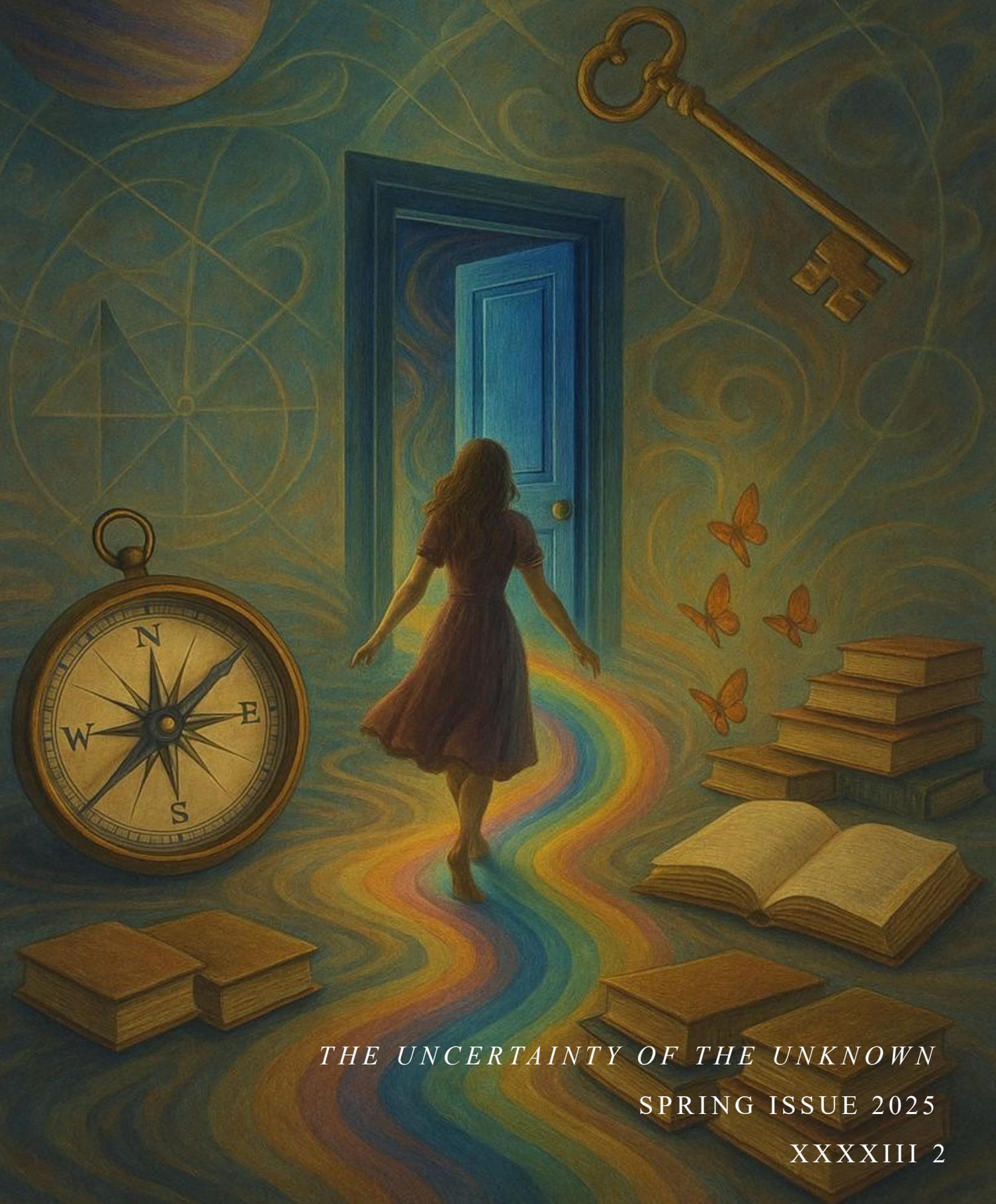


THE HERALD

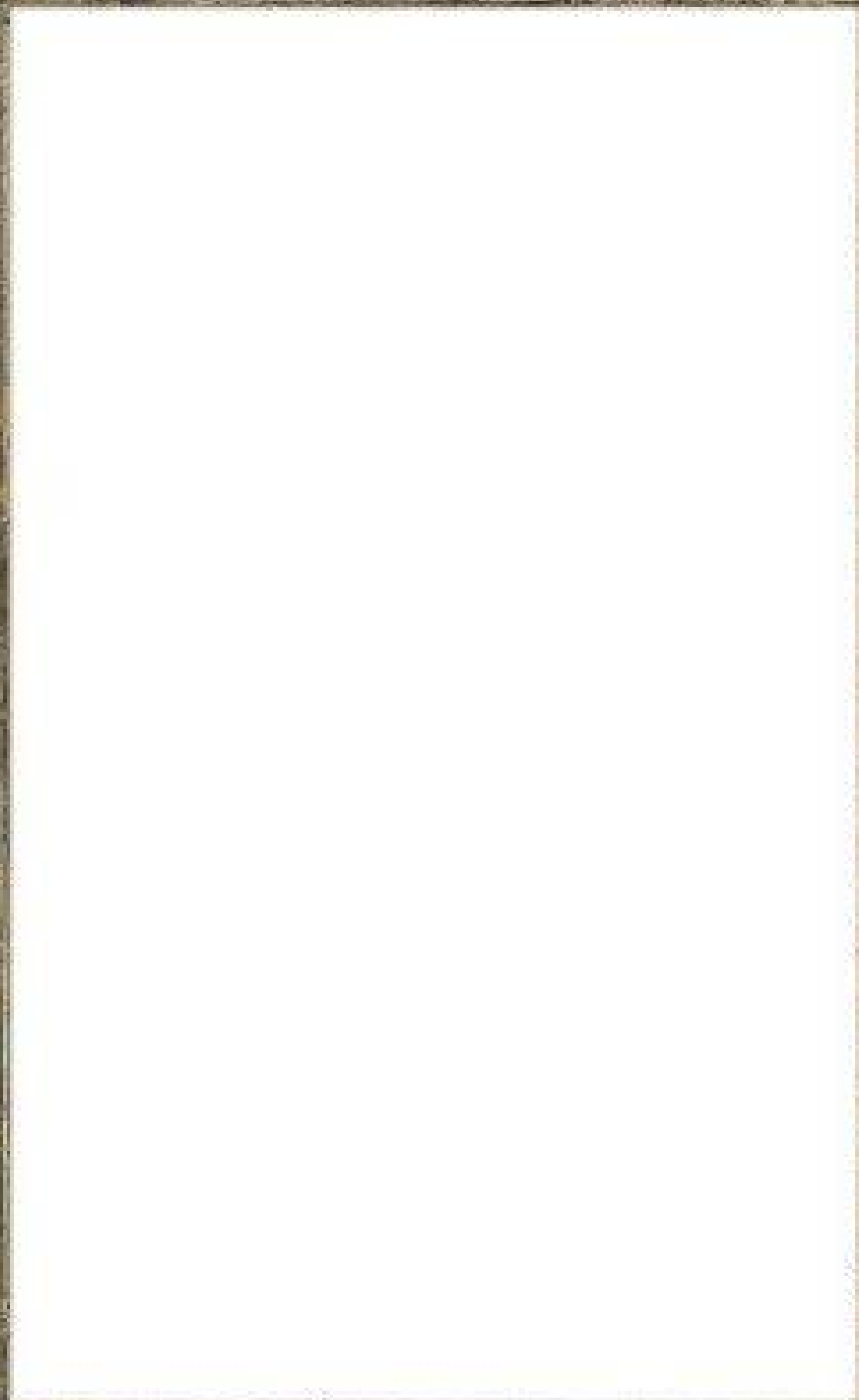


THE UNCERTAINTY OF THE UNKNOWN

SPRING ISSUE 2025

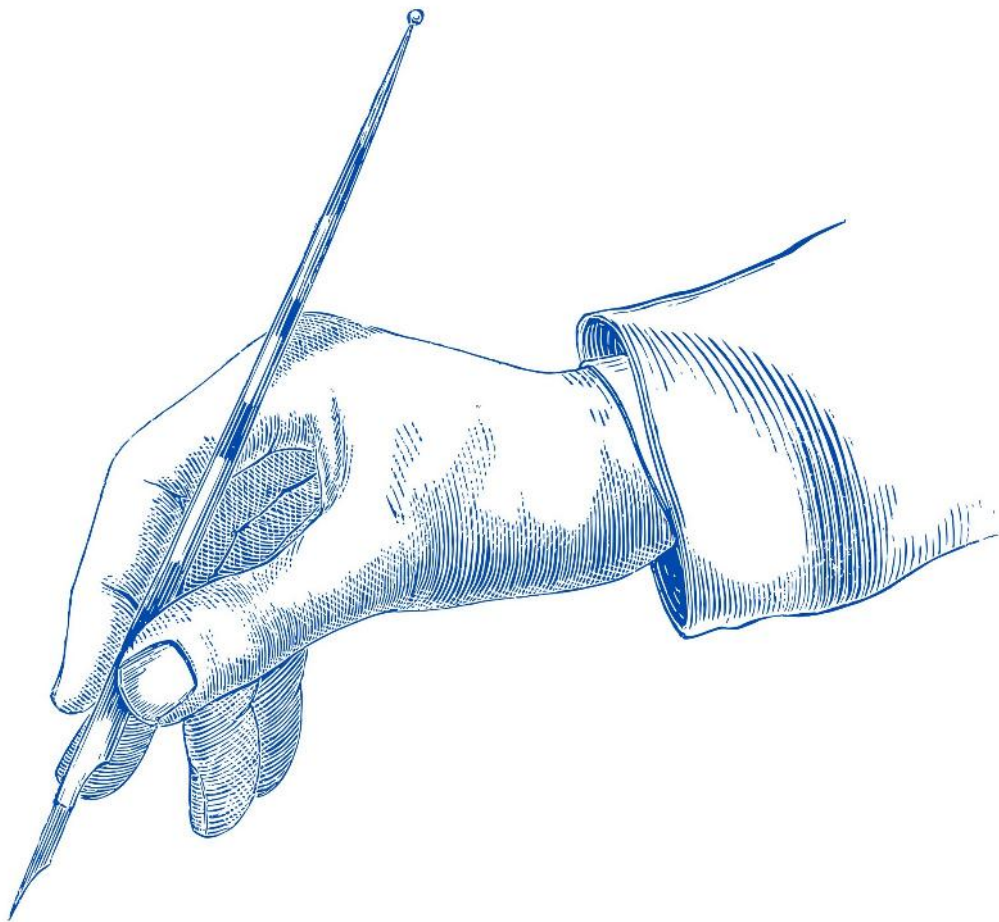
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As I sit staring at my blank notebook, hoping to form words valuable enough for you to read, with the last issue lying across from me, I realize something. I realize the poetic connection between the two; how that magazine once was as empty as my notebook. Yet now, it's filled with stories of lived moments, of pain, of freedom, of creativity, of life. I notice how those very memories were once part of the Unknown. And now, as I face the anticipating page, I too think of The Unknown.

Let us float around a bit. Let the spring wind carry us away, to witness all the unknowns and uncertainties of life we so often fear. It is only natural to fear them; it's human nature to question what isn't understood. But if I put it this way, where, as humans, we have blind and complete faith in many aspects of life, why not believe in the good of the Unknown?

I speak of the Unknown as something beautiful and shapeable only to your expectations of life. I speak of its certainty, as it is mostly seen as the Uncertainty that drowns us. The Uncertainty of life in years, in months, in weeks, in days, in hours, in minutes, in seconds... all that is to come frightens us. As Lebanese people, we have been left with the open battle wounds of the biggest Uncertainty with war, depression, trauma, and darkness engulfing us. As Armenians, far from home, we had to witness how disgustingly Artsakh was ripped from our hands; from our hearts. How much more Uncertainty can follow it? Have people even understood the depth of all their wounds? Have they come out of their shaken coma? Do they know what comes next for them?



The Chair- person's Corner

Questions plague the minds of all, as reminders of all we have survived are barred out naked with every step we take. As young people, we are uncertain of what comes next for us. How many do I know who drown with all the talent they need to show the world, yet cannot due to fear and Uncertainty. How many of us are confused about our future, our careers, our education, as every day brings us new Uncertainties to deal with? No wonder so many are scared to go forward, fearing losing it all. Have you counted how many times I used the word Uncertainty?

Uncertainty floats everywhere, yet its companion is just as graceful with its presence: The Unknown. The Uncertainty of The Unknown. What a duo of frightening abilities. As much as Uncertainty scares us, the Unknown has a much deeper impact. It resembles the end of a tunnel, not knowing what lies beyond the horizon; is it a train or a garden? Is it both? Is it none? See how the Uncertainty of what lies in the Unknown has its claws dug deep within us? Yet I notice how disgraceful we have been to their majesty.

I do agree with you if you tell me how this duo is engraved in you, as if brainwashing you, yet have you thought of the beauty that proceeds it? Have you ever felt butterflies of joy from an act that stemmed from the Unknown? Maybe winning a prize or getting the dream job? Have you given the thought that darkness can never have meaning without light? If light never existed, would we talk of the dark as it is today? The Uncertainty of the Unknown only blooms with flowers when you sit down with it, let its stories water the garden around it, and most importantly, trust in it, believe in it.

What I will leave you with is the Certainty I carry with me. The Certainty of the beautiful, whose hearts bled the Uncertainty of their own Unknowns. My dearest creatives, to whom I owe the light of paving the way of this Uncertain and Unknown journey. To the inspiring academics, whose motivation exceeds the limit of knowledge transfer and lands on creativity, who created the path to the end line, brick by brick. To my bravest and most important soldiers, the essence of our blossoming success in life, my editors. I owe the entirety of the start of my journey to you. Having been the guiding light during the storm, during confusion, the compass of life.

I only realize how much gratitude sprang from the Uncertainty of my Unknown. So, how can you say it's always so terrifying, when all I see is the unity of all into the most breathtaking Aurora Borealis and constellations? I leave you with the wonders beyond the pages of creativity. May the works of art you witness only guide you to the land of the Inspirational Unknown. Let the Uncertainty of what's to come be the Unknown you seek.



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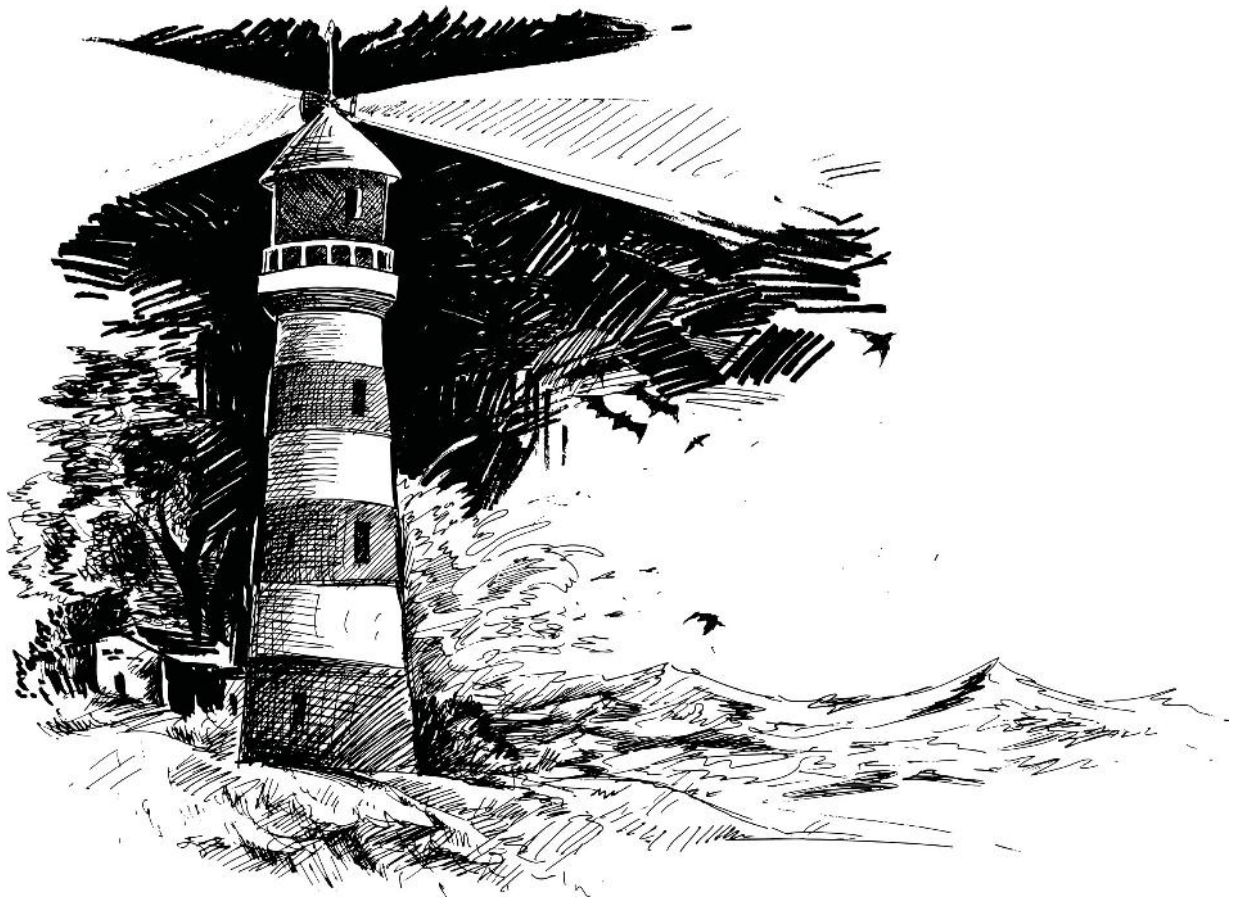
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BETWEEN CERTAINTY & DOUBT:

Literary Explorations



01

MAIRY
MARDIROSSIAN

THE UNCERTAINTY OF HOPE



Unmistakable Akh

Looking back, realizing I missed the chance to visit you feels like I've already been through hell. I was a kid, so it didn't seem that important to see you; I was certain I'd have a million other chances because you wouldn't go away; you would never leave me. You'd stay put thinking I'll come one day, that I'd hold you nearer eventually. But I missed it; I let you slip from my fingers. My Artsakh; certainty settled for too long, rendering me indifferent, blind, and thoughtless.

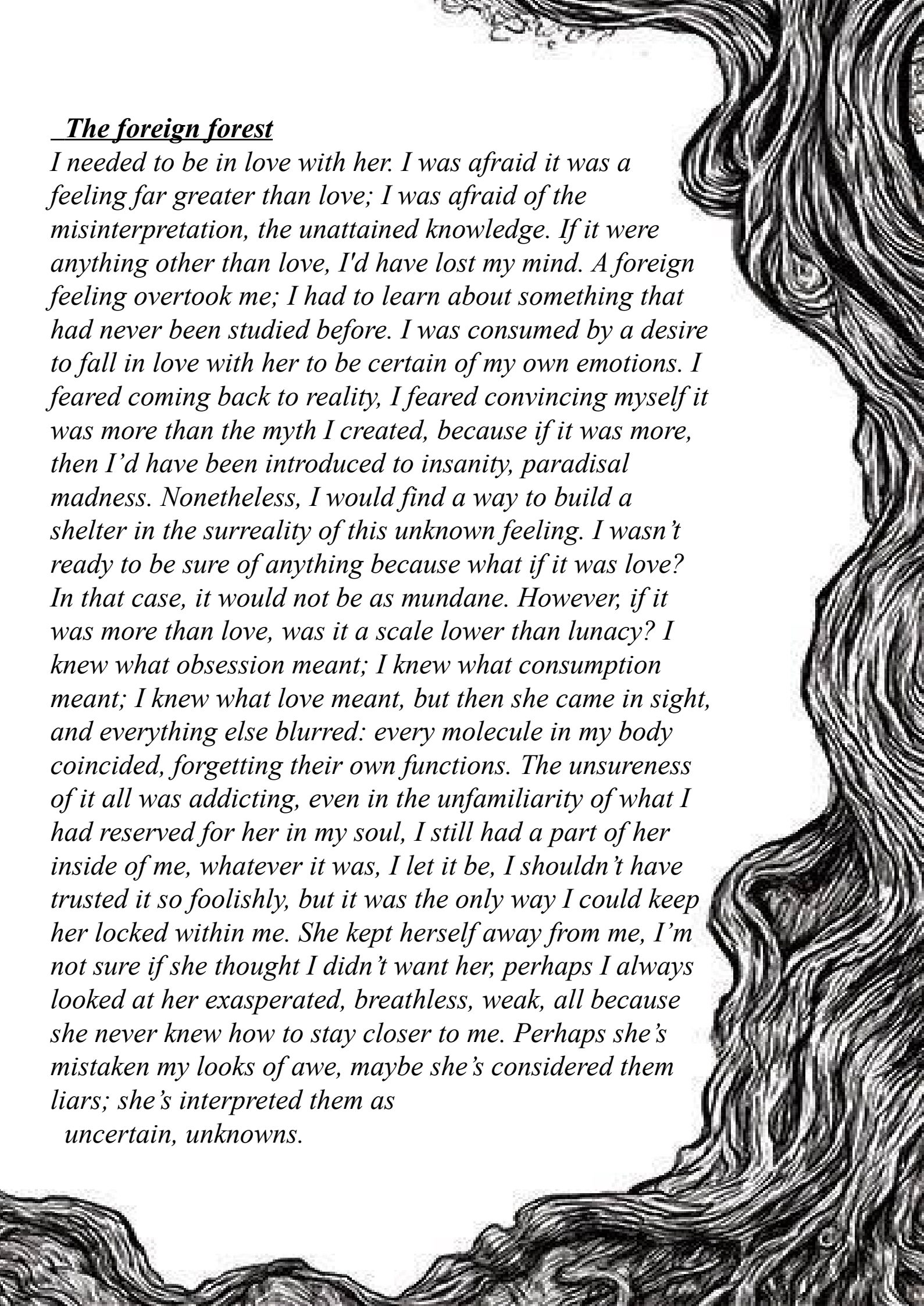
Now, every day I get older, I wonder when the time will come for me to rest in your valleys, nestled in the depths of your mountains. I grieve, unsure when you'll find peace again, spending hours questioning, wondering whether you'll ever come back to me. I mourn, unsure if one day I'll see you and bury your scent inside my lungs. I couldn't grasp whether it was right to count the days until you are mine again—would those days stretch into infinity? Or would the number be menial? I feared if I compared the numbers of both days, with hope, they'd be the same. But this hope of seeing you again I held in my heart suffocated me; I couldn't trust myself with it. It would never be as menial as those counted days. My hope was big, unnumbered, infinite, and unwavering. They broke you to pieces; they expected you'd wither within hours; they never knew your hope was steadfast, as steady as mine.

You had to bear misery in your name: you forever withheld an interjection of pain in your identity, you embodied suffering, having your history written in the splits of your name. My Artsakh, I hold your wounds now. I have your scars carved in the creases of my skin. When I see you again, I will etch every breath I take; I will etch it deep in my lungs and lock it in.

Freya

The foreign forest

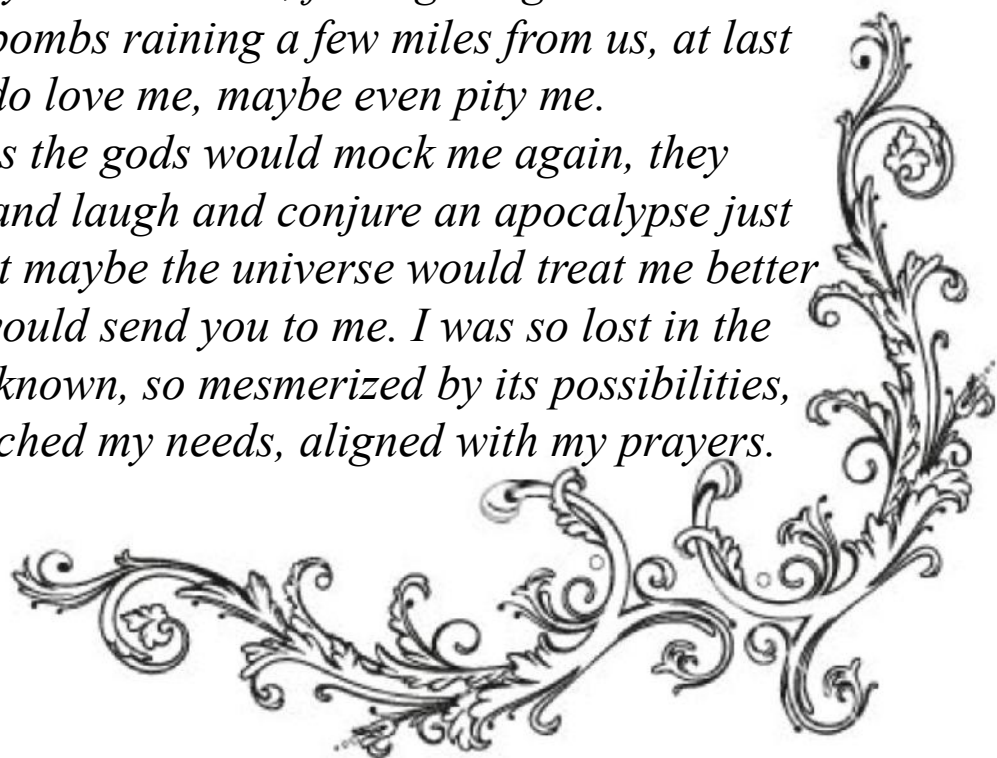
I needed to be in love with her. I was afraid it was a feeling far greater than love; I was afraid of the misinterpretation, the unattained knowledge. If it were anything other than love, I'd have lost my mind. A foreign feeling overtook me; I had to learn about something that had never been studied before. I was consumed by a desire to fall in love with her to be certain of my own emotions. I feared coming back to reality, I feared convincing myself it was more than the myth I created, because if it was more, then I'd have been introduced to insanity, paradisaal madness. Nonetheless, I would find a way to build a shelter in the surreality of this unknown feeling. I wasn't ready to be sure of anything because what if it was love? In that case, it would not be as mundane. However, if it was more than love, was it a scale lower than lunacy? I knew what obsession meant; I knew what consumption meant; I knew what love meant, but then she came in sight, and everything else blurred: every molecule in my body coincided, forgetting their own functions. The unsureness of it all was addicting, even in the unfamiliarity of what I had reserved for her in my soul, I still had a part of her inside of me, whatever it was, I let it be, I shouldn't have trusted it so foolishly, but it was the only way I could keep her locked within me. She kept herself away from me, I'm not sure if she thought I didn't want her, perhaps I always looked at her exasperated, breathless, weak, all because she never knew how to stay closer to me. Perhaps she's mistaken my looks of awe, maybe she's considered them liars; she's interpreted them as uncertain, unknowns.



Maybe even

Maybe after a while, I would lie down and think of the world ending. I would close my eyes and imagine a hurricane marching in because maybe, uncertainly, you'd rush to me, and sit under the table, and pray with your hand in mine. But the 'maybe', 'probably', and 'perhaps' rolled easier on my tongue than your name did. It was idiocy, foolish of me, whatever fancy synonym I could use for the word 'stupid'; we endured the war, as if hell actually froze over, and heaven's gates were ultimately sealed off and you never ran, sped, or took a step toward me; you didn't come over. But then again, maybe it was easier back then, you had me, so losing me wasn't that alarming. Maybe it's too fresh to think about it now, but after a while, I'd probably daydream and move to a reality where you run, speed, and take steps one after the other to reach me when you hear that war has resurfaced. Maybe I wished for an earthquake, maybe even hell on earth, because maybe if demons roamed, for once, maybe you'd think of me. It was such an uncertainty, such a lie, so far-fetched; this surreality was all I had, that you'd come over, without an ounce of uncertainty, knowing I'd be your last love, and I wouldn't be competing anymore, I'd stop wondering if you'd finally chosen me over everyone else, over life itself, because when I have you next to me, feeling the ground shake beneath us from the bombs raining a few miles from us, at last I'll be sure that you do love me, maybe even pity me.

Nevertheless, perhaps the gods would mock me again, they would sit in a circle and laugh and conjure an apocalypse just to be entertained. But maybe the universe would treat me better this time around, it would send you to me. I was so lost in the uncertainty of the unknown, so mesmerized by its possibilities, possibilities that matched my needs, aligned with my prayers.



Sibilation: Symphonies from the Unknown

It begins with silence—a moment suspended in stillness. Outside, the faint hum of the world continues: a ticking clock, the rustle of leaves, and the distant chatter of life. For a fleeting instant, you feel anchored, as if the chaos in your mind has paused and fallen silent.

But then, a single thought weaves its way through the cracks. It slithers beneath the surface and whispers, faint yet sharp, dragging other thoughts along with it like a torrent. The calm shatters. Your chest tightens as the endless possibilities your mind creates rise and swell, crashing over you like waves in a storm.

As you helplessly sink into the depths of the endless possibilities created by your mind,

You become devoured by the aberrations that rip you apart—the marks of their diabolical claws are etched into your soul, leaving it exposed to ghouls that consume you more than any drop of sunshine or hope that remains in your meek existence.

And the angels cry from the heavens, bleaching the skies red with their agony for you, telling your story to all.

Yet, no one listens. No one stops for a second to unwind and pay attention to your voice screaming to be found and rescued from the abyss of thorns into which you were tossed. You watch them pass by, as nonchalantly as possible, while a piece of you dies with every step they take and you ask yourself, “why?”

“Why would they not help me? Why would they step on my broken pieces and cause further pain? Why wouldn’t they instead lend a hand? Can’t they see I’m lost?”

The storm inside you rages, louder now, the wind howling in your chest, your breath shallow, ragged. The ghouls tear at the fabric of your thoughts, clawing deeper into the fragments of your soul, pulling you down into the abyss. The light grows fainter, and you’re drowning in the unknown, in the dark, in your own fear of what comes next. It’s suffocating, unbearable, each heartbeat a drum of panic, each breath a struggle to stay afloat.

As all these questions and feelings rush through your head, another voice rises from the depths. Faint, but steady. “Why not?” it asks.

“Why do you keep dreading what could happen and blight your present with your horrendous perceptions? Why not go out to taste the sunshine? To hug the skies, to smell the breeze, to kiss the stars, to sing the moon a lullaby goodnight?”

Why not? Why not take your own brush to paint your own canvas?”

The chaos within you falters. You’re still lost in a vast ocean, the wind tossing your sails mercilessly, with no tangible paradise awaiting you in the end. All you see is blue. All you feel is the weight of running endlessly through a dark tunnel, your steps unsteady, your direction unknown.





And yet, the voice persists.

“But, why do you think that something bad will happen? Why assume a negative outcome out of the unknown?”

It’s the paradoxical beauty of life,” it whispers. “It frightens you, keeps you up at night, feeds your anxiety, and causes you nightmares; however, it’s also what you wake up for the next day. What you work hard for, plan for, and dream for. It’s the thrill you get to reach closer to the untouchable and attempt to hold it. To know it. To live it. To make it your own.”

For the first time, you pause. You hear the storm within you slow, the ghouls retreating, the light faint but now visible at the tunnel's edge. The voice grows stronger now, its warmth mending the cracks of your broken pieces.

“You are the phoenix that has emerged from the fire, feeling the intense heat of doubt and fear, and yet here you stand, resilient and unyielding. What if I told you that the fire, the storms, and the uncertainty are not just obstacles but the very crucibles forging your greatness? You are not broken. You are not lost. You are becoming.”

The world around you shifts. The storm begins to quiet, its rage fading into a distant hum. The winds slow, and the air clears.

“In the end, I hope you hold your head up high when you get closer to tomorrow. If you are propelled into the sky, unleash your wings and learn to fly. Don’t let the frost distract you from the warmth of tomorrow. Go. Reach it.

"And when you finally rise," the voice says, "you won’t merely stand—you’ll blaze with a brilliance that outshines the sun. You’ll embody the hurricane, tranquility, inferno, and deluge. You’ll embrace the unknown, for it will no longer control you. You are the master of its chaos."

“And if you don’t succeed yet, do not fret. Once you’re ready, you will pick yourself up and try again. Because this time, you’re not starting from the bottom.

But no matter what. Oh, dear me, just be. Be you. Be happy. Be the moment. Be.”

*And with that, you take a breath—deep, steady, filled with the weight of everything you have survived. The light at the end of the tunnel is no longer distant. It’s within reach, and this time, it’s not just a flicker of hope. It’s a beacon, burning bright. Because you are more than fear. You are the fire that makes the darkness worth walking through. You **are**.*

And just like that, you walk towards it...



Ընդդէմ Բռնատիրութեան

Ազատութիւնն ու արդարութիւնը մարդու
ամենապարզ իրաւունքներէն են:
Մարդկային իրաւունք է դիմադրել, երբ այս
իրաւունքները կ'ենթարկուին վտանգի:
Պատմութեան մէջ կան օրինակներ: Օտար
կայսրութիւններ կը գրաւեն ուրիշ ցեղերու
հողերը, կը պարտադրեն ստրկութիւն,
կողոպուտ ու կը կատարեն այլ ահռելի
արարքներ: Կան նոյնքան դէպքեր, որ կը
խօսին պայքարի, յեղափոխութեան,
նահատակութեան եւ հերոսութեան մասին:
Իրաւունքէ աւելի պարտականութիւն է այս
պայքարը, ինչ ալ ըլլան պայմանները:
Մանաւանդ երբ խնդրոյ առարկայ
բռնատիրոջ ըլլայ ինքնին քու երկրիդ
կառավարութիւնը: Պայքարը մաս կը կազմէ
մեր՝ իբրեւ Միջին Արեւելքի ժողովուրդին
կեանքին ու արեան: Ըլլայ օտար, ըլլայ մեր
իսկ կառավարութիւններուն դէմ, շրջանիս
պատմութիւնը լեցուն է յեղափոխական
պայքարներով, որոնք մինչեւ օրս կը
շարունակուին: Իմացէ՛ք, բռնատիրութիւնը
տեղ չունի մեր ապագային մէջ՝ ո՛չ մէկ
առումով:

THE INK OF POSSIBILITIES

The only certainty in life is its uncertainty. The future unfolds not as a map but as blank pages, and yet some people are too afraid to hold the ink in their hand to fill it. We fear what we cannot predict, and that is only the beginning of our story. It is not just hesitation but the foundation upon which other fears are built. The fear of rejection, failure, and change all trace back to the fear of the unknown. Some use that anxiety as fuel, pushing themselves out of their comfort zone in an attempt to shape the unknown into something familiar; while others become paralyzed by it. However, if you are certain of the path ahead, knowing which job you are going to have in ten years, who you will end up with, and where, what do you call that? Safe or trapped? Dear souls, life's beauty is in its uncertainty. The ink in your hand is not a burden but a gift to script your own play of life, because life goes on, and you may contribute a legacy.

nature



lights.

Fear of the Unknown

The unknown is quite intriguing: it can be both terrifying and exhilarating. It is something rather hazy, like the darkness before dawn, or the leap before the landing. We stand at numerous crossroads throughout our lives, each decision unraveling a new range of unseen possibilities. Some paths are lined with roses, others all rugged with thorns, but we remain oblivious to what lies ahead until we take the first step and choose a path. I try to think of the unknown as a canvas that is just waiting to be painted with the hues of our decisions, rather than merely a blank and empty space. However, despite its potential, it also fuels my greatest fear: failure.

Thoughts unravel into the horizon of my room as my mind drifts into the depths of uncertainty. The weight of the future presses down on me, vast and suffocating. I am at the age where choices determine fates, courses must be picked, and directions must be taken, yet my thoughts are scattered like a puzzle with a missing piece, searching for cohesion.

Everyone around me seems to have it all figured out: moving forward with confidence, choosing paths they're happy with, whether it be getting married or securing their dream jobs, even getting into their dream Graduate program, while I remain frozen at the starting line, paralyzed by indecision. The fear of making the wrong choice, of failing, grips me so tightly that even taking a step feels impossible.

I somehow muster the strength to go to my desk, where my laptop screen flickers dully in the silence of nighttime. I notice an open tab—an application, an opportunity, my doorway to the unknown. The thought of stepping into an unfamiliar world without a safety net or familiar faces to rely on makes my heart tighten and clench. The fear of failure dawns on me. What if I'm not good enough? What if I make the wrong choice and regret it forever?



The enigma of the unknown lurks over me; all possibilities flash before my eyes, and unfavorable outcomes emerge, making even the most promising paths seem daunting. Fear squeezes in and whispers its warnings, but another voice, a softer, calmer but passionate one, reminds me that beyond fear lies growth, and beyond uncertainty, endless possibilities.

Still, I hesitate.

I look toward the window. The early morning air carries the melody of birdsong. They soar without hesitation, unburdened by the fear of the unknown skies ahead. How free they are, free from all doubt; I envy them. They do not question their direction, nor do they fear falling. They trust in their wings, in their ability to navigate the vast sky.

If I could let go of my fear, would I finally be able to soar too? Or would I fall like Icarus, burned by the very thing I dared to chase?

All of my doubts, fears, and uncertainties were some time ago. Although that fear of what is next to come still lingers in the back of my mind, now, I see it for what it truly is: a realm where anything is possible; there are endless possibilities and outcomes. It's going to be either a good time or a good story, so do it all. It holds within it the dreams yet to be realized, the emotions we will feel, the memories we will collect, the lessons we will learn; none of it is certain, none are set in stone, yet all of it is worth exploring. There is no guide or map for life; the road ahead will twist and turn in unpredictable ways. However, whether the journey is filled with triumph or trial, it will always be worth taking, for there is no such thing as being behind, only the beauty of walking on our own path at our very own pace. And perhaps, just like the birds, I will one day learn to trust my own wings.



صراع فلسفي

إبراهيم النجار

العقل والقلب، خطّان لا يتفقان، لكنهما في مكان ما نقطة تلاقٍ. فيا معشر البشرية، كم منكم أقدم على قرارات في حياته، ثم عَادَ لينتقدها ويتساءل عن مدى صوابها؟ لست خبيرًا في علم النفس، لكنني أعلم يقينًا أن داخل كلِّ منا شخصين؛ الأول يمثل العاطفة والانجراف للوهلة الأولى، أما الثاني فيجسد الحسابات ونسب "الفشَل، أي بالمختصر "العقلاني

فهل الإنسان ابن فطرة، يسير حيث تأخذه مشاعره دون تفكير، أم أنه حالة فريدة عن باقي الكائنات، يتصارع داخله المنطق مع الأحاسيس في معركة لا تهدأ؟ هناك مصطلح منتشر في الشارع اللبناني اسمه "يا ريت"، وهو اللحظة التي تتخاصم فيها الشخصيتان، فيسقط الإنسان ضحية صراع داخلي مرير. عندما يفرض العقل منطقَه القاسي، يجد القلب نفسه في خانة "الندم"، فيقع البشري في دوامة الحزن والإحباط.

ولكن، هل الندم يعني بالضرورة أن القرار كان خاطئًا؟ أم أن الإنسان بطبيعته يهوى التساؤل عن البدائل والاحتمالات التي لم يختبرها؟ أليس من الممكن أن يكون العقل قد بالغ في تحليلاته، أو أن القلب قد تسرع في حكمه؟ الحقيقة أننا غالبًا لا نكتشف الصواب والخطأ إلا بعد أن نعيش تبعات قراراتنا.

العقل يطالب بالدقة والاتزان، والقلب يسعى للاندفاع والتجربة، وبينهما يقف الإنسان متأرجحًا، لا يدري أيهما يتبعه. فربما تكمن الحكمة في التوازن، لا في الانحياز لطرف دون الآخر. فحين يُصغي الإنسان لعقله دون أن يطفئ شعلة إحساسه، وعندما يمنح قلبه حقه دون أن يغفل عن عواقب أفعاله، يصل إلى نقطة الالتقاء بين الخطيئتين، حيث لا "يا ريت"، بل "أخذت قرارِي" وسأَمْضِي



CAREN HAMZEH

THE ARCANES

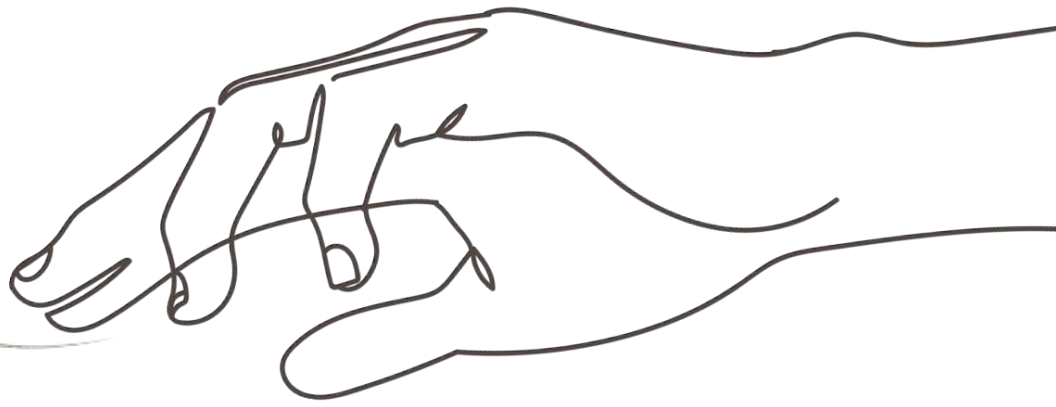
What if you knew everything that would happen tomorrow, or even years into your future? What you'd be, where you'd live, who you'd be with, how and when you'd die, etc.? Does knowing the unknown make you feel safer and calmer or dull and unexcited?

The uncertainty of the unknown surrounds us; every unpredictable year, month, day, hour and second. We dream of knowing the future, and when the question "Would you rather visit the past or the future?" is asked, most of us hurry to answer "the future," for our fear of the unknown dominates our fear of what is known. Endless possibilities, questions, and opportunities surge in the unknown, and humanity has been trying to curb these uncertainties in its every action from the beginning. From Faust's deal with the devil in Goethe's Faust or Dante's Journey in the afterlife in the Divine Comedy to recent developments in genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, and wars, all bask in the uncertainty of the unknown trying to minimize the fear that accompanies the unknown from the earliest historical times to the most recent years trying to make the unknown known.

Stepping into the labyrinth of life where light fades and uncertainties unravel, the arcane unfolds into an ethereal reality challenging souls, imprisoning minds, and crushing hearts. Are you ready to face the raw reality of life with no filters? To live life without the fear of what's to come? To give up for the current moment? In reality, that's what we have been doing for eternity: living every day not knowing what's next and what may come throughout the day or the next day, the next month, the next year... Individuals fear what they don't know, an evolutionary mechanism that can be seen from the earliest times, from the fear of the dark to the fear of deep oceans and unknown places, but isn't this fear what keeps us alive and keeps life exciting? Or would we be better off without this fear? Should we fear the unknown or just dance with its rhythm? A question that remains unanswered by many, but the answer lies within each individual.

"Caren Hamzeh.





"We all have one foot in a fairytale and the other in the abyss," Paulo Coelho says. One moment we are in a blissful fairytale thinking we know everything, striving for new opportunities, more growth, and more adventures that would unlock new doors for us and deliver us to the best versions of ourselves. However, at another moment we are in the abyss looking around at the unrecognizable environment, taking in the fears, dangers, and uncertainties surrounding us. We wonder when everything will end, when everything will change... We find ourselves strangely empty because when we call familiar names, look for familiar faces and familiar situations, we find none; we only find the unknown. How strange... When everything that was known to you becomes an unrecognizable unknown, when familiar faces turn into unrecognizable ones, familiar people turn into strangers, and familiar situations turn into unknown mysteries. How strange finding that you have to start from the beginning to go through the unknown again after finally getting comfortable with what you've known for a long time, having to abandon what was once your comfort and step into an abyss wondering if you will find that comfort and familiarity again or you will just find it then lose it and everything repeats.

When the line between the known and unknown blurs where the future repeats itself over and over again, the unknown becomes our known. History repeats itself, revolution after revolution, war after war, love after love, year after year, with new people and settings but familiar patterns. However, there's always that new element that keeps the uncertainty of the unknown lingering with a mix of fear and excitement. Isn't that what keeps life meaningful? Or we would've lived in repetitive events that would eventually drain any passion or anticipation for life. The fairytale and the abyss are inseparable, what scares us also excites us. Without the abyss, the fairytale would be dull, and without the fairytale, the abyss would be intolerable.

Here we find ourselves standing on the edge, wondering if we should cross the line. Are you ready to let go of everything that was once your only known and cross the line to the new unknown? Or will the fear of the unknown wrap tightly around you, not allowing you to cross the line? Or will you find that the feared unknown is just a repetition of your familiarity? Are you ready to step into the arcane?

Caren Hamzeh.

HASMIG AINTABLIAN

WHAT IF THE STARS GONE?

It's funny how you trust the stars, right? You see them every night and use them to guide you. But they're unreliable narrators, aren't they? Their light is old, their stories outdated. They could be dead, and you wouldn't know.

You have always found this fascinating, though, haven't you? And still, you look up. They feel steady— like an anchor in the night sky. But you know better. They are not steady. They are burning, shifting, chaotic — yet thriving in the chaos, painting the dark sky.

You might think how trivial we are beneath them. And yet, we are one and the same. Made of the very same matter, so you wonder— can we also not thrive in the chaos of uncertainty? The feeling of not knowing.

You go on to think that uncertainty is what gives us the purpose of yearning to know. If we were certain of everything, life would be boring. You recall how many times you have wanted to do something for the first time again because you didn't know what would happen next. Reading your favorite book for the first time, watching a movie you now hold dear to your heart for the first time, listening to your favorite music for the first time, not knowing what notes would follow— and being deeply moved when they came.

You salute the uncertainty of where life takes you, who you meet, and who you become. It is all so bittersweet.

You used to chase that feeling— to believe in the poetry of uncertainty, the rush of not knowing. I know because I did, too.

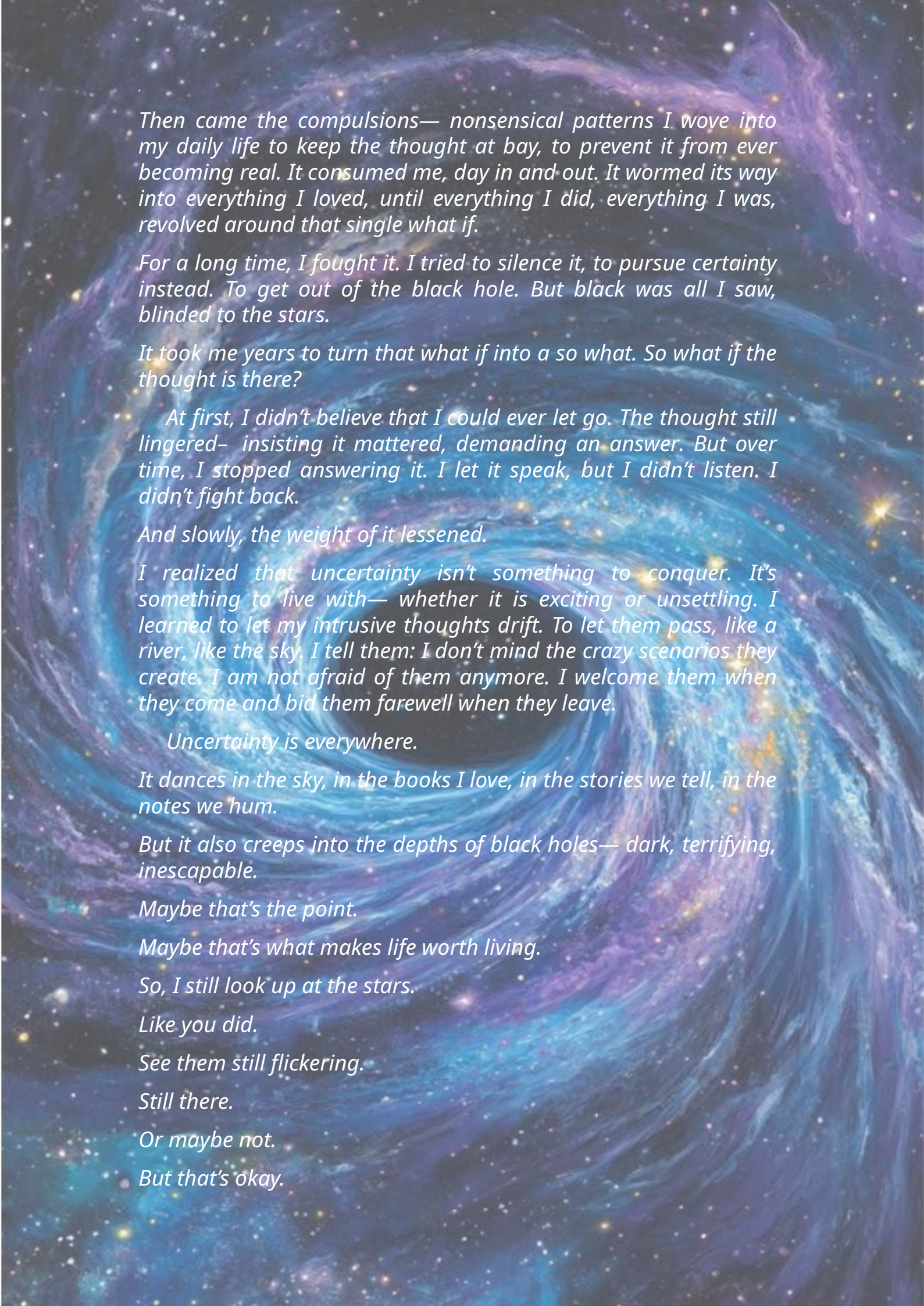
Until uncertainty stopped being poetic.

Until it turned against me.

It wasn't in the stars anymore, but in the darkness between— in a black hole pulling me in its orbit.

All of this, sparked by a single intrusive thought. A silly what if.

It only grew and grew, burying me deeper and deeper the more I fought it.



Then came the compulsions— nonsensical patterns I wove into my daily life to keep the thought at bay, to prevent it from ever becoming real. It consumed me, day in and out. It wormed its way into everything I loved, until everything I did, everything I was, revolved around that single what if.

For a long time, I fought it. I tried to silence it, to pursue certainty instead. To get out of the black hole. But black was all I saw, blinded to the stars.

It took me years to turn that what if into a so what. So what if the thought is there?

At first, I didn't believe that I could ever let go. The thought still lingered— insisting it mattered, demanding an answer. But over time, I stopped answering it. I let it speak, but I didn't listen. I didn't fight back.

And slowly, the weight of it lessened.

I realized that uncertainty isn't something to conquer. It's something to live with— whether it is exciting or unsettling. I learned to let my intrusive thoughts drift. To let them pass, like a river, like the sky. I tell them: I don't mind the crazy scenarios they create. I am not afraid of them anymore. I welcome them when they come and bid them farewell when they leave.

Uncertainty is everywhere.

It dances in the sky, in the books I love, in the stories we tell, in the notes we hum.

But it also creeps into the depths of black holes— dark, terrifying, inescapable.

Maybe that's the point.

Maybe that's what makes life worth living.

So, I still look up at the stars.

Like you did.

See them still flickering.

Still there.

Or maybe not.

But that's okay.

UNCERTAINTY

Uncertainty

One word with endless meanings.

One word that can describe your whole situation.

Why? How? What happened? Where? Whom?

All these thoughts occupy your mind.

We've been taught that uncertainty is a negative state.

*Not knowing your purpose, what you are doing, where you
are going-*

All of these deemed as sin.

But in reality, there is beauty in uncertainty.

If you think about it, there is a paradox:

You are certain that you are uncertain,

And this is what makes a change.

Here come your untold stories yearning to be told.

Your younger self searching for acceptance.

Your future self demanding perseverance.

Your inner voice trying to be heard.

*Uncertainty comes when you start acknowledging your
vulnerability.*

It is a call, asking you for healing.

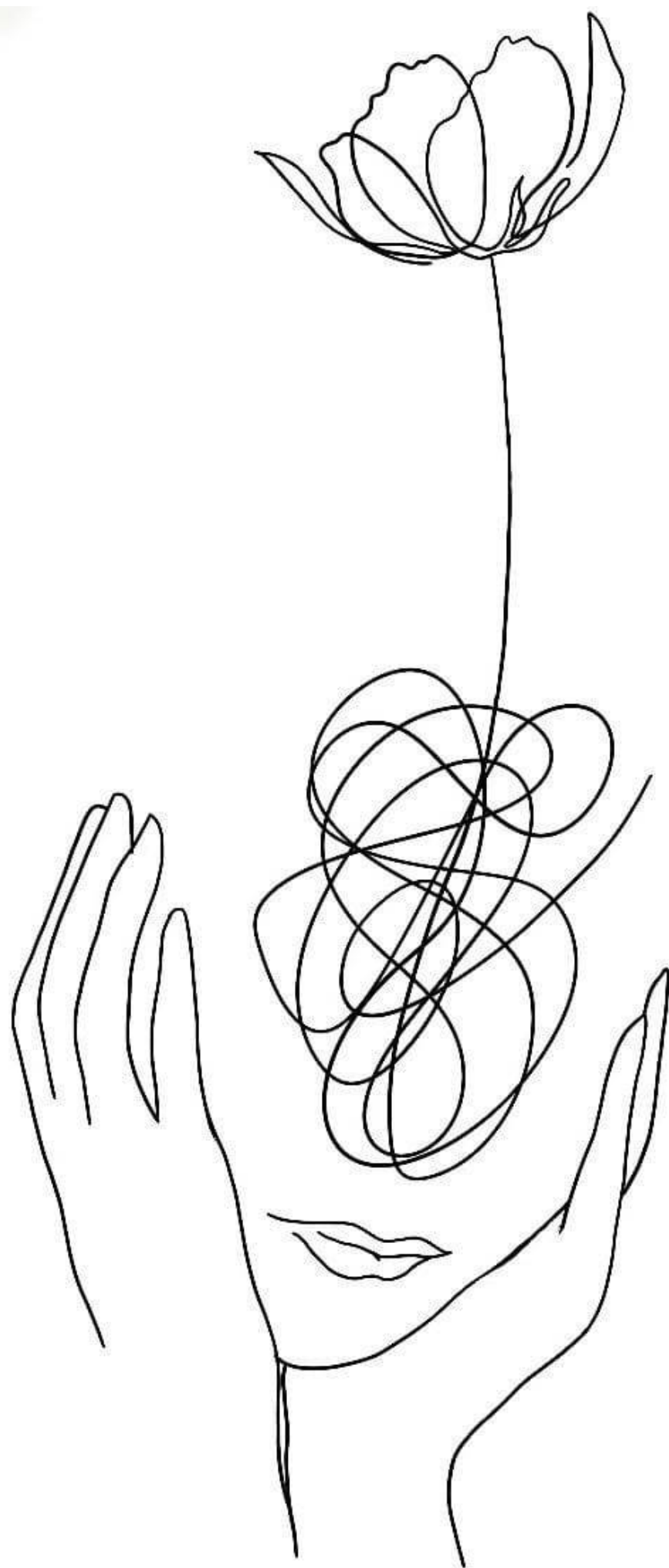
And when you answer that call,

Everything pours out like a flood.

And in that flood, you find your roots-

Not dead, but watered,

Growing again slowly, but surely.



GARBIS DER GHAZARIAN

Neutrality:

How It Made Compliance Palatable

No one ever likes to be complicit to violence and destruction. It essentially shows a flawed moral compass and a general disregard for life. Even those who were, would never admit so after the fact. And yet, if the last few years have taught us anything, is that a good chunk of the world has no problem turning a blind eye to atrocities beyond our comprehension. We don't even have to go far to make this observation. Even amongst ourselves. We often find that we remain indifferent to many issues surrounding our society. Which is, the result of decades long of preaching neutrality. People have a tendency to look for ways to fit in and appease the majority. You won't find your average Joe heavily invested in social/political issues, at most following what is on the news. In recent years many conflicts, both local and global, have had similar titles; "the situation requires more nuance" "there exists both sides of the conflict and we must listen to both" "it is a lot more complicated than that/impossible to boil down to a black and white mentality" "we hope for a peaceful end for the conflict and pray for all those affected". And it is this same neutrality that has allowed people to stomach the idea of being complicit to some of these horrors. From climate change, to wars and ethnic cleansing, we have forgotten the power we can hold as the general public, and allowed ourselves to retreat in the comfort bubble of neutrality. Anything which causes even the slightest inconveniences to our daily lives, gets ostracized and labelled as "too extreme", and it also forces many to reflect upon their own values/choices which makes them realize just how askew their moral compass may be. And it is so easy as well, just hope for peace and resolution for both sides, say you cannot give ideas due to lack of knowledge, and all of a sudden you appear good in the eyes of many.

. And it is so easy as well, just hope for peace and resolution for both sides, say you cannot give ideas due to lack of knowledge, and all of a sudden you appear good in the eyes of many. And in this day and age, with many minorities and marginalized communities having loud voices and many of their rights returned, the general population seems to think that discrimination/bigotry are long gone. And this is why you'll hear many people vocalize wildly problematic ideas, simply because they believe that any form of further activism is extreme. It is always important for us to look at any conflict/problem from all sides, but it is also important to take a stance. Sooner or later, it might be you who'll be spitting on the world for its neutrality.

Arab Youth and the Fear of False Change

We live in an ever-changing world. From climate disasters to political isolation, from revolutions to wars, uncertainty has become the defining feature of the 21st century. The world today is almost unrecognizable compared to just five years ago, leaving us to question what tomorrow might bring. Students wonder whether their degrees will hold any value—or if life as we know it will be swallowed by rising seas.

In a region often portrayed through a distorted and stigmatized lens, its youth remain trapped in a limbo of broken promises and unfulfilled aspirations. A region where history is steeped in colonialism, occupation, imperialism, and authoritarianism—with no clear end in sight. Here, the people fear change, as it is not always a source of hope but a specter of deeper instability. Change brings chaos and uncertainty. Change might mean the replacement of a tyrant with an even worse despot, ushering in a new reign of terror. In a land where the past looms heavily over the future, fear of change often outweighs the promise of progress.

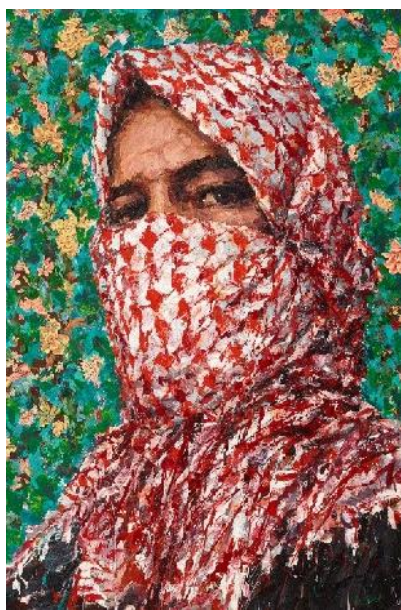
In Syria, screams of joy erupted on December 8, 2024, as the decades-long rule of the Assad regime came to a well-deserved end. A regime that could only be described as cruel, ruling with a relentless grip of repression. Hope and ululations filled the air as prospects of the new Syria emerged: a democratic state that guarantees equality and freedoms to all existing ethno-religious groups. Two months later, after some skeptical developments, we find ourselves asking the question: Is the new regime, with questionable leadership, truly the savior of the persecuted Syrian people? Is it all they ever dreamed of, all they deserved?

Away from the public eye, revenge killings and sectarian massacres have increased in the villages of Hama. Some minorities do not feel welcome in the new Syria fleeing as soon as presidential statues were brought down. Syria's future—whether for better or worse—remain broadly unknown. With Zionist tanks advancing just a few miles away from the capital city, the nation and its sovereignty face greater turmoil. Hopes for a better future are dwindling, yet they still linger in the hearts of some.

What's happening in Syria reflects what has become the bitter truth: change in the region fosters dread. It is a tale as old as time, an unbreakable pattern that echoes throughout the Arab world. In Lebanon, the new government will make or break the country. We're afraid to hope because we've seen it twist into something far worse than what came before. We've heard every lie, every justification, every plea for patience and perseverance. History has taught us to distrust superficial reform programs and fragile promises, which crumble faster than they are made.

Looking further south, to Palestine, we feel terrified of what the future might bring. The ceasefire was meant to be the temporary change we had long yearned for, but instead, we're petrified. What was meant to signal a break from suffering now threatens to usher in a new wave of erasure and uncertainty/ Plans of mass deportation and occupation are being drafted and discussed every day, shaping a Palestinian future that feels increasingly out of the Palestinians' control. Zionists are ushering in a new era of change; a 'new Middle East' designed just for them. The question is no longer about survival, but about who will be allowed to exist.

History has demonstrated how various nations have risen from the ashes, rebuilding stronger and freer societies. Yet, for our region, change rarely signals renewal; it signals instability and, too often, betrayal. Syria, Lebanon, Palestine-each stand at a crossroads, yet the road ahead seem littered with the remnants of failed dreams. When history repeats itself with such ruthless precision, it is challenging to trust the process of change. Still, even in the darkest corners of history, resilience and resistance have always blossomed. They are traits that never die, transmitted from one disappointed generation to another. Perhaps, one day, change in the Arab world will not be synonymous with fear and oppression. Perhaps, it won't cost us our very existence.



LORI MARASHLIAN

What's Next?

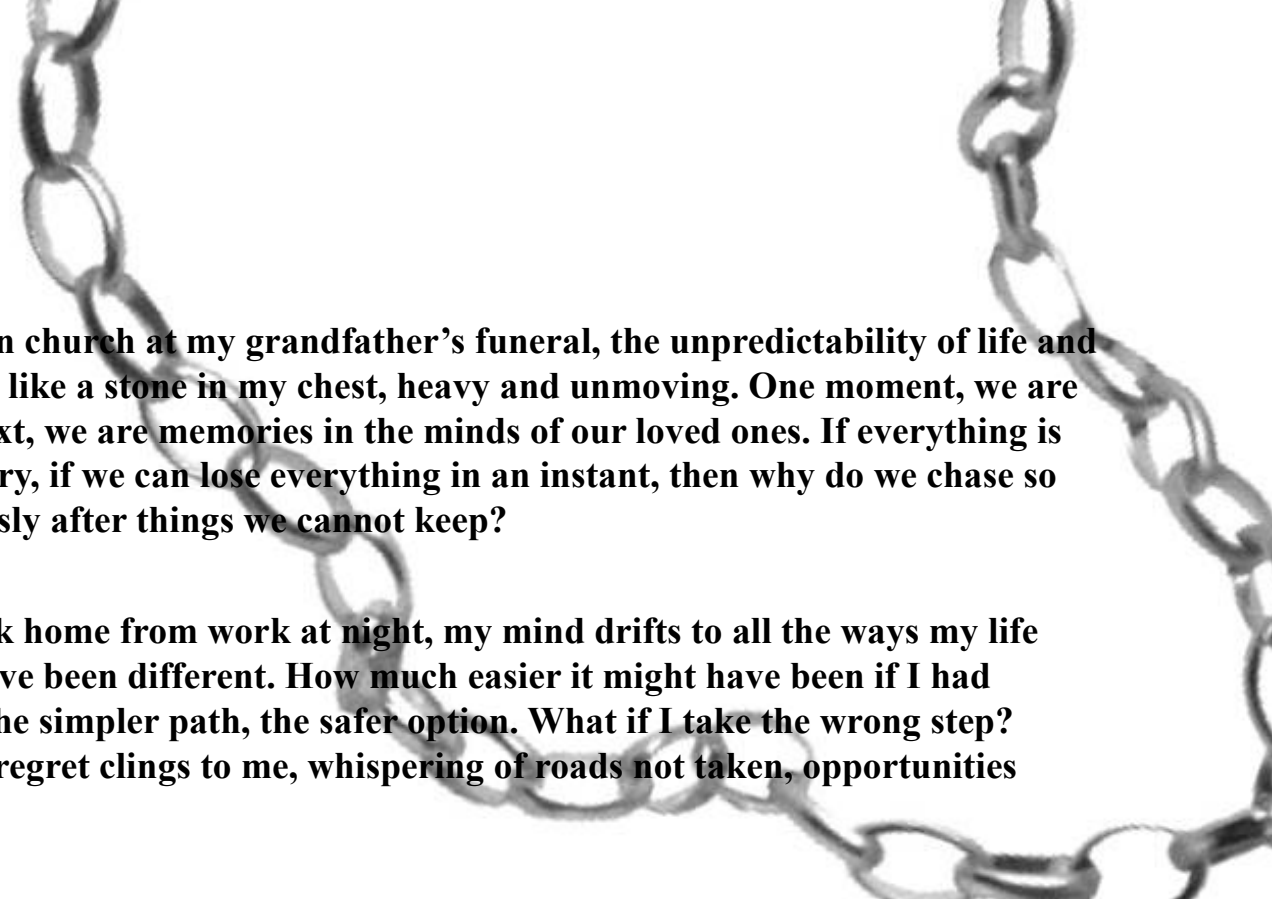
As I sit in class at school, I can't help but dream about the future. Life in the future seems brighter and simpler than my life right now. I watch as my teachers, my parents, and the adults around me move freely, making their own decisions. They are in control of their lives. That is the life I want—the life everyone dreams of.

As I stand on the stage on my high school graduation day, I can't help but wonder: what happens now? The life I have imagined for so long is finally within reach, yet the road ahead no longer looks as easy as it used to. Instead, it stretches before me, vast and unfamiliar, filled with questions I don't yet have the answers to.

As I step onto the university campus for the first time, the excitement is overshadowed by a creeping doubt. What if I fail? What if this isn't the right path for me? What if I'm not as capable as I thought? Dream big, they say. Aim high. But no one ever talks about the weight of uncertainty, the way it clings to every decision, every step forward, whispering doubts that refuse to fade.

As I help my grandma in the kitchen, I can't help but wonder—what truly defines a meaningful life? In her presence, success feels different. It's not in the noise of accomplishments; rather, it is the quiet rhythm of shared moments. Could fulfillment really be found in something as small as a Sunday afternoon spent in the kitchen?





As I sit in church at my grandfather's funeral, the unpredictability of life and grief sits like a stone in my chest, heavy and unmoving. One moment, we are here. Next, we are memories in the minds of our loved ones. If everything is temporary, if we can lose everything in an instant, then why do we chase so relentlessly after things we cannot keep?

As I walk home from work at night, my mind drifts to all the ways my life could have been different. How much easier it might have been if I had chosen the simpler path, the safer option. What if I take the wrong step? What if regret clings to me, whispering of roads not taken, opportunities lost?

As I look into the mirror, I wonder how different things would be if I were richer, smarter, funnier, prettier, or skinnier. If I had more opportunities, more luck, more control over the way my story unfolds. But then I remember that life is not entirely in my hands. No matter how carefully I plan, how tightly I hold on, it will always move in ways I never expected. Life is uncertain, and with uncertainty comes change, sometimes beautiful, sometimes painful, but always inevitable.

Now, as I sit here writing this piece, I can't help but wonder—will my future self be happy with the choices I make today? Will I look back and feel proud, or will I wish I had chosen differently? Will I spend my final years at home, content and at peace, knowing I lived fully? Or will I be caught in the chaos of regret, exhausted by the weight of all the what-ifs?

Perhaps only time will tell. Perhaps that is the point: life is meant to be uncertain, full of surprises, impossible to predict. And maybe, just maybe, that's what makes it worth living.

Uncertainty is not just fear. It is also a possibility. The unknown is terrifying, yes, but within it, there is also hope. Maybe, just maybe, the unknown isn't something to fear—but something to embrace, a promise waiting to unfold.

It could be that the beauty of life lies not in having all the answers but in the courage to ask the questions, to embrace the journey, and to find the light in the unknown.

Mia Parsumean

Who am I?

It is a conventional thought that writing often comes easily when the ink touches a piece of paper. But this has never been the way my mind expresses its thoughts. My emotions are forced, and my words are often misunderstood. Imagine putting yourself out in the open and explaining your thoughts for the sole purpose of having to and never because you want to. Feeling like you are a waste of space and air in this world makes you refrain from any kind of expression and convinces you that no person even wants to hear you speak. But isn't it ironic how a person's most taunting worry might be that they are worthless in this world?

My fear of words has always been my biggest setback. You need a certain kind of tool to communicate with the outside world. Unfortunately, I have always thought I never had it. Which leads to a tormented soul that often overthinks; what do others think about me? What am I to them? Do they wish I never existed?

When I gather up the courage to go and confront life's biggest fear and reach out to these people, it leads to other demons creeping up inside of me; will they be true? Or will it end up with every kind of manipulation being thrown upon me? Will I be able to recognize the truth?

We always end up with two choices; the first one is to put on a mask, choose never to speak, get hit as many times as you possibly can until your thoughts physically strangle you, and believe in any empty, shallow promise given, which leads you to denial. The second is to accept the truth, breach that interior wall, and let yourself out, no matter how miserable it might make you.





Here come the cliché quotes everyone abides by, bombarding you with messages to get you to speak up. You hear many different versions of “sayings” on how you should not care about what anyone thinks. But you soon realize that each one of them represents someone’s failed story. I hear plenty. Everyone has a very quick opinion to share when it comes to life problems that are not their own. It is not until I scream at my own essence, saying, “Are you even listening to yourself? When will your needs be satisfied? When will you come first? When will you understand that the people standing in front of you do not care about your begging for forgiveness, your cries, or your efforts?”

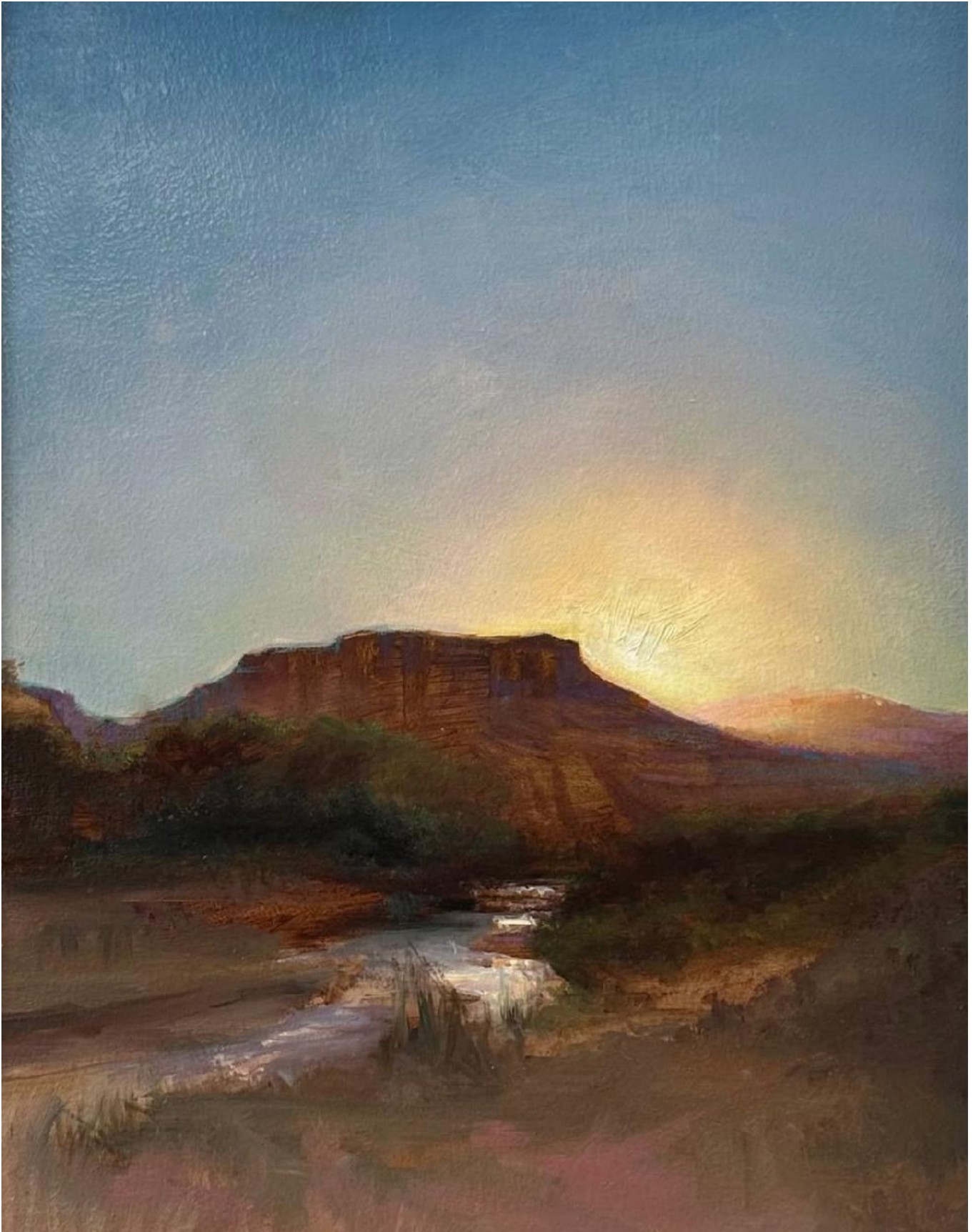
Being a people-pleaser who also never speaks out has often led to prioritizing others’ gain before my own. Without even considering how that gain could be destructive to my own soul. In this loop of toxic behavior, I have lost myself more than enough times that I am not even able to recognize a shred of myself.

When you are a kid, you draw yourself next to a house, a magnificent view, and all “la vie en rose.” As I grow up, I only notice myself getting farther away from that picture. The sentiment of feeling alone has become familiar.

Throughout life, many questions are left unanswered. Outside forces will always lead you to betray yourself. One of life’s biggest mysteries remains: finding out who you really are. Silence finds a way to break out, and eventually life runs out.

ARENIE BOYNERIAN

A Map Leading Nowhere



No matter our origins, no matter which ladder of the hierarchy we come from; our life will start as an empty book. No ultimate being or power will ever be able to predict a single word nor a single chapter, unless they can ridicule themselves as Gods. Life will show no mercy and no compassion. Instead presents us with complete ignorance over the kind of destiny we think the universe owes us. For every plan and every journey that is set out, we often forget the primal animal-like behaviors that are buried deep within us; revealed out of pure instinct. Which will soon serve as a reminder that we are bound to a mere desired version of perfection that is set to exist only in fantasies.

I chose to live in disbelief, and hold on to this idea that some big title was set out for me. I felt the clock ticking— my time was running out, everyone was rushing ahead and I was left far behind. I felt small, I despised my being and I could not, for the life of me, understand what kind of God would allow this type of agony to settle alongside my soul as a companion.

I urge you to ask me what my plans were and what I had destined for myself. It all ended with a spiraling soul down a ravine. We often grow up with a certain conventional idea, a very precise and detailed plan for our future that gets woven into each step ahead of the journey. We tend to forget that children shape their dreams of the future with a glimpse of magic and innocence. Why does no one warn us about how life can come knocking on your door at any moment and say "what you thought you knew remains a mystery, what you longed for is not what you thought as your destiny and what you loved will cease to exist". Over time, I noticed a shift in scenery. I felt alone and far out of reach from what was set out for me.

The analogy I would give of myself at the time would be; a person who got stripped down to their last shred of dignity, standing in front of this view as beautiful as the Garden of Eden. I kept longing to reach the horizon, to perceive the radiant energy behind the mountains. My own greedy motives and impatience got me so absolutely blind that I never noticed how the horizon I longed for kept getting further and further away the more I reached for it. It felt like my soul was tied down and forced to only follow this exact customized path in front of me. It was not until I stood still, stopped fighting that I realized I was the only torment along my journey to keep me from reaching my true and indefinite potential.

With time, life got me closer to this mountain which symbolized maturity.

With time, I was able to appreciate every single aspect of life surrounding me without tormenting my soul in order to reach the unknown.

With time, I finally understood, no matter the journey, someday, when time would be in my grasp, I would be able to perceive what is beyond the horizon.

My biggest regret would be not acknowledging how that shining essence was illuminating my journey all this time. This was a blessing I took for granted.

It was not until this ultimate power inside of me lashed out and screamed: "Your answers were not wrong, where you are now is exactly where you need to be. You were simply walking blindly holding the map that is not your own".

In this journey, I loved, I cared, I lived, but...

I forgot to exist.

AYA RAMADAN

A Storm of Grief

A storm of emotions
A storm of frustration
A storm of grief.
A feeling that overwhelms you to paralysis.
A paralysis that stays with you
An anger that overcomes you

Grief is an awkward feeling. How do you define it or describe it when everyone feels it differently? It brings uncertainty. An uncertainty that makes you feel lost in a maze; wherever you turn, you find a wall. A wall so tall and so hard to break down, you feel powerless. Alone.... And then you realize there are flowers growing on the wall. Vines that take you to another place. A place where you do not have to be alone, where you can bloom like a wildflower that can cope anywhere.

You realize that grief is not a closed maze. You do not have to be lost. You can bloom and flourish into an exotic wildflower and let the vines guide you to a place where your soul belongs. Where you feel most at home.

Grief shows you how delicate life is and teaches you that the road to healing is not a straight path. It fluctuates, overwhelming you at times and granting you peace at others. But remember, you can always climb the vine and come out on the other side. You will be *bruised* and *scratched*, but you are not defined by your journey. You are your *spirit* and your *resilience*. Even cities reduced to rubble have flourished again.

Bloom in *spite of your scars* and let the winds take you to new experiences. Let yourself love and be happy and create memories.

Let yourself *burn like a phoenix* and then *stand tall like the land of the sun*.

Your grief will not win, and just like Beirut, you will rise again.



Lilit Awhanes

المجهول

منذ صغري، كنتُ تائهة. تائهة في ساحة اللعب، ابحت عن أصدقاء . كبرتُ وأنا أبحتُ عن اتجاه الطرقات، معتمدة على الأدلة الإرشادية والكتب، لمعرفة الخطوة التالية. وما إن أدركت، حتى وجدت نفسي أرتدي البدلات وأخوض المقابلات، كل ذلك في...محاولةٍ لتأمينٍ مستقبليّ ..لا بل مستقبلي

لطالما كان المجهول تحدّيًا بالنسبة لي. أجد الراحة في الأشياء التي أستطيع التحكم بها، في الأشياء التي أعرف إجاباتها: "ماذا سنأكل اليوم؟" "ما الملابس التي يجب أن أرتديها للمناسبة؟" "متى ستزورني أختي؟" هذه أسئلة أستطيع الإجابة عنها أو على الأقل إيجاد الحلول لها. لكن أن يكون مستقبلي بين يديّ دون أن أعرف ما قد يحدث بعد ذلك؟ كان ذلك دائماً أمراً مخيفاً. أنا متأكدة أنني لست الوحيدة في هذه المسيرة. هناك الكثير ممن يشاركونني هذا الشعور، ولهذا يلجأ الناس إلى قراءة الفنجان اوالعرافين، بحثاً عن لمحة من المستقبل، على أمل العثور على بعض الوضوح.

عدم اليقين لا يتناسب مع طبيعتنا كبشر، لأن سؤال "ماذا لو؟" يخيفنا. نحن نميل إلى تخيل أسوأ الاحتمالات الممكنة، مما يزيد من الشك والخوف. لكن معرفة ما قد يحدث تمنحنا، بطريقة غريبة، إحساساً بالسيطرة، توهماً أننا نستطيع الاستعداد له أو ربما تجنبه تماماً

عدم اليقين يسلبني أيضاً إحساسي بالتحكم. كنتُ أعتقد أنني المسؤولة عن عالمي، وأنتني قادرة على التعامل مع أي شيء يوجهني. لكن فجأة، أصبح كل شيء غير متوقع، ولم يعد لي أي رأي فيه

ومع ذلك، يمكن أن يكون عدم اليقين جميلاً إذا نظرنا إليه كفرصة بدلاً من تهديد. قرأتُ مرة في كتاب ما أن الجهل في بعض الأحيان أفضل من المعرفة، لأنه يمنحك السلام. أوافق هذا الرأي بالكامل. الخوض بمعرفة المجهول فرصة للنمو، ففي لحظات عدم اليقين، نكتشف قوتنا الحقيقية و مرونتها. عندما لا يكون الطريق واضحاً نجد أنفسنا نبتكر و نثق بأنفسنا لأننا نتحرر من قيود عقولنا و مع الوقت ندرك أننا لا نحتاج إلى جميع الإجابات للمضي قدماً .

كالأعمى في بلدة غريبة ، ليس معتاداً على الرصيف أو زوايا الطريق. خطوة بعد خطوة ليصل إلى وجهته. الأمر يتعلق بتعلم التعايش معه وقبوله كجزء من الحياة. في جزء كبير من متعة الحياة يكمن في الغموض. المجهول ليس ظلاً نخشاه، بل لوحة فارغة تنتظر أن تُملأ، كتاب لم يُقرأ بالكامل بعد. لما قد أرغب في التوقف عن قراءة كتابٍ و أنا لم أكتشف بعد بقية القصة؟ تعلمتُ أن أحتضن المجهول. أن أحب عدم اليقين، حتى لو كان ذلك يعني المخاطرة بأجزاء من نفسي. لأنه، في النهاية، ما هو معنى الحياة دون القليل من الغموض؟

Ralph Tannous

The Unknown Syndrome

Sometimes the opportunity presents itself in the form of a door.

Yet, it comes with the price of not knowing what is behind.

And here, nothing appears more terrifying than the sound of the twisting knob...

It's like having the upper hand in a card game, but the pack has been reshuffled, and it all has been reduced to that single draw that determines success or failure.

The eagerness yet hesitation surfaces,

where you get caught between diving all in with no questions asked and analyzing every aspect of it.

How does the mind expect a decision to be made when it itself is split into two sections?

This is the effect of the unknown syndrome, where it leaves us swimming in all the chaotic emotions until they swirl and merge to become one final thought, which receives control of the steering wheel, guiding us towards our next actions.

...and the creaking door swings open.



Flowers

“You say you would die for them, but would you live for them?”

“What you’re not changing, you’re choosing.”

Looking at the screen on my lap, the words I had just read weighed heavily on my chest. There, they hung in the air like thick clouds of thought, like buttons that can’t be turned off, like darkness that can’t be shaken off. I realized I was facing myself again, with no distractions, no university, no friends. Just me, my dying willpower, my fear of dying, and the sounds of the dropping bombs on neighboring villages. My world was stuck in time once again.

I wrote to my best friend who had taken refuge in France from the beginning of the war: “I don’t care if I die anymore. I have made peace with the fact that I could die at any moment. It wasn’t like I was living the best life.”

I’ve wished for this moment over and over in my life. Death. Disappearing. But now that it was presenting itself to me, I didn’t want it anymore. I didn’t want to die a life not lived. But what was the point of trying to live for anyone when everyone was dying? Why would I want to live for anything when the world was collapsing?

The next thing I know, I am shuffling through old memories, pictures, and videos, trying to relive everything I have lived through and regretting what I didn’t in my life, taking it all in again one last time. Grieving. I witnessed the happiness I used to feel as a kid, how loved I was by all, how much potential I had to become so much more than I was. I cried, not for what I had lost, but for what I hadn’t become. My eyes filled with light and wonder, hopeful about a future I was too careless to hold. I had started grieving the potential of a life lived happily before it had the potential of ending. Yet, the possibility of not living was not far.

The grieving took two weeks. Two weeks of crying, isolating, wishing, praying, sleeping... Nothing made sense. It was all hopeless. I could never go back now. I had created a graveyard of dead dreams and hopes, and all I had done was weep for them. Flowers bloomed, but not for long.

At some point in all of this, I came across a DVD without a label on it. I asked my parents about it, but they were as clueless as me. My curiosity, still alive in me somehow, urged me to discover it. Pressing “play”, the screen flickered to life. And there I saw something I never thought I would; I had in my hands a living time machine, taking me back to my family on New Year’s Eve in 1993! My father was in his early 20s, gathered with his big family under one roof, celebrating, laughing. His hair hadn’t started to gray, my grandmother wasn’t at home alone without her husband, my aunt was smiling without grief overtaking her, and our relatives were not dispersed all around the world. The warmth of this cassette embodied the profound love my family has shared, a love that lives on in me. But more important than that, it held a more powerful message for me personally; Life moves on.



I reopened the quotes again.

“You say you would die for them, but would you live for them?”

“What you’re not changing, you’re choosing.”

I had proof, offered to me by my family nearly 30 years ago. They gave me the message I needed most today, as rockets lit up the sky like a starry night. For a moment, I felt undeserving of this love. Another moment, I felt proud to be part of this bloodline. This group of remarkable, successful individuals built meaningful lives for themselves and their families, while keeping their family bond stronger than ever.

So many realizations about time wasted on intangible, unrealistic thoughts. Pages of journals filled with unnecessary words, pointless worries, and quiet anxieties. But maybe—it was all meant to happen. Everything I lived, and even what I didn't, was leading me to a moment greater than I could imagine. I stare at my screen again. I'm still so young. I'm only 20, with my best days ahead of me. Yes, it's true, everything could end in a split second. But in that same instant, flowers could bloom. I had been choosing the sadness. My own decisions led me here. There's no one else to blame.

The screen's glow softened as the words settled into my bones: *"You say you would die for the graveyard of my dreams. And this time, I'd stay to watch them grow, but would you live for them?"* I had spent so long romanticizing an end, my end, that I'd forgotten living was the harder, braver thing. The DVD had shown me proof: life, relentless and radiant, had moved on without my permission. My father's laughter in 1993, my grandmother's unbroken smile, they were not just memories. They were demands. *Live.*

And then the second quote, sharp as shrapnel: *"What you're not changing, you're choosing."* I had chosen grief like a second skin. Chosen to watch my own life as if it were already a relic. But the bombs outside were not the only things that could destroy me, my surrender would do it first.

So I made a decision. Not to die for my family, my history, my unlive d potential, but to *live* for them. To carry their light forward, even if the world burned behind me. The rockets still tore through the night, yes. But in the silence between blasts, I heard it: the quiet, stubborn sound of a new choice.

I would weep flowers in .

ALIK DJINBACHIAN

10 Thoughtful Nights

1' As I lay on my bed, in the silence of the night, I only hear one sound— too loud to ignore. I'm afraid it will wake the night creature from its slumber. The noise grows louder with each banging echo.. A door knocking? No, it's my heartbeat. It's the knocking of my heartbeat, pulsing through my palm as I try to calm it down.

*2' The Uncertainty of the Unknown,
I often think about these two words.
Uncertainty. Unknown.
The more I am on my own, the more I realize how my very being is an extraordinary Unknown.
I do not know who I am, I do not know of what I am.
The Uncertainty of figuring out this Unknown is both wondrous and dangerous to even imagine
How scary this uncertainty is.
How far this unknown is.
So how can I speak of the Uncertainty of my Unknown?*

3' I walk on the shore, cold sand sending shivers down my spine, as I get closer to the edge. The edge, where each haunting wave hits. I turn around for one last look, one last goodbye, only to find no one there — only to feel terribly alone. I have, once again, failed them in this lifetime, and now I carry the guilt and shame of it with me into the next.

*4' I went to the flower fields,
I looked around for a while.
I picked up a flower,
And suddenly, it started telling me all about its life,
And I decided to rest my dying body, letting its whispers soothe my restless soul.*

*I decided to dip my filthy fingers in the endless sea of the fountain—
The fountain known as a healing and forgiving one,
The one hidden away behind the moonlight of the night.
I dipped my fingers in the cold water,
For the water to turn into a sea of blood.*

*5' The silence and stillness of the mind — so deafening,
The black-painted tiles beneath pale skin,
The shadow clinging,
A death of the unsleeping only. to you, hugging you, one hand on your chest and
one
on your waist.
An oath of never-ending love — a secret marriage of the forbidden.*

*A bed turned into deep ocean water, turned into steel, turned into a coffin.
A terrifying view of oneself — lying, decaying, on a table into nothingness.
Fear knocking on the door, ready for a night of revelry,
While you wait for your friends — Sorrow and Anxiety, to arrive.*

*You are left awake so the world can rest — an unfair sacrifice.
Then, a different kind of death — as the party comes to its end,
Exhaustion taking residence in all protestors,
Like a desperate mother lulling her newborn to sleep, uninterrupted for a few
hours.*

*Day arrives, and you wonder: when will it return?
As it has become your vow to life, to your friends.
A vow led only in the dark hours protection*



6' Tonight

Tonight, I choose you.

I choose you over the moon,

I choose you over the stars,

I choose you over the air we breathe.

Tonight, I choose you.

I choose your touch,

I choose your gaze,

I choose your sculpted body,

I choose you all over again.

Tonight, I choose you.

I choose you over my strengths,

I choose you over my weaknesses,

I choose you over the dreadful mornings,

I choose you over the calming blue nights.

I choose you.

I choose you tonight,

And I choose you, always.

For tomorrow night,

I will chant you the same poem.

7' These are no writer's hands. No proof whatsoever, to indicate the delicate wording— a message sent through from your brain, heart and even subconscious. The electrifying feeling coursing through your nervous system reaches and commands your hand as it flows delicately on paper.

There's no dried ink on your fingers. It's as if you claimed to be a farmer with no dirt imprinted on your hands and fingernails. It is not honorary to the sacred art and work displayed before your eyes. The fragility, purity, and novelty of this art is slowly slipping away with a quick dismissal of everything. The forbidden apple was delicious while it lasted, and now it's gone— vanished, having lost all of its beauty and replaced with the painful yet so sweet taste of poison. These hands show no respect for the once highly honored art.

8' Every night, I sit on my bedroom floor with my friends, playing board games. Tonight, we have lit a blueberry scented candle and are solving a puzzle meant for children. None of us speak as we work on the game, soft and enchanting music being the only noise in the room. The only light comes from the burning candle that barely lights the small puzzle laying in the middle of the circle we have created. The mesmerizingly beautiful melody, in addition to the red flame of the delicious-smelling goodness, creates a very sensational ambience. It's very controlling—we don't move, scared of perturbing the moment. The tension surrounds us completely and doesn't leave until we finish our game. Now it's time for us to part ways, for them to leave, until our game night tomorrow. They get up, telling me their silent goodbyes and goodnights, still in homage of our intense night. They leave—they leave through the walls of my room, where I am now left completely alone. And they say board games make people creative.

9' I kept having this dream, over and over again, always the exact same each time. Each time, I retained something more than I had the time before. In the dream, I would be surrounded by walls, and on one specific wall, I would read the words: "I bled in your bed, to make it red like the ground outside your window"—written in scarlet red, dripping paint. All I knew was that I kept seeing the same dream, exactly the same each time, no matter what. Nothing would change—nothing new and nothing less. Everything was, frighteningly so, there. The dream itself had become like a film stuck in a loop. Then, one day, I heard a song on the radio I had never heard before, sung by a beautiful and angelic voice—it sung the exact words etched in my dream. It all made sense; every single spoken word resonated with me—from the blood to the bed, from the ground to all the red. It made sense; as I finally met with my fate, I saw it in real life.

10' You have a friend you call Insy. Insy is a very remarkable and unusual kind of friend, strange even, yet very welcoming. This friend of yours even invites you into their sacred imaginary world, where you see inspiration float everywhere. This welcoming feeling can also be alternated by a very cold and violent silence. For many years, Insy was a mere acquaintance of yours, you would talk but wouldn't consider each other friends. You never understood Insy, you still don't or at least not fully. People tell you horrible things about your friend, accusing Insy of this and that, giving you a bad image of your friend. It's not true, they just don't understand Insy the way you do—the beautiful, creative, attentive, and spontaneous friend she is. We love people for all the good they have in them, we even forget all of their flaws and bad qualities, to an extent where we are blinded by the love and care. Insy would call you at any given time of the day, mostly and more importantly at night, where she would share the discovery of the day. Some days it would be about science, about why doppelgangers exist, and the detailed explanations would always blow your mind. Some other days, the discovery would be either a philosophical or psychological finding such as life being a trap of a cycle. Finally, Insy might not seem like the warmest friend, but when emotions unconsciously avail, there is no going back. A magnificent show unravels in front of you, displaying all the waves of emotions swirling and dancing in the air, a truly magical and majestic show to behold. You have a friend you call Insy—your friend Insomnia.

WHISPERS OF THE SOUL: POEMS OF WONDER



02



Vahé Melkonian

Testament to Uncertainty

A canoe awaits me
By the shore of fleeting glee.
Behind, the world ignites in collapse
As I traverse the waves of uncertainty.

Rowing with bare, aching hands,
I drift alone through boundless strands.
Moments slip, the moon descends,
A silent void—and daylight ends.

Remorse whispers in my ear,
A shadowed weight I cannot steer.
I row nonstop—a hopeless plea—
Towards the veil of uncertainty.

I close my eyes, a fragile dream,
Beneath the stars' eternal gleam.
They glisten high, they sing, they call,
Promises etched in their distant sprawl.

I wake—my eyes bloodshot
And find a quill, inkless to jot.
Desperation stirs as the storm draws near,
Its howling winds drown out my fear.

I stab my arm—the crimson flows,
A vivid stream of all my flaws.
I write all these words, my testament,
To pain, regret, and hope long spent.

Now you read this—my tale in red,
Each word inscribed as my veins bled.
The waves have borne this page ashore,
Yet my existence—forever stays unknown.





JOURNEY OF THE UNKNOWN

*It's that time of year,
Spring semester is here,
The last chapter is coming to an end,*

LYNN FAWAZ

After past years well spent.

*No time to surrender;
Success is near, dreams will render.*

*An unknown future,
With hope as a booster,
Not knowing where the path is heading,
Only faith will be leading.
A compass spinning with no direction,
But with pure passion.*

*Roads ahead – , some bright and some unclear–
Each turn gives hope and fear.
The brightness giving hope for a beautiful future,
Yet the path remains unknown like an unwritten scripture.
The unclearness giving doubts of a scary future,
Yet what comes after a storm reveals a wonder.*

*Doors open and doors close,
And no one knows,
What the future holds.
Will each step be worth the pain?
Or will everything go in vain?
Will the unknown lead to loss or gain?*

*The unwritten journey
Take it, it's worthy.
The path taken,
Shall never be forsaken.
Each step made with joy and worry,
In the end, it's a destined story.*



CLOUDS

*Eclipse has arrived early this season
I am resting on a cloud but it's foggy and crispy cold
I can't feel my fingertips and honestly, that feeling is getting old*

MIRA GHRAIZI

*But wait, I am not on cloud nine;
it's the name of the new coffee shop down the familiar corner
The heater is jammed; unmet deadlines with an empty head trying to ponder
And honestly, the only thing I am sharing with clouds is their aimless wander*

*But even clouds have a horizon, while lately, I can't even grab a line
My graduation is in a quarter and I am not trying to squander my time,
But I am avoiding that day with enough margaritas and lime,
I am not ready to go from a flourishing prime to a fixed bedtime,
I admit I have dismayed thoughts, but when is that a crime?
I am holding onto those pink sheets and gleeful smiles
I know I must switch to greys but I want them to bless my mornings one more time*

*They say adult life is an act of constantly letting go and submitting to the divine
leaving different versions of yourself
people,
places,
and even replacing your usual coffee order with Merlot wine
with the restless urge to check if your LinkedIn job got assigned
And of course the average sitcom scene of entering New York City with a suitcase of your
childhood dreams,
yet you notice when you reach the part of packing up...
It's quite dull, unfulfilling, and sad, and yes that part didn't rhyme
It's an abrupt sudden cut similar to how this phase feels,*

*While the box I am meant to leave has opened its wide mouth of madness
Allowing freedom and sugar-coated ordeals
its teeth are munching my bones as if I am stuck in an open casket
Facing the tyranny of choices in distorted fragments,
that appear in sudden blissful sadness*


*I believe in the future, the refined version of myself will be reading this in laughter
while bridging her successes, but that bridge seems to currently lack a rafter
it's afloat, fractured, with a wrathful sinner as its rower
But for now, the heater is still jammed,
my espresso came cold, and time is feeling slower
And for once, the agonizing unknown is gently hugging my figure*



Neptune Water

Jeanne d'Arc Davoulbeyukian

I am awake, aware of the space, A vastness surrounding, a liminal place .It is spacious and clear, yet vision is veiled—
A world half-seen, a truth unconcealed. My lungs are filled, not just with air, but power ,A current unseen, blooming like a flower .Dendrites brush, a whisper in the mind ,As breath flows through, new pathways I find .I see myself here, and there, and everywhere, Reflections shimmering like light on water rare. A fragmented self, in pieces I find, Yet in this dispersion, a wholeness entwined. I walk towards the calling, soft yet strong ,A siren's whisper, where I've belonged. It is the ocean's voice, a rhythmic plea, Calling to depths, unknown and free. I reach the shore, where Neptune's waters gleam, A cosmic mirror, reflecting a dream. The ocean brushes a cool, gentle kiss, Washing away control in a fluid abyss. Afloat and distant from the form I know, Yet, when I pinch, the senses start to flow. Real and unreal, here and not quite here—A liminal existence, banishing all fear. The gauze of perception, lifted by the tide, Revealing directions where truths reside. Beliefs like driftwood, tossed and turned by waves, In the deep unknown, where intuition saves. Less than the surface, where shadows play, More than the depths, where secrets lay. Trust the current, the pull of the unseen, Guided beyond aims, material and means. A divine calling, a power from above, A gentle nudge, a whisper of love. Self-actualization, a journey untold, In the ocean of my soul, where stories unfold. I float on the surface, back to the sky, My limbs drift and sway with the ocean's soft hand. My soul finds its fullness in this fluid embrace, A chaotic calm in this liminal space.



Everything and nothing, a paradox true,
Gentle and comforting, in shades of deep
blue. Eyes closed, I surrender to the
ocean's soft sway, Body and spirit are
united this way. We are one and all, yet
nothing at all, A cycle recurring,
answering the call. In this boundless
expanse, I find my own core, The ocean
of soul, forevermore. The uncertainty
whispers a constant refrain, Yet in its
vastness, a strength I gain. For in the
unknown, where shadows reside, The
truest self begins to confide.

"Freedom is the ability to build walls".
For ages man built from bricks of clay
Or from wood that decay
Or even from stacks of hay
Walls to keep danger away
Kept us dry on a rainy day
Stopping winds as they sway
Giving us privacy when in bed we lay.

**MOHAMMAD
CHEHAB**

Walls stood mighty and strong
They set the boundaries to where we belong
Within them, we would sing songs
They also surrounded those who did wrong
With no getting out for long.
Some would live and die among these walls.

They stood tall and might
Protecting us from a direct fight
Yet enclosing us without much sight.
So, we thought they were monsters of fright
Freakish, devilish, and the cause of our plight
The enemy, the ones we hate with spite.

But that was long ago, when walls had height
Now walls are lines we draw and write
We can see our enemy fully, we look alike
With limbs, faces, and features alike
So why are we killed every night?
Why must our enemy act to be of light?
Can they not see us? We deserve the same right.
Yet, they bring down our walls of stone
Killing us, while their walls blind them from what is known
Whether it be under rubble or on a throne
The truth is clear, the truth is shown
May we one day know peace with such foes gone
Shall we be left alone
To live, to dream, and atone
To have the walls we live in not be our tomb.

WHAT MAY IT BE?

I write as I have forgotten words **TO WHAT END?**
I miss the sound of birds
A constant buzzing and a sudden surge
Chaos ensues as the masses gather like herds.

The sounds muffle as another terror unfolds
Death on your door-step their remains it holds
Those who came to help, now lay cold.
To what end?
Your humanity you have sold
Riches you stole and power you hold
Poisoning our minds and forcing us to do as told
Killing all those who stand free and bold
Slaughtering the young and the old
Massacring even the ones in shackles and blindfolds.

I have no words to say, so I write
To what end shall we endure without a fight?
To what end shall they steal our rights?
To what end shall we have no might?
To what end shall they inflict us with blight?
To what end shall we actually unite ?

They fear us, so they divide
Behind missiles and warplanes they hide
Terrorists they called us, they lied
They are the terrorists with their pride
Looking down on us while committing genocide
While it is we who are dignified.
As world leaders jump from side to side
Hypocrites act as if they get to decide
Twisting words and facts to masses blind
Selling morality to the highest bidder's side
We asked about war crimes, answers we were denied
Of the truth they are terrified
And even by their rules, they don't abide
So don't expect justice from those whose morality has
died.



ABED EL KARIM EL AMIN

Mercy

**No bodies stand, no echoes last. A path winds forward into mist, yet behind,
the footprints erase.**

**Something whispers in the silence, a voice with no face, no name. It knows
the questions you dare not ask, and answers them just the same.**

**Doors appear where walls should be, keys that fit but turn no locks. Time
drips slow as if a scented candle, then races past.**

**A mirror wavers but holds no reflection, Yet something watches through
the glass. A flicker, a shimmer, a shifting shape— here, then gone, then
back at last.**

**The sky bends, the stars rearrange, patterns form, dissolve, realign. What
is choice, what is chance? and What is mine?**

**The air is thick, yet weightless still, a breathless hush, a frozen chill. It
watches, it waits, it whispers my name— familiar, yet never the same.**

**Is the unknown a void, or a voice? A lurking fate, or a mere disguise? An
experience or a hallucination? Does it wait with open arms, Or with hollow,
watchful eyes?**

**Perhaps the question was never when, or how, or even why at all. Perhaps
the answer breathes between the rise, the fall—the endless call.**

**Step forth, step back—does it matter? The road unfolds with each breath
drawn. For in the end, the great unknown has held you in its hands all
along, whispering, pleading, begging for mercy.**

Karim Hariri

La OÙ Je T'ai Perdu

Je marchais sur les bords de notre plage, regardant
les nuages qui passaient avec le vent et le temps.
Une brise de mer me caressa le visage, un triste
adieu.

Tout est passé, tout passera.
Sur le sable froid, j'accepte finalement ma
solitude.

Devant les douces vagues, tu m'as surpris.
J'avais cru qu'avec le temps, comme toute chose,
tu passerais aussi.

Mais te voilà, près de moi— silencieuse.
Que veux-tu de moi ? Il n'y a plus rien à dire.

Je plisse les yeux-espérant.
Tu restes, révoltante, persistante-tu me confonds.
Ne me regarde pas, je t'en supplie, regardons
l'horizon.

Le coucher du soleil nous peint le ciel- les
couleurs de l'espoir.

Pourrai-je espérer un nouveau chapitre pour
nous ?

Le silence me déchire. Parle, dis quelque chose.
Dis-moi à quel point tu me détestes— crie-le, hurle-
le.

Je t'en prie, fais n'importe quoi-piétine mes
pensées.

Il ne nous reste plus rien, je dois l'avouer.
Tu n'existes plus, je t'ai perdue il y a bien
longtemps.

Que deviendrais-je sans toi ?
Attends-moi, alors que je te suivrai bientôt.

ALIK DJINBACHIAN

I AM A WRITER

I am a writer.
I read what I write over and over again,
Marveling at how capable I was of
writing so profoundly,
I admire the state of being I was in to
have been able to write so passionately,
I try to write now but I'm bleeding soiled
blood on the paper.
My soul is thirsty, yet my mind is
drained,
If all of this has taken place,
Am I a writer then?
I open the page to write,
Whatever bleeds on the paper
disappears,
My words feel worthless.
The weapon I once had to shield myself
from the harsh world,
Has now been seized from me.
Is it my doing?
Or am I bound to painfully lose a part of
myself?
The part of myself that I sculpted with
my own bare hands.
I am a writer, I think.



**THE SCHOLAR'S PEN:
INSIGHTS & INSPIRATIONS**



MIRJAM POLAK

Certainty of the unknown

When I moved to Beirut around three years ago, so much was uncertain. I had left my home country (the Netherlands), carrying a backpack filled with my most important stuff. My dog accompanied me on my flight, and together, we started the biggest adventure I could ever have imagined.

I found myself in Beirut. A city deeply wounded by economic recession, kids begging in the streets, and the terrifying explosion in the port. I had visited Beirut for the first time in 2019 and could sense that this time, the vibe was different. People were sadder, streets and houses damaged. The hostel where I had stayed the first time was completely devastated. I had to get used to the lack of electricity, the inflation (and huge amounts of money that I had to carry), not paying with a card, no hot water, and no separation of trash.

In the midst of this uncertainty, I realized one thing was certain and crystal clear: my determination to stay, learn, get to know people, and help those who needed it. I gradually managed to get used to the things that were lacking, and I started navigating myself through it. That was not always easy. A Western-European in the Middle East has to learn that not all things in life can be taken for granted and that uncertainties are the norm.

When you work as a counsellor, people sometimes think you are the one who teaches them about life. Often, it is the other way around. Lebanese young students in Haigazian University, children in an orphanage, and many other people in Lebanon have taught me about the struggles of life. How challenging and stressful they can be. How people can feel as if they drown, yet they manage to swim to the surface. How a war can rage around them, and yet they keep their heads (kind of) cool.

In Lebanon, I learnt there is a way to live with uncertainties. And I salute you all for that. Reflecting on this, I would like to present to you some of the insights I bumped into, through a book by a Belgian psychiatrist who is well known in the Netherlands and Belgium: *Dirk de Wachter*. In my opinion, he is one the most important voices that plead against the dominant conviction that life should always be *more, better, further*: “*an obsessive individual pursuit of happiness and a stringing together of Instagram-worthy experiences*”.

The main message of his recent book 'Vertroostingen' (Dutch for 'Consolations') is that we all need *comfort* in our lives that hold so many uncertainties. This psychiatrist has the right to speak, since he has cancer and is uncertain how much longer he will live. I will list the things that bring comfort in the midst of 'a life full of absurdities', according to him:

- **Another person:** A comforting look someone gives you, since no one can bear weakness on their own;
- **Small goodness:** A simple word, kindness, touch, closeness of someone else: *is someone there for you?* Someone wishing you good courage, someone not forgetting about you. Someone asking you: *how are you?*
- **Rituals:** Especially when someone dies;
- **Being together:** A person that shares in your path, your sickness, your sadness;
- **Philosophy and literature:** Learning how to think, daring to ask questions, reading meaningful books that provide you with a new perspective. Important literature tells us about normal people and their normal lives and how we can learn from that;
- **Music of J.S. Bach, Leonard Cohen, Nick Cave:** Listen and be comforted, for example *Gottes Zeit ist die allerbeste Zeit*. "Our brains are in need to, through harmony, find tranquility in the midst of complexity";
- **Art:** Art goes beyond words and makes us wonder. These can be drawings, lithos, paintings, lithographs, statues, books, music;
- **Poetry:** For example the poems by Wisława Szymborska;
- **God**
- **Nature**

Uncertainties are there for certain, but they should not speak the final word. From time to time, we wrap ourselves in comfort, by actively practicing and searching for it. By listening, watching, and reading. By enjoying nature, meeting a friend.

Let me end with some questions. How can you be 'the other person' that asks someone *how are you?* How can we be people *who are there*, next to another person? Are we the ones giving someone else a comforting look?

It is my true inner conviction that these are the fundamentals of life. It starts with us. Comfort others and be comforted!



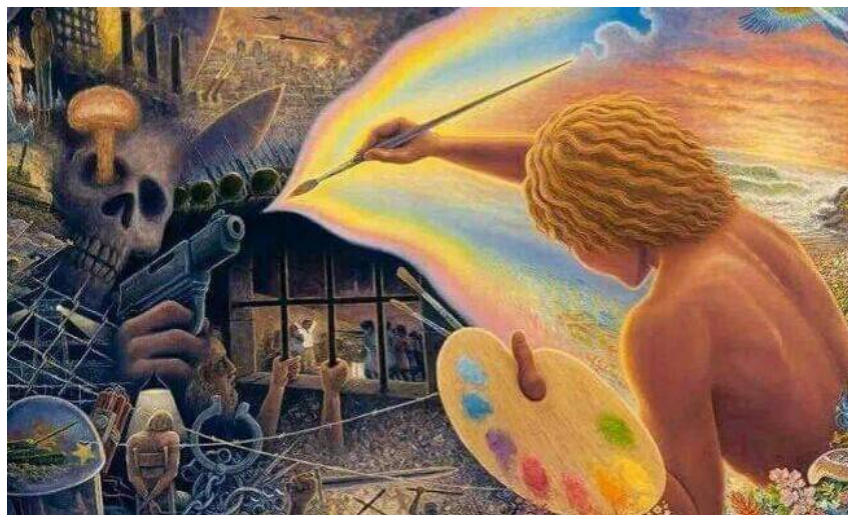
The Power of Certainty

Life has a way of speaking to us through unexpected means. Recently, I came across old writings I had long forgotten. To my surprise, I realized that the messages I had written, though simple and short, foresaw my future in ways I couldn't have imagined at the time. The same themes and ideas repeated themselves in different forms. These recurring messages, written without any awareness of the struggles I would later face, served as a guiding light during one of the most challenging chapters of my life. They carried a common thread: remain certain despite the chaos, heartache, and difficulties that come your way.

One particular verse from the Bible stood out as I reread my writings: *"I have given you authority...to overcome all difficulty, nothing will harm you"* (Luke 10:19). At the time, I wrote down this scripture with bold certainty, not fully understanding how deeply it would resonate with me in the future. But as I navigated through the rollercoaster of my cancer treatments and surgeries, I found myself clinging to this verse as an affirmation. It became my anchor, reminding me that despite the overwhelming uncertainty and pain, I was not alone. I had written this verse at the beginning of last year, unaware that it would provide the strength I needed in my darkest moments that year. My faith in this verse, in God's promises, helped me remain certain in the midst of my never ending struggles.

Reflecting on my writings now, some of which I wrote during peaceful time, became the very thing that carried me through the storm. They were a constant reminder of God's presence and the love that surrounded me. The certainty I expressed in those writings became a source of strength during hardship, guiding me through uncertainty.

Now, after a year and a half of treatments and surgeries, and especially during hardships I often find myself saying with gratitude: *Hallelujah, praise to you, my Lord*. The journeys we take are never easy. But if you hold onto gratitude and faith, you will emerge stronger and you will grow in abundance. My writings which were rooted in faith, were not just reflections of hope, they were a lifeline. They kept me certain in the face of uncertainty. Through God's promises, love, and guidance, I have learned that certainty isn't about knowing the outcome, but about trusting in God's plan, no matter what challenges lie ahead.



Rev. Wilbert Van Saane

Walking on Water

As a boy I often skated on the canals and lakes of the Netherlands. I can still see myself sitting on the bank of a lake, tying on my skates, and stepping onto the ice. The first few strokes were wobbly, but then a sense of freedom set in as I made speed and got into the rhythm.

Ice remains frozen water and it is hard to forget that when you skate. I remember the insecurity I would sometimes feel, especially far out on the lake. The creaking of the ice was unsettling. The dark depth below looked ominous. Was the ice strong enough to hold me?

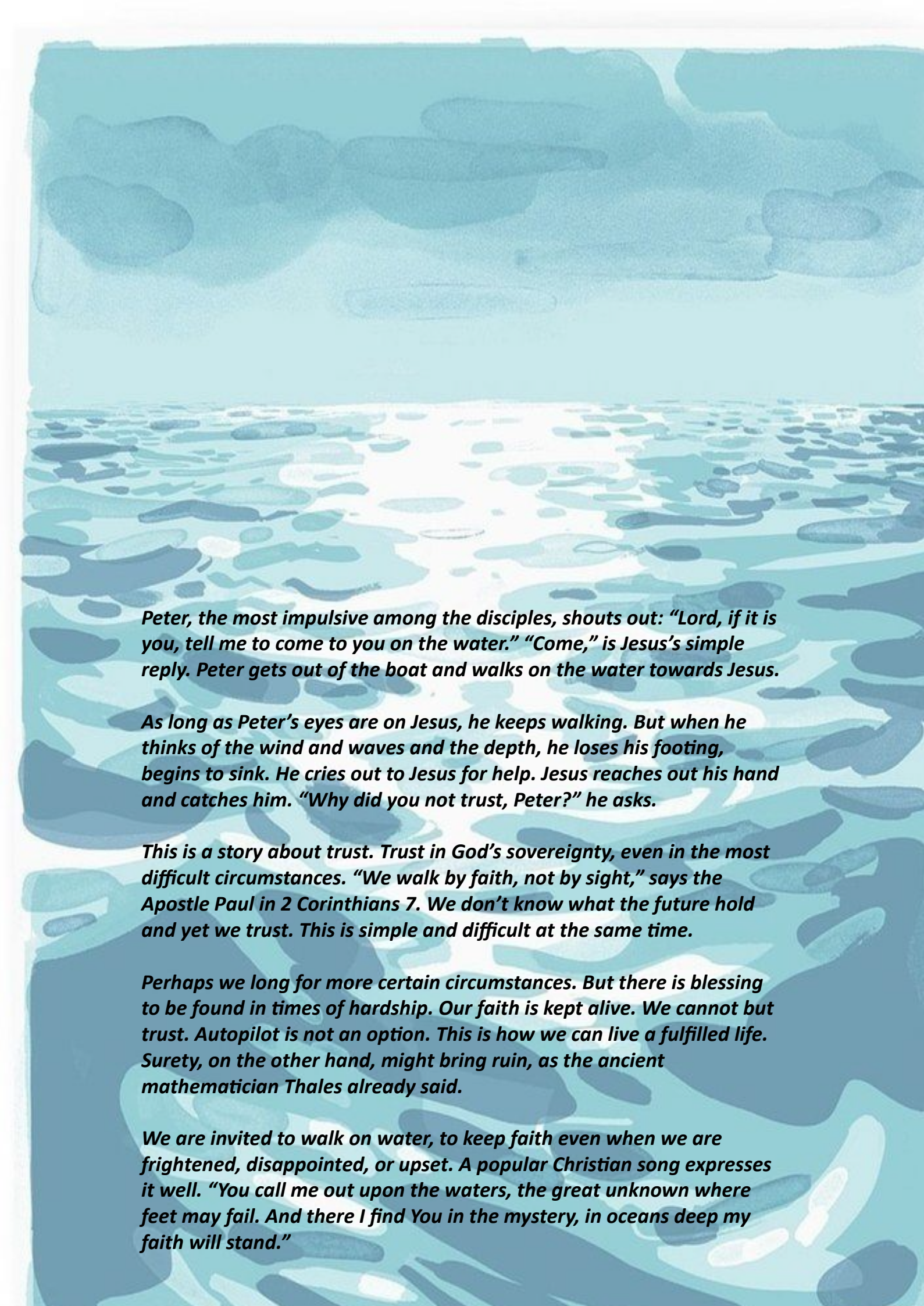
Life is uncertain. Here in the Middle East we know this well. The ice under our feet might give way any moment. In fact, over the past years it has repeatedly done so. Many have found themselves in the icy cold waters of loss, fear, poverty, and displacement.

We skate on thin ice. Of course, we have hope and we are ready to do all we can to contribute to peace and welfare. But we cannot ignore that the political and economic situation remains unpredictable.

How can we keep going in the face of this uncertainty? What are the values that can sustain us? How can we avoid getting paralyzed by despair? Or, better yet, how can we live a fulfilled life amidst the hardships of our time?

The Gospel of Matthew (chapter 14) tells the story of Jesus walking on the lake. When the disciples see him from their fishing boat, they think he is a ghost. Jesus tells them: “Take courage, it is I. Don’t be afraid.”





Peter, the most impulsive among the disciples, shouts out: "Lord, if it is you, tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," is Jesus's simple reply. Peter gets out of the boat and walks on the water towards Jesus.

As long as Peter's eyes are on Jesus, he keeps walking. But when he thinks of the wind and waves and the depth, he loses his footing, begins to sink. He cries out to Jesus for help. Jesus reaches out his hand and catches him. "Why did you not trust, Peter?" he asks.

This is a story about trust. Trust in God's sovereignty, even in the most difficult circumstances. "We walk by faith, not by sight," says the Apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 5. We don't know what the future hold and yet we trust. This is simple and difficult at the same time.

Perhaps we long for more certain circumstances. But there is blessing to be found in times of hardship. Our faith is kept alive. We cannot but trust. Autopilot is not an option. This is how we can live a fulfilled life. Surety, on the other hand, might bring ruin, as the ancient mathematician Thales already said.

We are invited to walk on water, to keep faith even when we are frightened, disappointed, or upset. A popular Christian song expresses it well. "You call me out upon the waters, the great unknown where feet may fail. And there I find You in the mystery, in oceans deep my faith will stand."

Navigating Uncertainty as a Path to Growth

Understand this. Within uncertainty lies the seeds of transformation.

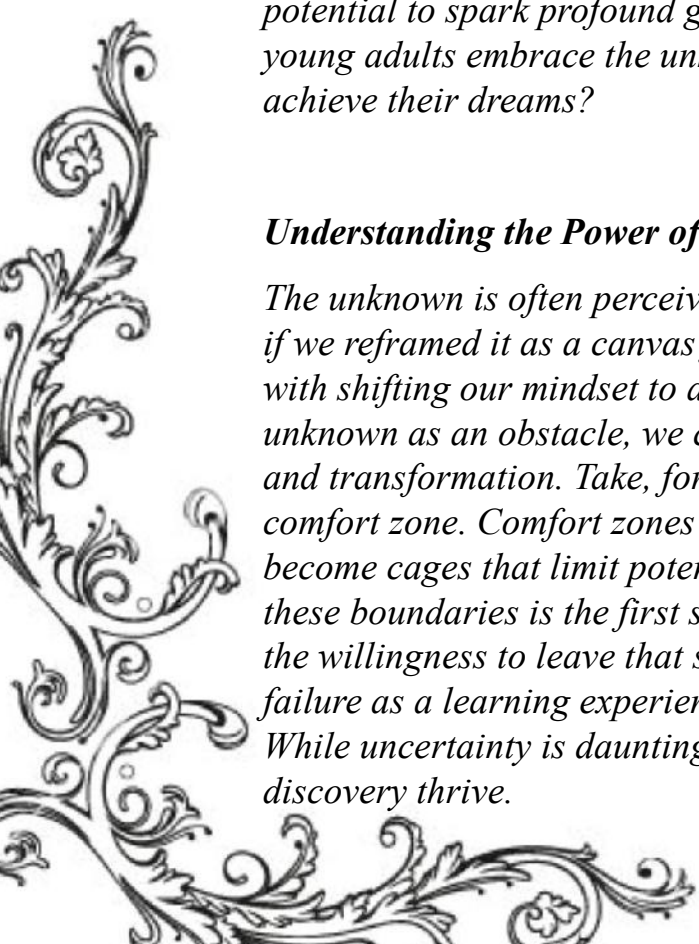
The transition to adulthood is inherently fraught with uncertainty. In a world brimming with unpredictability, young adults find themselves grappling with the overwhelming presence of the unknown. This is particularly true for university students, who are at a pivotal crossroads in their lives. They stand between the safety of structured education and the boundless, often intimidating, world that awaits them. For many, the uncertainty of the future casts a shadow over their aspirations, leaving them questioning their futures, decisions, and ultimate purpose.

Embracing the Unknown

In Lebanon, this sense of uncertainty is magnified by socio-political and economic instability. Students here not only face the universal challenges of career uncertainty, a rapidly shifting job market, or personal growth but are also compounded by the nation's precarious situation. The pressures of living in a country where the future often seems precarious, financial instability, brain drain, and dwindling opportunities often cast long shadows over their aspirations. This sense of unpredictability can paralyze decision-making and breed a fear of failure. Yet, it is precisely within this uncertainty that the seeds of growth and self-discovery lie. While these uncertainties can feel like insurmountable barriers, but they also hold the potential to spark profound growth. The question then becomes: how can young adults embrace the unknown and turn it into an opportunity to achieve their dreams?

Understanding the Power of the Unknown

The unknown is often perceived as a void, a space of risk and fear. But what if we reframed it as a canvas for possibility? Embracing uncertainty begins with shifting our mindset to a growth mindset. Instead of viewing the unknown as an obstacle, we can see it as a catalyst for creativity, resilience, and transformation. Take, for example, the idea of stepping outside your comfort zone. Comfort zones offer familiarity and safety, but they can also become cages that limit potential. Challenging oneself to venture beyond these boundaries is the first step toward growth. True achievement lies in the willingness to leave that space. This means taking risks, embracing failure as a learning experience, and remaining open to new opportunities. While uncertainty is daunting, it is also where innovation and self-discovery thrive.





Becoming a Change Agent in an Uncertain World

In the face of uncertainty, students have the power to become change agents—individuals who not only adapt to challenges but also actively work to transform their environments. Becoming a change agent requires courage, vision, and a willingness to take initiative. It means asking tough questions: What can I do to improve my situation? How can I achieve my highest potential? In Lebanon, where resources may be scarce and challenges abundant, this mindset is especially crucial. Many young leaders in the country have risen to the occasion, founding startups, leading social initiatives, or pursuing education abroad to bring back knowledge and expertise. These individuals did not wait for certainty; they acted despite the unknown. Their journeys remind us that taking small steps can lead to profound changes.

Overcoming Uncertainty

One way to overcome uncertainty is by setting clear goals. While the future may be uncertain, having a vision provides direction. Define what success means to you, whether it's personal growth, a specific career, or contributing to your community. Another way is by embracing lifelong learning. In an unpredictable world, the ability to adapt is key. Pursue knowledge and skills that prepare you for diverse opportunities. Attend workshops, learn new languages, practice micro-learning, or explore technology trends. Building a support network by surrounding yourself with mentors, peers, and friends who inspire and challenge you is a third way to overcoming uncertainties. Their guidance and encouragement can provide stability amidst the unknown. Added to the above is taking calculated risks as growth often requires stepping into the unfamiliar. Apply for that internship abroad, pitch a business idea, or start a creative project. Even if you fail, the experience will teach you invaluable lessons. Finally, practicing resilience is a must because challenges are inevitable. Resilience is what will help you bounce back. View failures as stepping stones rather than endpoints, using them to build strength and adaptability. Develop coping mechanisms, whether through mindfulness, journaling, or seeking professional support.

A Call to Action

While the uncertainty of the unknown can feel overwhelming, it is also an invitation to dream bigger and act bolder. For students in Lebanon and beyond, this is a pivotal moment to redefine what success and fulfillment mean. By committing to the journey of self-becoming, they can transform uncertainty into opportunity.

Uncertainty is not a roadblock but a gateway. By stepping boldly into the unknown, students can carve paths toward lives of meaning and achievement. In doing so, they not only overcome the constraints of their present circumstances but also inspire others to do the same—transforming the challenges of today into the triumphs of tomorrow.



The Edge of the Unknown

*You stand at the edge of the world you know,
Where light fades and questions grow.
The ground beneath you whispers, the earth
beneath you says,
Stay here, where it's safe, where it's certain
always.*

*But your heart beats with a desperate sound,
A rhythm urging you to leave the ground—
Into the mist, where dreams take flight,
Into the unknown, beyond the night.*

*Each step is a quiet rebellion
Against fear, against doubt.
You stumble, you fall,
But even the ground you kiss in failure,
Becomes the soil where courage grows
Guiding you forward like a steadfast sailor.*

*In the unknown, you find your way,
Not in the answers, but in the play.
For only when you break the chain,
And step beyond the bounds of pain,
Do you become who you are meant to be,
A soul reborn, forever free.*

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