



HAIGAZIAN UNIVERSITY

THE HERALD

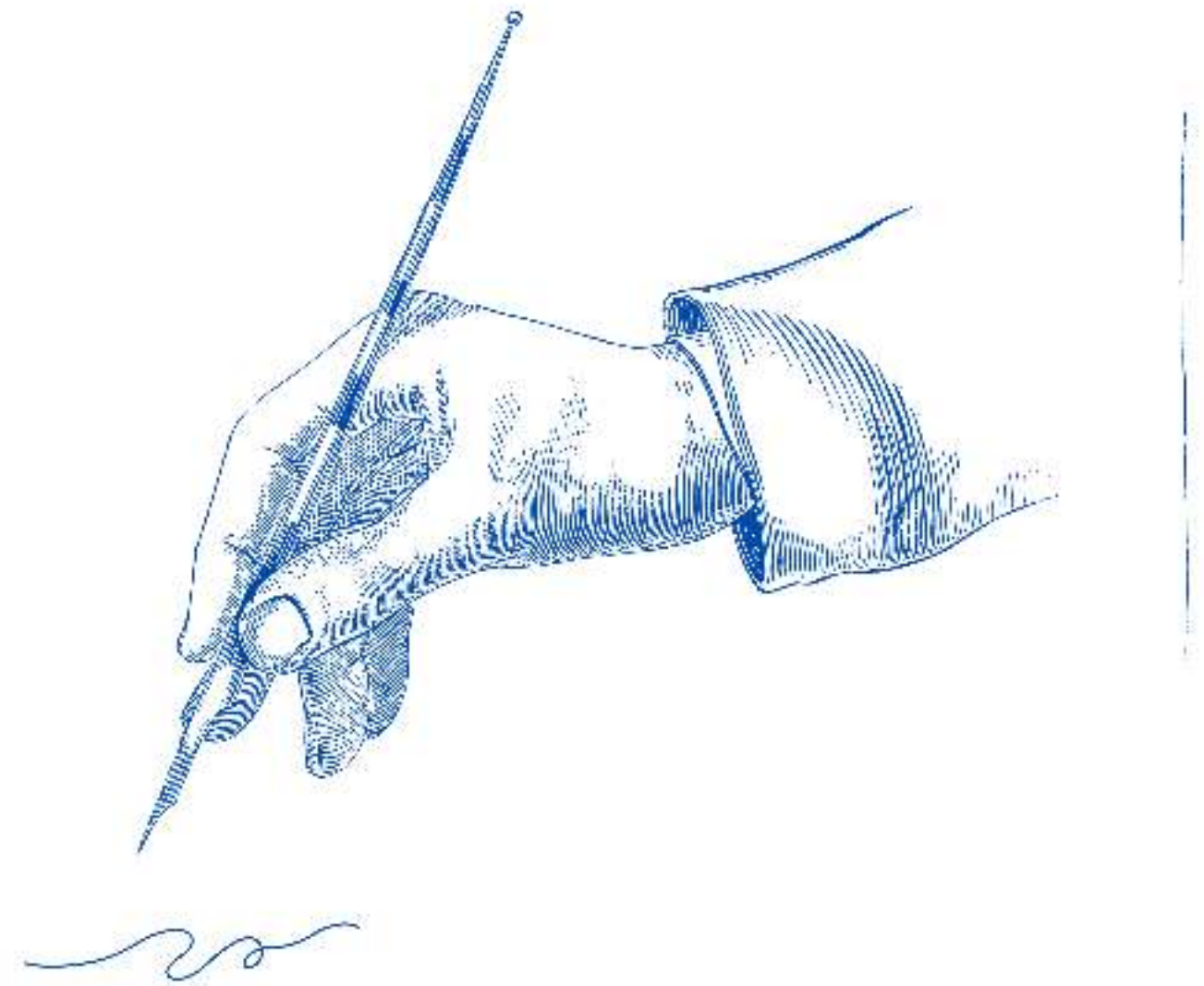
CREATIVE METAMORPHOSIS

SPRING ISSUE 2024

XXXII 2

LEAVE YOUR MARK

HU WRITING CENTER
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Writing Support



writingcenter@haigazian.edu.lb

 Writing Center

“This blank page needs to be filled with all the creative metamorphosis that inspired it to begin with”- what I thought of when I sat down to write the chairperson’s corner. So, let me fill it up with gratitude, appreciation and some reflection.

The thought of ever becoming chairperson never even crossed my mind, not even last semester when I was vice president. Although leadership isn’t new to me, I never thought I would be a leader in our club; Yet, here I am today, never prouder, and particularly grateful to the person who helped me reach this point, my dear friend and previous “boss”, Dania Al Boukhari. As chairperson before me, she saw potential in me and pushed me to take on this responsibility. A true leader herself, her resilience, her strength, and her ability to balance life always inspired me. So much of my knowledge and skills in this role come from her guidance. Therefore, part of my blank page is now filled with inspiration and guidance from her.

Taking on this metamorphic role was quite a change which frightened me at first, as the unknown felt too far and mysterious to understand. But over time, with the help of my amazing board, all these changes and new experiences ahead didn’t seem as scary, as we faced them together and even learned from them. They helped me build the confidence I needed and helped put my worries to sleep. So, thank you to my incredible vice president, Alyag Momjian, to my amazing assistants, Serly Topeyan and Lynn Fawaz, and to my dedicated club representative, Ralph Tannous, for always listening and supporting my ideas and for bringing light into the dark tunnel of this new journey. You filled my pen with so much ink that I’m afraid of running out of pages to write on.

Appreciation and gratitude wouldn’t carry the same meaning without me mentioning my wonderful heroes of editors, on whom I relied all the responsibility and work. To my editors: Fady Jawhar, Hasmig Aintablian, Helena Abou Sefian, and Ibrahim Al Najjar, you are the ones who guided us through the night with your constellation-creating pens. Your unwavering support, motivation, and care have become an anchoring light to us writers and members of this wonderful team.

Speaking of writers, our shining stars, these pages would never be complete without their touching, heartbreaking yet heartwarming works of art. During the club’s process of writing, I was able to see the progress of each piece, and let me tell you the unfathomable emotions these writings evoked in me. The pure love, joy, anger, hate, hope, and faith portrayed in every single one of these artworks inspired me while having embarked on this journey and I cannot express how grateful I am to be able to experience these most heartfelt emotions while reading them. I realized that these amazing people are the reason the blank pages of my new metamorphosis are complete. I saw how creativity is the bane of this metamorphosis and it is here where hidden gems are unraveled.

These hidden gems wouldn’t fully fill my blank pages without the absolute inspiring journey I got to witness from our phenomenal faculty and staff members. Having worked closely with them, I got to experience the rawest of emotions, as I got a view of their own worlds. Therefore, I thank you Dr. Christine Arzoumanian, our dear faculty member, and Ms. Mirjam Polak, our lovely student counselor, for your most heartfelt pieces of art that led me onto a railroad of inspiration and emotional transformation.

Last but never least, heartfelt gratitude is due to our supportive supervisor, Mr. Razmig Kaprielian, to our hardworking proofreader, Mrs. Maria Bakalian, and to our creative designer, Mohamad Abou Amo; it is because of their dedicated work and support that these pages that have been filled with hidden gems are coming to life.

So now I leave you all to discover the hidden gems behind every piece written and let you go into a spiral of creative metamorphosis that has filled the blank pages of our issue with the ink of creativity and transformation.

THE “ CHAIR- PERSON’S CORNER

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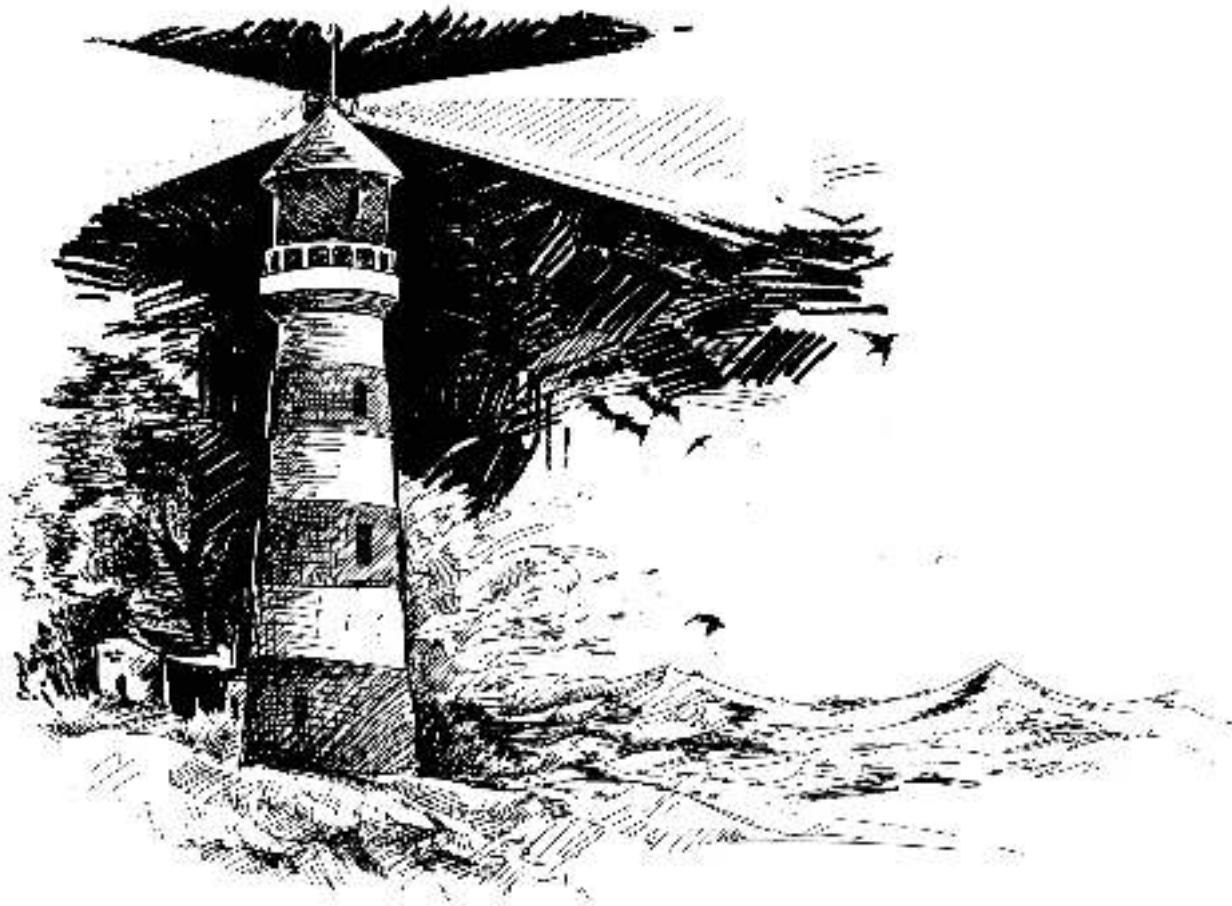
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SILENT SYMPHONY: ECHOES OF THE SOUL'S CANVAS

As the long wait of the blank page for the ink of
creative metamorphosis comes to an end,
Unexpected wonders unfold.

To express is to write,
To write is to ignite,
A fire in the dark.
To light up a spark,
It's when dreams and mysteries embark,
On a journey of delight.

In silent rage,
With emotions in a cage,
Words dance on the page,
With the melody and harmony of phrases,
Leaving heart-felt traces.

In sadness and heartbreaks,
The pain of mistakes and aches,
Eats through the heart,
Which longs for a fresh start,
Turning agony into art.

In joy and harmony,
Magic fills the minds,
And a lovely symphony
Comes in different kinds.

In the dance of creation,
Full of sensation;
Emotions intertwine,
Unveiling a tapestry divine.
Where whispers of the heart forever shine.



METAMORPHIC MUSINGS:

POETIC JOURNEYS OF CREATIVE TRANSFORMATION

01

TARNISHED EMBLEMS

The page is now turned.
Confusion embarks.
Realization strikes.

On every previous paper there were words written in someone else's
handwriting; tarnished by their ink that incinerated me.

Now that the pen is within my grasp, I unravel them, just like a thread from a
piece of clothing, and I stitch parts of them back in a reformed way.

To reconstruct and redefine the sentences that were once agonizing into ones
that determine the lessons learned.

Those that will morph to become emblems that will dictate their
newly found meanings.

...The blank page awaits the ink of creative metamorphosis...



Չայրենիքը Մեզ Կը Կանչէ

Շուշիի բարձունքներէն Սիւնիքի դաշտերը,
Մայր Արարատի գագաթէն, Վանի ափերը,
Արձագանգ մը ժայթքեցաւ, կարծես ըլլայ
որոտում:

Ա՛յ երիտասարդ, հայրենիքը մեզ կը կանչէ՝
Վերցո՛ւր զենքն ու գրիչը եւ պատասխանէ՝,
Քու հողդ կ'արինի.

Ինչո՞ւ տակաւին կ'եցած ես պապամսած:

Հասի՛ր մայր հողի կանչին:

Քու ծնունդն իսկ սուրբ խոստում էր
Վրէժխղրութեա՛ն, Պայքարի՛, Յաղթանակի՛,
եւ Արդարութեա՛ն:

Ամօթ չէ՞ դաւաճանութեան
տիրապետութեան տակ մնացինք:

Կը բաւէ ա՛լ լուռ մնալ:

Ըլլայ ովկիանոս, ըլլայ լեռնաշղթաներ,
Դիմագրաւէ՛ր բոլորը ու հասի՛ր մայրենի
երկիր,

Համբուրէ՛ սուրբ հողը ու պայքարէ՛ անոր
համար.

Ո՛վ հայ երիտասարդ, զենքն ու գրիչը
վերցո՛ւր.

Հայրենի հողը մեզ կը կանչէ՝



BLISSFUL IGNORANCE

I feel like another sheep in the herd.
 I preach but I'm not truly heard.
 I feel like we're all sick of this cycle.
 I feel like we all yearn for a revival.
 Reluctantly boarding this dying star
 I feel like a supernova, bleeding through these pages reflecting in awe.
 I feel like these walls cave in every time I speak my truth, and I'm met with
 scoffs and nods.
 Mere whispers in the wind,
 Lost souls raiding skin.
 I feel like I've been force-feeding the fools.
 I feel like you kiss the same hand that suffocates you.
 I feel like no one in the carnage screams,
 Every step is foreseen.
 I feel like your desire has become your god,
 Too much weight on your conscience and now your unconscious is scarred.
 A battle between nonsense, gospels,
 Preachers, apostles
 Saviors, false prophets.
 Feels like the blank page awaits, the ink of creative metamorphosis.
 I feel like I feel too much, a surplus of corpses.



UNEARTHED ECHOES

In the shadowed folds of history's gown,
 Where empires sprawled, then crumbled down,
 Lies the heartbeat of defiance, bold and true,
 The pulse of liberation, rising anew.

Decolonization whispered on the breeze,
 A map redrawn, reclaiming what's been seized,
 Borders etched by foreign hands, now blurred,
 As ancestral lands lie awake and unearthed.

Resistance blooms like wildflowers wild,
 Roots burrowing deep, tenacious, and proud,
 Defying concrete weight, oppression's might,
 Petals unfurling toward the sun's warm light.

Identity, a mosaic of fractured skies,
 Each shard reflecting battles in our eyes,
 The jagged edges of memory's refrain,
 The kaleidoscope of heritage's domain.

We refuse to be mere echoes of conquest,
 To mold ourselves to Western scripts, compressed,
 For the self is not a standardized decree,
 But a constellation of constellations, free.

They may steal our lands, our homes, our bullets.
 But may they never bend our spirit.

So, Listen: The wind carries ancestral songs,
 Their stories etched in sinews, woven strong,
 Bloodlines in our marrow, guiding our way,
 Toward sovereignty, where roots and stars sway.

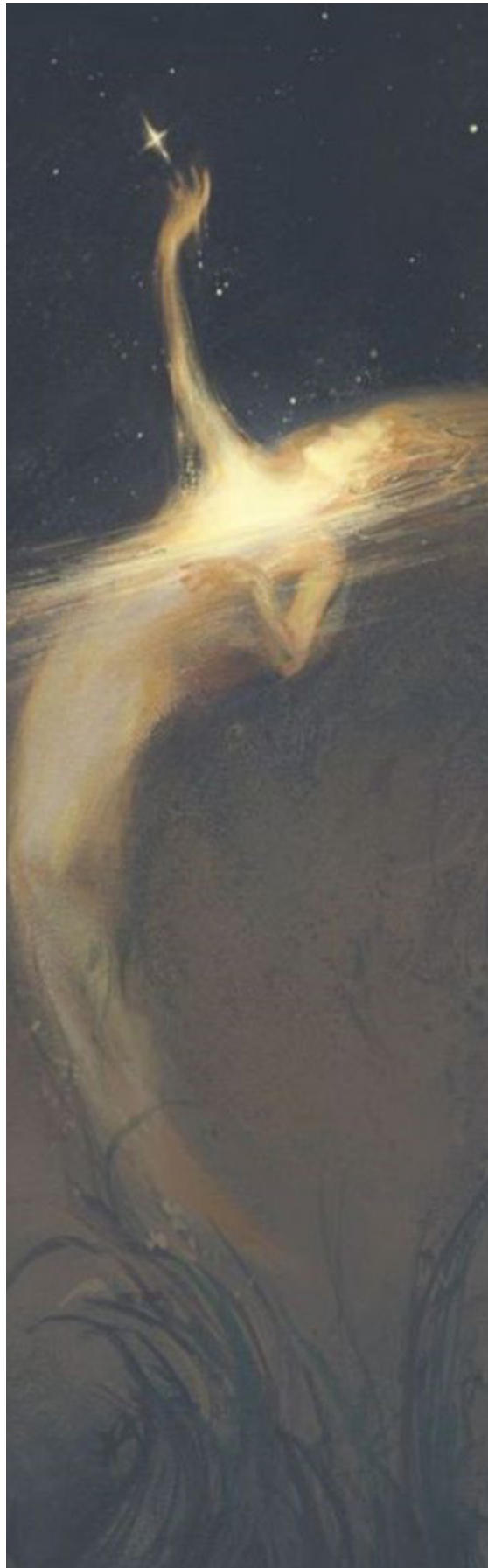
So, we rise, unyielding, hearts ablaze,
 Not succumbing to the Western maze,
 But writing our narrative, ink unchained,
 In defiance, our reclaimed selves sustained.

Decolonize the mind, unshackle the spirit,
 Within us lies the map of reclamation's merit,
 The compass of defiance, unwavering and true,
 Leading us home—to ourselves, to what is due.

May your words echo through time a chorus of
 resilience and hope.



ART'S MUSE



Why were you forbidden to touch if your skin
was made of porcelain, of the softest silk?
Why did you look as if every part of you was
meticulously sculpted,
only making my heart ache more for you?
Why did you always look surreal and
otherworldly to me,
despite the barriers between us?
Why does daily life bore me yet one look at you
and the world shines brighter?
Your porcelain skin, your sea of eyes, your
painting of a body: my priceless art.

You were hidden in every book, in every statue,
in every painting I saw.
Your presence and absence have been as
comforting as they have been haunting.
Where are you? When I see you in everything
yet you're nowhere to be seen.
Don't you see that I'm blind to the world, but I
see life in/through your absence.
Your deep roots around my heart have made me
weep of blood for you to nourish on.
You have destroyed me, body and soul.
You have left me lifeless, leaving my bones to
shiver from the cold.

You have made me feel young as you have made
me feel old.
You have colored my life as you have shown me
the feeling of gray.
You burnt my skin and robbed me of my identity,
giving me a new
one each time I caught a glimpse of you.
You broke my heart, yet remolded it into
something new
everytime it was in your ghostly hands.
Your tears bore into my skin, leaving behind
specks of stars
that drew constellations and confessions of
passion.
You have been my biggest heartbreak, and you
have scarred me for life.
I realized that I was your canvas, your muse,
yours to build and sculpt. And you, mine.

I could almost feel your blood run
warm under that cold skin of yours.
Why the regretful act of covering your
face, when it is poetry of its own.
Let us live in a universe where our love
is a touch away, where time can be frozen.
A universe where touch and gaze shape us,
giving us all the essentials to stay alive.
For us, to be named in history; for our
story to live in every universe to come.
For us, to light the night sky for eternity.
And when time comes for us to part, I will
go through all the pain just to see you again.

Once again, the blank page awaits
the ink of creative metamorphosis
So let me fill it with the whispered
secrets of my being.
And you, look at me as if
sculpting me in your mind
Then use my tears, my heart, and mold me
into your own creation; make me your muse
Now you see, I've become your muse and
you have created me in your image.
I can now see myself in everything and in
everything I see, I see you.



EPHEMERAL ECHOES

Deep slumber had taken me away, lying within the safe comforts of my surroundings I want to stay.

Salty spray stings my cheeks as wind whips the rain against my windowpane.

The ocean roars, a symphony of crashing waves mimicking the dissonance in my head.

Pen poised, a stark white page mocks me from the desk – a canvas longing for the storm brewing in my soul, I rush to take hold.

Tangled thoughts reach my tongue, like seaweed in a riptide's grip, fighting the undertow of frustration's surge. They churn and choke, yearning for release.

Hesitantly, I follow the thunder's booming path, a whispering labyrinth leading me deeper into the house.

Air hangs heavy, charged with anticipation, before it bursts.

Bathed in the storm's silver glow, I fling open the balcony window.

Soul laying bare, the storm mirrors the tempest within.

A wave of raw sensation washes over me – the sting of salt, the wind's mournful howl, the crashing symphony of the waves.

Sinking comfortably onto the balcony's edge, I become a vessel for the chaos.

The wind whips around me, a fleeting caress before vanishing, and returning just as quickly. A shuddering gasp escapes my lips, a lifeline thrown to a drowning sailor.

There, with the storm thundering outside, mirroring the storm within, I find solace. This blank page is my waiting ocean, vast and untamed.

Here, my strangled words may finally morph into a current of creativity, pulling me towards a shore of self-discovery.

Ink bleeds onto the page, and I whisper to the unknown with a sense of premonitory victory "The blank page awaits the ink of my creative metamorphosis..."

It has begun.



MIRA GHRAIZI

GROWING OLDER

Let's face it,
No one prepared us for the empty void that consumes us as each candle blows.
Now, exclude the cheesy millennial internet jokes:
"I hate adulting, growing older sucks"
and "Oh, you want to hang out? Let me check my schedule"
"Let's wait for next week. who knows..."
My childhood best friends went from knocking on my door
to calling twice in a row.
My childhood bedroom feels darker almost, yet it is still bright pink with bows.

Now, I pick up the phone for my own doctor's appointment,
And I can't recall the last time my voice froze.
I went from seeing my parents every day, all week
to coming home on Fridays at four.
I went from enjoying warm dishes with my mother
to waiting in the cold for Toters.
I went from my bed's blissful sleep to a tired doze.
I went from asking my father to drive me almost everywhere
to ensuring he isn't too tired to pick me up from the dorms.
Also, when did his hair transform into crystalized white storms?

Don't get me wrong, independence and freedom are as
precious as crimson stones,
But I can't deny how daunting it is to grow older, it is neither enlightening nor
exciting.
It's just sad and demanding.

Legally, I am 19 but I can't seem to count anything past 16.
I look at older adults and wonder if they ever feel the same.
Is this why people dye their white hair and fill their faces
with Botox and shame?

Is this the reason why they can't accept wrinkles
And post only their wedding pictures?
I used to fear shadows late at night but now a quote such as
"Time Will Never Stop" can dim my light into an onyx flame.
It's a pernicious double-edged sword with no one to blame.
It does make me live day by day: the spiral of time makes me
hug my parents tighter,

And write as many journals before I forget my roommate's name.
It is filled with joyful future thoughts of becoming wiser with permanent grace.
But with the dismayed pain of many letting go's and
a lethal biology that cannot be tamed.
So for now, I will open a blank page that awaits the ink
of my creative metamorphosis
which time shall not erase.



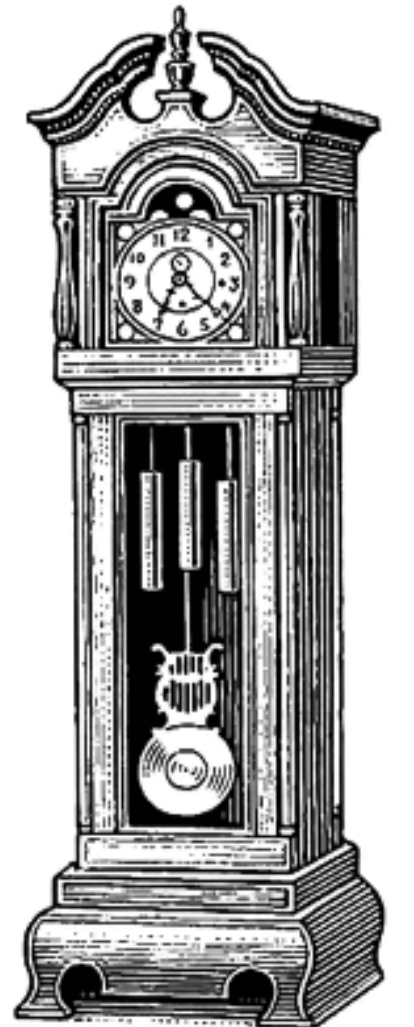
أزمة شخصية: و اقتباساً من سيرة الشاعر الفلسطيني محمود درويش

الى من دخلت القلب دون استئذان
 ورسمت عشقا ينبض حياة و الوان
 كفافي عبثا بنا فنحن ضعفاء لا قوة لنا و مال
 نملك احساسا لم تراعيه بل رميته في خاة نسيان
 أي مخلوق انت تركعين الروح بداخل الاجسام
 وتجهرين بفعلتك ولا يطبق عليك الاحكام
 فيا دنيا عن اي عدل تتحدثين ومجرمات العشق في كل مكان
 انها أصبحت مسألة شخصية فلا تحتاج الى خير في علم البيان
 فالناس في ما تعشق مذاهب
 والبعض الآخر في حالة حرمان
 يرى الحلم وهو على ناصيته
 لكنه يا درويش لا يقاتل خوفا من الخذلان



THE CLOCK TICKS

It is true that time passes like a breeze,
 Those who master it will know how to make it freeze.
 An appointment, a time for a man to meet
 Four chairs were set, the man chose a seat.
 In front of the man, stood a grandfather clock,
 That would take him back to a time at the dock.
 A moment which he would remember till the end
 It would make him so tough that time
 he would learn to bend.
 A fire would take the life of many
 In a land he knew injustice was plenty
 For a place like this even such an event
 would be an unexpected turn
 Despite the injustice, the people's heart
 continued to burn
 The clock ticks and at another time he would recall
 The beginning of what would be seen as a downfall,
 Not for the man, but for everything around him
 A time where the question was what was not grim.
 The clock ticks and another moment to reminisce
 Over and over endless memories filled an abyss
 With every swing of the clock,
 a new memory appeared
 A long time it would take for this trance to break,
 A click of the door was all it would take.
 The man froze time as though he were a master
 Sometimes time is frozen through a disaster.
 The man could not control stopping the time
 Which could be triggered by a sound or a chime
 The door would open, coming out was a familiar face
 It was at this moment the man would end his chase
 For time would not only be frozen alone
 Realizing this, the man's mind was blown
 His heart ticked as he got what he wished for
 The familiar face of a girl that made his head soar
 Two smiles met and the time was right
 Even through all suffering things seemed so bright
 Looking around, the man saw everything stand still
 It was his heart ticking that resulted from his will
 The man had learned that not only
 sadness could freeze time
 The sound of the tick was a beautiful chime
 The man looked on, forward he would move
 With the girl by his side, he had nothing to lose
 For the final time, the clock would tick
 All his memories behind, he would no longer be sick.



WITH ALL HIS MIGHT

It's odd right now, is it not?
In times of dark, why is it what we got?
We got pain and sorrow and much a lot,
Through seeing others fall hot
To enemy, so small, we cannot spot,
As our society falls down to this little clot,
What must this sickness be but a viscous mutt
Ravaging our lands till all is forgot,
As days turned to night as many were left to rot
On streets and every lot
What hope there is, it seems as not.
As people fear and try to hide,
To where you'll go, to what side
Do you not see what came with the tide?
With it came our very guide
To see and learn, to kill our pride,
For nothing shatters bigotry, as living when others died
Nothing forces us to see, as the death of those who tried,
As tears drip down from eyes that cried
And people came to value what others provide,
From a loaf of bread, to chocolate spread.
People torn with grief as society bled,
People saw no light even within the brightest shed,
People not hearing family, before they went dead,
All for we had lost belief, and became misled
We didn't take notice to what was being said,
As words we spoke, came out malice instead,
With words and lies we strewed dread
We deceived ourselves from work to bed,
As if we thought we could have fled
From deeds we brought upon each and every head.

No, we must repent, we must go back
Back to the right track
As we failed to see what seems so black
For people thought of pain as wrack,
They saw that it's not them who lack
It surely must be others who slack,
"It can't be me, as I have a knack"
We aren't special, and we should tack
Tack on the path that we mustn't attack.
"Go, be free", as to freedom, responsibility
For freedom is a part of our humanity,
With it we learn humility.

Through tranquility,
Through diversity,
Through unity,
Yet freedom can bring hostility
It can drive us to instability,
And take away our civility,
When we lose sight of His divinity.
He who gave us the ability to feel
Allowing us to help and heal
As we were born incomplete, not ideal
Yet, with Him and one another we can be steel
Strong and tough we seem, still much we conceal,
Or so we think, as we cannot hide our deal
We are weak, yet only to Him we kneel,
To Him we pray, to Him we appeal.

Approach, ye who seeks to be forgiven,
Truth was long ago given
With the first man to come from heaven,
To the man, instead of killed, was risen
Till the man who with truth kept on striven
As his people hurt him until out of his home he was driven.
A man so great not for the battles he fought
Rather for the lessons he taught
He worked to spread the truth that he was brought,
For he was given the truth of thought
From He whose mercy precedes His might.
With His words we can sight
As the truth shines out bright
In the hearts of those who fought for what is right,
As they saw a path no matter how narrow, how tight
A path from darkness to light
The journey was of hardships, yet they carried out in spite,
In spite of all the pain and blight
For what awaits is of great delight,
Heaven be for those who carry forward in darkest night,
And pray for help from the One with all the might,
As on that they all unite
With words of truth they rise to a new height.
So why do you not see
The truth He brought upon thee,
At night you disobey the All Mighty
Do you not fall down on your knee,
And pray to He who made the sea?

WHO AM I?

He who created all, from the mountains to the trees
From dead atoms He made you be,
He made you and me
Not to play and disagree
Not to kill without a fee
Not to dance with glee
To where will you run, to where will you flee?
To He who is all Just?
In His mercy we trust,
For our faith to be robust
Trying to do good is a must
If we hope to be forgiven when we are dust.

So why do we feel so hollow
With smiles and happiness so shallow
And when death comes around, we turn yellow
Is it really our desire that we shall follow?
Shall we know what will come by,
Months pass and hours fly
We can't even know when death is nigh,
So please take care and do not cry
Look up and see the sky,
As in it you'll see with your eye
His might and all He made
that you cannot buy,
So pray to He who will never die,
Live the truth, never a lie.
And no, He never left us alone
No matter the weakness we have shown
We fell when we lost our own,
Fighting one another on who takes the throne,
A throne in this world made from blood and bone,
As mothers cry and mourn
Mourn on their children, gone
What has changed? Backwards have we grown?
Once so great in history, we were known
With His might we could defeat
the enemy with sticks and stone.
Shall we not come back to truth and glory,
And with His might fix this story
Shall we not repent before we are sorry?

A prisoner of my own thoughts,
A perfectionist with a cruel twist of fate,
A reflection of rage?
Perhaps, a mask waiting to be burned,
A storm waiting to be calmed,
A soldier wanting to be saved,
A lover dying to be embraced,
A dreamer tormented with perfection,
A scarred human waiting to be healed,
A realist trying to paint a tapestry of life,
A blank story waiting to be written, for the
blank page awaits the ink
of creative metamorphosis.

I am a lost soul, trying to find her way;
a canvas in the realm of
dreamswanting to be painted.

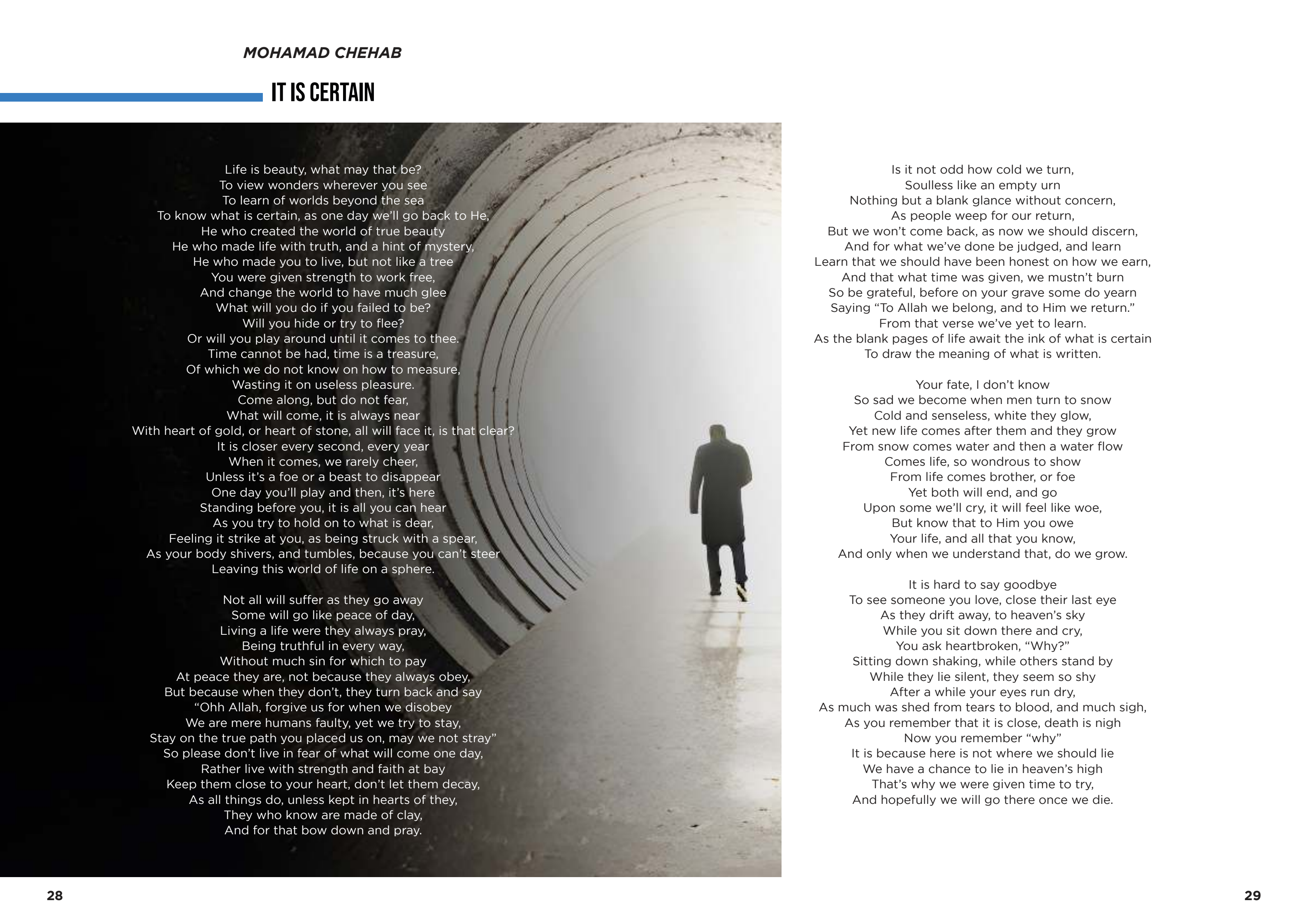
I am a bundle of imperfections that shine under
the moonlight and fears that hide in shadows
only poets can see.

I am on my journey to find the field where my
flowers will bloom.

I am on my journey to heal from my scars.
I am a woman trying to embrace the
melancholy feeling of imperfection.
I am me.



IT IS CERTAIN

A person in a dark coat is walking away from the viewer down a long, dimly lit tunnel. The walls of the tunnel are composed of many concentric, slightly curved layers, creating a strong sense of depth and perspective. The floor is wet and reflects the light from the person and the walls. The overall atmosphere is contemplative and mysterious.

Life is beauty, what may that be?
To view wonders wherever you see
To learn of worlds beyond the sea
To know what is certain, as one day we'll go back to He,
He who created the world of true beauty
He who made life with truth, and a hint of mystery,
He who made you to live, but not like a tree
You were given strength to work free,
And change the world to have much glee
What will you do if you failed to be?
Will you hide or try to flee?
Or will you play around until it comes to thee.
Time cannot be had, time is a treasure,
Of which we do not know on how to measure,
Wasting it on useless pleasure.
Come along, but do not fear,
What will come, it is always near
With heart of gold, or heart of stone, all will face it, is that clear?
It is closer every second, every year
When it comes, we rarely cheer,
Unless it's a foe or a beast to disappear
One day you'll play and then, it's here
Standing before you, it is all you can hear
As you try to hold on to what is dear,
Feeling it strike at you, as being struck with a spear,
As your body shivers, and tumbles, because you can't steer
Leaving this world of life on a sphere.

Not all will suffer as they go away
Some will go like peace of day,
Living a life were they always pray,
Being truthful in every way,
Without much sin for which to pay
At peace they are, not because they always obey,
But because when they don't, they turn back and say
"Ohh Allah, forgive us for when we disobey
We are mere humans faulty, yet we try to stay,
Stay on the true path you placed us on, may we not stray"
So please don't live in fear of what will come one day,
Rather live with strength and faith at bay
Keep them close to your heart, don't let them decay,
As all things do, unless kept in hearts of they,
They who know are made of clay,
And for that bow down and pray.

Is it not odd how cold we turn,
Soulless like an empty urn
Nothing but a blank glance without concern,
As people weep for our return,
But we won't come back, as now we should discern,
And for what we've done be judged, and learn
Learn that we should have been honest on how we earn,
And that what time was given, we mustn't burn
So be grateful, before on your grave some do yearn
Saying "To Allah we belong, and to Him we return."
From that verse we've yet to learn.
As the blank pages of life await the ink of what is certain
To draw the meaning of what is written.

Your fate, I don't know
So sad we become when men turn to snow
Cold and senseless, white they glow,
Yet new life comes after them and they grow
From snow comes water and then a water flow
Comes life, so wondrous to show
From life comes brother, or foe
Yet both will end, and go
Upon some we'll cry, it will feel like woe,
But know that to Him you owe
Your life, and all that you know,
And only when we understand that, do we grow.

It is hard to say goodbye
To see someone you love, close their last eye
As they drift away, to heaven's sky
While you sit down there and cry,
You ask heartbroken, "Why?"
Sitting down shaking, while others stand by
While they lie silent, they seem so shy
After a while your eyes run dry,
As much was shed from tears to blood, and much sigh,
As you remember that it is close, death is nigh
Now you remember "why"
It is because here is not where we should lie
We have a chance to lie in heaven's high
That's why we were given time to try,
And hopefully we will go there once we die.

METAMORPHIC NARRATIVES:

TALES OF CREATIVE EVOLUTION

02

SERLY TOPEYAN

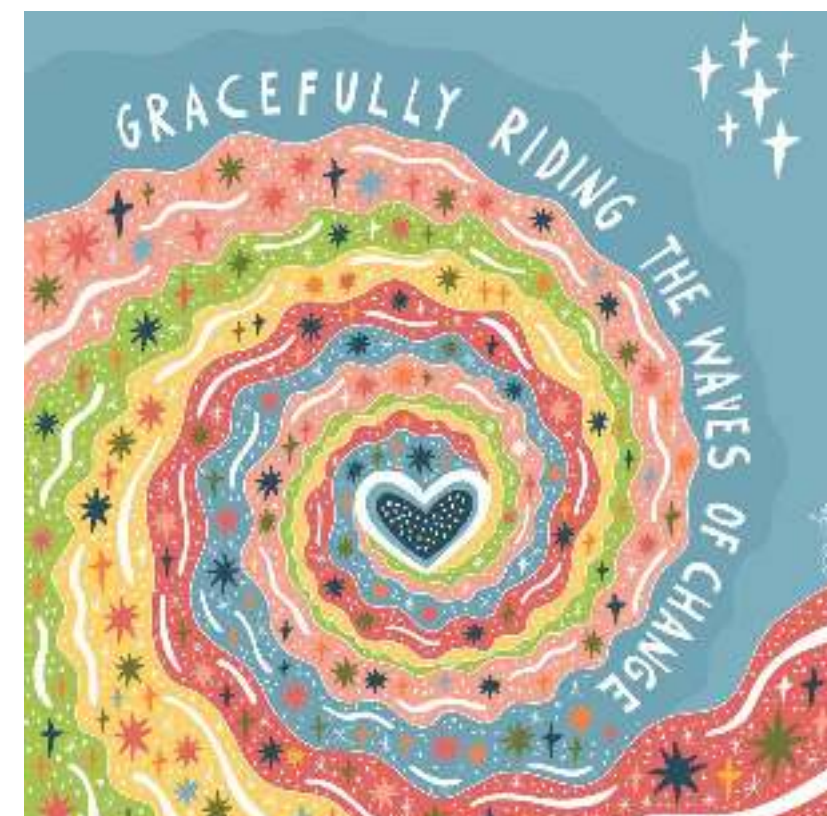
OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

Nothing good in life ever comes easy.

Four years feel like four minutes, and if I had to do it all over again, I would, most delightedly, without any hesitation. Four years ago, specifically when I became a student at Haigazian University, I was a completely different person. I remember how much of a shy and anxious girl I was during my first semester, always doubting my abilities and never taking any risks, all of which were negative traits in my personality. But now, when I compare this past version of myself to my present self, I get mesmerized by the person I have become. College life has changed me in ways I can't describe in words. Throughout these four years, I have faced countless obstacles that got in the way of my focus and studies, made me physically ill, and disrupted my mental health. However, these obstacles have shaped me into the fierce individual I am today.

At first, college life may seem like a blank page awaiting the ink of creative metamorphosis, marking the shift from one phase of life to a brand-new one. This page will never be transformed into the artwork it was meant to be if you don't step up and face your struggles. However, the more life you add to this blank page, the more colorful and the brighter it becomes. Never be afraid to learn new things, to step out of your comfort zone, to take risks, and to strive for excellence. Never doubt your ability to accomplish new things, and always know your worth. There is a quote I like that says, "It's not about the days in your life that matter, but the life in your days that counts." College life and onwards, we are going to face constant struggles and challenges, but we should find solace in the fact that we will overcome them at some point and grow through them.

Four years ago, specifically during my first semester, the biggest challenge for me was trying to survive university life; yet, here I am today, a senior student graduating soon with honors. As a final word, facing adversities in life can break or make a person. In fact, it is a choice; choosing to get broken or choosing to be made. The choice is yours. And always remember, it doesn't get easier; you just learn to be stronger.



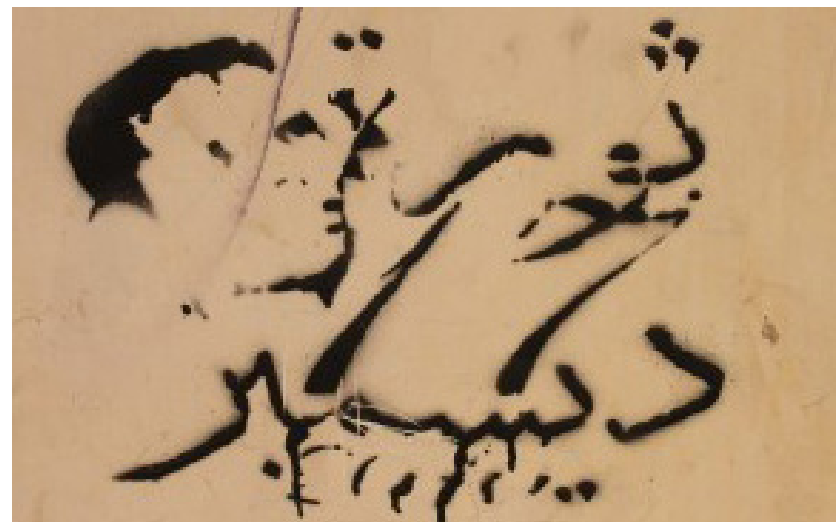
ARAB UPRISINGS: ART AS RESISTANCE

On December 17, 2010, a Tunisian street vendor set himself on fire in the city of Sidi Bouzid.

Mohammad Bouazizi had been facing police brutality due to not having a permit for his street cart. Police officers had been asking him for bribes until they confiscated his cart on the morning of December 17. As an act of desperation, he lit himself ablaze. Bouazizi's self-immolation triggered a chain of anti-government protests in the Southwest Asia and North Africa region (SWANA), an unprecedented event in the history of the region. Citizens in Egypt, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Bahrain, motivated by the Tunisian efforts, took to the streets against their governments. In Tunisia, authoritarian President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali fled to Saudi Arabia, becoming the first president to be ousted amid the series of revolutions known as the 'Arab Spring'.

However, the aftermath of these movements was not so spring-like; countries like Syria and Yemen fell into bloody civil wars that are yet to be terminated. Western intervention in Libya rendered the country unstable and deteriorated its security. In Bahrain, protesters were severely reprimanded, and the civil unrest was quelled violently by the monarchy. The results of the movement did not meet the expectations of the Western media, who were ready to welcome overly-ambitious and unrealistic reforms in such a short period of time. On the other hand, the local media was responsible for creating a divide among the population and wrongly portraying the movement. As a result, art became a commonly used tool during these revolutions.

Art has consistently served as a crucial medium for self-expression. Even the simplest piece encapsulates a specific feeling within a certain time. In the context of revolutions, the role of art has been uncontested and unparalleled; it serves as a resounding voice for the people's demands. Accordingly, Tunisian youth decorated the streets with murals and pictures of Bouazizi, hoping that his sacrifice would never be forgotten. They sought to immortalize him through art. Walls were adorned with graffiti portraying a desire for democracy, like the piece done by Bilal Berreni illustrating the complicated steps to reaching Tunisian democracy. Today, most of these artworks are painted over.



Across the border, within Egypt's embrace, a similar artistic and revolutionary movement was blossoming. Egyptians were initially inspired by Bouazizi's self-immolation, but their tipping point was the brutal murder of Egyptian blogger Khaled Said. Said was a victim of police brutality, underscoring the cruciality of this issue in Egypt under its then-President Hosni Mubarak. Several street artists drew pictures of the blogger on the walls of Cairo, commemorating his martyrdom, alongside the movement 'We are all Khaled Said'. Ganzeer, an Egyptian street artist, expressed in an interview with DW, a German media outlet, that street art became an expression of discontent with the regime. What prompted Ganzeer to make art was the lack of participation in the protests during the first days of the revolution. However, as time went on and the streets swelled with angry citizens, the city's walls became increasingly expressive. One poignant artwork by Ganzeer created during the early days of the revolution depicts a military tank pointing at a young boy on a bicycle; a simple yet powerful depiction of the vulnerability of ordinary citizens under an unjust regime.

What prompts a man to burn himself? Bouazizi's actions sprung from loss and impotence; he was faced with a blank wall and a stagnant path. The blank page awaits the ink of creative metamorphosis. His sacrifice, akin to the ink on a blank page, triggered an unparalleled movement. Revolutions in the SWANA have been usually carried out by high-ranking officials, often taking the form of a military coup. The 2011 Arab uprisings, on the other hand, were civil insurrections initiated by citizens often stigmatized as politically uninvolved and unaware. Street art became their weapon of choice, an authentic portrayal of their discontent and rage. While the outcome of many of these movements were not attractive, its memories harbor hope for future generations.



DREAMLESS DREAMER

*"...I know someday I'm gonna meet her, it's a fever dream
The kind of radiance you only have at seventeen
She'll know the way, and then she'll say she got the map from me
I'll say I'm happy for her, then I'll cry myself to sleep..."*

It's a gloomy afternoon. I take a sip from my latte in café Younes, my table covered in a mess of open notebooks, highlighters strewn across books, a pile of flashcards, and the glow of laptop screens. The café is buzzing with students and busy waiters. My boyfriend sits across from me with a look of determination and restlessness reciting the characteristics of gram-positive *Staphylococcus*. It is finals season, meaning sleepless nights, double the amount of coffee intake, Pomodoro playlists, and many trips to café Younes to study. I am studying for a computer course I am not sure I will ever need in my life. Then it hits me. What will I do with my life? I don't want to become a boring programmer (no offense), nor do I want to be a researcher in the field. Why don't I know what I want? What if I don't figure it out? The existential crisis deafening my ability to focus, I pause "Nothing New" by Taylor Swift which has been playing on repeat for an hour or so, and stare outside, thoughts of worry still lurking in my mind. I take another gulp from my mug as the sweetness of cinnamon and caramel changes to a bitter taste of uncertainty on my tongue. It's a flavor I've grown too familiar with—a bitter reminder of the doubts that haunt me every semester.

This is me. This is who I am. Every semester. A dreamless, lost struggler looking for purpose.

The blank page, that is life, awaits the ink of creative metamorphosis, but I am not sure how to paint it. It pains me to see others moving forward with maps of their dreams, pages worth of inky ambitions, while here I am, aimlessly drifting, hoping my dreamcatcher seizes just one for me to fill on my page and cover the blank. Take my boyfriend for instance, who's sitting in front of me, poised and self-assured, completely in contrast to my trembling uncertainty. Worse still, I don't have much time before I graduate and get thrown into the real world and I am not sure what I want from it, or what it wants from me. If I go too deep in my thoughts, I always reach the same paradoxical dead-end. I want to be a musician, a dancer, a writer, a historian, a scientist, a wife, a mother, and an independent woman. I want to be everything and nothing at the same time. Melodies dance in my head, stories yearn to be written, and the thrill of discovery in every field ignites my curiosity. Is there a way to be a scientist by day and a writer by night? Can a love of knowledge coexist with the freedom of a simple, nomadic lifestyle? Maybe I am not dreamless after all, but quite contrarily bombarded with so many I cannot choose from. My soul and spirit also anticipate the ink of different versions of myself.

In the mess that is my mind, a single thought starts to shine. The path ahead doesn't have to be linear, nor must it be carefully designed beforehand by my own hands. It's at this moment that the soothing voice of God resonates with me, assuring me of his promise:

"For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you a hope and a future." (Jeremiah 29.11)

The gray afternoon light flickers through the café window. The black screen of my laptop reflects my face. Sounds of coffee cups and light conversations returning to my ears, I find myself going back to the words that moments ago echoed with despair in my mind.

"I know someday I'm gonna meet her," I whisper to myself, but this time with a newfound perspective.

"Everything okay?" My boyfriend asks across from me, having taken a break from studying.

"Ever considered a side job as a life coach for lost dreamers?" I say playfully.

The bitter taste of uncertainty has melted away from my mouth, replaced by a tinge of sweet hope that leaps within me. I no longer yearn to meet a girl radiating the brilliance of a feverish dream. Instead, I am becoming her. The map I've always dreamt of receiving is no longer far out of reach, but a blank canvas I undertake to fill every day by the grace of God. The colors of my dreams may be complex, with countless shades vying to shine brighter, but the brush is in my hands. Resolutely, I will cover every uncharted territory, one dream at a time, changing from one version of myself to another. This is me. A dreamer, welcoming and embracing the beautiful chaos, a blank page craving for the vibrant strokes of my own story, with endings of infinite possibilities.



AM I TOO WEAK TO BE HUMAN

CHAPTER 2: BIRTH OF THE DEAD

Auditorium C is my least favorite room in the entirety of the West Hall building. It's damp, windowless, and the atmosphere always feels almost dead. And on February 7th, I wanted to be too.

Since I moved into a new dormitory less than a month ago, I did not have enough time to process what was happening in my life and what was becoming of me. Everything had become heavier, with my past catching up to the person I was; memories haunted me breaking me every chance they got, mocking me for the life I was living. Quietly sitting down on a chair, the noise and music around me blurred and everyone's faces became distorted as I traveled back in a time when none of them existed; the time when I lost the girl who lived within me, with a mind wiser than her age, eyes full of curiosity, and a heart overflowing with passion. The year is 2017. She's in the school bathroom. Someone is trying to climb over her door to peek a glance, while others behind her laugh. She holds her skirt close to her body as she keeps quiet, not letting them know she is there. This little hidden "monster" understood that the world was not her playground, that people were not safe and trustworthy, and that she didn't want to be here anymore. But who could she tell? Would she handle the shame of it all, the follow-up questions of that situation? "Why are they doing that to you? What did you do to them?"

How could she let her parents know she didn't want to live anymore?

She couldn't. That's why she didn't as she let them drive a knife in her, and she silently helped them.

While her mind is still wiser than her age, that little girl lost her sense of curiosity about the vast world, and the passion within her was slowly fading away; It was these beautiful features of hers that cost her a happy future. "What's the point?" she thought. I heard her voice like an echo, coming my way from the depths. She sent shivers down my back and every hair on my body stood up to its end. She's alive? After all this time of trying to summon her through excruciating memories... I could feel her anger burning through my veins like a flaming fire. Before I got a chance to react to her presence or get a word in, she started consuming me. "Why is our past still holding so much power over you, Tvin? Why are you thinking of me so often?" Tears started pooling at the corners of my eyes. She knew she was hurting me, with the things that we both were bearing the consequences of. I needed to comfort her, but I wasn't in the right mind anymore either. I imagined myself hugging her, finally holding a grasp of her, trying to be her last hope to continue living on because she sees no one else but me.

"Why are you thinking of me?" she persisted.

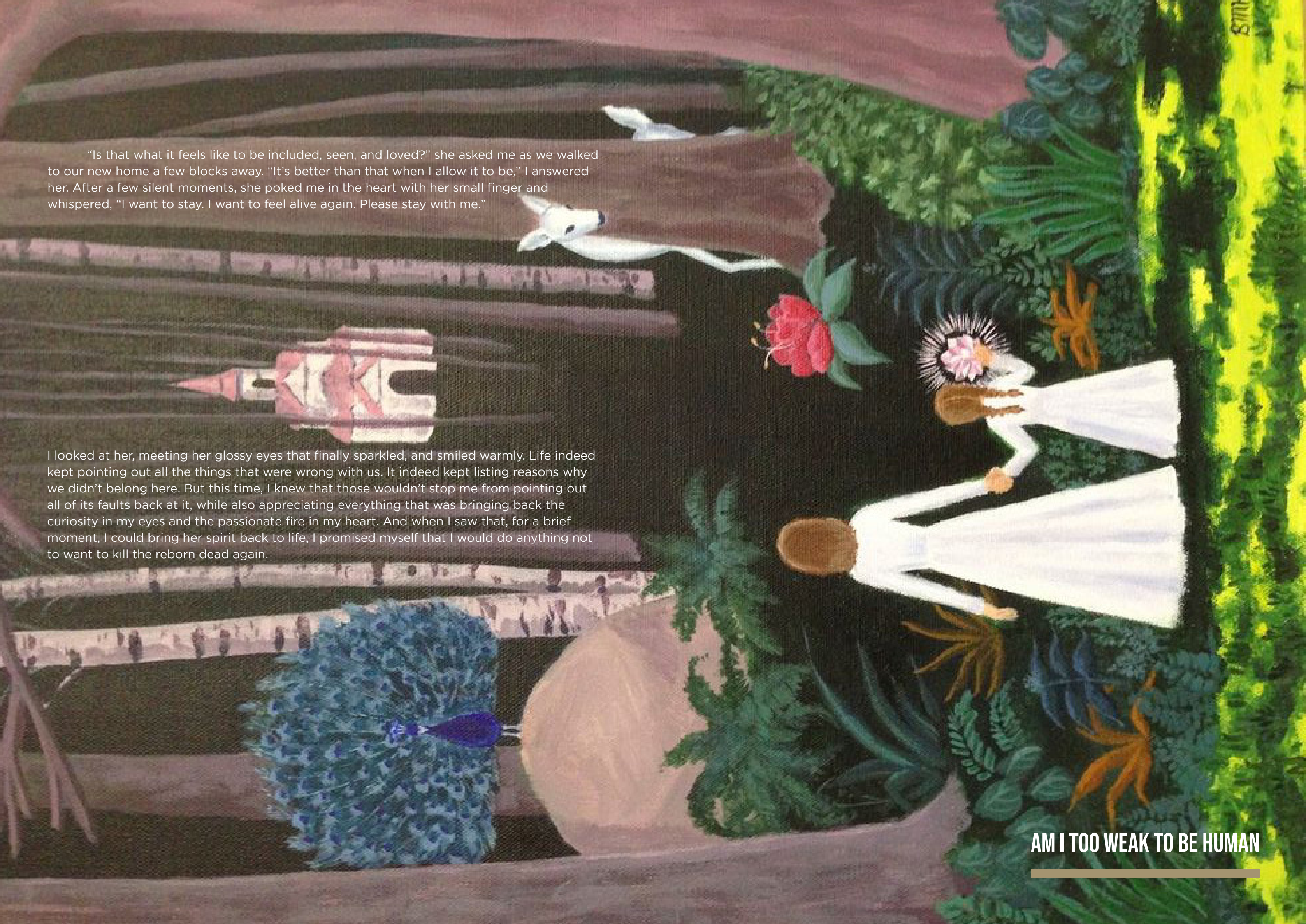
I shook my head at her. I could never let her know that my childlike view of the world was dying, that this world was not accepting me as it didn't her; It didn't want me, just like it didn't want her. As soon as my world started revolving around people rather than around big ideas and dreams, life made me feel weak, insignificant, insecure, unloved, lonely, inferior, left out, abandoned, broken, and corrupted.

I had summoned her, so I could go with her this time. I just needed to persuade her.

"Why is this the way we are?" I asked her. "Why should I like this life? Why is belonging here so hard, when all we've wanted is someone staying with us forever, accepting us whole, choosing us through everything, and yet, when presented with all the choices they have, they will question our role in their experience like 'Why are they here in the first place?' and leave us like leftovers? Why are they leaving? What can I do to make them stay? Do I need to tell them to? Do I need to buy them too many presents? Do I need to give them tight hugs so they know how much I need them? Do I eat food that I hate for them? Do I do the things I most hate for them? Or do I simply let them go because I cannot force them to stay, even if it kills me?"

The little girl inside me started screeching and crying so loudly that my ears began to bleed. Was no one else hearing her? I needed to get out of there. Rushing to the bathroom, I locked the door behind me and immediately fell on the unsanitary floor. Why did I do that to her? I knew that this world did ... but why exactly? That's when I realized that at the end of the day, it wasn't about not being good enough on my end; I would never wait for the blank page of life in my hand to have enough ink for me to write my beautiful metamorphosis, for two reasons: because it wasn't beautiful at all and because this life would never be able to be good enough for me, and her; That quiet "monster" behind bathroom doors deserves better, more than what this life could give her. And that was the reason I didn't want to live anymore. And the truth was, nothing was making me feel more alive than the death I was wishing for myself.

"Where are we?" she finally asked after calming down, as if just realizing we were not in our hometown. I didn't answer her as I washed my face and tried my best to hold myself together as I walked up the stairs to Auditorium C once again, hiding the mess that I had made in myself. I looked into the room, seeing all the faces that didn't exist in the past turned to me. "Who are these people?" she gasped. She looked around, capturing all the new faces she'd never seen before, taking in the new environment, and hearing the prayer-like music playing in the air. The melodies made her want to cry from the high that she was finally feeling after all these years. Later on, people were interacting with her, most lovingly, hugging out every poison within her; the poison that had stolen her life from her. Her skin didn't burn from the love she was receiving.



"Is that what it feels like to be included, seen, and loved?" she asked me as we walked to our new home a few blocks away. "It's better than that when I allow it to be," I answered her. After a few silent moments, she poked me in the heart with her small finger and whispered, "I want to stay. I want to feel alive again. Please stay with me."

I looked at her, meeting her glossy eyes that finally sparkled, and smiled warmly. Life indeed kept pointing out all the things that were wrong with us. It indeed kept listing reasons why we didn't belong here. But this time, I knew that those wouldn't stop me from pointing out all of its faults back at it, while also appreciating everything that was bringing back the curiosity in my eyes and the passionate fire in my heart. And when I saw that, for a brief moment, I could bring her spirit back to life, I promised myself that I would do anything not to want to kill the reborn dead again.

AM I TOO WEAK TO BE HUMAN

EPIPHANY

Within the pages of creativity lies a blank page as an exciting opportunity and a taunting challenge. A page where ideas form, imagination strikes, and stories unfold emerging with serendipitous thoughts and experiences. For some, a blank page means a new beginning, a new opportunity, and a new challenge. But for others, a blank page stands as an unknown mystery that carries all possibilities that are yet to be revealed. The blankness of the page may be paralyzing and frightening, symbolizing not having a purpose, not knowing what to do, and feeling unworthy. At first glance, the voidness of a blank page seems intimidating yet liberating at the same time. A moment of silence, freedom, liberation, and giving in to the unknown. A moment of fear, uncertainty, emptiness, and vulnerability. Yet, it is exactly this emptiness and void that creates the most alluring masterpieces, holding the promise of myriad possibilities. Like a painter facing a canvas, a sculptor facing a marble block, a writer facing a blank page, a gardener before soil, and a composer before a piano.

Hidden within the white void lies the potential for epiphany, the sudden realization that sparks the metamorphosis of the blank page into a masterpiece of creativity. Marked by moments of inspiration, the journey from blankness to brilliance flashes images that light up the path forward. Every revelation comes from different inspirations, a fleeting thought, a chance encounter, or a sudden realization. They are the whispers of creativity urging the creator to breathe life into their work. With each stroke, word, experience, and chance the void is filled with new meaning that shapes it into something extraordinary.

Epiphanies are not easy to grasp, for the void can be intimidating. However, it is in such moments of uncertainty and frustration, that epiphanies occur. Thriving in the space between fear and strength, certainty and doubt, the person finds enlightenment. Wandering in thoughts, free from judgment, thriving in moments of solitude, the person is free to explore new epiphanies to sculpt their life. The journey from a blank page to creativity is unique to every person, shaped by their experiences and perspectives. Each epiphany is a manifestation of the strength and power of imagination and creativity of every individual. To welcome the unknown, to embrace uncertainty, to be swept by the waves of creativity, and to flourish in freedom of thought, is the key to sculpting the blank page into a magnificent piece of art unique to each individual.

To embrace the void, to be a part of it, and to live in its empty space is a strength on its own, but to fill the void, to complete the full picture, and to create one's masterpiece is another type of strength. To accept solitude, to live happy and content, and to accept the patterns that one's ink creates, to love one's creation, and to be one's self without apology and fear is what fills your blank page with the most exhilarating strokes of creativity. The potential within every individual, the difference of perception, aspirations, emotions, and experience is what makes us unique in filling the emptiness of our pages. Epiphany courage to create meaning in the abyss, the beauty of filling the canvas with wide unique unapologetic strokes is what channels meaning into one's life. Waiting to be awakened by the spark of inspiration the blank page awaits to be embraced and adorned with the most magnificent metamorphosis.



AND IT WAS ALL BLANK

It was all blank when it started; the pages of that chapter in the book waiting for you to hold your favorite wet pen, drop some ink, and bedraggle the page, the blue sky on that day waiting for some clouds to be drawn, white clouds or gloomy ones, waiting for a blank heart to sit on the balcony, to look up and mesmerize the beauty within them, letting your blank heart decide what to see. You start visualizing the clouds. That is when you realize that your heart is not a blank after all. You reflect on what is hidden inside of you and you notice the resemblance of a heart in a cloud, a heart-shaped cloud. You question whether that heart is truly its form, or whether you are extremely full of love. Regardless, you remember that the blank page awaits the ink of creative metamorphosis, and you let it be.

The blankness disappears over time; you are a dot on a page, whether you were forced to be there or chose it yourself. You get to decide the way the page turns out, the ink is in your hands, some are dropping and creating a mess, and some are taking shape beautifully. You keep on moving that ink, you keep trying not to lose control over it; some days you feel heavy and fragile, watching the ink drip all over the page, turning it black from blank; some days, you hold the ink still, tight and proud, determined to take charge in making a change. You keep on drawing, erasing, mixing up, reshaping, hesitating of the next move, unsure of the outcome, simply being aware of the fact that in one way or another all these motions are leaving a stain. The page is starting to develop its form, it is becoming what it is supposed to be, you might find the sight displeasing, you might waiver from leaking another drop of that ink, you give what you can and decide to trust the process, to see where it might take you, where it is trying to guide you, some pitstops you have to make before continuing the bumpy road, a bunch of irksome feelings you have to endure before reaching that peaceful state of mind. You feel irritation and confusion, you question again, you question if it is worth it, you question the adversity as you have no clue of what is happening, you keep questioning, while forgetting that the road on this page is yours, forgetting the fact that you are the author of the chapter in this book of yours, forgetting that you lead the ink, that every drop of it is yours, the ones that fell fortuitously were never misplaced, they were meant to be on that road of yours, destined to besmear the page, to remind you of your faith, of your capabilities which are bigger than your fear. Feeling the nudge that is most certainly from above, you take a deep breath and opt to proceed.

On a paper full of blankness, you decided to believe in yourself, you were committed to directing the ink, notwithstanding the idea of the mess the ink might have been bringing. You intended to show up, to hold the wet pen in your hands, to be confident enough to leave pieces of you on a blank page. Those pages of that chapter are no longer blank, those pages are you, with all the instabilities, with all the unpredictable events along your path, you held the ink, permitted yourself to sense the wild and the tame; you are no longer just a dot on a page, you grew around and beyond it, you are now the page itself. As you turn the last page of the chapter of this book of yours, the last page where there is no recognition of the word blank, you fearlessly flip over; and it is all blank again.

PEACE: THE WESTERN SUGARCOAT

I think we have all grown tired of phrases like: “We just want peace in the region”, “Why can’t we coexist peacefully?”, “We urge both parties to come to a peace agreement.” But what exactly is peace? A useless question really, as we have all taken grade-school level English, and thus know how to define it.

But, looking towards the West, its meaning shifts. To it, peace means silent oppression, whereby its people can live in blissful ignorance, not having to witness the atrocities they partake in. Ironically, the West adores media that shows an oppressed group resisting and fighting to achieve peace. They cheer them on, idolize them, romanticize them, you name it. But when they actually witness people they oppress rebelling against them and picking up arms, all their cheering for resistance goes out the window.

Take a look at the United States of America - a perfect example of such hypocrisy. From Texas to California, nothing excites Americans as much as tales of resistance, whether drawn from their own history or fictional narratives. And yet, when marginalized communities start resistance movements, the former quickly villainize them, preaching all about “peace”, sugarcoated as oppression whereby the privileged are shielded from witnessing and bearing the consequences of their actions. This discrepancy is most recently evident in the ongoing genocidal campaign of Israel on Gaza, in which we’ve seen reports of the people of Israel protesting against the government. Superficially, this might seem like the people there genuinely care about the situation in Palestine and seek an end to it. However, a deeper look reveals that they are simply mad at the incompetence of the current government which has placed their atrocities under the international spotlight.

The meaning of peace is quite different for those under oppression, as evidenced by an Armenian saying I am always reminded of, first spoken by Catholicos Mgrditch Khrimian, after his return from the Treaty of Berlin in 1878: “It is only with arms, that we’ll bring about peace and salvation to our people”. This statement holds true to this very day across many ethnicities facing oppression at the hands of those who preach “peace”. For them, true peace can only be achieved through justice and liberation from the shadows of colonial empires.



حرة تبقى.. و لو محتلة

"شو حلمك تصير بس تكبر؟"

"نحن ما منكبرش"

بالفعل أنتم لا تكبرون. أنتم ولدتم رجالاً. ولدتم من رحم أمهات ناضلات و في أفواهكم مالدق قوة وعزيمة. جئتم إلى هذه الحياة وتتمنون رجليها منذ اللحظة الأولى. تتمنون الشهادة وأنتم لم تفتح أعينكم بعد. بأي ذنب ولدتم تجهزون أكفانكم؟ بأي ذنب ولدتم على أرض تملكونها و لا حق لكم بأن تتمتعوا بها؟

رغم كل ذلك لم تستسلموا.. تحاربون لأجل هذه الأرض منذ 75 سنة و ما زلتهم تحاربون. تذهلون الجميع بشراسكم وعزيمتكم في كل مرة وكأنها المحاولة الأولى. خسرتم أرواحاً كثيرة لكنكم تأتون بأجيال وراء أجيال يترتبون على النضال وهم أطفال رضع دموعكم تفتك بنا، لكننا نخشى أن نضعف و أنتم أقوىاء لهذه الدرجة.. ما أروعكم أنتم.. نتعلم من صغاركم قبل كباركم الصبر و الإيمان. فكيف لنا أن نذرف ولو دموعاً واحدة وأنتم صامدون إلى هذا الحد؟

عيونكم تتكلم، تناشدنا و نحن عاجزون.. نحاول أن نعطيكم إشارة أننا نسمعكم ولكن ما الجدوى من السمع دون العمل؟ أقدم اعتذاري. أعتذر نيابة عن جميع من خذلكم، لكن حق الاعتذار أصبح سخيلاً.. أصبحنا نرى كل شيء سخيلاً، إلا نضالكم. كيف لا تستسلمون؟ ألم ينهككم النضال بعد؟ لكن لا، بأي حق أتساءل هذه الأسئلة؟ كيف لكم أن تستسلموا و الضفير بينكم أقوى من جيش كامل؟..

أعتذر مجدداً.. أعتذر لأنني شككت بقوتكم.. لأنني فقدت ولو للحظة واحدة الأمل في وقت أنتم تمسكون بأطرافه..

أعدكم أننا سنخبر أطفالنا عنكم، سنريهم على القضية، سنفرحهم نيابة عن أطفالكم الذين لم يتسن لهم أن يفرحوا.. سنطعمهم الزيتون و سنخبرهم عن أرضنا.. سنبقى نناضل و لو وقف في وجهنا العالم بأجمعه.. من أجل كل دموعه دُرقت من عيونكم.. من أجل كل رجفة طفل.. من أجل كل قطرة دماء، من أجل كل صرخة أب و حرقه قلب أم، سنناضل..

سنناضل على الحدود.. في البيوت.. على الأرض..

سنناضل في الكتب.. في الروايات.. في التربية.. في الفكر..

سنناضل أينما كنّا و كيما استطعنا.. و سنردّ في آذان أطفالنا جملة واحدة و هي :

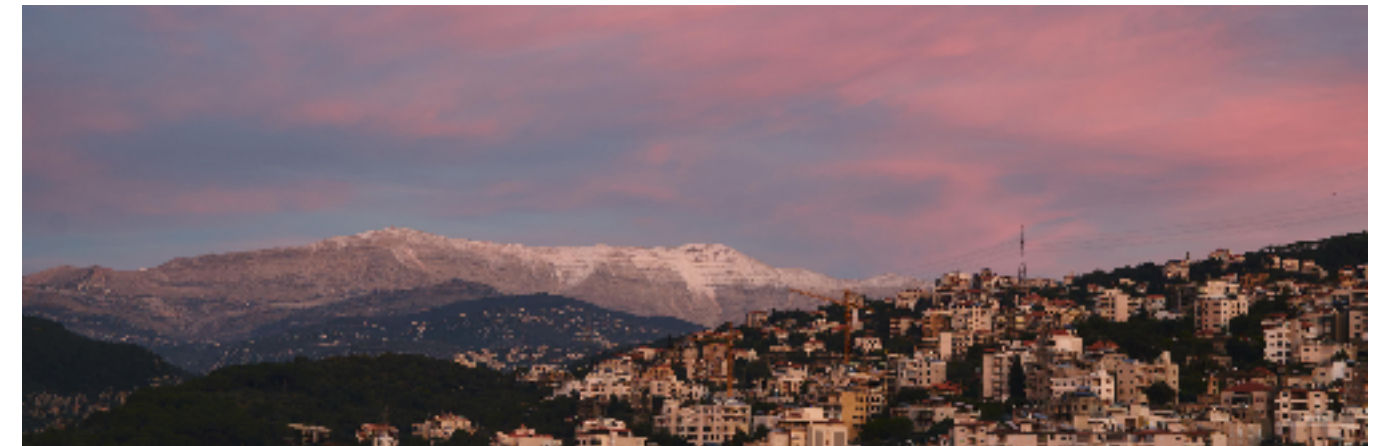
"من النهر إلى البحر، فلسطين صامدة قوية حرة مستقلة"

2,316 BLANK PAGES

"Life to me is about feeling, and I lost my ability to feel. I lost a big part of who I am."

For all the praise and love that books get, my own book was blank and black. Page after page, from page nil to all. They were black so dark, that had I aimed my camera at it, it would bug me to remove the lens cap because it can't see anything. It absorbed the bright colors of joy and the cold hues of despair; it didn't matter how life felt, I was bound to feel mostly nothing, as mostly everything went to feed the void.

It was self-destructive that wherever I went, and whatever I did, I had my book with me; I read through its blank pages like a ritual, unknowingly allowing it to absorb the emotions within and around me that were meant to be felt and enjoyed. All the beauty that came my way, they were lost in the oblivion of darkness. Days, months, and years - shades and tones that defined joy and love - all the laughs, the smiles, and the pain - all of them got lost in the void. Barely left for me was but a pinch, while the black page robbed them all, to fill a bottomless void.



It was unfair from myself, to myself, to see life in all its beauty pass, feeling only its wind, while I gazed down into the blank pages trying to find meaning in something that had no meaning, when the things that mattered came and left without me blinking an eye.

I look back with regret thinking about all the people and places that have shown me the colors of life and its meanings: when I only caught the wind and left the rest unattended. I wish I could revisit the people and places to express my sorrow for not fully realizing the joy and beauty they gave and showed me.

As I look down the blank pages, I long and crave the desire to take the leap of faith within them. To find and retrieve some of those feelings that got lost. They will never be the same as feeling those lost emotions in the time and space when they occurred, but it'll be peaceful knowing that I'll be reconnecting with a part of me that I lost.

As I turn to the next page - and after thousands of blank pages of darkness - I'd have the ink to metamorphose the blank page into something that blooms with creativity and life.

THE MYSTERY OF THE UNKNOWN

‘La Bohème’.

I grew up with this term engraved in my memory, having been raised by true French romantics. Even at a young age, listening to French songs created infinite fantasies. A life I deemed mesmerizing; beside a lover, savoring wine and marching through endless spirals of nostalgia. La Bohème meant being young and enjoying life’s simplicity. As I grew older, I realized that it was a mystery beyond comprehension.

The yearning to understand life’s meaning unleashed an internal struggle that led to my self-destruction. Surrounded by ruins, by shattered pieces, by a cold entity that makes souls shiver, I was locked in a room whose walls were infinite and windows were exposed to faceless beings, and for an excruciatingly long time, I was forced to stay silent.

The mystery of the unknown purpose of life has left writers baffled, sent historians off to endless conquests and caused philosophers to lose their minds... For a brief period of my life, I thought I had everything in the firm grasp of my hand and control of my destiny. My pride led me to assume that I was worthy of having a roadmap to guide me through the infinite labyrinth called life.

This delusion had given sweet meaning to my purpose of being. As beautiful as this thought might seem, we can often get lost in this spiral of delusion. ‘La Bohème’ had created a bubble, an unhealthy misconception leading to years of never-ending sleepless nights. The allure of this idiomatic expression can be enchanting, weaving dreams of a romantic and carefree existence. Unraveling such complexities is a journey that transcends time, leaving one to ponder the true essence of existence.

I had been led to believe that time would stand still after turning twenty, symbolizing eternal youth; some nights in a shivering winter atmosphere forgotten with good company, and others sleepless, ending with phenomenal sunrises and cups of tea. My days would start earlier than everyone else’s, with long walks, where every corner held my memories, where every alley had captured my youth, and where I had been greeted with the same Hellos thinking this might never change. I would disregard the past and everything would become my muse. I would caress time and play with life thinking my days would be countless. I had portrayed myself as the only key character wanting to be the center of every conversation. The suppression of genuine desires and wanting to leave that bubble had made me oblivious to life’s reality.

Destiny had other plans; torments awaited to make me realize that I had succumbed to a lie. Life-altering tragedies created this new vulnerable being. I felt my dignity getting crumbled by my ignorance. Suffering led to profound reflections, everything was stripped away, my essence was stolen, and my life flashed before my eyes. The alleys I once knew became unrecognizable; my memories were lost. Friends turned into strangers. From this point forward, ‘La Bohème’ surrendered its significance.

The blank page awaits the ink of creative metamorphosis. The continuous flow of thoughts coincided with a surge that resulted in countless writings. Those countless pages became my new companions, filled with the desire to understand the purpose and meaning of everything. ‘La Bohème’ does not exist. But acquiring knowledge about issues we may never be worthy of understanding leads to more downfall. With human intellectuality having so little to offer, we would resemble the ignorant who wanted to understand God, being foolish enough to think that having a grasp on such an essence would not be demeaning. The mystery of the unknown purpose of life will be unraveled by only those who have taken their last breath.



ONCE UPON AN EXISTENCE

Once upon a dream, beneath the moon's gentle gaze, there lies a secret garden bathed in silver light. In the heart of this ethereal sanctuary bloomed a solitary rose; its petals kissed by stardust; its fragrance was a melody that whispered of forgotten realms. Within the petals of this celestial blossom, a world unfolded: one where dreams take flight on wings of imagination.

Here, in the extension of the past recurrent dream that paints the present with colors of hope, and amid the fragrant embrace of the rose, a tale is written, woven into the very fabric of the universe. Each step taken in this enchanted garden is a dance with destiny, a journey where the air is alive with the hum of magic, and every rustle of leaves carries a message from the stars.

Adding to the mystical embrace of existence, where the whispers of destiny intertwine with the ethereal melody of the cosmos, there exists a timeless waltz—the dance of life. With each graceful turn, souls find solace, hearts discover harmony, and kindred spirits entwine in a tapestry woven by love's gentle hands.

And back to the genesis of creation, love has been the celestial conductor, guiding stars in their celestial ballet and tenderly sculpting the contours of destiny. It is the first blush of dawn, painting the heavens with hues of passion and promise, igniting the sky with the flames of ardor.

Accompanying the amiable visual scene is the melodic enchantment of the grand opus of existence; every stanza is an ode to affection, every verse is a sonnet to the infinite depths of the human soul. From the gentle flutter of a butterfly's wings to the thunderous roar of the ocean, love manifests in a myriad of forms; a constant reminder of the beauty that surrounds us.

But amidst the enchantment, there exists a longing—a longing to capture the essence of this dream, to immortalize its beauty upon the blank pages of existence. For the rose may wither, and the garden may fade to a memory, but the echo of this dream shall endure, a beacon of hope in the darkest of nights. And amidst the grandeur of life, remember that there is a blank page awaiting the ink of creative metamorphosis, ready to capture the essence of our dreams and weave them into the tapestry of the universe. Outstanding will be the success of merging with the universe, releasing our utmost power and leaving our imprint.

That is our greatest mission!



METAMORPHIC CHRONICLES:

WRITINGS OF INSPIRING JOURNEYS

03

COUNSELOR'S NOTE

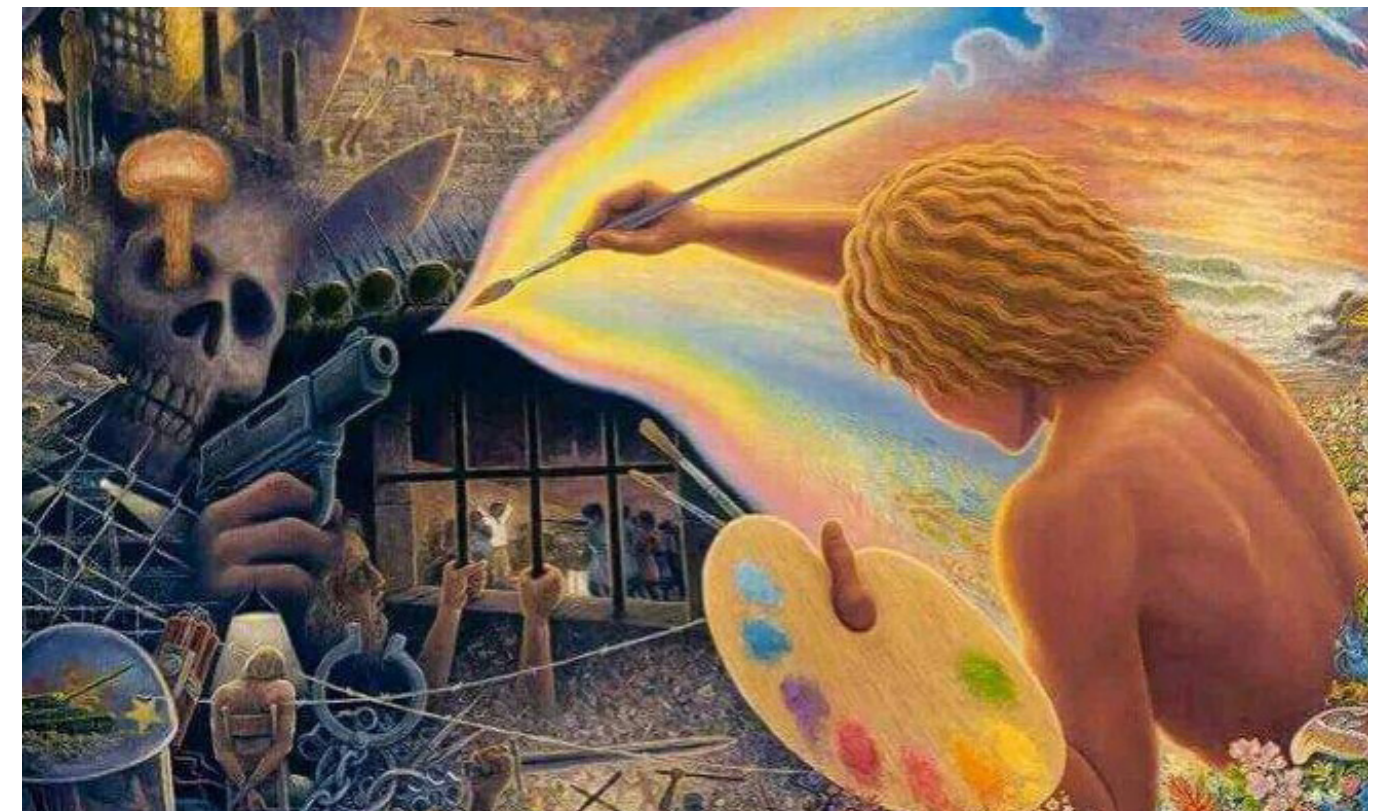
Before a student enters my office, everything is blank.
As blank as possible.
I wait.
A human being enters – empties the heart.
I listen.
I try to stay neutral, no matter what is being told.
I am the outsider, blank.
The room is filled with words. Where words grow into
sentences and sentences connect to form a story.
Tears flow – suddenly a lot makes sense.
Eyes start glistening. The moment of
enlightenment – Recognition. Getting to
know oneself better.
Gaining energy to move forward. Standing up. Facing it.
Life is hard. Life in Lebanon is harder.
Darkness is all around us.
Life stories are written, often with black ink. At least
there is a drop of ink that disturbs the blank page.
Still, there is hope. There is life.
There is light,
And only a sliver of light is needed to crack a thick
atmosphere.
And thus, I invite you.
I invite you to enter this blank space; your safe space
And to fill it with your ink.
To write your story.
Maybe together we can re-write the darkness and make
light out of it.
Are you ready for metamorphosis?



METAMORPHOSIS: A JOURNEY OF FAITH AND HEALING

In the vast tapestry of life, there exist moments of profound transformation, like when the caterpillar sheds its cocoon and emerges as a majestic butterfly. Such metamorphoses are not merely physical; they embody the resilience of the human spirit, the power of faith, and the unshakable will to triumph over hardship. One such journey of metamorphosis is the battle against cancer, an experience that tests the limits of one's strength, courage, and faith. For many, the diagnosis of cancer is like being plunged into the depths of despair, a sudden tumble into the unknown. The initial shock gives way to a rush of emotions - fear, anger, sadness - as one confronts the reality of the condition and its potential consequences. Yet, amidst the darkness, there glows a beacon of hope, a glimmer of faith that illuminates the path ahead for the person and others through the person, and paves the way for a majestic transformation.

The journey to healing is fraught with challenges, through physical, emotional, and spiritual domains. Palpably, the body becomes a battleground, as chemotherapy, surgery, radiation, and treatments take their toll. The side effects are relentless, sapping energy and vitality, testing the limits of endurance. However, perhaps the greatest challenge lies not in the physical realm, but in the realm of the spirit. It is here that faith takes center stage, a steadfast belief in a higher power that transcends the boundaries of human understanding, a resilience that defies logic, a strength that emerges from the depths of the soul. In the face of uncertainty, doubt, and despair, faith becomes an anchor, a source of solace and might. You start radiating it with every action and step forward in life.



Those who have faith are not promised an easy journey in life, nor guaranteed favorable outcomes within the understanding of the human mind. The enemy attacks harsher, those who have faith; however, the victorious rewards are far greater for those who know how to endure and keep that faith, for only they understand the importance of keeping it while in the fire, and most surprisingly with joy and certainty, for as much as they can physically endure. This act helps us see beyond the confines of the present moment, beyond the fear and the unknown. It is a reminder that there is a purpose to our struggles and a meaning to our suffering for both us and our surroundings, through us. It is a transformation and even an upgrade in our lives. God turns tortures of the faithful into blessings in disguise and compensates time lost in pain with future abundance.

And so, the journey of metamorphosis unfolds, each step a testament to the power of faith and the resilience of the human spirit. Yes, there are moments of darkness and moments of doubt, but through it all, there is a glimmer of hope that shines brighter. It is a hope that transcends the limitations of the physical world, a hope that springs eternal from the depths of the soul. Hence, to all those who are embarking on their own journey of metamorphosis, I offer these words of encouragement: embrace the challenges you face in life, all of them... trust in the journey with required and actual faith in God, for He will inspire you to take the right decisions in your journey, line up the right people to help you, uplift you when needed, and change things completely to your favor. Keep the love and the joy you have in your heart. Make sure you do whatever it takes to nourish them. Moreover, protect your heart and use your faith through your prayers to do all of the above. For in darkness, there is light, and in the depths of despair, there is hope. May your journey be filled with blessings, and may you always emerge from the darkness, a radiant butterfly with absolute faith, ready to soar to new heights.

METAMORPHOSIS: A JOURNEY OF FAITH AND HEALING

Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to our dedicated writers, who continue to share their words and creativity, and to our readers, who support our endeavors and place their trust in us. Thank you for being part of our writing journey.

The Herald

THE HERALD



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