

Volume 24

Fall 2023

English Break

The Scientific Association of English Language
and Literature of Alzahra University

Including:

Poems

Articles

Short Stories

“Real
World of
Dream”



You will read:

“The Enigmatic
Allure of Sad
Endings”

“Your eyes
shone
brighter
than any star
to have ever
lived”

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Colourblind

By: Hannaneh Safary

Sitting in the corner of a cube, Here I am,
In the safe cube inside my heart,
Wrapped in a black blanket,
Looking outside the window,
Watching people waving at me,
Calling my name,
I reached the door,
Still Wrapped,
Still safe,
Then they smile,
They nod in solace,
And then I remove the blanket,
My true colours shine bright,
And I come clean,
But the colour blinds don't see colours,
My heart bleeds red,
My eyes cry blue,
My throat screams magenta,
And my hands shake in yellow,
But people continue dancing,
Laughing, drinking, living,
And I am grey to them,
Swaying in the shades of grey,
And they regard me as one of them,
Because the colour blinds don't see colours.

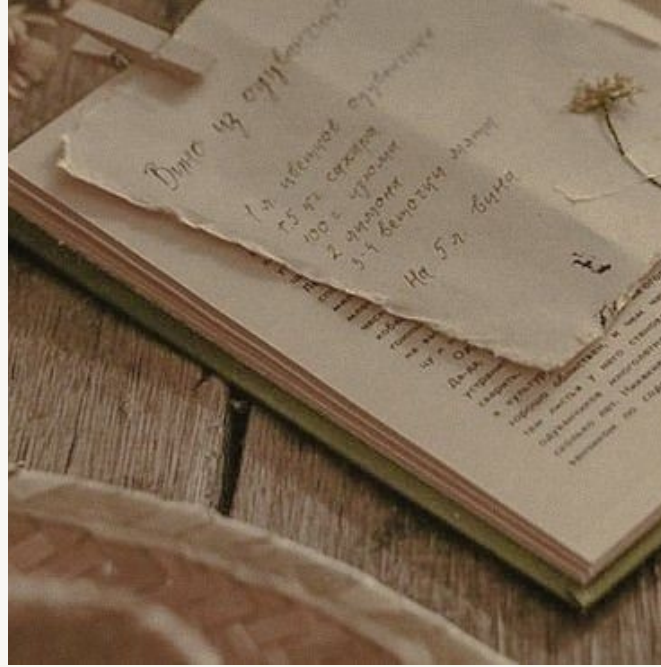


An Agreement

By: Ilgar Mahbooby Bonab

I'm laying on my bed
Nothing new to see
Sediment,
Of the tears I shed
A reverie,
Of who I wished to be
The pillow under my mind
No new thoughts to absorb
It knows
I'm one of a kind
In this room-for-one globe
My eyes stare
The ceiling is white
My gaze isn't there,

My mind, as dark as the night
Then,
As it dances to brag,
I see a spider web in the corner
To this frozen nation, I find a flag
To my departure,
A mourner
I'll let the spider web be
No one will notice it after all
Just like no one noticed me
Now, the heat of summer,
But I died in the cold of fall
I've been laying on my bed
Nothing new to see
Just that I have a new friend
The butterfly that can no longer be free
Flee
On staying and staring
We both agree



Old Confidant of Mine

By: Kimiya Azad Fallah

Will I ever see you again?

Will I even have the chance?

Will the ocean ever pull my ashes back to wherever you are?

Or will the wind graciously carry my dust to you?

Will my rotting body search for yours when you're deep underneath too?

When we are nothing more than dust...

Or a mere memory, kept alive in someone's mind...

I contemplate death every day, his heavy shadow,

Cast over me constantly,

And yet,

I regard him every day as I would,

An old confidant...



Forsaken

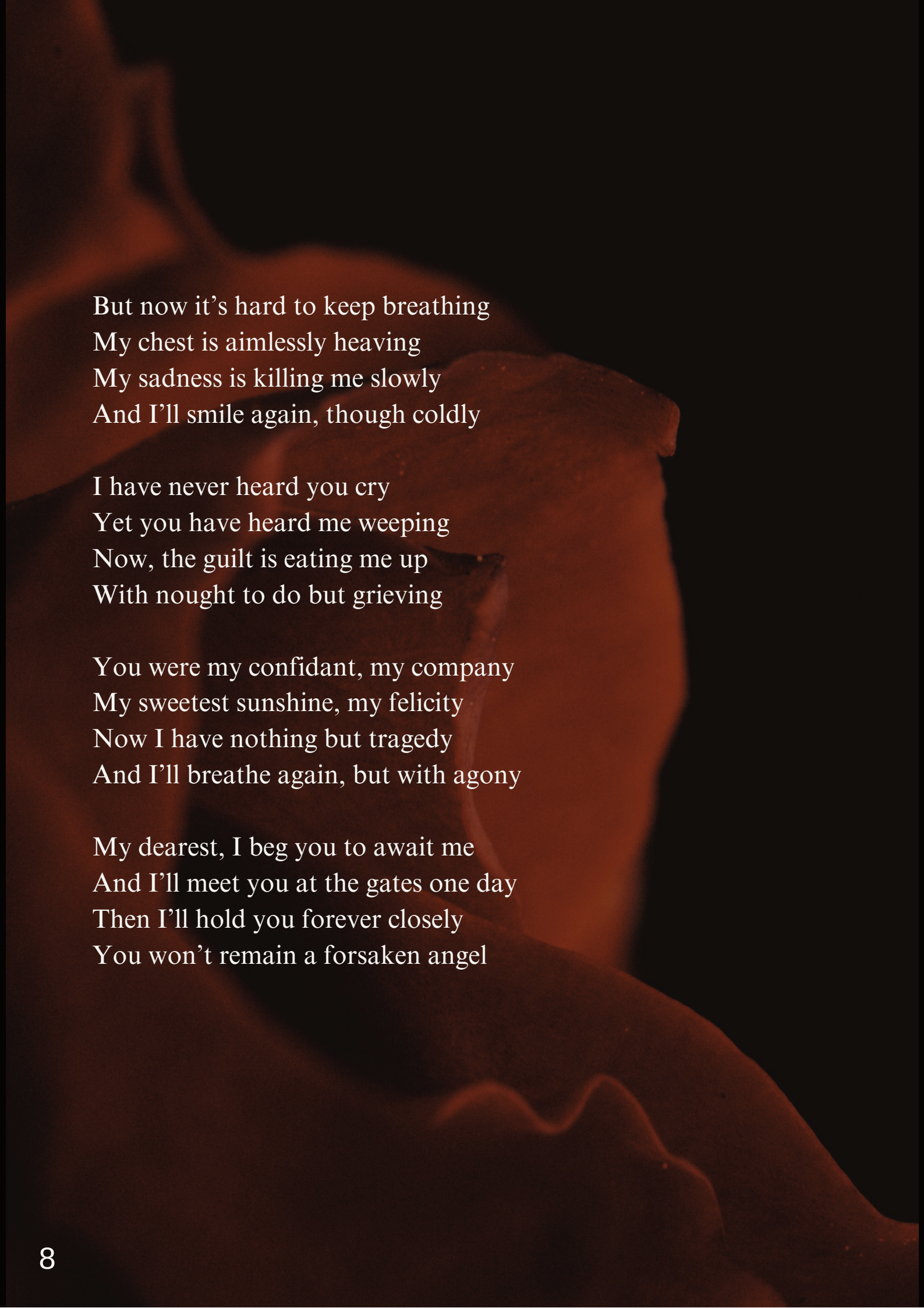
By: Asal Pazhoom

I always had a feeling
that you were silently bleeding
And still I never bothered
to tell you I was near

I was sad, quietly crying
One step away from relapsing and dying
Then you came and made me laugh
One word, and I threw my head back

Your eyes shone brighter
than any star to have ever lived
And I forgot I used to be frightened
The second you made the tides shift

The reverberation of my laughter
and the love that kicked in after
forevermore etched in my heart
indelibly engraved in my thoughts

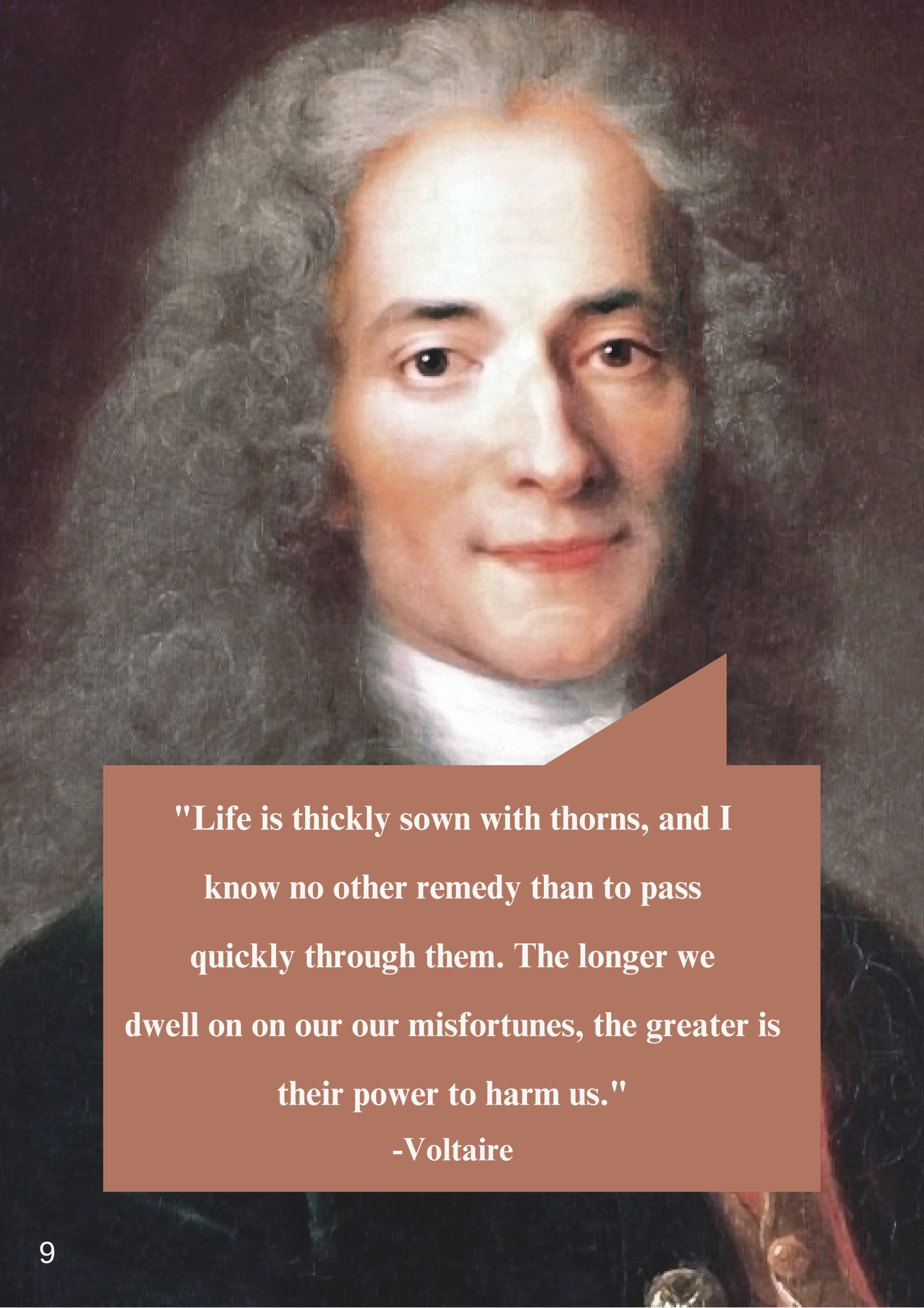


But now it's hard to keep breathing
My chest is aimlessly heaving
My sadness is killing me slowly
And I'll smile again, though coldly

I have never heard you cry
Yet you have heard me weeping
Now, the guilt is eating me up
With nought to do but grieving

You were my confidant, my company
My sweetest sunshine, my felicity
Now I have nothing but tragedy
And I'll breathe again, but with agony

My dearest, I beg you to await me
And I'll meet you at the gates one day
Then I'll hold you forever closely
You won't remain a forsaken angel



"Life is thickly sown with thorns, and I know no other remedy than to pass quickly through them. The longer we dwell on our our misfortunes, the greater is their power to harm us."

-Voltaire

Ripples of Faith

By Hanieh Zare Soheyli

The warder, clad in a timeworn uniform, reluctantly stirred from his slumber, dreading the arrival of another day in the oppressive confines of the jail. With heavy footsteps, he trudged through the dimly-lit corridors, his movements betraying his inner reluctance. The weight of the jail seemed to hang on his shoulders, burdening him with the stories of despair and shattered lives. Despite his unwillingness, he pushed himself forward, driven by a sense of duty that battled against the growing disillusionment within him.

To the warder, the prisoners were like a flock of lost sheep, aimlessly wandering through the dark passageways of the jail. He saw himself as a loath shepherd, responsible for guiding the wayward souls. He couldn't help but draw parallels between his role and Moses, leading his people through wilderness. He felt stripped of his dreams and freedom. But wasn't that what prophets did after all? Sacrificing themselves to liberate mislaid souls?

The stoic figure patrolled the jail's gloomy hallways with an air of somber authority. His face showing nothing but a haunting emptiness, eyes holding a hollow void. With each step, his polished boots echoed against the cold floors, commanding attention and respect from both inmates and fellow staff members. The man relieved his coworker of the night shift as he began his day.

Walking among the prisoners, his empty gaze fell upon a new arrival. The air seemed to carry an unsettling aura around the individual. His senses tingled with a heightened awareness as he examined him. "he is the Satan" he thought. He trusted his power of judgement well enough to state that the newcomer was perhaps the reincarnation of the monster he killed years ago. Whispered rumors claimed that he was a psychopath. A man who had committed a heinous act in the asylum he was kept in, killing a man brutally there. The chilling rumors also painted a sinister portrait of a man accused of murdering his own wife. As he sought to understand the depths of darkness that laid within the prisoner's soul, his ominous voice ripped the string of his thoughts apart.

-You have weird eyes mate.

The warder approached cautiously, aware of the need for vigilance and careful observation. *This encounter would test my ability to navigate the complexities of the human psyche*, he assumed. Staring deadly at the prisoner, he breathed. "yeah, I keep hearing that very often."

As the prisoner stepped closer to him clicking his tongue, he let out a chuckle.

-Then I've offered nothing extraordinary; I'm starting to feel... dull today.

+If that's the case, I'm always dull.

The imprisoned smiled wryly. "No you're not, at least not to me."

He started pacing back and forth in the narrow space, arms crossed.

-Most people's eyes reveal something, let's say... a glimpse into their souls, and souls are boring to me. (*rolling*

his eyes) All begging for mercy and redemption, but yours... they're like empty vessels, dark and unknown; It's intriguing.

The warder stayed silent, his death stare still focused on the spot where the man had stood before, not following his movements.

+You ache for adventures I suppose.

-Touché! I long for the allure of mystery, the thrill of the unknown. It has a way of captivating us all, wouldn't you agree?

"Told you. I'm dull." The warder stayed silent.

-Care to share your secret? You know mine now, let's play fair.

The warder's expression didn't change when he whispered: some secrets are better left untouched, trust me.

The psychopath did his best to conceal his disappointment.

-Ah! The delicate line between curiosity and danger, got it.

In the stifling silence of the jail two men stood drowned in an unspoken understanding, while the muffled voices from prisoners arguing created an eerie eardrop, reminding them of the constant tension that permeated their confined world. A pervasive sense of despair hung heavy in the air of the cell, as if the walls absorbed the sorrow of its former inhabitants. The prisoner finally dared to break through the silence.

-Am I in danger?

+You tell me. They say you killed a man in cold blood.

-I did him a favor. His life was boring, I offered him death mate, isn't that marvelous and mysterious?

+You claimed it was liberation.

-Indeed. I relieved him of his misery. Am I not a worthy son of my father?

+No man wants his son to be a sinner. (chuckling)

-You don't see it, do you?

This enraged the warder, he immediately felt an overwhelming urge to unleash a tempest of fury upon the man.

-I see! I see everything!
He could stand the maniac no more. Storming away, his anger was palpable and his departure a declaration of resentment, leaving an unsettled tension behind. In his dismal room, the warder stood before the cracked mirror, his senses fixed upon his own haunting reflection. His eyes held the weight of a turbulent past. Memories flooded his mind, ones he thought were buried deep beside the Satan lying down in this building. How bold of him to assume that he was past remembering his father, a man whose behavior was as harsh as the religious doctrines he imposed. The strict rules and dogmas that suffocated his childhood had left an indelible mark, fueling a deep-rooted resentment towards religion. And yet, there he stood, talking to a bloody religious lunatic who's believed he's serving the lord's justice.

The prisoner's religious disposition seemed to mirror the very thing he despised, an irony that tugged to the warder's conflicted emotions. As he pictured the emptiness of his eyes, he couldn't help but wonder if the darkness within them was a reflection of his father's, or of his own.

The morning sun timidly rose, announcing the arrival of another mundane day. Everything was just the same, the grey corridors, the cacophony of distant echoes, the haunting shadows of the haunted, everything. Yet, as a man approached the prisoner, he knew it was going to be an adventurous day. The psychiatrist sat on a chair he had brought with himself, wearing a ridiculous smile.

+Hello. I'm doctor—

The prisoner interrupted him: where's my mate? I want him to stare into my soul with his intense gaze.

The doctor seemed to be confused, he knew exactly who

the prisoner was addressing. The thing that had him shaken was the truth.

+That warder? He's blind sir.

-No, he sees everything.

To be continued...



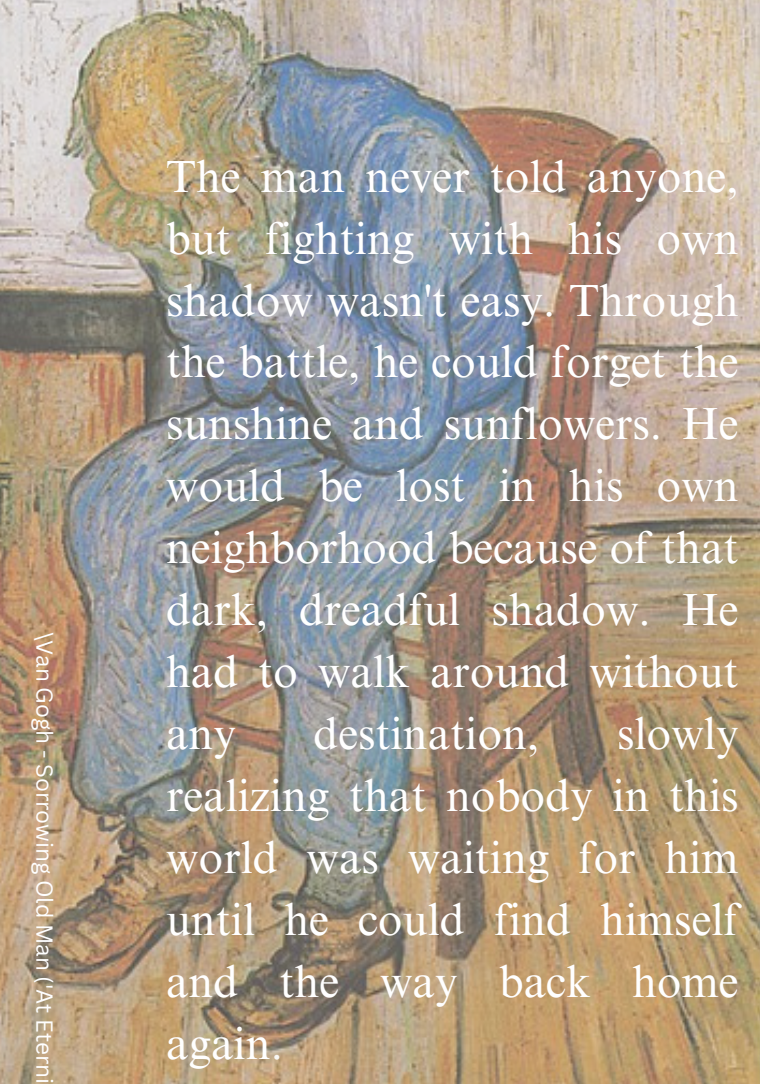
The Man

By Zinab Moradzade

Once upon a time, there was a man with a monstrous shadow. His shadow was so grand that it sometimes covered his face, eyes, and even his soul. Some days, he would look in the mirror and couldn't see his face; instead, there was the shadow all around. On those miserable rainy days, he could only remember himself by looking at his heart.

But if you're wondering how this shadow came to be, it was like a big scar on his neck - deadly but coverable.

And the man was the best at covering. He had beautiful red cheeks and a bright smile, played with kids all the time, and was the kind of person who would put yellow lacy flowers inside the little pocket of his brown cardigan. The shadow made him a great actor. He could hide his shaky knees perfectly, his chewed nails, and his droopy shoulders. He was all good and fancy until you spared a second to look into his eyes. They were desperate, like a soldier who came back home from war but never came back to life. Wide eyes and a confident chest were his way of telling the world he was fine. The world watched his shows and clapped at their endings, believing whatever was shown on stage like a foolish child. The man couldn't be happier because of the foolishness of the world, but he also couldn't be sadder because of it.



Van Gogh - Sorrowing Old Man (At Eternity's Gate)

The man never told anyone, but fighting with his own shadow wasn't easy. Through the battle, he could forget the sunshine and sunflowers. He would be lost in his own neighborhood because of that dark, dreadful shadow. He had to walk around without any destination, slowly realizing that nobody in this world was waiting for him until he could find himself and the way back home again.

The shadow made him doubt every move he had ever made, every good thing in his life, and every achievement - his glories and his failures, his sleepiness and his consciousness, his entire existence. Everything felt numb, including his love for people and their love for him. But as we once said, he had a heart, so he had a special kind of love. He loved when the snowy weather made every place quiet.

He loved when he could manage to wear the right amount of warm clothes on cold days - not too much to sweat and not too little to freeze. He loved well-baked cookies, and if you think he would skip smelling the pages of a brand-new book, you are highly mistaken. The long list of these loves would go on and on because if there was one thing that the man knew, it was how to love the little things in life.

So, every time he couldn't find the way back home, he would look into his heart. And his heart would show him a glimpse of his loves - that time he helped a little girl with a ponytail cross the street, that special moment he made for his neighbor's dog by giving it a warm pat on its head, all the battles he attended - battles of getting up from bed and doing the same thing as he did yesterday, and the day before. By remembering them, the

man could remember himself. So, as he tried to go back home, looking at the blue sky made him realize how long he had been fighting for a love and loving through the fight. He didn't know if this life was destined for him or a common path for everybody. All he knew was the love and the fight. And wasn't that life? A love to fight for and a fight to adore? Yes, it was. The man walked back home, and the blue sky was thinking, "What a fighter! What a lover!"



Doomsday

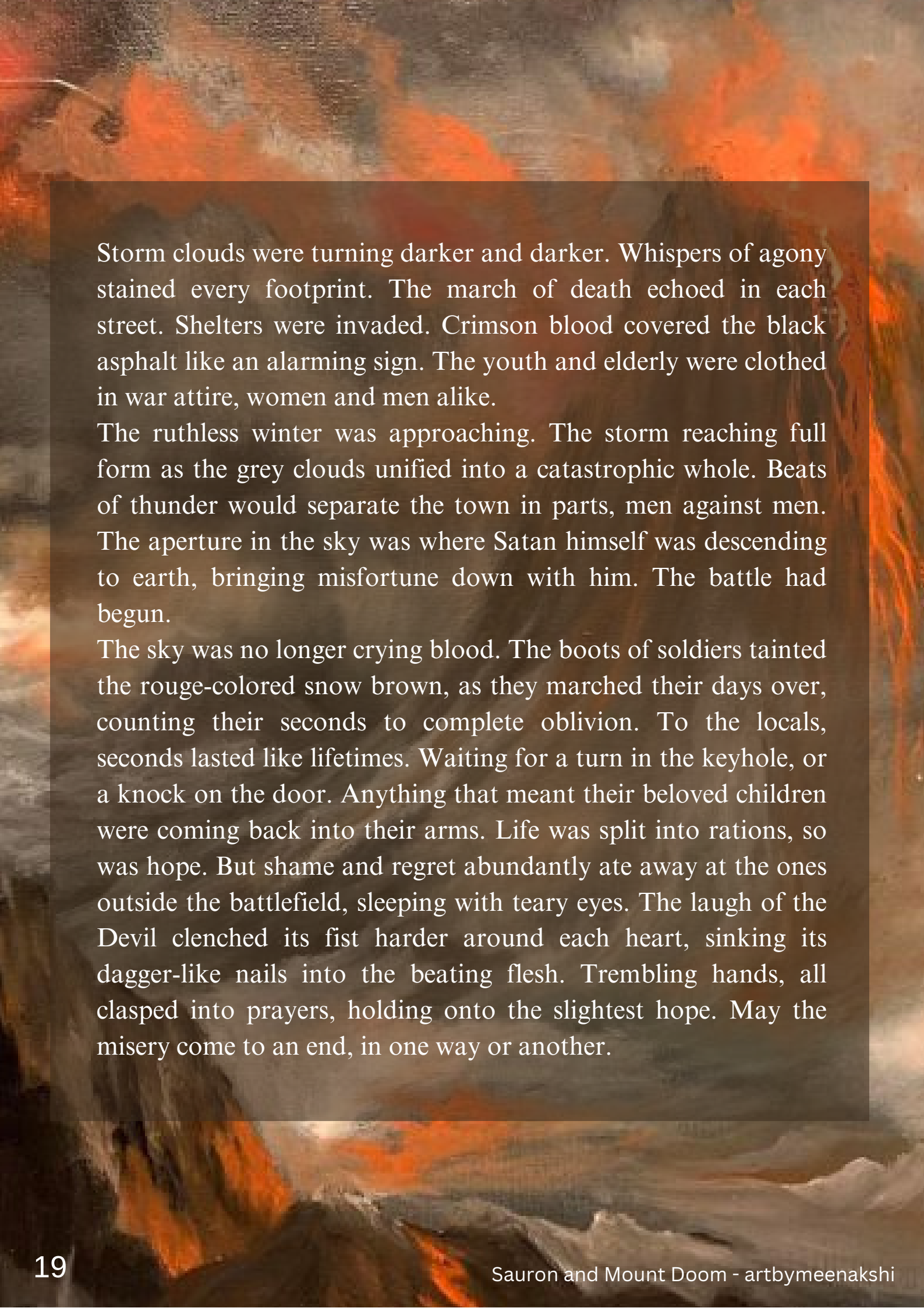
By Mahdiya Salarie

It was as if the promised doomsday had finally fallen upon them. Lives were changed, altered, ruined, shattered, and some not affected at all. Circling dark clouds brought a message, "A ghastly storm was approaching."

Had it been as dreadful all the while, or had it happened overnight? Perhaps doomsday was the very day some had finally come to the realization that they were merely surviving the blows rather than actually living. Spring had passed a long time ago. The breeze that was once gentle, had turned into something aggressive. Hostile wind carried horrid words around; "The worst has yet to come". Bad omens were scattered all over the town, graffiti on walls in pitch black ink, screams of ravens ringed in the gloomy air, and felines of the night disappearing in dark alleys, all told a story forbidden to be spoken about.

Safety was reserved only for the privileged. Danger followed locals like a shadow. Cries of pain hung in the air for days, weeks, even months, making you shiver in your place. Pigeons

were no longer carrying messages of hope. The devil's advocates were on the run again, shouting words at the top of their lungs, content with the guards protecting them like hounds, biting onto any soul who dared to disobey "the Mighty Lord". Invisible snakes slithered all over the town, waiting for the moment one dared to misbehave. Even leaves were turning darker. Blossoms were falling apart, petal by petal. Birds had stopped singing. Life was sucked out of every creature that was once alive. The luxury of warmth was taken away. Houses were once homes. You are not safe.



Storm clouds were turning darker and darker. Whispers of agony stained every footprint. The march of death echoed in each street. Shelters were invaded. Crimson blood covered the black asphalt like an alarming sign. The youth and elderly were clothed in war attire, women and men alike.

The ruthless winter was approaching. The storm reaching full form as the grey clouds unified into a catastrophic whole. Beats of thunder would separate the town in parts, men against men. The aperture in the sky was where Satan himself was descending to earth, bringing misfortune down with him. The battle had begun.

The sky was no longer crying blood. The boots of soldiers tainted the rouge-colored snow brown, as they marched their days over, counting their seconds to complete oblivion. To the locals, seconds lasted like lifetimes. Waiting for a turn in the keyhole, or a knock on the door. Anything that meant their beloved children were coming back into their arms. Life was split into rations, so was hope. But shame and regret abundantly ate away at the ones outside the battlefield, sleeping with teary eyes. The laugh of the Devil clenched its fist harder around each heart, sinking its dagger-like nails into the beating flesh. Trembling hands, all clasped into prayers, holding onto the slightest hope. May the misery come to an end, in one way or another.

Real World of Dream

By Kosar Darvishi

It all started on the weekend when we had a sleepover at her place. Evelyn was a nice and sweet girl. You could say she was the school's most popular and most beautiful girl from miles away. All of the teachers admired her, and you would always find her surrounded by students who tried to attract her attention. Unlike her, I was a nobody. I didn't attract a lot of attention from people, and I preferred to keep to myself. I was an antisocial person myself after all. But then, something changed. Evelyn, of all people, picked me to become best friends with. And that night was the first and last night that I spent in her room. We watched our favorite sitcom together and spent the rest of the night gossiping about our classmates.

It seemed like a regular girls' night that all best friends could have...until we went to sleep. I had an awful nightmare where I was in the woods. I saw trees everywhere I looked, dark tall trees with even darker shadows. Their leafless branches looked like witches' claws with pointy nails. Then, they started to whisper. I couldn't understand a word of it, but they kept singing that dreadful melody into my ears. I covered my ears with my hands "STOP IT!" I screamed. And that was when I woke up. My heart was pounding and cold sweat trickled down my spine. "Rachel! Are you okay?" It was Evelyn, with a worried look on her face. "I'm fine...It was just a nightmare." I said, "Can I have some water, please?" She came back with

a glass of water. When she gave it to me, somehow I managed to see her round green nails like those disgusting nails in my dream. I shook my head and tried to forget about it. It was just a very bad dream, nothing else. When I calmed down, I started to tell her what I had seen. She caressed my back. "That is a weird dream, but I'm sure it's nothing." She tried to comfort me. "Perhaps you just had too much pizza. Next time we'll order Chinese food." "Sounds great..." I sighed. That night came to an end, but my nightmare didn't. Actually, it got worse. The following night, I was back in the woods. The trees were pointing at me with their ugly fingers. This time, I was able to hear what they were saying. "Evelyn...we want you. Evelyn... come to us darling, come." Then I saw her. With her body full of scars and a black eye on her face, Evelyn was on the ground sobbing. Suddenly, one of the

trees began to move. A skeleton face appeared on its wooden hard surface. It smiled a creepy smile and extended its hands to her. "Get away from her!" I cried my lungs out. "Don't you dare touch her! I said stop!" Of course, it ignored me and grabbed her wrist. Evelyn noticed me. "Rachel! Do something! Don't let them take me!" I tried to reach her, but something was holding on tight to me. I felt those stone-cold nails around my waist. Then I was dragged behind and woke up.

My heart was beating in my ears like a drum. I could still see Evelyn's petrified face before my eyes. I called her a few times on my cell phone. She didn't answer. I grabbed a pair of shoes and ran to her house. I tried to convince myself that it was all just a dream. A dream is not reality, right? But how could I tell which was which? It all

felt so real that made me believe I had lost my friend. Finally, I was at her door. I knocked as hard as I could. " Evelyn, It's me. We need to talk." Someone opened the door. It wasn't her but a short old man who seemed to be displeased.

"Haven't your parents taught you anything, you little pest? " He yelled at me.

"I'm so sorry, sir. Are you Evelyn's grandfather? Is she at home? I need to talk to her_"

"I don't even have a wife... nobody lives here but me. Who the hell is Evelyn?"

"The girl who lives here."

"No one lives here but me and no one has lived here for the past twenty years but me! Get out of my yard! You kids just want to mess with adults!"

It couldn't be true. I had been there the other night. How could it be even possible? I called and texted her the rest of the day. I even asked her neighbors. They all admitted the house had belonged to that old man even before they moved in themselves. Was I checking the wrong address? Was she ignoring my calls? Why? The next day I returned to school. She would have never skipped school, but I failed to find her anywhere, so I asked my classmates if they'd seen Evelyn.

"Who's Evelyn?"

"Are you making nicknames for us, Rachel?"

"Is this a new trending challenge?"

It was a mistake to ask them in the first place, so I asked a teacher.

"Rachel, it's not appropriate to ask silly questions from your teachers."

"But I'm seriously asking."

"Really? Because we don't even have an Evelyn-named student in

our school."

I left the class because I couldn't hold back my tears anymore. Something terrible had happened to my best friend and no one even seemed to remember her, like she had never existed. I heard a voice faintly whispering into my ears:

"She's one of us now."

I turned around and didn't see anyone. Since that day, I've always wondered if I had truly left the nightmare, or if it had followed me back to the real world. Either way, I know that nothing will ever be the same again.



Locust

By Negar Sohani

The moment I entered the bank I could already feel my palms sweating. Although it was goddamn freezing outside and the bank wasn't much warm, I was melting like a despairing ice cream in summer. I have never seen so many people in a bank before. Anyway, I walked toward this machine that you can have your turn with. The guy in front of me had a very nice green jacket on. I thought about liking him. But as I stepped closer I changed my mind because he smelled like a dead rat. I can see gadflies around him that no one else can see. Oh, people! As I try to like them they show up with something that makes me hate them more than before. I behold him seeking an empty chair which was as rare as a non-maniac human around.

I had my turn. Ninety-five. The board showed fifty-four. God damn it I have to waste so much time! (Like I usually spend it effectually). I walked toward the window and leaned on it backward. As I was rolling my eyes on faces, a frizzy white abundance of hair popped up in front of my sight. A woman about an eternity-year-old was giving me a ridiculous grin like those of grandmas. Especially when you believe them nagging about coughing all day. My grandma at least feels good when you tell her "I get it. It must be horrible coughing all day and not finding a remedy." I haven't been visiting her for months. I doubt if she's even alive. I want to say I don't give a damn but I know I will die of guilt when she dies.

"Excuse me!" She said in a voice that sounded like a creaking door, pointing to a paper behind me.

"Sure." I handed her the paper and watched her leave.

Sure. That was the only word I've said and it feels like a thousand. I took a long breath because I remembered that I needed to breathe sometimes. I have this habit of holding my breath and it has had some side effects I suppose. I get dizzy often and stumble. I catch myself before I fall. Right on the edge, I catch.

Sixty-seven lighted on the board.

Banks. Goddamn banks. I wish I was living in an age when people hid their money in their pillows. Pillow Bank: personal and safe. That's a nice name for a bank I wonder why nobody has ever picked that name for one. Then I remembered that banks are supposed to be boring. They don't do much with creativity.

Eighty-nine. They must have a quick staff as they are handling so many people. They remind me of locusts with their awkward always-dead eyes and eye bags which are darker than their black stupid suits. They even live a locust-like lives. Destructive they are, so many you can't help when they attack, living a life of eight to ten weeks. Born to die but long enough. "At least they have reliable salaries" I remember once someone mentioned to me.

"What's your number ma'am?" The smelly green jacket asked.

"Ninety-five" I whisper so slowly I can't say I thought it or articulated it.

"It's your turn."

Ninety-five. Blood red on board. I walked onward, realizing I had torn apart the paper into millions of pieces below my feet.

Mary Had A Little Lamb

By Taranom Mohammadi

Actually, I have never read that famous story; I have only heard its name. But I am going to write about it anyway.

Well, let's assume that Mary is nearly thirteen and she has a little lamb. But...hold on a second, she doesn't "own" the little lamb. She is going to "receive" the little lamb.

The little lamb is not going to exist in the first stages of my story. So at the beginning, we only have Mary. This Mary is a schoolgirl but my story takes place in summer. Therefore, she has a whole lot of free time right now.

Mary is a city girl, despite what you may have heard about her. Since this girl is in her early teenage years, she likes to do something cool and different. So, as she was browsing Amazon she stumbled upon a pet category. She couldn't believe her eyes. There was an iguana for sale. Nothing could be more exotic and more teenage-like than that. So, she ordered the iguana.

The due time for sending the iguana was two days, but they sent it three days later.

She finally received her order on a Friday afternoon. When she opened the box, she couldn't believe what she had just seen. It wasn't an exotic, teenage-like creature like an iguana. It was the most common animal known to humankind.

It was a little lamb!

The lamb was very weak .it was making a low, screaming sound and its legs were shaking. Mary was confused. On one hand, she wanted to give the lamb back immediately and on the other hand, that creature was so weak that if she left it alone, it would die. So, the girl took good care of the lamb for a couple of days to keep it alive.

Well, I guess that's my story. That's the way Mary "got" a little lamb. Although it would be way easier if she "had" a little lamb in the first place. But it is not possible, is it?

You won't actually "have" something unless that thing is within you and is a part of you.

Now, let me tell you something, my dear reader; As a writer, I can only show you a spiritual aspect of the lamb by making it a part of Mary's ego.

There is this lovely afternoon when Mary suddenly wakes up from a long midday nap. There is a pain that wakes her up from that sweet nap. A pain in her stomach. She tries to make herself warm and lies down to soothe the pain, but it doesn't work.

Weirdly, after five minutes, at a single moment, it completely disappears.

Days pass without any pain in the stomach or anywhere else. After a week, Mary notices a purple spot on her stomach. It feels like there is a strange creature growing up in there. Suddenly, the creature moves and the pain begins. Again, she freaks out and tries to kill the creature by punching herself in the stomach. Punching doesn't work. The creature is stronger than that.

Eventually, Mary gets sick both mentally and physically. Her skin has become dark, and there are bruises from continuous punches all over her body. She still believes that punching is going to work and kill that monster inside her.

Paranoia has consumed her mind. She can't even go out of the house or let anybody inside.

Fear is what is controlling the poor girl. She can't trust anyone anymore. She has locked all the doors and drawn all the curtains. The house has turned into a kingdom of filth and darkness. Insects go up her body. The place has become a gigantic coffin with windows and doors in it. Mary's eyes are no longer green. They have turned black.

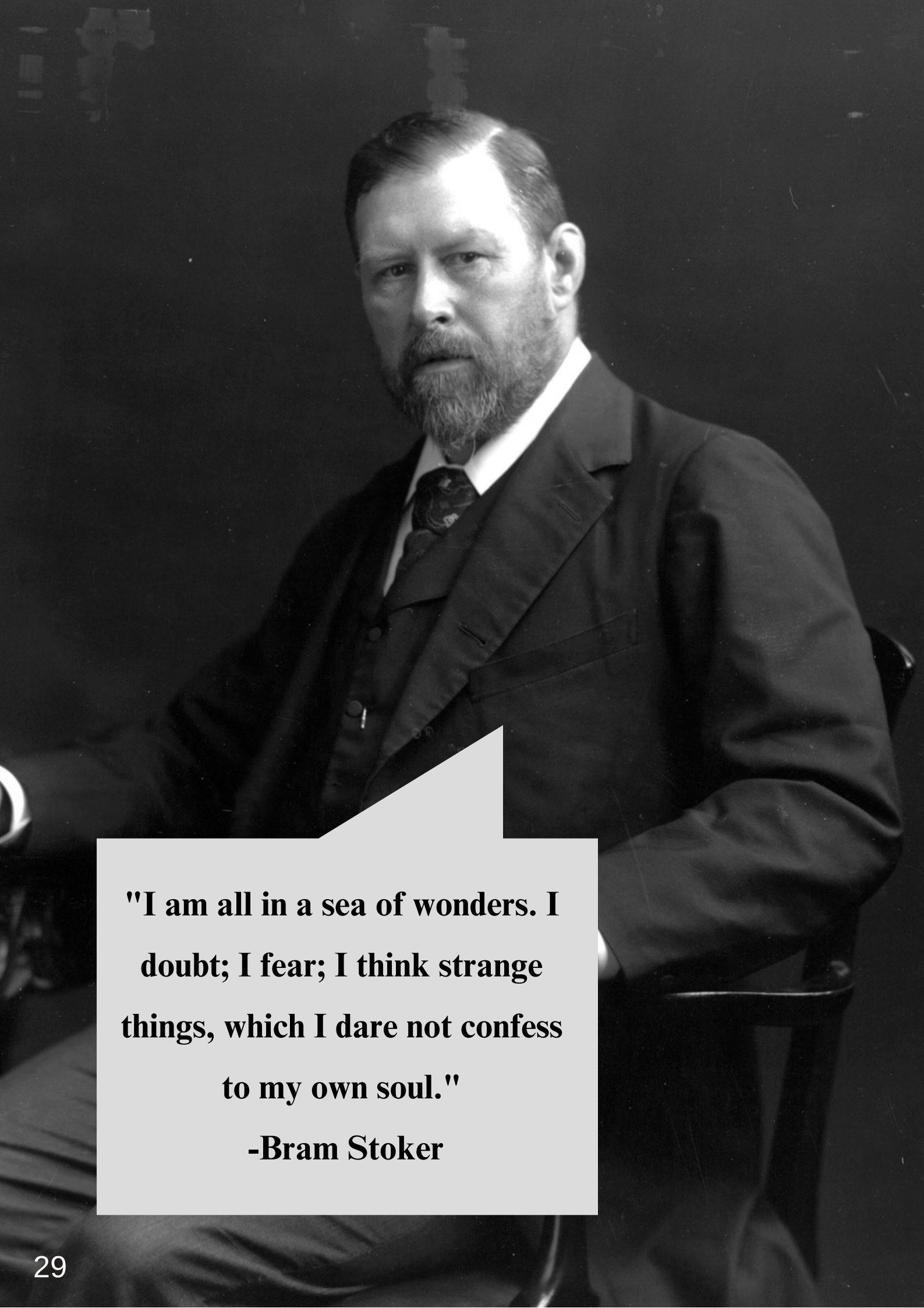
Darkness is all over her body and soul now. The way she sees things is different. It is as if there is a shadow on everything she sees. A black one. Her food is insects. She also feeds herself with the dirt that is on her old drawer. It makes her stronger and gives her the power to rule the dark empire of hers. Madness keeps growing in her head, she fights herself and lets her fists win.

The creature grows bigger and stronger every day. It has almost ripped her stomach to come out, but it doesn't. It waits for a few more days. Causing the poor girl more pain and suffering. Finally, it rips the girl's stomach with its long and sharp nails and hops out. Yup, it is Mary's little lamb. But it is not a cute white lamb. Its wool is black, and it has a sharp horn on its head. There is blood all over the place. The blood is not red. It is black and sticky.

That is how Mary "had" a little lamb. She didn't achieve it. She didn't even choose to have it. She just "had" it. With no control over it.

Anyway, Mary eventually died and the lamb made a crown out of her corpse and put it on its head and became the vicar in the girl's dark empire.





**"I am all in a sea of wonders. I
doubt; I fear; I think strange
things, which I dare not confess
to my own soul."**

-Bram Stoker

A Critique to Manual of the Warrior of Light

By Hamidreza Mirzaei

Strange as the story begins, but soon you find yourself in a room full of thoughts. Some of them inspiring, others frightening, some pleasant, and some disappointing. “Manual of the Warrior of Light,” an incredible piece written by Paulo Coelho, which I believe has not been appreciated as it should, contains a series of quotes, explanations, and mysterious stories about how and why an ideal person behaves and thinks in a world like ours. Hidden behind Coelho’s famous novel, “The Alchemist”, “Manual of the Warrior of Light” serves as a guidance to spirituality and living a fruitful life in a mechanical world where meaning is rare to find. Being young in the 21st century, the era of science and technology, we fight in no war; no great conflicts, and no real depressions. Our only real war is a spiritual one. The only real challenge we face is to make sense of our lives. That’s the real conflict. That’s the true obstacle. That’s the battle we fight. “Manual of the Warrior of Light” is a handbook to win this battle.

A little innocent boy meets a mysterious woman. She informs the boy about an island on which existed a temple with many bells, but an earthquake drowned the temple and the bells. Still, the bells ring beneath the water. The mysterious woman persuades our little boy that if he is lucky, he might be able to hear the bells ringing underwater. The boy, losing interest in everything, spends days and weeks by the shore listening to the ocean, hoping to hear the ringing bells.

Waves crashing, wind blowing through the palm trees, and seagulls squawking are all he can hear. The fishermen from the village tell him that they have heard the bells. So he sustains despite no result. Once, a fisherman, seeing the little boy in distress and obsession, suggests that perhaps only fishermen can hear the bells. Hearing this, relief flows into his veins. He decides to become a fisherman when he grows up so that he can hear the magical bells. But suddenly, a miracle happens. Just when he feels no pressure on his shoulders to hear the bells, as he turns his head to listen to the ocean one more time, everything sounds different. Palm trees, waves, and seagulls feel relaxed and he finally hears the bells ringing!

Years later, when the little boy turns into a grown man, he comes back to the same shore. The mysterious woman reappears to the man. Not aged a bit. Not a little different. She gives the man a notebook. Empty of any words, she demands that the man write about a warrior who belongs to the light. The Manual of the Warrior of Light. And that's how the journey begins.

This book is a treasure for all of us who seek meaning in our daily lives as we struggle along the spiritual path. There exists a warrior within each of us who is capable of listening to the silence of hearts, accepting failure without letting it bring us down, and capable of holding onto hope when facing of exhaustion and depression. Values such as love for all things, discipline, and friendship are the arms that this warrior uses when he confronts the battles in the name of personal growth. On every page lies an inspirational thought, which can be read as a part of Paulo Coelho's holistic philosophy or his daily meditation.

Even though the way he shifts from the opening story to the manual, the empty notebook, might be(to some extend) questionably sharp and noticeable, soon the reader feels surrounded by words of wisdom, each of them enriches our existence in a particular manner. The following line is a drop in

Paulo's bucket. Read them slowly. Savor it.

“We hide our fear of loneliness behind an air of independence”

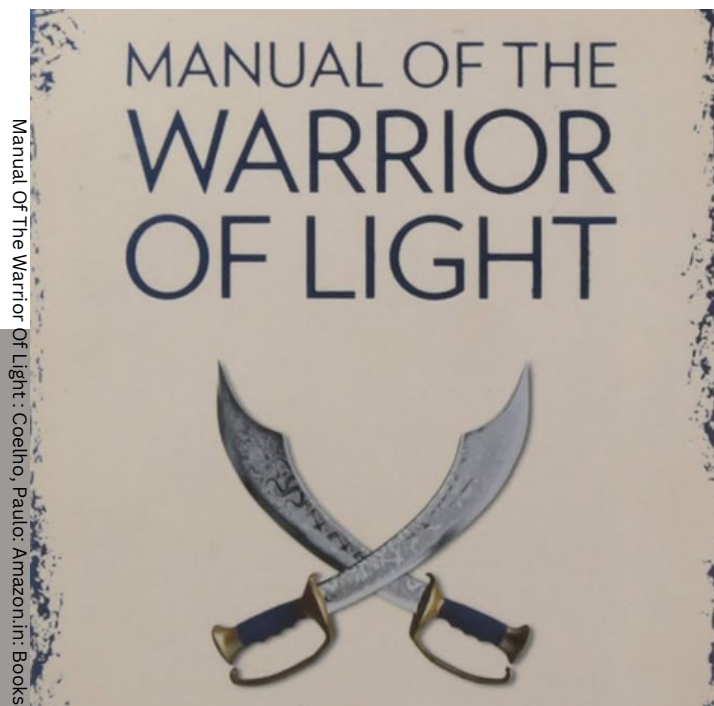
The author values companionship, reliability, and trustworthiness. Nowadays we are often told that If we are independent and ignorant we will not be hurt by people. Nevertheless, according to Coelho's philosophy – or more specifically, the philosophy of the warrior of light – we are all bound to get hurt. So wouldn't it be better to enjoy companionship while having it under control? As the warrior says “Nobody's your friend, nobody's your enemy.”

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Kafka's Character in an Ivory Tower

By Atousa Mirzapour

Contemporary literature is character-oriented. Most of the stories are devoted to the psychological development of the characters. The reader comes to know the character through the story. Novels are novels of characters, not incidents. The Second World War made humans understand that no one would come to save them. All types of literature were under the influence of the general condition of the time. A pessimistic point of view can be seen in literature at the time. From the Victorian age on, positivism faded away due to the development of different sciences like psychology. The themes of contemporary literature are disillusionment, isolation, and death.

The short story called "Hunger Artist" by Franz Kafka is an example of contemporary literature with third-person narration. It tells the story of a hunger artist who fasts for so long that he dies. The idea of Hunger Artists was common some decades ago. Back then, it was a valuable art to fast as hunger artists. Kafka portrays a materialistic society that would no longer value a hungry artist. Therefore, one can argue that this classic art will not survive because people are no longer interested in valuable art. The story of "Hunger Artist" is a criticism of the modern society that does not value novel art. Hunger artists could also be the criticism of shallow judgment of people attracted to superficial things.

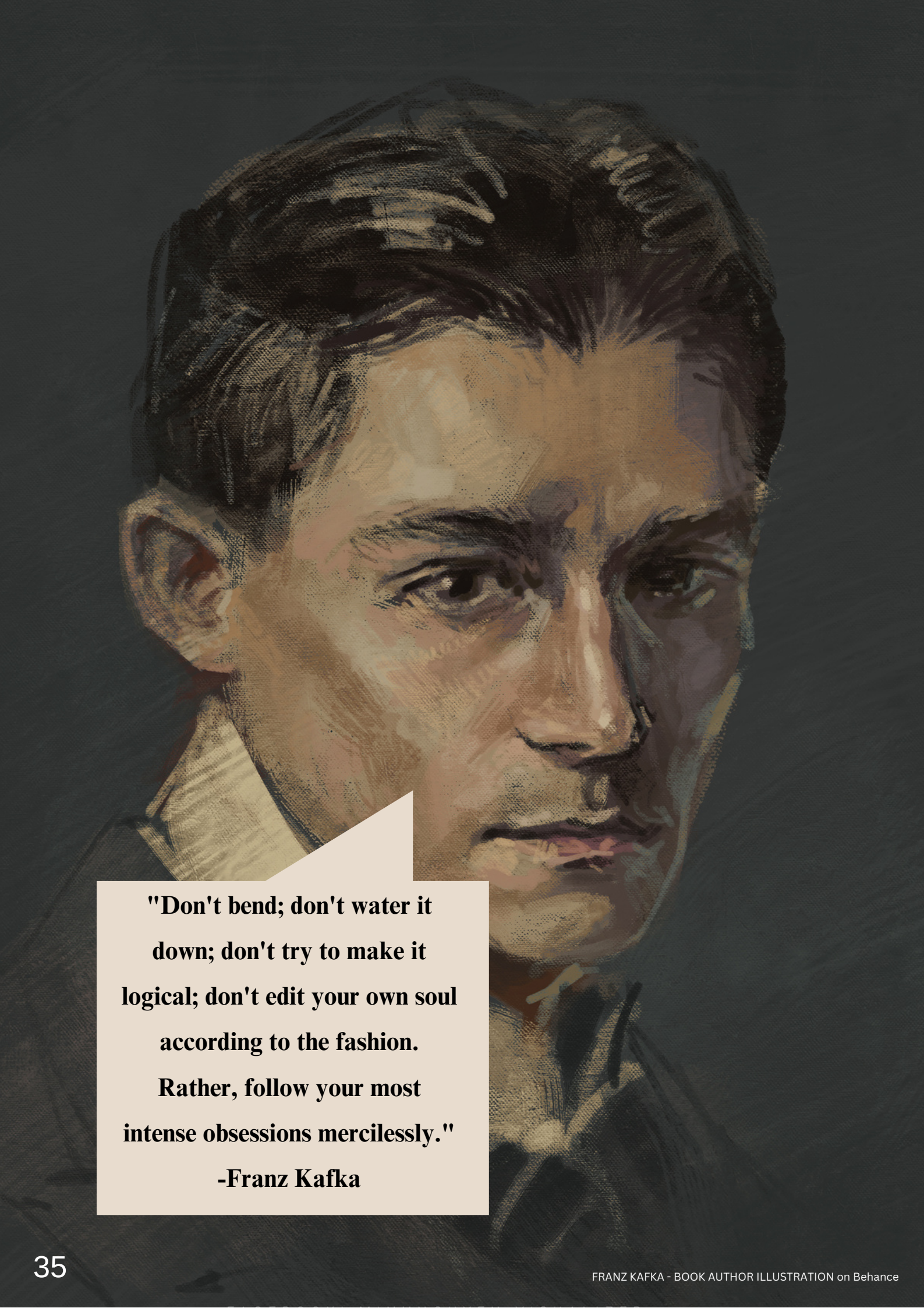
The artist is in an ivory tower and far from people. In the story, the hunger artist fasts until he dies while no one actually pays attention to the valuable art. The food for an artist is the attention and understanding he gets from the audience. He needs to be admired. But the bars can be a symbol of the separation between the artist and the society. The eyes are the only lively body part of the artist, with which he links the outside and the inside. The protagonist is a Kafkaesque: an individual victimized by the society. Even the writer did not have a good relationship with his audience and his father. Panther is eager to live and is a symbol of the materialistic aspect of human life. Thus, one can say that the main theme is isolation and alienation.

The panther could be a symbol of the body or even a symbol of the passion of the people for things that they can understand. The butcher is the sensible aspect of society; It refers to the materialistic world and a gap between people and spirituality. You can see the conflict between body and soul. It indicates that society cares more for the body. It can be seen when the artist says that he did not find the food he likes from a spiritual point of view. From a social point of view, you can see that there is no mutual correspondence between the society and the artist. The crisis of spirituality is there. There is no trust between people. They do not believe that the artist is fasting.

The protagonist of the story can be a symbol of every artist and even a person who feels separated from modern society. Perhaps the cost we paid for modernism is too much that we can no longer appreciate the classic art

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**"Don't bend; don't water it
down; don't try to make it
logical; don't edit your own soul
according to the fashion.
Rather, follow your most
intense obsessions mercilessly."**

-Franz Kafka

The Enigmatic Allure of Sad Endings

By Hanieh Zare Soheyli

Sad endings have a peculiar appeal that has captivated the audience throughout history. Despite the emotional distress they may cause, the question remains: why do people love sad endings? One possible explanation lies in the cathartic release that a tragic conclusion provides. By experiencing sadness vicariously through fictional characters, individuals can confront and process their own emotions in a safe and controlled environment. Sad endings offer a unique opportunity for reflection and introspection, allowing the audience to connect with the complexities of humannature. They have the ability to elicit powerful emotional responses within us, reaching the depths of our experiences and evoking feelings like sorrow, grief, and longing. These emotions, although seemingly negative, connect us to our own vulnerability and remind us of the complexity of our emotional landscape. By experiencing sadness through fictional narratives, we are given the opportunity to reflect on our own lives, allowing us to appreciate the entire range of human emotions. As the story concludes on a somber note, we are prompted to contemplate the underlying themes and messages conveyed throughout the narrative. We question the choices made by the characters and ponder upon the implications of their actions. In doing so, sad endings invite us to examine our own lives, encouraging personal growth and self-awareness.

We may find satisfaction and gain insight into our own struggles and dilemmas, ultimately leading to a deeper understanding of ourselves and the world around us. The power of sad endings lies in their ability to foster empathy and forge connections between the audience and the characters. When we witness the characters' suffering, losses, and heartbreak, we become emotionally invested in their journeys. We empathize with their pain, experiencing a profound sense of shared humanity. This empathetic connection not only deepens our understanding of the characters but also enhances our capacity for compassion and empathy in our own lives. Sad endings, therefore, serve as a means of cultivating our emotional intelligence and strengthening our bond with others.

A sad ending is characterized by the absence of traditional notions of triumph and resolution. It deviates from the expectation of a happy conclusion, leaving the audience with a lingering sense of sadness or a bittersweet aftertaste. Sad endings can have various forms: the death of a beloved character, the collapse of a romantic relationship, or the realization of irreparable loss. They challenge our preconceived notions of closure and force us to confront the complexities and uncertainties of life. Sad endings often challenge societal norms and expectations. In a world that often favors happy endings and neatly resolved narratives, the inclusion of a sad conclusion can be refreshing and thought-provoking. It serves as a reminder that life is not always fair or predictable, and that even the most beloved characters are not immune to tragedy. This departure from the expected can ignite discussions, encouraging the audience to explore the hidden concepts of the story. Furthermore, sad endings have the power to evoke a profound emotional response.



The poignancy and sadness connected to these endings can leave a lasting impact on the audience, staying with them even after the story has ended. This emotional resonance is a testament to the writer's skill, as it demonstrates their ability to craft a narrative that resonates deeply with the human experience. However, it is important to note that the definition of a sad ending may vary depending on one's perspective. While some may perceive it as a conclusion where the protagonist faces tragedy or loss, others may argue that a sad ending can also encompass unresolved conflicts or unfulfilled desires. The interpretation of a sad ending is subjective, and its impact on individuals will differ based on their personal experiences and worldview.

In conclusion, people are drawn to sad endings for various reasons. Whether it is the cathartic release they provide, the challenge to societal norms, or the emotional resonance they evoke, sad endings have a unique ability to captivate and engage the audience. By exploring the depths of human emotion and confronting the complexities of life, these endings offer a profound and thought-provoking experience that continues to resonate long after the final page is turned or the credits roll. Sad endings defy the notion that stories should always end with triumph or resolution. Instead, they present a more realistic portrayal of life's complexities and uncertainties.

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13 black cats walk under the latter!

By Fateme Moosavi

When a black cat crosses your way, it is necessary to spit three times over your left shoulder and say “touch the wood”, as it is believed to help keeping the good luck! BECAUSE black cat symbolizes bad luck.

Careful with that mirror! According to folklore, breaking a mirror is a surefire way to doom yourself to seven years of bad luck. The superstition seems to arise from the belief that mirrors don't just reflect your image; “they hold bits of your soul”. That belief led people in the old days of the American South to cover mirrors in a house when someone died, lest for fear that their soul be trapped inside.

Things like this are very common around the world. Even well-educated people believe in some of these superstitious things. But why?! Why people happen to believe in the unbelievable?

Simply, superstition is a behavior that has no logical and rational basis. If things are not in a person's control or are unexplained, engaging in superstition has shown to reduce stress and anxiety among people. Studies have shown that superstitious beliefs help some people to promote a positive mental attitude. Decisions taken based on superstition can be irrational and more with belief in destiny and luck.

So, the question is whether you believe in superstitions or not?



“I think life is a series of random coincidences and can’t be shaped by these strange little habits, but I guess it’s reassuring to believe you have some control over it — especially when there’s so much about our lives and society that we can’t change. Life is pretty scary sometimes, so people [do] whatever they can to try avoiding hidden dangers.”

Here are some reasons that derive people into superstition:

Superstition is cheap! One reason that people may believe in superstition is that it is “cheaper”. Knocking on a wooden surface when commenting that one has been in great health for years is a small price to pay, compared to the potentially devastating consequences of illness.

One study confirms this and explains that superstitions appeal to people because the advantages of carrying around a lucky charm, for example, outweigh the disadvantages of a so-called costly exploration scenario — a situation where a person must explore an uncertain environment. Similarly, avoiding the “number 13” may impose a relatively small cost with potentially large benefit, which might explain why this superstition persists.

Tempting Fate! Imagine that you’re sitting in a class and the professor is choosing students at random to answer his questions. You may be thinking, “I am unprepared and will therefore definitely be called on”. You feel that you “tempted fate” by coming to class unprepared, and are thus more likely to be chosen by the professor.

People believe that anything they do or say might increase the likelihood of the opposite happening. For example, leaving your umbrella at home, thinking “It will not rain today”, will actually increase the probability of getting stuck in the rain later that afternoon.

This happens because the moment we think or do something to tempt fate, all the negative possibilities rush into our minds. Since negative thoughts are, by nature, more accessible, we automatically make a connection between tempting fate and negative outcomes, making us feel that these negative outcomes are especially likely once we have tempted fate in some way.

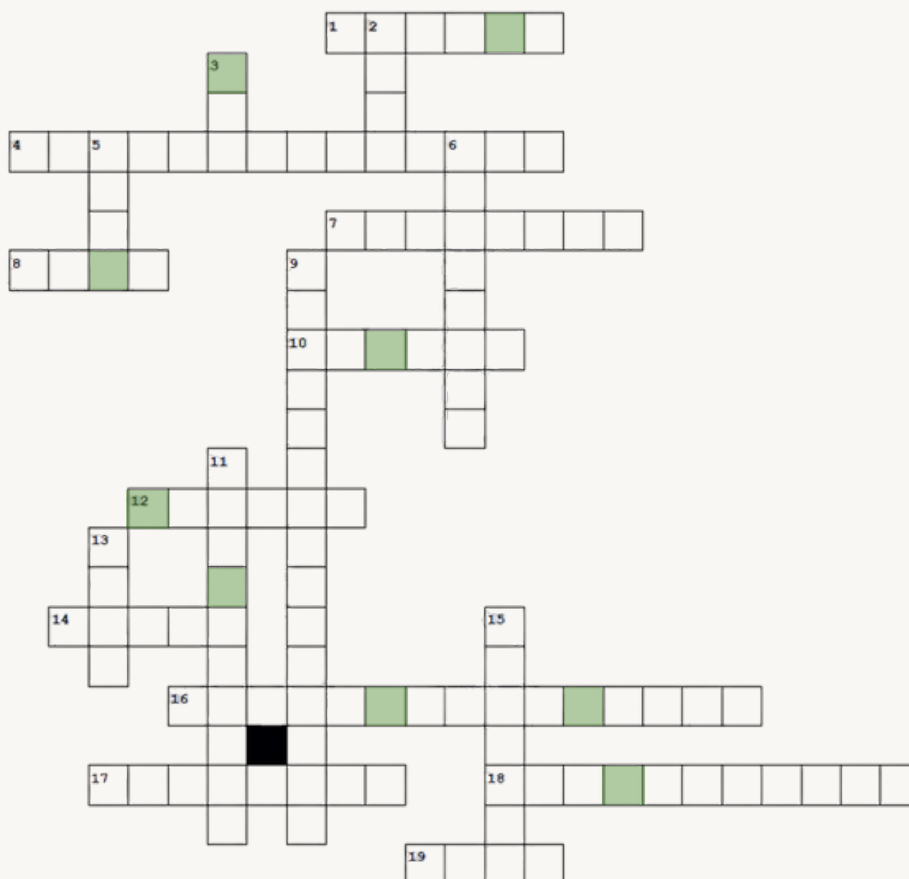
Jumping to Conclusions! What is most comforting and almost captivating about superstitions is that they have the ability to provide an explanation for everything. This means that if anything good or bad occurs in conjunction with a particular action, we readily jump into the conclusion that the action caused the outcome, which may not always be true.

Yet another reason why superstitions continue to exist is confirmation bias! Confirmation bias is the tendency of our mind to favor information that validates our existing beliefs. For example, if we think that a certain person is “bad”, information that corroborates this thinking is more likely to jump into our minds, thereby confirming our initial thought.

Despite all these things, some people truly don't believe in superstition. Yet, they sometimes engage in superstition practices. It's a defense mechanism for them! Thus, even though they don't believe in such a superstition, they think it's only rational to protect themselves against it, just in case it does turn out to be true. Superstitious or not, you can't deny that superstitions are quite interesting—and not always bad! Like most other things, they can be healthy within limits, and are sometimes a charming piece of familial nostalgia. However, if you find yourself constantly fretting about the results of your superstitious behavior, it might be wise to break those irrational habits as soon as possible! “Fingers crossed!”

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Across

1. Play on Prince of Denmark by William Shakespeare
4. Classic book on New York in the 1920s by F. Scott Fitzgerald
7. God of the sea, Oceans, and water
8. "King ___" by William Shakespeare
10. "___ Faustus" a tragedy written by Christopher Marlow
12. "The Picture of ___ Gray" by Oscar Wilde
14. God of the underworld
16. A novel written by Margaret Mitchell
17. "Pet ___" a story by Stephen King
18. Book series by J.K. Rowling
19. "And Then There ___ None" by Agatha Christie

Down

2. "___ Karenina" by Leo Tolstoy
3. "The Raven" by Edgar Allan ___
5. a novel written by Jane Austin
6. Conan Doyle's most famous character (first name)
9. "The ___" by Ernest Hemingway about a Cuban fisherman
11. "Dracula" a novel written by ___
13. "Crimson ___" a movie directed by Guillermo del Toro
15. "The ___ in The Rye" by J.D. Salinger

Note:

By solving this crossword puzzle, you will be able to make a famous quote with the help of the colored squares. We hope you live your life as the quote says ;)

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Volume 24

English Break

The Scientific Association of
English Language and Literature of
Alzahra University

