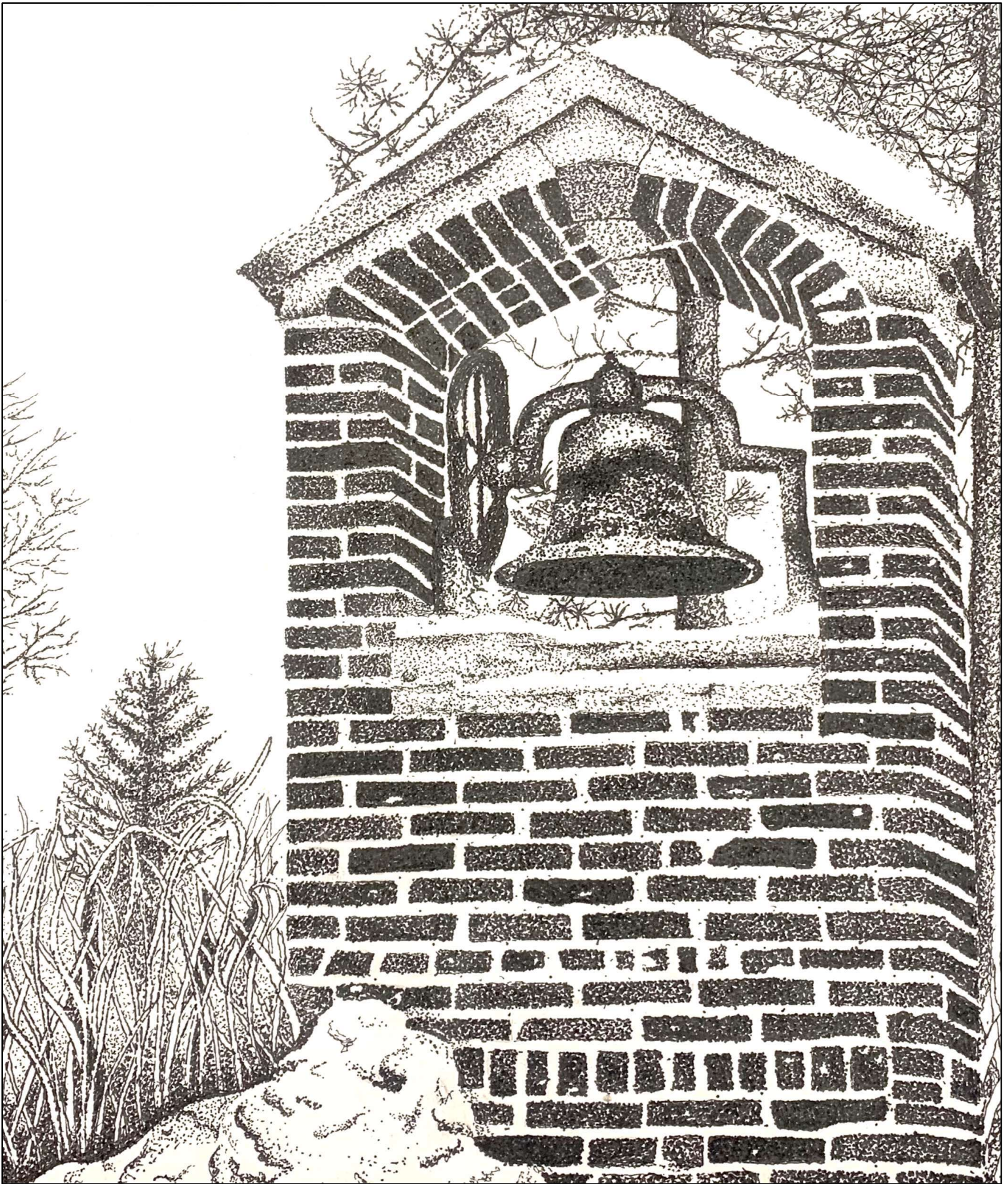
“It *is* quite filthy down here,” Gideon agreed. He fetched his overcoat from the floor and slipped it back on, stealing a final glance at the table of instruments. “Ah, I almost forgot.” He trotted over to what remained of Isaac, and in one short motion, pried the scalpel from the stiff muscles of his shoulder. In hindsight, perhaps it had been overkill, though what was done was done. The weapon found its place in his overcoat’s pocket. “I’m sure Santiago won’t be too upset that I took a particular liking to one of his instruments.”

Mottak only rolled her eyes.

Gideon’s gloved hand found its place on the handle of the basement door and gently twisted. “Well, Mottak--” He swung it open, revealing the wooden staircase they’d descended earlier. “I do believe that this is the beginning of a beautiful partnership.”

Offering a subtle smile, she stepped through the doorway. “Indeed.”

The door shut behind Gideon as he followed suit, leaving the room’s dank, shadowy expanse abandoned, save for the corpse of poor Isaac.



Saint Francis University Bell Tower by Katelyn Diehl

It Is Time

by Gabriel Graham

1st Place Winner, Gunard Carlson Contest

September 11th, 2020, a phone call and crying. My mum called me, her voice shaking and her eyes certainly filling with tears. I automatically knew what happened. She was about to say words that I dreaded hearing as tears started to well into my eyes. My cousin with cystic fibrosis had died; he hadn't been doing well.

It was cold upon Mt. Sion that night. As cumulonimbus clouds fell on blackish-grey peaks, the sun was being swallowed by the southwestern waters, while the moon was being born from the southeastern waters. During these dark and dreary hours of the night, a turtle walked out of his cavernous home, holding himself upright using a long and steady wooden staff with a wider upper end in his right hand. His scaly flesh was green and wrinkly, his eyes were black circles with a white outline, and the claws on his hands and feet were as black as the looming clouds above. His brown hooded cloak rested upon the leafy-green shell on his back, all for his comfort and a reminder of what he had carried to Mt. Sion. He had been awakened by a voice telling him to go to a nearby cave that housed a circular pool of purest mountain water. The pool was soaked completely by moonlight whenever the moon was full, thus earning its sacred name of Stagnaluna. The turtle knew the voice too well, as it came from the one who had led him to this mountain. *I trusted and obeyed him before*, the turtle thought to himself, *and for all my long years, he has not led me astray. If he wishes to see me now during these dark hours, then I shall see him.* With that resolution in mind, the turtle made his way to Stagnaluna.

Having reached the entrance to the dome-shaped cavern that housed the sacred pool, the turtle removed his hood and proceeded to Stagnaluna. Walking up to the pool's edge, which reminded him of a round bowl he used back in his own dwelling, the turtle planted his staff onto the stone with his right hand as his left hand gripped the edge of the pool, getting onto his knees as he looked into the sacred waters. This was not Malachi's first visit to Stagnaluna. In the past, he had come to this place and placed his staff into the sacred waters, seeing images of the lands beyond Mt. Sion, whether it be the lands of Southaven (which encompassed seven civilized mammal species and all the plains between them and Mt. Sion) or lands further north from which he and the former mammals had traveled so long ago. *Is this where he wishes to connect with me?* the turtle thought to himself. *Am I to be shown another vision?* It was one of many gifts he was given before arriving at Mt. Sion, some for personal use, others to protect but eventually give away. *Well, I hope the moonlight shines upon Stagnaluna soon*, the turtle hoped, as the coldness of the stone floor seeped into his knees. *My cloak and the gifts that I carry can*

only warm me for so long. Fortunately for the turtle, his wish would be granted sooner than he thought.

It felt like a light wind brushing against his shoulder, but it was enough to cause the turtle to turn around, wondering if something was behind him. The turtle's eyes widened as he recognized the newcomer.

"It's you!" the turtle exclaimed, feeling relief rush over him like a roaring river.

"May peace and harmony be with thee, oh Malachi, turtle prophet of the Creator," the figure replied, dipping his head as he clenched his right hand and put it over his chest as he continued. "It has been a long time, old friend. If it helps your memory, my name is Jora."

Jora? Malachi pondered, *Yes, I do remember that name. It truly has been a long time, has it not?* Toward showing respect to his old guide, Malachi dipped his head and performed the same gesture. Feeling a hand upon his shoulder, Malachi looked up as Jora stated, "Come, my dear Malachi. We have much to talk about." As Malachi obeyed, he kept his eyes upon his old friend, marveling at what he saw.

Jora looked just as Malachi remembered all those years ago. His form was that of a human man, one with slender but strong legs and muscular shoulders and arms, cloaked in a large brown robe with a green sash strapped across his body from his left shoulder to his right hip. While Jora stood at approximately the same height as Malachi, the word "stand" could hardly describe Jora's state. Jora's form was airy and translucent, and while Jora's feet seemed to touch the ground and keep him upright, Malachi could still see the ground through Jora's feet. Nevertheless, he was still the same Jora that Malachi knew and respected, so when Jora signaled to Malachi to walk with him, Malachi followed his lead without hesitation.

Catching up with his old friend, Jora being on his left as the two of them walked around the edges of Stagnaluna, Malachi asked, "Jora, what brings you to these sacred rocks tonight?"

"In truth, the Creator has sent me to tell you this..."

Malachi noticed Jora's hesitation, and feeling Jora's light touch on his left shoulder, Malachi faced Jora as he said to him, "It is time."

I see, Malachi thought to himself, knowing exactly what Jora was referring to.

"I presume that you still have them with you?" Jora probed.

"Yes, I do. In fact, I have them right here in my shell." Reaching into his shell with his left hand, Malachi found what he was looking for and presented what he had been carrying to Jora.

Within Malachi's left hand were three identical amulets. The embellishment of each amulet looked like an apple-shaped stone that had been cut perfectly in half with a small

brown-colored seed covered in golden specks in its core, the upper part of the stone having a small hole for the simple leather cord covered in similar specks to loop through and tie off at any length that the user wished. These were the amulets that Malachi had been charged to keep and protect by Jora, to be hidden away until an opportune time. From what Jora had told him, that time was now.

Malachi listened as Jora gave him these exultant words: “The Creator has deemed that we have entered the fullness of times. As such, it is time for the amulets to be revealed to the mammals that the Creator chooses. It is time to go back north and restore the Creator’s tree. It is time to banish the usurping serpent and all of his shadowy servants who poisoned that tree. It is time for the mammals of Southaven to bring peace and harmony to the world once again, to civilize the lands and teach the ways of the Creator to all. It is time, my dear Malachi, for you to send forth the signs from Stagnaluna.” Thus was Jora’s command to Malachi.

Setting the amulets on a flat surface near the edge of Stagnaluna, Malachi prepared to touch the sacred waters with the tip of his staff, knowing that the wondrous ways of the Creator would take care of the rest...only to then hesitate, as if an invisible force was holding him back. Sometimes before taking a leap of courage, one may experience a moment of doubt that kills one’s momentum, regardless of how prepared one felt about the whole endeavor. That same feeling was now overcoming Malachi, and even though he knew that this day would come, even though he knew that this was the moment that he had been waiting for, Malachi could not bring himself to complete his task.

“I’m sorry, Jora,” Malachi said, bringing his staff back onto the ground. “I don’t think I can do this.” Glancing over at Jora, he expected to see an angry and disappointed look on his face, a look which would say to him, *What do you mean you cannot do this? This is why I gave you the amulets and led you here all those years ago!* But to Malachi’s surprise, Jora gave him only a thoughtful glance, sitting down at the edge of Stagnaluna in front of him. Following suit, Malachi sat down as well, resting his staff in between himself and Jora.

“What hinders you, my old friend? Never before have I seen you so weak with worry. Has such great doubt of your own duties held you for this long?”

Turning his gaze to Jora, Malachi replied, “It is true, oh Jora, image-bearer of the Creator. I do doubt myself.”

“Is it because you only have *three* amulets to give away instead of *four*?”

“What else would it be?” Malachi replied, remembering his failure as if it were yesterday. During his journey from the northern lands to Southaven with the seven civilized species, a young vixen had stayed with him for several nights, saying that she was interested in learning about meditation and prayer. Seeing no harm in sharing his spiritual experiences, he had been more than happy to teach her. One night, however, he had awakened from his meditation to find hostile creatures attacking, the vixen missing, and an amulet gone. He had made it his priority from that point onward to stay away from the

seven civilized species, not wanting to lose another amulet again; thus, when Jora told him that he would settle upon Mt. Sion, he was more than willing to oblige. Nevertheless, the memory of that failure remained, and hearing Jora's command to finally give them away had only brought back such memories to the forefront of Malachi's mind.

"Are you sure that you still trust me to do this?" Malachi wondered out loud.

"Yes, I still trust you, my old friend," Jora replied, his words filled with warmth. "In this imperfect world of ours, it is inevitable that we will make mistakes. But that cannot dissuade us from doing what must be done. If perfection were the requirement to act, then no one in this world would do anything. Besides, you have shown your commitment to your task through all the decades that you have resided on Mt. Sion, continually keeping the amulets safe to this day."

It is true, Malachi thought to himself, breathing out a heavy sigh. *For my earlier failures, while I have been here, I have certainly stayed true to my task.* Feeling Jora touch his shoulder once again, Malachi listened as Jora gave him more encouragement.

"You can do this, my friend. If you have faith in me and the Creator, as the Creator and I have faith in you, then can you not have faith in yourself?" Looking deep in Malachi's eyes, it did not take long for Jora to see that his words had gotten through to him. However, self-doubt was not the only struggle that was holding Malachi back.

"But even if I do send forth the signs and have the amulets ready, are you certain that any of the mammals are *worthy* of them? If I recall correctly, you told me that these amulets can only be wielded by the pure of heart. While I have stayed faithful to my task, I could never say the same for any of the mammals that will be called here to Mt. Sion. For all I know, I could simply be giving away your gifts to mammals cut from the same cloth as the thieving vixen! Even if they all come, how will I know whom to entrust these amulets to?"

Glancing back at Jora, Malachi could tell that he was deep in thought, considering his objection. *While I was personally called by Jora to follow this holy path all those years ago,* Malachi acknowledged to himself, *I doubt that there are many others who have followed suit, unless the only mammals that the Creator chooses are all priests or hermits like me.* To be clear, it was not that Malachi thought that only mammals of faith could have good character, but rather that those who had already accepted a religious calling in their lives would be more receptive to the Creator's signs, similarly to what he had done.

"Everyone is called in their own way to make this world a better place," Jora responded. "You ask what differentiates the good mammals from the others? It is whether they cared enough to listen for that call, understood what they were being called to do, and were willing to answer that call when it was given to them." Pointing at the amulets that were resting near the edge of Stagnaluna, Jora continued, "If it helps thee, my dear Malachi, let this be *your* sign. If all of the mammals that are called willingly come to Mt.

Sion, intently listen to what they must do, and sincerely agree to go on this great journey, then you will know that they are worthy of the gifts that you give to them.”

Then I will keep watch for such a sign, Malachi thought to himself assuringly. Nevertheless, there was still something holding him back, a nagging thought that had been building ever since Jora had told him that it was time. *It feels almost preposterous to ask, as Jora might see this as me losing faith in him*, Malachi worried. *But nevertheless, I believe it must be asked.*

“Jora, are you certain that this will work?”

“What do you mean, my good friend?”

“I mean, even if I complete my task well and the mammals that come to Mt. Sion are all good mammals worthy of these gifts, won’t they face grave dangers in the northern lands? The usurping serpent has many shadowy servants, and unless all the mammals that come to Mt. Sion are all the same species, they probably won’t have any alliances or friendships that initially keep them together. Do you really think that they won’t just be good enough for these gifts, but good enough to succeed on their great journey?”

This time, Jora moved over to Malachi’s left side. He then reached for Malachi’s staff, pulling it back with his right hand so that the bottom end was resting behind them and the top end of the staff was in between them. With regards to the top end, there was engraved an equilateral triangle inscribed within a perfect square, the bottom side of the triangle and the square overlapping each other, all of which was circumscribed by a circle.

Having Malachi’s attention, Jora stated, “It is true, my dear Malachi; the mammals that will go on this great journey will be challenged. They will have to face many threats, both old and new, spiritual and physical, before their journey’s end. Even if the Creator found ten thousand mammals to go on this great journey, their task would not be easy. Nevertheless, there is a power in this world that can work in mysterious ways, even amongst strangers. It can spring from many sources, whether it be the desire to serve one’s nation, the desire to do what is right and just, the desire to stay true to one’s word, or the desire to truly know another mammal. Never underestimate this power, my dear Malachi, for when it is realized, it can truly conquer all.”

Glancing down at the stick, Malachi watched as Jora’s fingers brushed over each of the shapes, his words following suit. “The truth is, my dear Malachi, I do not know if the mammals that will go on this great journey will succeed. But what I do know is this: If they can build bonds between themselves that are strong and sturdy, are perfectly equal in distribution, and are continuously sustained throughout their journey, then they will succeed. Is that clear to thee?”

It is clear, Malachi thought as he nodded, feeling two emotions overcome him simultaneously. On the one hand, he felt as if a heavy stone had finally been lifted off his shoulders, one that had been weighing him down for a long time. On the other hand, he felt as if a fire had just been kindled in his heart, one that he had felt all those years ago

when he was first given his tasks by Jora. *I shall doubt no longer. If it is the Creator's will that I shall do this, then let it be done.* Looking back at Jora, he saw a smile spreading across his face, and for the first time since Jora had arrived, Malachi smiled, too.

"Then this is where I leave thee," Jora announced, his voice filled with resolution. "The Creator awaits my return, and you know what you must do." Giving Malachi the chance to get back onto his feet, holding himself upright with his staff in his left hand, Jora walked over to the exit from the sacred cave. Jora then turned around, dipping his head and clenching his right hand and placing it over his chest as he did before, saying to Malachi with a smile, "May peace and harmony be with thee, oh Malachi, prophet of the Creator."

Returning the same gesture, Malachi replied, "And also with thee, oh Jora, image-bearer of the Creator." By the time Malachi raised his head, Jora had disappeared, leaving him alone once more in the cave of Stagnaluna.

Glancing around the cave, making sure that they were still there, Malachi grabbed the three amulets that he had set aside, finally prepared to freely give them away to the mammals that would see the signs that he sent. With the three amulets in his left right, his staff in his right hand, and renewed confidence in his heart, Malachi knew that the time had come. *Imperfect as this world may be, towards making it a better place, I'm willing to play my part.* As he proceeded to perform his task, Malachi thought to himself, filled with relevant concern yet calm resolution, *I only pray that others will be willing to play theirs.*

Tapestries

2021-2022

Weaving the Threads of
Creativity & Innovation

