





# AMO<sup>2</sup>

*“Unravel the past, live the present, and  
script the future.”*

# *In this Anthology*

*In this remarkable book, students of Al Mawakeb School have joined hands to craft and launch a collection of over 55 imaginative narratives. Representing various grades from Al Mawakeb School Al Garhoud, these students have selected poignant events from past centuries and placed themselves within those historical moments. They have reimaged the events with new plots, introduced original characters, and infused the stories with their own feelings and thoughts, as if they were real participants experiencing the events firsthand, forming this researched based anthology that flows in sequence of the past and current centuries.*

*This anthology is not just a testament to their creativity but also to their dedication and understanding of historical contexts. Each story serves as a bridge between the past and present, allowing readers to explore significant moments through fresh, youthful perspectives. Through detailed descriptions and vivid storytelling, these young authors bring history to life, making it relatable and engaging for modern audiences. This collaborative effort showcases their literary talents and deepens their appreciation for the impact of history on our lives today.*

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# *The End Of Julius Caesar*

*In the Eyes of: Yassin Fergany*

*“Julius Caesar, born in 100 BC, was a Roman general and statesman pivotal in the transition from the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire. His military conquests, notably in Gaul, catapulted him to power; eventually leading to his appointment as dictator for life. Caesar's assassination in 44 BC by senators, including Brutus, marked a significant shift in Roman politics and history.”*

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As I slowly let my blade meet the last Pompeian, it went through smoothly, sounding like a muffled scream lost in a storm, as subdued as a goat in the undertow, and like fabric tearing under a muted curse. I held him by his neck, stared him in the eyes, and saw a bloodthirsty man. When I asked him if he wanted to surrender, I was met with his saliva on my face. I twisted my blade and pulled it back with all my power. I then slid my hand from the back of his sweat and blood-filled neck, and he dropped to the ground, with his face lying towards the ground filled with the blood of my soldiers and Pompey's. That man didn't deserve to die, but he should've asked for mercy, and I would've given him the clemency he deserved. As for the rest of the Pompeians, they were given clemency by myself, Caesar. The task still hasn't finished, Pompey has fled to Egypt, and Rome is still not fully in my grasp. I pushed through my soldiers and stood in the middle of the battlefield, which was filled with the corpses of fallen soldiers.

“Soldiers of Rome, Fortissimo (the bravest), our victory at Pharsalus is a testament to our might. Now, we pursue Pompey to Egypt, not from odium (hatred) but for iustitia (justice) and the Republic. In this journey, let us recall: Veni, Vidi, Vici (I came, I saw, I conquered)—not just as a recollection of our past victories but as a promise for what lies ahead. Our causa (cause) is just, and our spirit is indomitable. We march, misericordes in victoria (merciful in victory), for the Gloria rei publicae (glory of the Republic), united under the gods. Procedimus ut unum (We go forth as one) to protect Rome's legacy and ensure its future. State Mecum (stand with me), as guardians of peace and architects of history.”

The soldiers roared, and I smiled. I led the soldiers to the docks, where we got on our naval fleets and headed to Egypt in pursuit of Pompey.

A month and a half had gone by since leaving the docks in Greece, and we had finally arrived in Egypt, awaiting to capture Pompey alive. Captaining Pompey alive seemed stupid to some soldiers, and I knew that because during the journey to Egypt, they would have little talks between them, but when they saw me, everything seemed to quiet down as if they were pacified, but that was not the atmosphere I wanted to share with my soldiers. So since then, I have had conversations with many of the soldiers, and I have told them my plans and strategies for successfully capturing Pompey alive. Many of the soldiers had opposing ideas, saying that we should capture Pompey and execute him or that it did not matter if we captured him alive or

dead. These soldiers, we would call fools; there was no harm in listening to them, but they still did not add any value to the strategy or the planning. These same soldiers did not understand the severity of capturing Pompey alive. Pompey had the backing of the Senate, which chose him over me in the civil war. Having him pardoned by myself would be one of the greatest demonstrations of power and would minimize any further resistance that would arise if he were killed, so capturing him alive is the only choice, but it will not be easy. Pompey Magnus, my adversary, my once-brother-in-arms. How has fate brought us to this juncture, where swords must resolve what words cannot? Your military genius, once the beacon of Rome's might, now shadows the Republic, threatening her very foundations. Yet, in your flight to this distant land, do I sense fear? Or is it the final act of defiance, a test of wills between two visions of Rome? Your strategy, ever cautious, has led you here, but Egypt will not be the sanctuary you seek. It is but the stage for our final reckoning. As the Nile carves through the land, so too have our choices carved our paths, leading us inexorably to this moment. I called the naval commander and told him to put the journey to a halt because we had arrived at the location of our final reckoning.

As I set foot upon the sands of Egypt, the weight of Rome's destiny rests upon my shoulders. Here, in this ancient land of pharaohs and gods, I find myself not as a conqueror, but as a seeker of justice, in pursuit of one who was once Rome's greatest son, now her prodigal. We looked around conversing with the locals trying to figure out where Plotemy XIII was staying. A man, with a unique belt engraved with some heliographics, wearing tons of golden accessories approached my entourage and called us to follow him into Plotemy XIII's palace. We followed him, once we arrived, the man who escorted us opened the door for us and told me to continue straight and you will find Plotemy. I continued and my soldiers followed me. At that moment, there were ten people in total so we had to proceed with caution. Once I got to the end of the hall I saw a massive seat on what seemed to be the seat of the Pharaoh, I went to approach the seat, but the Pharaoh's commanding guards drew out their weapons but so did my soldiers. In this awkward standoff, I heard a strong but youthful voice, calling on us to stop. We kept our weapons drawn, but the Pharaoh's commanding guards slowly dropped their weapons. So it was evident it was Plotemy XIII since the commanding guards only took orders from him.

I said to Plotemy sitting on the opposite side of his throne, "Pharaoh Ptolemy, under the auspices of Rome and in the spirit of the alliance that binds our great nations, I seek knowledge of Pompey Magnus. He, who once stood beside me in the Senate as a pillar of the Republic, now flees the turmoil he has sown. As sovereign of this land, have you, or your guardians, cast eyes upon him or offered refuge within your borders?" I said that in full directness and diplomacy to clear up the room that was filled with hostility.

He, Plotemy, arose from his throne and replied to me and said, "Great Caesar, your quest for Pompey Magnus ends within the confines of my kingdom, a land that honors its guests as much as it respects the sanctity of its alliances. We Egyptians hold dear our bonds with Rome and seek only to fortify them in the spirit of mutual prosperity and peace."

He pauses, and he signals one of his commanding guards of a higher status to bring something unseen to be brought forth, he then says, "In your pursuit of justice and

reconciliation, know that Egypt, under my reign, has acted not with malice but with the foresight to preserve the delicate balance upon which our nations stand. Behold.” The moment he uttered the words “Behold” he unveiled that unseen item that was veiled by a black piece of cloth, he unveiled the head of Pompey the Great.

I was in shock, but he still didn’t finish his words, he said in a voice of solemnity and an attempt of justification, “Pompey sought refuge here, yet in his final moments, it was Egypt’s destiny to serve as the arbiter of his fate. In this act, understand my commitment to Rome’s cause and my resolve to protect the interests of my people. Let this serve not as a wedge but as a testament to our allegiance to Rome and its illustrious son, Julius Caesar”. After I heard these words from the Pharaoh and had the head of my greatest rival and once brother-in-law in my arms, I wept, not only because I was sad, but because I respected him and he deserved a Roman death and funeral.

After the death of Pompey, I arrived in Rome, to pardon and provide clemency to those who supported Pompey in the civil war, one man stood out among the rest, it was Marcus Junius Brutus or Brutus. Marcus Junius Brutus was one of Pompey’s most loyal men but most importantly he was loyal to Rome itself. His mother, Servilia, was a woman I loved, but my wife never knew, but I still did not let my views on his mother affect whether I was going to pardon him or not. I saw value in Brutus, he had a strong loyal character, he was like a son, and posed talent that would benefit the Roman Republic. Not only did he have talent, but he was of descent to the man who founded the Roman Republic itself, Lucius Junius Brutus. I then pardoned him.

I was pardoned.

My name is Marcus Junius Brutus and I believe in the Roman Republic, and that shows in my ancestral legacy. I am the descendant of Lucius Junius Brutus the man that overthrew the last Roman king. My ancestor Lucius worked hard even at the expense of his own family dying; he wanted to make sure that there wasn’t too much power given to one person and that it was a republic where people could speak what was on their minds and had senators that would make decisions based on people’s opinions and thoughts and not have any type of tyranny or monarchy. When I asked to be pardoned by Julius Caesar, I meant it and I wanted to work for him, but I believed that there was a chance to get the Roman Republic back to where it was. Rome was in turmoil and was divided by two sides, Caesar’s side and Pompey’s. I picked Pompey’s only because my uncle chose to be on Pompey’s side. Pompey, the man who murdered my father, welcomed me with open hands, and it was in Rome’s best interest that I side with Pompey in this civil war, so I did side with him. The war emerged and we lost it, I escaped imprisonment and headed to Greece to apologize in hopes of being pardoned by Caesar, but once I apologized, I was pardoned instantly with no extra measures, I was taken in unconditionally by Caesar and given a political title even though I was on the side that opposed him. That man gave me a second chance and was treating me like a son, but the reason I think I was pardoned, was that I TRULY believed in the Roman Republic and not tyranny, and I thought that Julius Caesar wasn’t going to abuse his power and was going to save the Republic from its current turmoil and volatility.

Years have passed since the day I was pardoned; it's been approximately 3 years, and I was currently being elected as a praetor, which would've given me more respect and authority within the Roman political system. It turned out I was wrong because I believed that Julius Caesar would restore the republic after the Civil War. Rome never went back to that same republic and Caesar was gaining too much power. I couldn't deny that Julius Caesar had done great things for Rome and myself, but he was still gaining too much power. Today there would be an announcement, but I was unsure what the announcement revolved around. All I knew was that Caesar would be there, and it was going to be at the Senate House. I arrived at the senate house with one of my friends who I had been speaking with regularly for a while, his name is Gaius Cassius Longinus. The moment I arrived at the senate; I saw Julius Caesar in the middle of all the other senators. I asked around senators who were near my vicinity, and they said that Julius Caesar was appointed "dictator perpetuo" meaning dictator for life.

"Dictator For Life?!" I told the senator.

I thought, how is that possible, it shouldn't be, why? But to that, no answer, I was furious, the anger went through my arm and through veins which triggered me to clench my fists. I left the senate house in a hurry, in anger and fury at what has happened to the republic. Do they not understand what they had done to the republic, they were single-handedly creating a MONARCHY that would THREATEN the Republic's fundamentals and existence. Once I left the senate, I saw Cassius outside, he saw me in anger and fury and asked why I looked like this.

I stared into his soul and said, "This is the DEATH knell of the Republic. Caesar, cloaked in ambition, has torn the very fabric of Rome. Where stands liberty now, Cassius? Shall we be subject to a king in all but name?"

Cassius replied to me while he was smiling and said, "Perfect, then let this be our clarion call, Brutus. We stand at the precipice, with Rome's soul in the balance. Join us, for only together can we restore the Republic from the grasp of tyranny. Our forefathers demand it; our honor requires it.". I joined the conspiracy.

After a few months, it was March and we decided that the day of his death would be March 15 (ides march), since most of the conspirators were senators, we decided to kill him in the Senate house, this was also strategic since most of his men wouldn't be able to enter. There were 60 conspirators but only 20 to 30 were equipped with daggers. The dagger choice was mine, since it could easily be hidden beneath our tunics and cloaks, which was the traditional attire of the senators, and it would allow us to bring in the daggers without arousing any type of suspicion upon entry. The day had come, and the conspirators were ready, and I was sure that Julius wasn't going to anticipate this. One of my co-conspirators, Decius Brutus called Julius Caesar into the senate meeting place near the theater of Pompey. Once he entered he was alone around all the other "senators" (conspirators). One of the conspirators, Servilius Casca, was the first to stab him; he was the one to give the sign to the rest of the room that the attack had commenced, he stabbed Julius Caesar in the neck and from that stab, his fate was sealed. He did not know I was in the room until he saw my face. While the conspirators were stabbing

him, I pushed through them to give Julius the final blow. I pushed myself through the crowd until Caesar saw me, once he saw me his face flipped to happiness or as if he was saved , he thought I was going to save him. I stared him in the eyes and pulled out my dagger, I saw pain in his eyes, but it was necessary for the republic, the moment he saw my dagger he looked staggered he then muttered the words:

## *“Et Tu Brute?!” (You Too Brutus) ”*

I pushed my blade forward, the weight of Rome's fate heavy in my hand. As steel met flesh, it was not just Caesar I betrayed, but a part of myself. In that instant, torn between love for the Republic and the man before me, I became both Rome's defender and its most haunted son. With each heartbeat, the ideal of liberty we yearned for bled out, leaving me to wonder if freedom was the true cost of this necessary yet tragic deed.



# *Augustus Caesar: Triumph Amidst Turmoil*

*In the Eyes of: Mohamad Chahbaz*

*"Augustus Caesar, born Gaius Octavius in 63 BC, became Rome's first emperor after defeating Mark Antony and Cleopatra in 31 BC. His reign ushered in the Pax Romana, marked by peace and stability, and his reforms laid the foundation for the Roman Empire's 186 governance. Augustus' death in 14 AD sealed his legacy as Rome's most influential leader."*

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In the heart of the Roman Empire, where the very air had whispers of history. Augustus's life held a great many battles, betrayals, and a constant conquest for power more than just the expansion of the Roman borders, but rule and control over the world as we knew it. Augustus's life paved the way for the world as we knew it, as such, his story will be honored with this text.

Born as Gaius Octavius Thurinus on the 23rd of September in 63 BC. I was born to a distinguished lineage of cardinal political members: My father Gaius Octavius, an esteemed senator, heavily respected in the realm of Roman politics, and my mother Atia, who planted and watered seeds of ambition and aspiration into my psyche, paving the way for me to turn into who I stood as today.

Our family had constant issues and trials. As my father, who I had loved dearly, passed away, leaving a vacuum in our household. A vacuum my mother tried to fix by marrying a new man. A man named Lucius Marcius Philippus. My mother had made various attempts in harboring connections between us, alas we could not stand one another. His presence in our household created an overwhelming sense of unease I could not shake off. I found warmth and peace with another person however, my grandmother Julia Caeseris. She would soon introduce me to my great uncle, a wise and powerful man: Julius Caesar.

Relations between Julius and I continuously grew, and as I saw him for wisdom, he saw within me potential to grow and become a great leader. Due to our growing relations, Julius added me to his will as an heir to his power and treasures. However, no one could have known what was to happen shortly after. As in the year 44 BC, tragedy struck Rome when Julius Caesar was assassinated by a group of conspirators. Creating a vacuum of power generals and consuls were fighting over to fill. Rome hung in the balance, and during this time, at the ripe age of 18, I emerged as Caesar's heir, determined to avenge him and create a better and greater Rome.

My journey to power was gruesome. Rome was claimed by different groups led by former consuls and military generals. Around this time, I gathered whoever was left of Jullius supporters and formed a group of my own. We ran through the other faction and soon emerged victorious. I was then given the name Augustus, which I would keep for the coming years. As such, I was ready, ready to become the greatest ruler Rome has ever seen.

The battle of Philippi took place in 42 BC, in which my ally, Mark Antony, and I took on the mighty armies of Brutus and Cassius. The war meant a great deal to me personally, as those were the very men who planned and organized the death of Julius, my only father figure since my father's death. The war was horrible, the sound of screaming soldiers and clashing swords filled the air. The cries of soldiers and horses could be heard from miles away. However it was through our superior cavalry and military prowess, along with our superior strategies, that we were able to come out victorious over Brutus and Cassius. The battle was hard-won; however, it was a victory I hold dear to. I have finally avenged Julius.

I would soon learn, though, that even the closest of allies could turn into the worst of foes. My closest ally, Mark Antony, was driven by jealousy and turned against me. I was left alone, broken and confused. I would now be facing the difficulties of life alone.

It would not take long before Mark and I clashed. As in 31 BC, the battle of Actium took place. In which our fleets engaged with one another competing for dominance. Both Mark and I understood that this battle would be the most important one of our lives, considering the victor would have Rome as well as nearly all of Europe, Asia, and Africa for their taking. A prize I would come to claim. Through different schemes and tactics as well as immense military prowess, my army emerged victorious. Antony was no more, and I finally had Rome to myself.

After my victory, I returned to Rome with my head high, ready to take rule of it once and for all. In 27 BC, the senate bestowed upon me the title of emperor. The first one Rome had. The future was looking amazing, but I was aware of the fact that my empire would not be easily managed.

It did not take long before revolutions began. Provinces around Rome erupted with rebels and revolts. One rebellion was led by Cleopatra, renowned queen of Egypt. A former ally that took Mark's side. However, she fell as well. It did not take long to prevail against her.

All was going well, and Rome was thriving exactly how I imagined and planned it would. But still, tragedy struck. My own adopted son, the heir to my throne, whom I had been nurturing for years, preparing for a great life, Tiberius, was caught planning and scheming against me. I was heartbroken. For the sake of whatever love I had left for him, I decided not to take his life, however I still banished him to Capri, an island near southern Italy where he would spend the rest of his days.

As I looked at my empire of marble and stone, I looked back at my beginning, my conquest for greatness, my allies, my reign as emperor, my journey had most certainly been one to remember. Through all of the trials and tribulations, I stood alone as the only and greatest emperor of the greatest empire to ever grace the Earth. I was Augustus Caesar, emperor of Rome. However, even I could not escape the cruel punishment of time.

As my time was coming to an end, and my reign was soon to be over, I surrounded myself with my loved ones. Friends, allies, and family members alike.

As I felt my life slipping away, I uttered my last words: “Have I played the part well?  
Then applaud as I exit.”

Their applause was the last sound I heard before slipping into darkness.

Thus, Augustus Caesar departed from this world, leaving behind a legacy etched in the annals of history—a testament to the enduring pursuit of power, the tumultuous nature of politics, and the complexities of the human heart.

As such, Augustus Caesar had come to an end, dead but not forgotten. His legacy is untouched by any other ruler in modern history. From Octavian in an unstable household, to the greatest emperor Rome has ever seen. There was, is, and never will be another Augustus.

# *The Atomic World of Marie Curie*

*In the Eyes of: Aljuri Rajab*

*"Marie Curie" encapsulates the remarkable life and contributions of the pioneering physicist and chemist who revolutionized science with her groundbreaking work on radioactivity, becoming the first woman to win a Nobel Prize and leaving an indelible mark on the fields of physics and chemistry."*

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The Kingdom of Poland, as a part of the Russian Empire at the time, was welcomed with the arrival of a baby born by the name of Maria Salomea Skłodowska-Curie on November 7, 1867. Curie was the youngest of five children. She was reared in Russian-controlled Poland and had been taught to speak Russian in school. Warsaw was located in the region of Poland controlled by the Czar, who wanted to eradicate Polish nationalism by keeping the people unaware of the Polish language and culture. But Polish patriots vowed to reclaim control of their country. As educators, Maria's parents worked hard to overcome the limitations imposed by their Russian supervisors. Curie's parents were exemplary educators who ensured their daughters had an equal education as their son, Józef Skłodowski. Curie's father, Wladyslaw, taught physics and mathematics, and Curie later explored both of those fields.

Curie's parents scrimped and saved to send their children to the most esteemed schools they could afford. But it wasn't just about tuition fees. Curie's father, a man of science himself, brought the laboratory home, turning their house into a hub of experimentation and discovery. The forthcoming arrival of Manya, her fifth child, prompted her mother to resign her position as headmaster of a school where her family had once attended. They went to a boys' high school, where Vladislav taught physics and mathematics for a respectable salary. Eventually, the Russian supervisor in control of the institution fired him for his pro-Polish views. Curie's father's career was unpredictable, leaving their family unsure of their next steps and where to relocate. Her father went from job to job during their life in Poland due to the rigorous rules set in order by Russian rule.

Due to the bombarding rule of Russia at the time, many families in Poland, including Curie's, felt very sorrowful and depleted of life. This was later proven in a letter written by Marie Curie to Bronya in 1903, "I had grown so accustomed to the idea of the child that I am absolutely desperate and cannot be consoled."

Bronislawa Skłodowska was the mother of Marie Curie. She was also a schoolteacher, overseeing a girls' boarding school. According to her grandchild, Eve Curie, Bronislawa was also a talented musician who sang and played the piano. Maria was just eight years old when her elder sister contracted typhus from a border and died. Less than three years later, Madame Skłodowska died at the age of 42 after a five-year fight with tuberculosis.

Aged 11, Curie had to confront the reality that her mother had died of tuberculosis, which became more widespread during the Middle Ages and Renaissance, eventually displacing plague and peaking between the 18th and 19th centuries when field laborers traveled to cities in search of work.

Curie was extremely proud of her Polish roots. She spoke, read, and taught Polish, despite the fact it was illegal at the time and could lead to her deportation to Siberia. Despite

Russia's rules making women unable to attend university (a restriction later changed by the women's suffrage enacted in 1918,) this didn't stop Curie from attending university. In 1891, right after the Fusillade de Fourmies, Curie migrated to Paris to pursue a higher education at the Sorbonne. With such a prestigious school, Curie was on the cusp of poverty. Paris did not come without its challenges, causing Curie great financial instability and language barriers; however, Curie deemed her love for sciences more important.

The Sorbonne is where Curie later found her husband Pierre Curie. She noted "I was struck by the open expression of his face and by the slight suggestion of detachment in his whole attitude. His speech, rather slow and deliberate, his simplicity, and his smile, at once grave and youthful, inspired confidence."

After their first sighting, they later got married in 1895. Curie and her sister Bronya established an agreement as teenagers: Curie would support Bronya while she was in medical school in Paris, and Bronya would pay Curie's tuition. Curie worked as a governess and tutor for six years beginning at the age of seventeen, while also managing her studies. Curie placed her money on the Sorbonne, to obtain Licenciateships in Physics and the Mathematical Sciences. Curie graduated in 1893 and was keen to find laboratories and institutes.

Pierre died on April 19, 1906, which was a sorrow for his family and Marie. He was hit by a horse-drawn vehicle and fell under its wheels. Marie was distraught but vowed to honor him in any way she could. In her later life, she succeeded him as a Professor at the Sorbonne. She went on to establish a world-class laboratory as a monument to her late spouse and became the university's first female professor.

The death of Pierre left a notable impact on Curie, as can be seen from a selection of her diary: "They filled the grave and put sheaves of flowers on it. Everything is over, Pierre is sleeping his last sleep beneath the earth; it is the end of everything, everything, everything. I am working in the laboratory all day long, it is all I can do; I am better off there than anywhere else. I conceive of nothing anymore that could give me personal joy, except perhaps scientific work—and even there, no, because if I succeeded with it, I would not endure you not to know it."

Through all her foreseen years from her apprenticeship led by her father, to her work in the lab, work had proven to take over not only her life but her death. Curie discovered Radium and Polonium (named after her native Poland), which due to her constant interactions with dangerous chemicals, led to her falling ill with aplastic anemia in 1932, aged 66.. This condition has been known to develop after years of radiation exposure. Marie and Pierre Curie were truly a marriage of true minds, they shared their love and bonded through science and research. While Marie Curie is widely known for her research and discoveries, she led teamwork with her husband which ultimately harmed them and killed her. Curie placed her life work as a priority over anything else, having been raised in a household of science, married in a laboratory dress, and dedicating her life work to radiation and coining the term "radioactivity".

Curie left behind two daughters, Irene and Eve, who each made significant contributions in their chosen fields. Irene expanded on her mother's groundbreaking discoveries by studying the nucleus of an atom and radiation. Her contributions received recognition with the Nobel Prize, and she was credited with discovering artificial radiation.

Eve, on the other hand, lived as a journalist and writer, reporting from various places like North Africa, the Middle East, the Soviet Union, and India. After her success in journalism, she later pursued a career in nuclear physics, working at the National Centre for Scientific Research in Paris.

Marie Curie spent her every breath for the sole purpose of discovery for herself and for the world, her last breath spoke as an encapsulation of her life's work with a question, "Was it done with radium or mesothorium?"

While on her deathbed, Curie was relentless in the discovery of knowledge even in her final moments. Mesothorium, a term used at the time to describe several radioactive isotopes of thorium, was the focus of her study and experiments.

This question demonstrated Curie's strong involvement in her radiation research and longing to grasp the precise nature of the substances she had committed her life to studying. Even as she faced the end of her life, Curie remained focused on the details of her scientific endeavors and understanding until her final breath. In short, her last words represented her lifelong commitment to unraveling the mysteries of the atomic world.

# *The Headless Valley*

*In the Eyes of: Mohammed Al Aladous*

*"The Headless Valley" typically refers to a legendary or fictional place, often found in folklore, literature, or speculative storytelling. It's not associated with any specific real-world location or event. However, if you're interested in creating a setting or backstory for "The Headless Valley," we could craft a description together. What kind of place are you envisioning?"*

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My name matters not, for what am I but a mere observer? I am but a lens through which you peer into this tale I tell, and as you observe, you may be quick to throw your stones and deem my actions cowardly, lacking in resolve or backbone. Before you cast your judgment, pause and consider the burden this messenger carries. History must be told, and dead men tell no tales.

Dead men also plagued the Northwestern Territories. Here, the elements reign supreme, imposing their will upon all who dare to traverse this inhospitable terrain. Winter descends with a ferocity unmatched elsewhere, blanketing the landscape in a thick layer of snow and ice. But even in the fleeting respite of summer, the land does not relent. The sun hung low on the horizon, casting long shadows that stretched across the tundra like fingers of frost.

As one ventured deeper into the heart of the Northwestern Territories, one may stumble upon a place shrouded in whispered tales—the Nahanni Valley. Here, amidst the jagged peaks and rushing rivers, the land took on an eerie quality, as if cloaked in a veil of secrets and ancient lore. I was not prone to having faith in superstition, but whether it was the Indian tales or the white man's fallacy, I could not help but see some truth in the ghastly anecdotes told.

This aura of ambiguity did not deter Frank Henderson on that fateful summer of 1947. He was a white man from Calgary, a proud yet seasoned explorer even if rather heavy around the middle. He wore a kavacha amulet around his neck – he had been listening to what the Indians on our expedition were feeding him. A sign of a fool by all means. It may not be of proper manners to speak of my expedition leader as such, but it must be understood that I was to tell all that I have seen. If I do not, then what use was my cowardice?

“A horrendous trip!” Henderson exclaimed with sorrow as we were leaving the accursed valley.

“20 ounces of course gold!” said his second-in-command merely to match the attitude of his superior. This man's name I would loathe to mention, for he was a cowardly, dishonorable man in such a way that is hard to put into words.

“We unearthed 30 just last fall, and prices ‘aven’t been going up...’”

Henderson suddenly looked as if he had lost his train of thought. He was examining something in the distance, and I followed his gaze. Initially, I was at a loss for what had made my leader so baffled, but the horror of it dawned on me.

Frank Henderson had a partner called John Patterson whom he spoke of very fondly. They seemed to be close companions; however I have never met this Patterson, and as a messenger, I must not make claims on that which I have yet to observe with my own eyes. Henderson and Patterson had agreed that the first to arrive would leave a message on a large tree which both knew from previous trips, and the second would reciprocate it. Henderson arrived first and left his message before traveling into the valley, and now, weeks later, we were observing the same tree. There was still no message left by Patterson.

“What’s the matter?” whispered the second-in-command.

*How could he hold such a position and not realize what this entails*, was what came to my mind.

“We’re setting up camp,” Henderson declared with an air of authority without an explanation, completely ignoring the interrogation of his subordinates.

Unlike the others, I did not object. Did I not tell you that I am an observer in this tale, not a character of strong opinions? However, even the strongest opinions of the strongest men of our expedition could not shake Henderson’s iron will, and to go against his will or secede from the company? That is nothing but a wish for blissful death in these harsh territories.

Our campsite lay just at the edge of the Nahanni Valley, a small enclave amidst the towering pines and rugged terrain. As twilight descended, the flickering flames of our campfire casted a warm glow against the encroaching darkness, offering a semblance of comfort in the wilderness.

Tents of weathered canvas stood like sentinels, their stakes firmly planted in the frozen soil. They bore the scars of countless expeditions, their surfaces patched and worn from years of use. Around the fire, our belongings were scattered—a jumble of backpacks, coils of rope, and assorted gear. A battered cooking pot hung suspended over the flames, its contents bubbling and steaming as the whiff of something repugnant drifted through the air, mingling with the scent of pine and earth.

Lanterns hung from nearby branches, their soft glow illuminated the faces of my companions as they huddled close to the fire. The crackle of burning wood filled the air, punctuated by the occasional snap and pop as embers danced skyward.

Despite the tranquility of our surroundings, a sense of unease hung heavy in the air, an unspoken acknowledgment of the mysteries that lay just beyond the valley’s edge. The silence was unbearable, and Henderson made an effort to overcome it.

“Does anyone know of the Naha tribe?”

More silence. The look of confusion on my companions' faces suggested they did not. I, however, knew fully the history of this cursed valley. I did not speak up though; I was but a ghost observing this conversation unfold from a distance.

Most of my companions knew only of the McLeod brothers who had allegedly found gold here in the Nahanni only to vanish without a trace. Three years later, their skeletons were found; they had been shot in their sleep. Their skulls, however, were nowhere to be found, earning the area its nickname: the Headless Valley. Few men knew, however, that that is not where the mysteries surrounding the valley began.

"The Dene people that inhabit this valley today are not the only ones history tells a tale of," Henderson continued. "Along with the more peaceful Dene, the local oral history contains many references to the Naha tribe, a mountain-dwelling people who used to viciously raid settlements in the nearby lowlands."

"When the Dene in the valley finally decided to strike back at their Naha rivals, they sent scouts to find the Naha settlement in the mountains. They found it by going through the horseshoe canyon nearby Tlo Dehé. It was a secluded, difficult to access location.

"The Dene returned home and fetched their warriors and then lay in wait until nightfall, preparing their attack. In the middle of the night, they surrounded the Naha settlement on all sides, sneaking closer and ready to strike. Once they were right alongside the teepees, they hurriedly threw open the tent flaps, weapons at the ready, and... no one was inside. Silence. Fires were smoldering, and sleeping bags were laid out, but there wasn't a single human around. They had disappeared completely."

There was a thick air of uneasiness about us. I did not know how the others fared that night, but being within view of the source of these mysteries had taken a toll on me. I could not sleep.

However, I knew for certain that Henderson did not sleep either because he was wide awake when we were visited by a group of Indians an hour or so before sunrise. They appeared distressed, saying what I assumed were prayers under their choppy breath.

"Men... tall... come," the Indians urgently tried to communicate.

"What? What do you mean?" Henderson implored the visitors with a rising panic, turning his attention to the Indians in our expedition. "What is this they speak of?"

The Indians took a few moments to translate the messy words told in between breaths. "They warn us."

"OF WHAT?"

"Of white, slender figures moving along the valley."

Henderson was normally a very well-composed man, but this account seemed to have shaken him to the very core. I could see the man waging war with demons we could not perceive. His trip ended in failure, his partner remained missing, and his greed lingered unsatisfied.

“We leave at sunrise,” he declared as he went back to his tent for privacy.

To judge the man for his superstition or cowardice would be to announce myself a hypocrite for all to plainly see, for I was every bit as flawed as he. In fact, I could not help but feel the beating of my heart hasten as I beheld the valley a final time. Faster and faster, heavier and heavier it always beat until it no longer did...

## *An Hour or So After...*

“There is absolutely no denying the sinister atmosphere of that whole valley. The weird, continual wailing of the wind is something I won’t, soon forget.” - Frank Henderson

Henderson's experiences within the Headless Valley reverberated far beyond his own adventures, leaving an indelible mark on the world of exploration. As word spread of the mysteries he encountered, the Headless Valley itself became a symbol of uncharted potential and untamed beauty. The allure of the valley, with its secrets and perils, drew in adventurers from far and wide, each eager to uncover the truths hidden within its shadowed depths. In a world devastated by World War II, with men hungering for the thrill of discovery, Henderson's inadvertent legacy became a rallying cry for those yearning to push the boundaries of the known and venture into the unknown.

# *Voices Unheard*

*In the eyes of: Hala Akel*

*"The Women's Suffrage Movement of 1910 was a pivotal moment in history, marking a determined push for women's right to vote. With fervent activism and relentless advocacy, women across the globe fought for their political voice, paving the way for significant advancements in gender equality and democratic principles."*

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In the quiet dawn of July 19, 1848, at around 9 am, the small town of Seneca Falls lay hidden in a peaceful slumber. Elizabeth Cady Stanton's modest home, settled among the whispering trees, conveyed a feeling of anticipation. Though she was just an hour away from a moment that would be significantly important in history, Elizabeth was busy contemplating whether or not she should attend the convention that was going to be held later on. She knew the importance of her role, but instead of focusing on things like her speech and how she would persuade others, she just sat there thinking about the possibility of the convention failing seeing that winning woman suffrage in the United States was a long, laborious process that required the dedication and hard work of several generations of women.

Across from her sat her dear friend and confidante, Susan B. Anthony, her eyes alight with a mixture of excitement and concern. Unlike Elizabeth, Susan had a strong feeling of optimism. She looked over at Elizabeth, who still had her head in the clouds, and asked, "Are you alright?" Elizabeth looked down, "What's the point?" she ranted, "This isn't the first time us women try to fight for our rights. We couldn't possibly be able to persuade these stubborn people." The ticking of the mantel clock seemed to reverberate through the room. Susan sighed as she heard the words of her hopeless friend and replied, "I understand where you're coming from, but don't you think that's what every other woman thinks? It may be hard, but if we don't fight for our rights, then who will?"

Elizabeth's mind buzzed with a whirlwind of thoughts and emotions. One hour before history would be made, she grappled with doubts that gnawed at the edges of her resolve. Would their audacious plan succeed? Could their voices, no matter how impassioned, break through the cemented barriers that had long denied women their rightful place in society? Silence filled the room, and with all those thoughts trapped inside of her, Elizabeth let out a soft sob. Susan, deeply concerned for her friend, questioned, "What happened, dear? Did I upset you?" Elizabeth shook her head and mumbled, "No. I know what you said is right, but I don't think I have the capability to make that big of an impact. Also, how can a singular speech make a difference." Susan gave Elizabeth a gentle embrace, "With your passion and determination, encouraging others should be the least of your worries. Besides, with your intelligent mind, I'm sure you'll be able to make a difference regardless of how you do it.

With Susan by her side, Elizabeth was now more determined than ever to give the speech of a lifetime. The scent of ink lingered in the air as she dipped her quill pen into the

inkwell, and the scratch of nib against the parchment carried a soothing rhythm in the otherwise silent room. With each stroke, she poured her hopes and dreams onto the page—a declaration of liberation and a call to arms for the oppressed.

As the first rays of sunlight pierced through the morning mist, casting a golden glow upon the sleepy town of Seneca Falls, the Wesleyan Chapel stood as a beacon of hope—a sanctuary for the voices that had long been silenced and the dreams that had long been deferred. Inside the chapel, a flock of eager faces gathered, an embroidery of diversity unified together by a common thread of commitment. Women, their eyes alight with enthusiasm, and men, their hearts stirred by empathy, joined upon this hallowed ground, united in a singular purpose—to demand justice, to demand equality, and to demand an end to women's suffrage.

On the side stood Elizabeth, a vision of strength and resilience. Beside her stood Susan, her fiery spirit as a guiding light of inspiration to all who dared to dream of a world where gender was no barrier to freedom. Elizabeth stood nervously with her eyes on the time, waiting patiently as the clock hit 10 am. "You'll be alright." Susan assured. "You poured your heart into that speech, and they'll know that once they hear it." Elizabeth smiled and responded, "Thank you. I wouldn't be here without you. I really hope today's the day we change history." Susan nodded.

Soon after, it was time for the awaited moment in which Elizabeth would read her well-written speech. She breathed heavily as she took anxious steps towards the front of the crowd. Elizabeth unfolded the parchment upon which her words of truth were written, a hush fell over the assembly—a significant pause, a collective intake of breath, as the gravity of the moment hung heavy in the air.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she began, her voice steady, her gaze unwavering, "We hold these truths to be self-evident—that all men and women are created equal." With those words, Elizabeth ignited a spark—a spark that would kindle a firestorm of change, a tidal wave of resistance against the restraints of oppression. Every single word Elizabeth said at that moment opened a new pathway of hope and sympathy in every man and woman's mind. She read enthusiastically as she addressed the audience, "But what would you gain by voting. Man must know the advantages of voting for they all seem very tenacious about the right. Think you if woman had a voice in this government, that all those laws affecting her interests would so entirely violate every principle of right and justice? Had we a vote to give might not the office holders and seekers propose some change in woman's condition? Might not "women's rights" come to be as great a question as "free soil"? But are you not already sufficiently represented by your fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. Let your statute books answer the question." When her speech came to an end, she thanked the crowd and walked away knowing that she had made a change for women's rights.

With a wide smile across her face, Elizabeth ran over to Susan and gave her a tight hug. "I'm so proud of you!" Susan exclaimed while a tear ran down her face. Elizabeth was then

surrounded by many other women who listened to her encouraging speech. They all thanked her for putting effort into helping them achieve their deserved rights. A group of little girls rushed to Elizabeth as she has now become a role model and inspiration to them. She looked behind her to find Susan's joyful face along with Lucretia Mott, Martha Wright, Mary McClintonck, and all the other women who contributed to the convention. "I believe this deserves a celebration." Susan cried.

All the women of the town gathered in a ceremony hosted by Susan. She raised a glass and said cheerfully, "A toast to the lady who took a stand for all the neglected women of the world.. Elizabeth, we owe you a big thank you." One hour after the culmination of the Seneca Falls Convention, the town square pounded with the rhythm of victory. Elizabeth and Susan stood shoulder to shoulder, their eyes reflecting the radiant glow of triumph. In the outcome of the historic gathering, the air was electrified with an undeniable sense of possibility—a newfound hope that permeated the very structure of society. The walls of repression that had long restrained women to the edges of history were beginning to crumble, brick by brick, beneath the weight of collective resistance. As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows across the paved streets, Elizabeth and Susan knew that their work was far from over. But for now, in this brief moment of conquest, they allowed themselves to take pride in the knowledge that they had played a key role in fighting for women's rights.

# *Echoes Beneath the Waves: A Tale of Titanic's Tragedy*

*In the Eyes of: Wadee Asfhan*

*"The Titanic, a luxurious ocean liner touted as "unsinkable," tragically met its demise on its maiden voyage in April 1912 after striking an iceberg. The sinking of the Titanic resulted in the loss of over 1,500 lives, making it one of the deadliest maritime disasters in history. This catastrophic event sparked widespread public outcry and led to significant reforms in maritime safety regulations."*

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Ever since 1912, it had been a roller coaster ride of emotions thinking of the tragedy I witnessed at a very young age. Titanic: I was 23 years old, and I knew for a fact that the veins in my body were alight with passion and adrenaline. Whether it was certainly the plane for first-class passengers or those people who couldn't afford it, it didn't matter because they all were set to take the space journey now. Another significant unifying factor is that various social and age groups also encompass the aforementioned mass. They were, it looked like orphans widowed and locked in their youthful smiles, and lovers embracing their present time with one hand while never letting their nostalgia go with the other. It was they who were the talk of the entire village, not threatening their own lives or even discovering new lands. Likewise, I fell under the category of stargazer, and it was the temptation of there being something which is beyond that where the limits of gravity find its end that exhilarated me. The decor of the Titanic, including the glorious belle-eep and dining rooms where sumptuous and precious materials were expertly used to match. Then, the outstanding thought that the ionosphere and bowlines oxidized in Southampton ports that were about to leave their native town to travel somewhere else was also very astonishing and something that a lot had never heard before. This mind-blowing atmosphere was out of the ordinary and was so fashionable at that time that the rich would walk down the lanes and flaunt their wealth or chat about the society they belonged to. Rich people walked around talking about gems, gold, and other treasures in the mighty world while others were talking about the hard challenges of life, but no matter what, the magnificent tie between all of these different people was the exploration and witnessing great superiority... At least or so I thought...

The journey began to threaten me as soon as the captain of the great ship, Edward John Smith, said, "Even God himself couldn't sink this ship!"

In my perspective, this story was starting to look familiar as the same type of actions would end up in a massive disaster at the end: that was until a friend boarding the same ship, Miss Malake Attalah, comforted me as she explained the unseen before engineering of the exceptional ship, looking back at it now, it was the biggest mistake of my life... As passengers eagerly boarded the Titanic in Southampton, England, the air crackled with excitement and

anticipation. The ship's grandeur and promise of a luxurious voyage across the Atlantic Ocean filled them with awe and wonder. For the elite passengers occupying the opulent first-class cabins, the Titanic represented the pinnacle of luxury and sophistication, boasting lavish amenities and impeccable service. As the ship set sail on its first voyage, bound for New York City with stops in Cherbourg, France, and Queenstown, Ireland, the atmosphere onboard was charged with optimism and the thrill of adventure. Passengers are revealed in the elegant surroundings, lively social gatherings, and breathtaking open sea views. However, beneath the surface of this idyllic journey lay tensions and forebodings, as whispers of potential dangers and the harsh realities of class division simmered among the lower-class passengers. Despite the initial excitement and splendor, the stage was set for unfolding a dramatic and ultimately tragic tale, as the Titanic hurtled towards its fateful encounter with destiny.

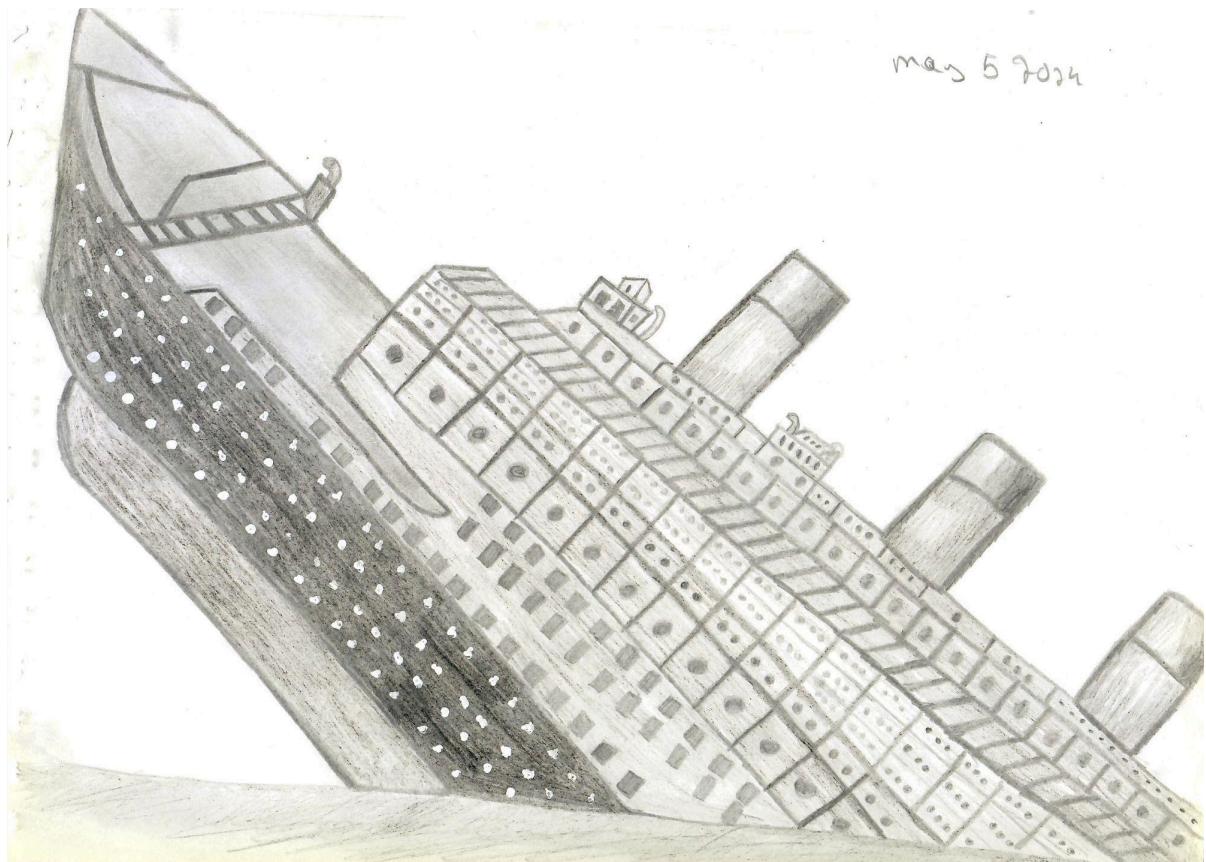
On the right hand, it was a stylish and expensive thing, and on the other hand, it was more pleasant to look at it if it was not too bright. The iceberg emergency served as the splash of reality that sobered up some of the people and prevented them from getting too carried away by the festive mood.

'I repeated time and again that Titanic was invincible, and that fear had nothing to do with her, but there was a shiver running down my back. I got chilled a bit and lost a little bit of hope.'

And the ice cracked and pushed through as Shannon's vessels sank till, they almost disappeared beneath the waves This chaos resulted in the passenger being like a victim to the accident, but unfortunately, everyone around him was the primary suspect due to their look. The biggest tragedy I had ever seen was not recognizing the true heroes among humans who gave all they had but decided to stand up for true values and fight for us. Consequently, the condensed picture for the audience comprised of an ultimate scene of the Titanic getting swallowed in the blue waters of the Atlantic at which was believed to be invincible because it was famous as unsinkable. The human sense of pride and engagement seemed to halt at a moment of typhoon's explosion in a few seconds when nature cycled herself through powerfully and coldly tossing us under the sword instantly.

The catastrophe gave the question of life sheer importance and I, at that point, had to figure out how to celebrate my second life with many more years to come. I came out unscathed but scarred in a sense. I was not physically hurt in any way but my mind carried all the burdens resulting from the devastating experience, in which it seemed like millions of people have died of this tragedy... The flame of love for life was blurred and fuzzed through smeared lenses to get done with the fact that we, humans, are no more than frail entities in the face of natural disasters. Further questioning myself about the role of humility in the lure of difficulties I have a clear awareness and that is it. By far the closing of Titanic movie is a known point to think about the bad side effects of pride like undestined pride and the failure to be prepared which is usually caused by luck. Those sounds of incomprehensible depth had awakened in my memory the voices of many never-to-be-seen faces. The voices expressed how to not live solely for themselves but for each other and to learn modesty — to look around and see and appreciate what one has rather than what one doesn't.

Despite the tragedies inflicted by the sinking of the Titanic with the disaster all indices of life's resilience and goodwill still managed to surface amid the catastrophe. After that, all the riots the boldness, and the fairness unveiled what people are made out of showing that personality is not destroyed by unbearable coniction. Congealed Latin America's waters became a friend between the survivors turned to their friends overnight, passing all of social status, nation, and history. These were the moments we saw that we all were determined, not individuals but all of us jointly as a human race who we all lived united for and with one another. In the annals of history, the Titanic remains a symbol of both triumph and tragedy. As a survivor of that fateful voyage, I carry with me the memories of those lost and the lessons learned from their sacrifice. Though the Titanic may have met her end beneath the icy depths, her legacy endures in the stories of those who survived to witness her final journey.



# *The Black Hand's Gambit*

*In the Eyes of: Emma Khouzam*

*"I am the son of peasants and I know what is happening in the villages. That is why I wanted to take revenge, and I regret nothing...." – Gavrilo Princip*

*"Gavrilo Princip (1894-1918) was a Bosnian Serb nationalist who assassinated Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914. This assassination set off a chain of events that led to the outbreak of World War I. Princip was part of a group seeking independence for Slavic territories from Austro-Hungarian rule."*

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July 28, 1914, all hell broke loose when the war to end all wars began, all because of me, the nineteen-year-old who pulled the trigger, leading to the death of Austro-Hungarian Archduke, Franz Ferdinand. Ferdinand was a menace to us Serbians, as I have always believed. Everyone had lived in fear since they had no idea what the Archduke was capable of doing to them or how powerful he was. I used to lie in bed every night and think about what I could do to help my people. I had a few ideas, but how would I implement them?

After a few weeks, Col. Dragutin Dimitrijević, the head of a secret Serbian society, also known as the Black Hand, contacted me and said promisingly, "I guarantee your dreams will become a reality someday." He assured me.

After joining the Black Hand, we agreed that we wanted to destroy Austro-Hungarian rule in the Balkans and unite the South Slav people into a federal nation. To do so, we need to assassinate a member of the Habsburg imperial family. Archduke Franz Ferdinand was our initial target.

After months of planning the prosecution of the Archduke, we finally had a master plan. Around seven men from the Black Hand were spread around town with weapons cautiously awaiting the arrival of Franz Ferdinand. As the car arrived near where Nedjelko Cabrinovic was standing, he tossed a grenade, but he failed to hit the archduke's car. Approximately twenty people were injured when it veered left and struck the other person's Sedan, but the archduke remained unharmed. As Cabrinovic was looking for an escape route attempting to flee the scene, he was shortly caught by bystanders and sentenced to twenty years of hard labor.

After hearing what happened to Cabrinovic I thought of a niftier, and sneakier way of killing the archduke. I walked into a small coffee shop and found a perfect table outside that seamlessly aligned with the street the archduke's car would pass through. As I was pretending to read a magazine, I saw the archduke's car right out of the corner of my eye.

It was time for me to act after the unsuccessful first attempt to kill Franz Ferdinand. I knew that I had to put Ferdinand to death because I couldn't let Dimitrijević down.

Franz Ferdinand and his beloved wife were in the vehicle. I proceeded to take precise aim at the Archduke and fired two shots, one killing the Archduke and one killing his wife Sophie. I was hesitant to kill his wife but I remembered what the archduke and Sophie made my people live through.

Although I felt proud of what I did, I felt an underlying sense of guilt. I had just ended two people's lives. The guilt kept eating at me and I couldn't bear it any longer. Gasping for air, I turned the gun around and aimed it at me with the last of the bullets. My finger was on the verge of pulling the trigger as my palms started to sweat profusely. Once everyone understood what I was trying to do they apprehended me, therefore I was caught by the police. In normal circumstances, I would have been executed but due to my youth, and the Austro-Hungarian law, I was sentenced to twenty years in prison but, let's just say I didn't make it through the twenty years.

Although the archduke was one of my biggest enemies, my prime threat was tuberculosis. Lying there in my jail cell all alone and hopeless. I felt the most disturbing sensation I've ever experienced. The disease, like my guilt, kept eating away but this time at my bones, causing my arm to be amputated. I had never lost so much blood. Consequently, knowing that my sacrifice had not been in vain gave me comfort as I faced my awaiting demise. As a reminder that even the tiniest actions can have the potential to alter the path of history. With my body growing weaker and weaker and my spirit declining, I was left to consider the legacy I would leave behind. Would I be remembered as a villain or a hero in history? Would my name become legendary in Serbian history books or just a passing mention in the annals of time? But what I know for sure is that I would continue to exist even after I died as a sign of resistance.

My prison sentence is long ahead of me, but my days in this life are numbered and I can sense God's calling for me, so I will leave you with the quote that inspired me to take action:

*"When we stand up for what we believe in—for what's right—there is always a chance that we risk the very things we fight for: our safety, our lives, our freedom. But if we stand down, the risk is definite." – (Reber, nd)*

# *A Tale of Innocence: Shattered by WW1*

*In the Eyes of: Mahdi AlSalahat*

*"World War One, also known as the Great War, was a global conflict that engulfed much of the world from 1914 to 1918. Sparked by political tensions, militarism, and alliances, it resulted in unprecedented devastation, reshaping the geopolitical landscape and setting the stage for future conflicts."*

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In the quaint German village of Windenberg, located near the border with France, a warm late afternoon on July 28, 1914, painted the cobblestone streets with shades of gold. The air carried the comforting scent of home-cooked meals as tight-knit communities gathered in the simplicity of life. Among the village's youthful inhabitants were two siblings, Ludwig and Anna, whose dreams and innocence would soon be shattered by the echoes of a war that approached on the horizon.

Ludwig Müller, a 14-year-old with blond hair and piercing blue eyes, represented the village's spirit. Dressed in traditional German clothing, Ludwig's gaze emitted energy and curiosity. His dreams soared above the village rooftops; he desired to become a pilot, fueled by patriotism and admiration for the aviators of the time. By his side was Anna Schmidt, Ludwig's 12-year-old sister, with braided brown hair and a mischievous smile. Playful and adventurous, Anna idolized her older brother, often joining him in his adventures through the village.

The village of Windenberg, with its tight-knit communities and the distant laughter of playing children, was a bastion of tranquility. However, the peace was about to be shattered by the ripples of an event that would echo through history. Archduke Franz Ferdinand's assassination on that fateful day cast an ominous shadow over the village, as hushed conversations hinted at the magnitude of the unfolding crisis.

As news of the assassination spread, the village found itself dealing with uncertainty. The air, once filled with the joyous laughter of children, now carried an unspoken tension. The innocence of Windenberg was under threat, and Ludwig's dreams of becoming a pilot suddenly felt more real, connecting with the ominous cloud of war that loomed on the horizon.

World War I, was a tragic event from 1914 to 1918, characterized by unprecedented destruction and suffering. Soldiers and civilians faced brutal trench warfare, enduring constant bombardment, disease, and gas attacks. Entire villages vanished, homes reduced to rubble as the conflict swept across Europe, leaving landscapes stained with blood and filled with the echoes of sorrow. The Earth seemed to struggle with agony as millions perished, leaving behind a legacy of grief and anguish that would endure for generations. This war, with its new technologies and unimaginable scale of human loss, reshaped history and society, serving as a somber reminder of the horrors of conflict.

Mobilization orders arrived, and the village was propelled into a new reality. The rustling of paper, the sudden gravity in the air – these substantial signs of change left the villagers on edge. For Ludwig, the dreams of piloting became entangled with the duty he felt towards his country. As the village received orders for mobilization, the atmosphere shifted from curiosity to anxiety, and the once-distant war now knocked on Windenberg's door.

In the midst of this uncertainty, the village gathered for a farewell event, an attempt to cling to normality amid the impending storm. Sentimental embraces and tearful farewells painted a emotional scene, symbolizing the internal struggle faced by families and friends. Ludwig and Anna, in a shared moment, realized the world around them was about to change. The innocence of the village, symbolized by the laughter of playing children, seemed to slip away, replaced by the weight of an uncertain future.

The climax of our tale arrives as Ludwig, torn between duty and family, grapples with the decision to enlist. His internal conflict is evident, reflecting the broader struggle faced by a generation caught in the crossfire of political tensions. The village itself stands at the cliff of transformation, gloomily absorbing the reality of an impending war.

Ludwig's departure for basic training marks a turning point. The once vibrant village is now a canvas painted with the colors of departure and sorrow. Anna, left behind, symbolizes the innocence shattered by the impending war. Her tearful eyes mirror the collective grief of a community propelled into the unknown.

The tale reaches its denouement with Ludwig's departure echoing through the cobblestone streets, leaving a void in Windenburg. The village, forever changed, is an example of the broader historical upheaval unfolding across Europe. The innocence lost, the dreams shattered – these echoes vibrate through time, leaving a permanent mark on the village and the hearts of its inhabitants.

In the aftermath of the Great War, the world grappled with the monumental task of rebuilding shattered societies and healing deep wounds. Nations came together in the spirit of cooperation, forging alliances and agreements aimed at preventing such devastation from ever occurring again. International organizations like the League of Nations emerged, dedicated to promoting peace and resolving conflicts through diplomacy rather than warfare. Amidst the rubble of war, seeds of hope were sown as communities rallied together, rebuilding homes and infrastructure, and nurturing a collective commitment to a future of harmony and prosperity. While the scars of World War I remained etched in the collective memory, the resilience of humanity prevailed, paving the way for a new era of understanding, tolerance, and unity.

# *The Last Romanovs*

*In the Eyes of: Juman Shahin*

*"The Romanovs were the ruling dynasty in Russia from 1613 to 1917. The family came to power with the coronation of Michael Romanov, who established a dynasty that lasted over 300 years.*

*The Romanov reign ended with Tsar Nicholas II stepping down from power during the Russian Revolution, leading to the execution of Nicholas and his family in 1918, marking the fall of the Russian monarchy."*

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*July 16, 1918, Ipatiev House, Yekaterinburg, Russia...*

Olga, the oldest sister, stood patiently as I brushed her hair. Her nightgown, a delicate shade of blue, complemented her eyes. I gently unclipped her necklaces and placed them on her nightstand. "You can go to bed now," I said.

"Thank you Amaliya. Goodnight," she replied. I gave her a gentle nod before turning to her sister, Tatyana. I let down her hair and began to take off her powder blue headpiece.

"Ouch! I think it's clipped onto my hair," she said with a slight chuckle.

"Oh, sorry," I replied with a soft smile as she began to unclip it.

I left her with that and approached Maria and Anastasia, the youngest sisters, but found them giggling with themselves in the corner of the room as they watched Tatyana struggling with the headpiece. "Oh! You two are just so silly. How about you come with me and help your sister!" I said with a chuckle.

"Fine," they sighed.

After everything was done, I went to the small room where all the other servants slept. "Don't you feel sorry for them?" asked one of the maids, "They went from being in royal castles to being imprisoned in the Ipatiev house..."

"Yes, but they seem to be very optimistic! I could hear the girls laughing from here!" replied another servant.

"I only feel sorry for the children. The Tsar and Tsarina brought this on themselves," I said, joining the conversation, "if they had even slightly cared for their people, we wouldn't be here."

"It's true, the children are innocent in all this."

I sighed, "Hope is all they have left, and perhaps it's what keeps them going. But looking at how the world is changing, I fear for what the morning may bring."

The dim light flickered, casting long shadows on the walls. There was a comforting silence, each of us lost in thought. It was around 9 pm, so I got ready for bed.

Hours went by; it was one of those nights where I just couldn't seem to enter the final stages of sleep. I turned over and over, drifting in and out of consciousness. The night was oppressively hot and humid, so I left the window cracked to get a breeze. The curtains seem to expand and contract like lungs filling with air. It was relaxing to watch, as it refreshed my mind off the small nightmarish thoughts I had in my micro sleeps.

*July 17, 1918...*

It was around 2 A.M when a loud banging on the door broke the silence.

"Get up! Pack your things and get ready, you have something to do. You need to look your best!" shouted one of the guards. The urgency in his tone left no room for protest or question. His heavy boots thudded against the wooden floor as he moved from room to room, ensuring that his orders were heard. Everyone, from the highest noble to the lowest servant, scrambled to gather their belongings. I quickly packed my stuff and ran upstairs to help the girls.

"Amaliya, can you help with my hair? It's a tangled mess!" asked Anastasia. I began to approach her before her mother, Tsarina Alexandra, shouted from behind.

"Amaliya! Come pack our things!" I gave Anastasia a sorry look and quickly headed to the Tsar and Tsarina's room. I packed all of their belongings and met everyone in the main hall.

We all waited patiently for the Bolshevik Revolutionary, Yakov Yurovsky, to speak. "Listen carefully," he commanded, his eyes scanning the faces before him, ensuring he had everyone's attention. "I need all of you to go into the small room at the end of this hall and wait there until further orders are given. Do not speak or make any unnecessary noise. This is for your own safety and the efficiency of the operation we must carry out. Move quickly and quietly," he continued, gesturing towards the shadowed hallway that led to the designated room, "This is a critical moment, and your full cooperation is imperative." With those final words, he left the hall and met with other revolutionaries.

A guard guided us down the hall and into the room, "Wait here quietly."

"Can we at least have some chairs?" Asked Tsarina Alexandra.

"Fine," he replied, "get one of your servants to fetch some." I immediately locked eyes with the Tsarina, and she asked me to get the chairs. I obliged and headed out to the dining room.

As I was making my way back, I noticed the door was closed. I began to approach it but stopped when I heard the commotion. I put my ear up to the door and began listening. "Our enemies abroad spread gossip that you and your family are liquidated," began the man whom I assumed was Yakov Yurovsky, "this is not true. You are alive and in good health. We will now take a picture to be able to refute this gossip."

"Nicholas Alexandrovich, please move towards me a little. Olga and Tatyana, move a little closer to your mother." He ordered. "Great. Now we can see everyone."

I moved a little closer to the door and heard a paper rustling before Yakov spoke again. "According to the order of the Ural Soviet, you, Nicholas Alexandrovich, and your family are sentenced to death and will be shot now."

My jaw dropped and my hand flew to my mouth. I couldn't believe what I was hearing. A part of me expected something like this to go down, but not so soon. I kept listening, "What did you just say!?" spoke Tsar Nicholas, "God! Forgive them, they don't know what they—" He was interrupted by a barrage of loud, chaotic gunshots that echoed through the halls of the Ipatiev House. Each shot was like a thunderclap.

The gunfire continued, enhanced by the muffled screams of chaos and despair from within the small room. Standing frozen outside, I could barely breathe, my heart pounding against my chest as the reality of the moment sunk in. The once-grand dynasty, with all its history and power, was being extinguished in that small room.

The Bolsheviks began to speak again, snapping me back to reality. I turned away from the door, my feet moving silently but swiftly, carrying me away from the room. Reaching the basement, I pushed open the heavy door and slipped inside, closing it with trembling hands. I broke down, I hadn't cried so hard in all my 30 years of life. I curled into a ball as my hands tightly kept me together. By the time the rage unraveled me from the tight ball I was in, my shirt was half stained with the eruption of anger that poured from my eyes. The house was silent, for it was now a house of blood and a house of death. The basement, once just a part of my daily routine, now felt like a sanctuary and a prison all at once. In the deafening silence, which once brought me comfort, my mind replayed the events, the gunshots echoing over and over

## *After...*

The end of the royal family sent grief and disbelief through the hearts of some Russian people, who struggled to come to terms with the sudden and violent end of an era. However, others who were victims of the Tsar's unjust rule were relieved. After the fall of Tsar Nicholas II, a provisional government was established in Russia, but it was weak and unstable. The Bolsheviks' rise to power was not without opposition, as they faced resistance from various factions, including the White Army during the Russian Civil War. The Bolsheviks' victory in the Civil War solidified their grip on power, allowing them to transform Russia into a socialist

state. However, the revolution also unleashed widespread violence and repression, as dissenting voices were silenced and political opponents purged in the name of revolutionary zeal. The Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin, seized power in November 1917 and established the Soviet Union in 1922.



# *Bessie Coleman's Skyward Symphony: An Odyssey of Resilience and Vision*

*In the Eyes of: Bader Salloum*

*"Bessie Coleman soared beyond barriers as the first African American woman to earn a pilot's license in 1921. Defying racial and gender prejudices, she blazed a trail in aviation, inspiring generations with her courage, determination, and passion for the skies."*

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In the vast canvas of the early 20th-century, American sky unfolded, an unparalleled tale of courage, determination, and an unyielding spirit that etched the name Bessie Coleman permanence in the annals of aviation history. This tapestry of dreams and perseverance tells the story of an African American and Native American woman who, despite the ferocious waves of race and gender-based discrimination, not only matured into an unparalleled aviator but also into a beacon of hope and symbol of groundbreaking achievement.

In the time frame and city limits of Chicago, in the fervent atmosphere of the White Sox Barber Shop, Bessie Coleman's aspiration took wing. Amidst the auspicious cadence of daily life and the storytelling of the returning fatigued pilots, the future aviator entertained dreams motivated by the gallant stories of aerial battle and reconnaissance missions. It was also a period clouded in the cultural paradigm of the cruel segregation that sought to extinguish the flames of aspiration in the fiery hearts of those deemed undeserving based on race or gender. Thus, as she told her confidante behind the mirror, "These skies, how they beckon to me," her eyes flashed with the relentless promise of liberty in a word enslaved.

The skies coveted by Coleman were barred by the walls of racism and fear that standing American flight schools were too deviant to permit a woman of African American and Native American descent. The Chicago Defender's gifted creator, Robert S. Abbott, on the other hand, kindled the flame of expectation in the girl. "Your goal is feasible, Bessie. Do not be held down by bigotry in this region. In France, the sky is unrestricted by complexion," advised the benefactor, inspiring uncommon choler from Coleman. The financial and moral encouragement of such prominent African-American community members gave her the certainty to rein in her quest for France, which aside from being a transcontinental trek, signified an improbable metaphor for belief in her dreams.

Accompanied by the serenity of France, on the extremely historic June 15 of 1921, Bessie Coleman hooded with perseverance the inexpressible breaking of the navigational covering, defeating the color barrier wearing her title of the 1st African American woman and first Native American with degrees in French pilot kite flying. "Is that it? We did it! This is for our people!" cried the young woman ecstatically across the meadows, elevating her breakthrough outside the genres of transport and into the fascinating field of the battle with

racism, sexism, and non-racism. With a shake, she exalted many discouraged by societal and gender favoritism in an announcement obscuring the boundary of sociological affair...

As she returned to the States, Coleman's life became a saga of hope above tragedy. Her appearing in air shows across the country was something more than incredible performances – it was a silent outcry against the injustices of society from which she escaped. There was always the pursuit of freedom in the speeches she gave and the tricks she performed. “The sky's the only place free of prejudice” – this sentence became her motto, and she boldly proclaimed it. Yet it was not only the people that went to see her shows that she influenced. Bessie Coleman became a character in the prophecy of the future that she lived for those who might want to try and realize their dream.

Even though Bessie Coleman died tragically in 1926, her demise, as if to contrast the tragedy, gave birth to a saga that enveloped the nation. Her name became a symbol, and churches, schools, and organizations would name themselves after the first African-American pilot. Her story became the living legacy that many shared to kindle and ignite the dreams in millions who became plunged in the patriarchal society. The Bessie Coleman legacy gave rise to future dreams and told the social fabric that the avenue to a future of nobility and dreams was only beginning, not up there.

In commemorating Bessie Coleman's extraordinary life and achievements, we are reminded of the power of dreams, the importance of resilience, and the enduring struggle for equality. Her journey from the cotton fields of Texas to the skies of France and the airshows of America is a timeless beacon of hope, urging us to dream boundlessly and soar beyond the constraints of our circumstances.

# *Bridging Cultures with Timeless Wisdom*

*In the Eyes of: Zeinab Ramadan*

*"Knowledge of the self is the mother of all knowledge. So it is incumbent on me to know my self, to know it completely, to know its minutiae, its characteristics, its subtleties, and its very atoms." - Gibran Khalil Gibran.*

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In the vast expanse of time, my soul wandered through the corridors of existence, seeking understanding, seeking expression. I emerged into the realm of mortal life, a vessel and facility for my already complex thoughts and emotions, destined to traverse the landscapes of human experience. In a small town along the mountains of Lebanon, amidst the harmony of the cedar trees and rich anciency, I was born in Bsharri. My name is Gibran Khalil Gibran, and through my words, I embarked on a journey that transcended the boundaries of geography and culture, touching the hearts of millions of souls across the world – all of which hoped to grasp the excellence of literacy and its individuality. My country has long been credited for its diverse cultures and beliefs, and my gratitude is eternal as that is what shaped the essence of my being. I had been infused with a deep appreciation for diversity and interconnectedness of all things – I found solace in solitude, in the silence that echoed the symphonies of the universe, and in the beauty that adorned every corner of existence. As I walked the paths of life, I encountered the complexities of human existence — the joys and sorrows, the triumphs and tribulations; each experience became a brushstroke on the canvas of my soul, enriching my understanding of the human condition and inspiring the words that flowed from my pen. In the hustle and bustle of city life, amidst the whispers of ancient ruins, I found inspiration. Beirut, with its vibrant energy and resilient spirit, became a muse for my creative endeavors, fueling my passion to give voice to the silent melodies of the soul. Through poetry, prose, and philosophical musings, I sought to unravel the mysteries of life, to delve into the depths of the human mind, and to offer solace to weary hearts. My words became troops of truth, carrying the wisdom of the ages and the insights of my journey.

It is believed that children can only grow happy and successful in a supportive environment. Well, I am both the proof and disproof of exactly that ideology. My earliest memories are of me drawing. I remember when paper was scarce and I would go out and pour my soul onto the fresh snow in the ground for hours on end, or when I would go outside with a singular piece of paper and dig a hole for it, hoping that I would be able to harvest paper come spring. My thirst for knowledge was quenched by a rightful man whom I will always remember, Selim Dahir. Despite the fact that I was denied schooling for the first decade or so from my life, I outgrew all the limitations people set for me because of those that believed in my ambitions and plans. Mr. Dahir was a poet/physician who never once doubted me. "Some people are so wonderful that I wonder whether their life isn't creation after all...He was a poet, a doctor, a painter, a teacher, yet he never would write or paint as an artist. But he lives in other

lives. Everybody was different for knowing him. All Bsharri was different. I'm different. Everybody loved him so much. I loved him very much, and he made me feel very free to talk to him." My father, Khalil Gibran, was so centered around the belief that a man should work the typical, masculine job. Yes, these are all ideas set hundreds of years ago and must be adapted to fulfill the needs and wants of every individual person, but some people would rather not keep an open mind to what is indeed correct. Though he was a humble and hardworking man, he kept a close mind and followed what he was taught. "I admired him for his power, his honesty and integrity. It was his daring to be himself, his outspokenness and refusal to yield that got him into trouble eventually. If hundreds were about him, he could command them with a word. He could overpower any number by any expression of himself." I never felt close to my dad, he never had that loving aspect to him that every son yearned to find in his father. As the years passed he grew further hostile toward my line of work and soke to understand the very thing that made me artistic – the very thing that drove me away from living a laborious, routine life. That thing is no other than his wife, my dear mum.

My mother, Kamileh Rahmeh, was a graceful and loving woman. Her voice set in your ears like honey does in your throat, and she lived a live that made her devoted to support and encourage our own ways of life for my two sisters, half-brother and I. She was given away to a Lebanese man who departed this Earth much too soon, leaving her and Boutros to fend for themselves. She was a loving parent, truly. "She had ambitions for her children, and despite her informal education, she possessed an intelligence and wisdom that had an enormous influence" on the path which I followed. Because of my mother's uphold to her culture, I was raised knowing nothing but the history of the land I came from – everything about the one thing she believed was the pillar of every man's life; his roots. Though it is the innate urge of every mother to care and fend for her own, I felt in debt for everything she had done for me, and so I devoted my early work "Al Ajnihah Al Mutakassirah (The Broken Wings)" to express my admiration for motherhood: "The most beautiful word on the lips of mankind is the word mother, and the most beautiful call is the call of my mother. It is a word full of hope and love, a sweet and kind word coming from the depths of the heart. The mother is everything; she is our consolation in sorrow, our hope in misery, and our strength in weakness. She is the source of love, mercy, sympathy, and forgiveness." In a way, the most prominent part of my life, everything that I have achieved and everything I have to be remembered for, is all thanks to her. When I was just six years of age, my mother gifted me Leonardo Da Vinci prints, and I am surely never to forget that definitive moment. Da Vinci was an incredible man who was a compass needle for a ship lost in the mists of the sea who awakened in me the urge to become an artist.

My mother was the main focus of numerous parts of my life. Amidst corruption, when my father was put under investigation for charges of embezzlement, he was found guilty and had all of our property confiscated. Just as many generations of women had to do before her, my mother had to make the life-changing choice of leaving behind a life of enduring poverty and to embark on a journey to the United States – taking the risk of ruining everything she and our family had worked for or seeking and ensuring a better life for my siblings and I. June 25, 1895 was a day to remember – we set out on our journey to the USA, heading towards the Big

Apple. We decided to settle South of Boston where my mother began working to scrap together any adequate amount of money to care for us; and I might have boughten a lottery ticket given that I was the only member of the family to pursue scholastic education. On September 30<sup>th</sup>, 1895, I was placed in a class reserved solely for immigrant students whom were ruled to relearn English from scratch. Due to patriarchal ideals and our financial state, my sisters were denied schooling – this was a primary source for my drive towards my work later on in life, where I championed the cause of women's emancipation and education and my will to surround myself with strong, independent women, just as I was brought up. Having been raised in Lebanon, my heart sought a lively and bright culture, just as the one I confided in back home. The cultural side of Boston called my name like a ship is called by a foghorn and I was exposed to the rich world of theatre. My inborn desire for arts was stimulated by the galleries I found myself in, and my teachers noticed this craving that I had for the humanities. They paved the way for me and led me to Fred Holland Day, an artist and ambassador of artists, who introduced me to Greek mythology, literature, and photography. In 1898, Fred's continuous strive to aid in improving my art resulted in my work being printed on covers of books and encouraged me to seek my own technique. Not too long after my success, my family and I came to a joint decision that I must follow the comfort of my heart, the ache of my soul to return to Lebanon and pursue my Arabic education. Back to the familiar sounds of the clinking of the Finjan, and the intimate call of the cedars, I was enrolled in College La Sagesse where I caught the eye of my Arabic teacher whom went on to say that he saw in me "a loving but controlled heart, an impetuous soul, a rebellious mind, and an eye mocking everything it sees." I, alongside my dear friend Joseph Howayek, started a magazine we called "Al Manara (The Beacon)" and I count this to have been the last straw for my father – the last gram needed before the thin ice broke. After immersing myself with Arabic literature, both ancient and modern, and French poetry, my relationship with my dad strained. Not shortly after, my sister fell ill and I had to return to Boston. I was forced to take over the business my brother had abandoned to pursue his dreams in Cuba, and I was deprived of dedicating my time to the artistic pursuits I so hoped I could follow. Holland's perseverance and continuous attempts at distracting me proved temporarily successful, just until my brother died days later. That same year, my mother died. I was left alone with my sister, Mariana. My heart, so mournful and woeful, was captured by Josephine Peabody, whose care and attention helped ease the pain of my heart and rescue me of the drowning in my sorrows. I decided to take a decision for myself and I sold the business my brother established and I set out to improve my Arabic and English writings, something to paramount that I'd be doing for the rest of my life.

Holland Day and Josephine Peabody helped me launch my art exhibition which featured my allegorical and symbolic charcoal drawings – there, through the attraction of the Boston Society and their say in my work, I was brought to meet a lady who I knew I would spend the rest of my life with. A lady I knew to be worth devoting my entire life's work towards. Throughout the years, I published many minute works in articles and newspapers, but I received strong criticism for my devotion to and encouragement of women's liberation. Eventually, through the help of Mary Haskell, the lady I knew would become the center of my universe, I travelled to Paris to study drawing at the French artistic school Académie Julian. "I was fascinated by the French cultural scene and indulged in examining paintings at various art

museums and exhibitions. However, my travel to France revealed my lack of artistic training, a sore point which left me critical of my drawings. In truth, I had earlier refused to receive a formal training, relying solely on my talents and feel for objects. But soon the academy's formal education alienated me, and I soon left the academy to pursue a freewheeling self-exploration of my art. Together with Joseph Howayek we sketched models and visited exhibitions. Then, I moved to tour London with fellow Arabic writer Amin Rihani, whom I admired for his sarcastic wit and writing style. We both shared memories of our Lebanon.

Mary's unstinting help and unconditional encouragement to begin writing in English instead of translating from Arabic was one of the most prominent steps in my life. Because of her motivation, I wrote "The Prophet" took me eleven years to write, but eleven years so worthy. I was now known for "The Prophet", and because of Mary's devotion to my English work, I wrote to her "Your blessed touch makes every page dear to me. The punctuations, the added spaces, the change of expressions in some places, the changing of "Buts" to "Ands" and the dropping of several "Ands", all these are just right.". In 1919, my success as an artist reached its zenith with the publication by Alfred Knopf, who saw beauty in my work and published "The Madman", of a volume entitled "Twenty Drawings". I then became founder-president of a literary society called Al Rabi

tat al Qualamiya (The Pen-bond Society). Now, my platform in both English and Arabic work, allowed me to express views that I felt my fellow Arabs needed to hear. If I was asked as a young boy or merely hinted to that I would become who I am or be granted the place I have in the world, I would be in complete awe, yet utter shock. At the time, for someone from a small village in Lebanon to become a worldwide sensation was something so far-fetched and unthinkable. But I now know what was destined for me – everyone who ever doubted me now knows that this was my destiny.

## *Mary Haskell...*

My late Gibran told me ""A remarkable face... You know that I find beauty in you. You know I use your face again and again in my drawings, not an exact likeness, but you... you have the face I want to paint and draw the eyes with their ins and outs all around them. It is the face I can say things with," just before his soul departed, "I was drawn to you in a special way the very first time I saw you... I loved talking to you that day... I knew many people in Boston at that time, some of them among the very finest... The others found me interesting. They liked to get me talking, because I was unusual for them; they liked to watch the monkey. And they would have people meet me, as someone who was interesting. But you really wanted to hear what was in me and you weren't even content to hear what I had to say, you kept making me dig for more. That was very delicious to me," he said.

We had an enduring and complicated relationship. My ability to teach and my supposed work ethic led us down a path of spiritual enlightenment that changed our lives and, as I would like to believe, impacted the world. "I told him frankly how I used to wish people might know he loved me, because it was the greatest honor I had. I wanted credit for it; I wanted the fame of his loving me. He wanted it known that I had faith in him and made his start possible. And

he desired to conceal our friendship, but didn't want it to be called a mistress-and-lover affair as it might be."

Despite wanting to be known as someone he loved so dearly, I know that I was replaced by May Ziadeh towards the conclusive years of Gibran's life. But I know he never forgot about me. She would write him about her passion and love for women's liberation, an interest she shared with Gibran. Eventually, her role in his writing took over mine, and they exchanged letters, pictures, and continued corresponding with one another until he passed away. By 1926, Gibran had become a well-known international figure, but seeking a greater cosmopolitan exposure, he began to contribute with articles to the quarterly journal *The New Orient*. The same year, Gibran started writing *Jesus, The Son of Man*, his lifetime ambition and longest English work, a book which I edited the year that followed. In 1928, Gibran's health began to deteriorate, and the pain in his body, due to his nervous state, was increasing, driving him to seek relief and comfort in alcohol. Gibran's excessive drinking turned him into an alcoholic at the height of the prohibition period in the U.S., and so he had already started thinking of his post-life and began inquiring about purchasing land in Bsharri. The artistic circles thought it was high time that Gibran was honored; and by 1929, every possible society gave him a tribute. In honor of his literary success, a special anthology of Gibran's early works was issued by Al Rabitat under the title *Al Sanabil* (Spikes of Grain). But by 1930, Gibran's excessive drinking, to escape the pain in his liver, aggravated his disease and his hopes of finishing the second part of *The Prophet* (*The Garden of the Prophet*) dwindled. Gibran revealed to Mary his plans of building a library in Bsharri and soon he drew the last copy of his will.

To May Ziadeh, he revealed his fear of death as he admitted: "I am, May, a small volcano whose opening has been closed." On April 10, 1931, Gibran died at the age of forty-eight in a New York hospital, as the spreading cancer in his liver left him unconscious. The New York streets staged a two-day vigil in his honor as his death was mourned in the U.S. as well as in Lebanon. Gibran's final will reflected a simple desire: "Everything found in my studio after my death – pictures, books, objects of art, etcetera – goes to Mrs. Mary Haskell Minis, now living at 24 Gaston Street West, Savannah, Ga. But I would like to have Mrs. Minis send all, or any part of these things, to my hometown, should she see fit to do so." And so, I did. After Gibran's death in 1931, I both directly and indirectly placed Gibran's art in numerous public collections including The Fogg Art Museum in Cambridge-Massachusetts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, and the Newark Museum in Newark-New Jersey. I deemed it of upmost importance to also donate the majority of Gibran's artwork, left in his studio at the time of his death, to his hometown of Bsharri in Lebanon – I wanted to ensure the preserving of his work and his memory from where he came from, in the country he spoke so highly of. This donation made possible the establishment of the Gibran Museum, today the world's largest public collection of his artwork. A place that I and everyone who ever loved Gibran may visit in hopes of being in the embrace of his soul once more.

# *The Great Depression: Broken Promises*

*In the Eyes of: Abdelmalik Chakkif*

*"The Great Depression of the 1930s plunged the world into economic turmoil, with widespread unemployment, financial collapse, and social upheaval. It left an indelible mark on global economies, reshaping government policies and profoundly influencing the lives of millions for decades to come."*

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I can vividly recall how things were before the Great Depression when I was just a young man. Emma and I had a modest life but were content in the small town, where we worked hard to make sufficient money. I was employed at the nearby factory, and Emma managed our not over-furnished home with tenderness and affection. We envisioned a life where we will be raising a family and creating a brighter future.

Then, about 30 days before the event, things came to life, I learned that the news about the stock market crash had hit our town, and the following day I was fired from the factory. On one hand there was a busy street with people everywhere and on the other hand there were dark and empty streets carrying the unrest and fear everywhere. Emma and I were continuously struggling with the bills. We had to get rid of all our furniture and we cut down on all possible expenses. Even facing the hardest times, we did not lose hope because we trusted that things would eventually improve. Little did we know it got even worse.

Cities once bustling with life now stood as ghostly monuments to shattered dreams and lost hopes. Skyscrapers, once symbols of prosperity, loomed like silent sentinels against a backdrop of gray, smog-filled skies. The streets below were lined with boarded-up storefronts and vacant lots, their emptiness echoing the sound of nothing but the loud dusty wind. Leaves of trees shriveling and crumbling like grains of sand. The soil dilutes the sewage water flowing from down the streets. I couldn't have imagined a viler and more gut-wrenching environment. Our water was filled with brown liquid, yet finding food felt more like a search for a needle in a haystack.

During the Great Depression, Emma and I leaned on each other for support. We attended community gatherings and soup kitchens, where we met others who were facing similar challenges. Despite the bleak circumstances, we found moments of joy in each other's company and cherished the simple pleasures in life. Emma became a pillar of strength during those difficult times, always encouraging me to stay positive and reminding me of the love and happiness we shared. However, I knew she was suffering too. Our child we prayed to receive might not be promised to be welcomed in this life.

I woke up with half of my eyes open, tongue dry as my grandma's cake. Grasping for a tiny nourishing and fresh cup of water. I crossed out today's date on my calendar "March 3rd". Today marked Emma carrying our baby for 5 months! Despite the hardships we faced, the

news of Emma carrying our baby brought a glimmer of hope to our lives. I gently kissed her forehead as she slept beside me, her face peaceful in the soft morning light.

Looking around our humble home, I felt a mix of emotions. While whatever this hell we're going through had taken a toll on us, it also taught us to appreciate the beauty of simplicity and the importance of being together. Our home was filled with love, even if it lacked material wealth. Community members began to bond more strongly during these sad times, as they helped each other not only with the rebuilding of lives but also the rebuilding of their communities. Emma and I were the moving spirits of many local community projects and charitable initiatives, in which we were involved as volunteers, guided by the local community that had provided us the hand of support when we were in the darkest days of our lives. We, for the sake of our own experiences during that time, had strongly developed this sense of gratitude and an aspiration to make others happy.

The passing of time had an impact on Emma as she got pregnant which added more happiness and hope to our lives. Unfortunately, tragedy occurred when Emma caught a rare flu during her 8th month of pregnancy. The medical bill was really disappointing, and whatever we had saved wasn't enough to foot the bill. Nevertheless, we did our best, hoping that she would get well soon.] Emma used to have a very warm light in her eyes. But now, it was like this light had dimmed to just a little spark of light. The face, that had been full of life and colorful before, was now as pale and worn as the pain it was carrying. With each breath she seemed to struggle for some extra air, her chest rising and falling in an evident struggle.

"Stay with me, Emma," I begged desperately, wrapping her hand tightly in mine as my eyes were suffused with tears.

It was a smile only a mother could feel, her voice much like a whisper. "I'm trying, love."

Our neighbors had been turned into our support group – the look of empathy in their eyes was visible in every word and action they had. But even the hardest work of the paramedics and the frantic rushing of the ambulance didn't help her, and the life within her was leaving this world, taking with it the chance we had for the new little human.

"Emma, please don't go," I swore helplessly, the crack in my voice saying a lot more than the words themselves.

In her eyes I saw love and sadness at the same time. "I love you always," she whispered, her voice thinning.

She was with me a moment ago, and now... she's gone. The silence stretched like a ghostly cloud that enveloped the room. The loss of Emma and our child was devastating, and I was left to pick up the pieces of my shattered life. The memories of our time together sustained me through the darkest days, reminding me of the love and happiness we shared.

In the middle of spring, the government spread news claiming the U.S began to recover from the horrific event. Some people told me the rest of the world was still suffering. Looking back, the Great Depression and my time in the army were defining chapters in our lives. They tested our resilience, challenged our beliefs, and ultimately shaped who we became. Through all the trials and tribulations, one thing remained constant – our love for each other. And as I sit here today, reminiscing about the past, I realize that it was that love that carried us through the darkest days and gave us hope for a brighter tomorrow.

# *The Skies of Dreams; My first flight across the Atlantic.*

*In the Eyes of: Wid Samaan*

*“Never interrupt someone doing what you said could not be done.” - Amelia. E*

*“Amelia Earhart was a pioneering American aviator and author. Born in 1897, she became the first woman to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean in 1932, earning international acclaim. She set multiple aviation records and actively promoted women’s roles in aviation. Earhart disappeared in 1937 while attempting to circumnavigate the globe, leaving behind a legacy of adventure and mystery. This story displays the prediction of what would’ve happened if Earhart made it out alive.”*

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“You will never be able to do it.”

I have heard phrases like this tossed around whenever I have spoken about aviation, or, as a matter of fact, about anything. Simply because I was a woman. And yet, as I stood looking at my gorgeous plane: a Red Lockheed Vega. The amount of pride I felt was immeasurable. There were a plethora of reporters behind me. Most were shouting obscenities and degrading comments at me, but there were the occasional jewels; the young women telling me how brave I was, and how they take my bravery as their inspiration. The endless stories of how I inspired women to do more in our times was what pushed me forward. I could hear my heart pounding in my ears as I made my way towards my plane. The last thing I heard from the crowd was from a man who was glaring daggers at me.

“You are a horrible, foolish woman!! I can only hope that you crash and never return.”

Feigning ignorance, I sat down on the cushioned seat and made the necessary preparations for the plane. As I did, I tried not to let the man’s hurtful comment get to me, but it had. I may have shed a few tears; it is horrible, needing to fight for independence. I was almost always in wrath trying to prove myself constantly. I was the one who showed the world the power behind women and their capabilities. But, in my moment of weakness, I remembered all the kind people who had supported me and my career, and I vowed that I would return, and make an example out of that dreadful man. I was brought back to earth by the sudden remembrance of what I was supposed to be doing. I took the yoke, or the airplane’s steering wheel, and pushed it forward. It started to move, and soon, I was among the clouds; so high, it seemed I could touch the very sun.

As I peered over the glass, I saw an army of black clouds approaching. A terrible feeling clawed at the pit of my stomach. What was I to do? There was no place to land, as I was flying over the North Atlantic Ocean. My breath quickened, and in place of my exhilaration came in a wave of fear. I ran my options in my head. I could not land my plane in the ocean, because I would surely drown. I cannot descend into a lower altitude because the possibility of rain and lighting causing damage to my plane was way too high. The only feasible choice is to stay airborne until I can find a suitable place to land, and so I did. The plane went directly through the ebony sky until I could barely see through the glass.

But that was the least of my concerns. The plane was going through tremendously rough winds, and I was going to crash; it was inevitable. There was only thing going through my mind:

“I have to survive.”

Within minutes, it already seemed that my doom was imminent. I could hear the threatening sounds of thunder and the crackle of lightning approaching, and there were only 2 options; either sink or survive. I had just about made up my mind to try my luck within the dangerous waters below when I saw an inkling of land. But it was not France, where I was hoping to land, but Ireland. There was no room for any uncertainties, so I had to make a split-second decision. Do I carry on, or do I land?

BEEP!! BEEP!! BEEP!!

The sound of the airplane’s alarm snapped me back to reality. It turns out I had no decision. The plane was crashing! I yanked on the yoke until my hands turned red, and braced for impact, praying this flight of mine would not be my last.

Pain. I felt so much pain as I slowly stirred from my unconsciousness. Yet, I was grateful for my stinging cuts and bleeding shoulders because pain meant that I was alive. I was alive, and I had landed in what seemed to be a meadow. Pulling myself up, with much discomfort, I managed to walk for a few meters until someone had found me. They said I was not in a meadow, but in a pasture, on the coast of Londonderry. The kind lady who had found me treated my wounds, fed me, and allowed me to find the equipment needed to make the necessary repairs to my aircraft, as well as fueling it, before I flew away, ever so grateful to my savior.

Landing back in Newfoundland, it did not take long for an abundance of paparazzi to arrive, asking me about what had happened, and how I had sustained my wounds. Amongst the crowd, I found the haughty reporter who had mocked me, and approached him. He seemed to break in a cold sweat, but tried to look me down, yet I stood my ground. One mention of his horrible words and he stood as still as a statue, and I could have sworn he stopped breathing. The stunned look on his face and the mix of dumbfounded and disgusted looks the man received from the crowd of onlookers was what I needed to make up for these perilous events.

And yet the degradation I faced as a woman did not extinguish my determination; rather, it sparked my interest and acted as fuel to my fiery ideas and ambitions. I hope that the women of today and women of the future look at my work and use it to spark the embers of their imaginations and defiance.

# *Shattered Silence - The Story of George Stinney*

*In the Eyes of: Meera Sehwail*

*"George Stinney Jr. was a 14-year-old African American boy from South Carolina who, in 1944, was convicted and executed for the murder of two white girls. His trial lasted just a few hours, with scant evidence and no legal defense, leading to a conviction by an all-white jury. He was the youngest boy to be executed. Years later, George Stinney Jr.'s case became a symbol of racial injustice, and in 2014, a South Carolina court cleared his name because the trial was flawed and violated his rights."*

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I was slouched on the couch of my home in Alcolu, South Carolina, playing video games when suddenly I heard banging on the door. I could hear yelling from outside.

"It's the police, open up!"

I was confused about why the police were outside my home, but with haste, I opened the door. The cops barged in and began interrogating me. My mother rushed down the stairs with fear evident in her eyes. I couldn't comprehend what was happening.

"George Stinney, you are accused of the murder of Betty June Binnicker and Mary Emma Thames," stated one of the officers, spitting on my face.

"What? No, they are my friends," I cried, shock appearing on my face.

I couldn't believe it, my friends died, and I was accused of their murder. Suddenly, someone dragged me by my arm and shoved me bitterly into a police car. I looked up, only to find it was one of the officers. His badge read Smith. He had stubble on his chin, and his eyes looked tired. As if he felt my stare, he looked down at me with disgust. He shoved me into the police car, mumbling something about this messed-up black community. I looked out of the window, only to find my sisters with tear-streaked faces. My brother was holding onto my mother's arm, trying to calm her down. Tears streamed down my face. The car ride was quiet. The cops kept giving me sickening glances every now and then. After a while, we reached a police station. The officer opened my door and threw me out. He held my hand and walked at his own pace. I kept on stumbling on my feet, unable to match his huge steps. When we went into the police station, I couldn't ignore people's stares. If I hadn't known any better, I would think some of them looked at me with sympathy. But people here don't care about my kind. We aren't to be looked at with sympathy. I was tossed into a room with two officers already seated. I sat on the chair opposite to them, unable to shake off their stare.

The cops' presence and their false accusations terrified and intimidated me. The girls, Betty June and Mary Emma were the ones they had accused me of murdering. The police dragged me to court for trial, not bothering to find me a lawyer. I had no proper legal

representation and no one to defend me. I was handed a white taxman to “defend” me. How was any of this fair?!

I sat alone at the defense table. The prosecution table was empty. The judge sat at the bench, elevated above the rest of the courtroom, his fair complexion subtly hinting at his Caucasian background. The courtroom was filled with murmurs and dirty looks. After an hour, and with not a single discussion engaged with me, the judges decided that I was to be executed the very next day. I was petrified. In what way was this fair? I didn’t do it! Tears rushed down my eyes, as police officers grabbed me. I thrashed in their hold, but that only got people to look at me with horrified looks. They seemed terrified of me. I was thrown into a cell, as I sobbed uncontrollably. After getting exhausted from the events that were dumped at me from the whole day, I sat quietly looking around. The cell was small and filthy, with a disgusting smell that would no doubt make someone gag. Trash piled up in one corner. It all felt like a nightmare I couldn’t wake up from. After a couple of hours, I was let out to meet my mom for one last time. Her eyes were puffy as though she had been crying for decades. She looked around in disbelief and anguish as she hugged me close to her not letting go. I took a deep breath, savoring the familiar fragrance of my mother, wishing to remember it always.

“Mom?” I said in a hushed voice.

“Yes, my love?” she said tears filling her eyes.

“I didn’t do it mom, I promise, please believe me,” my voice cracked.

“I know you didn’t, I know,” was the last thing she said before they forcefully separated us.

The sun started to set and I got closer to my death with every single second that passed. I laid on my bed as thoughts filled my head, “I will never get to see my family again, I’ll never get to fulfill my dreams, and I’ll never get to be 15.” I woke up to the sound of police officers shouting at me to get up. They circled around my small figure, as one of them snatched me and drove me to the place of my execution. I was standing in the middle of an unknown area, when suddenly two police officers grabbed me by my skinny arms and dragged me to the electric chair, which was known as “Old Sparky.” I was terrified, and in fact so terrified that I couldn’t cry or scream for help. The officers carried me up to the chair, but the electric straps wouldn’t fit me because I was too small, too skinny. The police officers on the other hand wouldn’t give up. They put books under me so the straps could reach to my scalp to electrocute me. They adjusted the straps and at this point I was screaming in misery. The assistant pressed the buttons of the electrodes. I felt a sharp pain up my spine, and everything around me slowly vanished to darkness...

## *After*

As members of the jury in George Stinney Jr.’s trial, we thought we made the right decision at first. We all agreed he was guilty of the murders of Betty June Binnicker and Mary

Emma Thames, based on what we heard from the prosecution and the pressure to bring closure to our town. But as time passed, we began to question ourselves. We wondered if we had rushed our decision and hadn't really looked at all the evidence. After the trial, we felt uneasy about whether we had treated George fairly. It felt wrong that George didn't have a proper lawyer to help him out. When we heard George was executed, we realized we might've made a big mistake. It weighed heavily on our hearts to think that we might've sent an innocent kid to die. But in the end, the truth was revealed, we were responsible for the youngest person's execution. George Stinney was innocent. Even though we couldn't fix what happened, we promised to learn from our mistakes and make sure everyone gets a fair shot in court. It's tough knowing we messed up, but we're hopeful that speaking out will prevent this from happening again.

# *Echoes of Hiroshima*

*In the Eyes of: Youssef Zouaoui*

*"Hiroshima stands as a symbol of both the horrors of war and the enduring resilience of humanity. The atomic bombing of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, during World War II, brought unimaginable devastation and suffering, yet from the ashes emerged a commitment to peace, reconciliation, and the pursuit of a world free from nuclear weapons."*

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Hours before its air lost its oxygen, minutes before its land lost its texture, and seconds before its sky turned into a nightmare of black and unseeable colors, Hiroshima hummed with the routines of its resilient inhabitants, their lives etched with the scars of war, yet still pulsating with hope. Sakura Tanaka, a 26-year-old schoolteacher, her spirit woven deeply into the tapestry of Hiroshima's history and culture, stood in her colorful classroom, preparing the tools of knowledge for her young pupils. Orphaned by the cruel hand of war, Sakura lived alone in the proximity of her school, her heart a reservoir of kindness that flowed ceaselessly for her students, whom she saw as the flickering flames of hope amidst the shadows of conflict. Across the city, Kenji Yamamoto, a 32-year-old carpenter of remarkable skill, toiled in his workshop, the essence of resilience and determination personified. A father of two, Kenji bore the weight of a tragic loss, his wife Emiko swept away by the indiscriminate hands of war's fury in an air raid, leaving him to nurture their young children amidst the rubble of their shattered dreams.

As the morning sun cast its gentle embrace upon Hiroshima, a fragile peace enveloped the city, a fleeting respite from the wartime tensions that gripped its heart. Sakura meticulously arranged her classroom, each colorful desk a beacon of hope, a sanctuary of learning amidst a world torn asunder. Meanwhile, Kenji, his calloused hands deftly crafting a toy for his son's impending birthday, sought solace in the rhythmic strokes of his work, a silent prayer for a future where laughter could drown out the echoes of sorrow. In this suspended moment of tranquility, amidst the ordinary rhythms of life, a city held its breath, unaware of the impending storm that would shatter its very foundations.

Then, in a heartbeat that echoed through eternity, the world trembled, and Hiroshima was engulfed in a blinding light that seared through the fabric of existence. At precisely 8:15 a.m. on August 6, 1945, the atomic bomb, ominously named "Little Boy," descended upon the city, a harbinger of devastation unleashed upon unsuspecting lives. Sakura, amidst the tender cadence of her teachings, felt the world around her fracture into chaos as the deafening explosion tore through the air, shattering windows, dreams, and lives. Kenji, amidst the solace of his workshop, was thrown to the ground by the violent force of the blast, his world collapsing around him in a deafening cacophony of destruction.

In the eerie silence that followed, broken only by the agonized cries of the wounded and the distant wails of sirens, Sakura and Kenji emerged from the rubble, their bodies bruised, their spirits shattered, yet somehow unbowed. They bore witness to a city torn asunder, its once vibrant streets now littered with the debris of shattered lives and broken dreams. Buildings, once symbols of resilience, now stood as hollow shells of despair, their walls bearing witness to the horrors unleashed upon Hiroshima. Together, amidst the ruins of their city, Sakura and Kenji embarked on a harrowing journey of survival and resilience.

In the desolation, they encountered fellow survivors, each bearing the weight of their own stories of loss and anguish. In the midst of this bleak landscape, they formed a fragile community of hope, pooling together their meager resources and offering solace amidst the suffocating despair. With each step, they navigated the treacherous terrain of radiation exposure, the gnawing ache of hunger, and the unyielding specter of grief that loomed over them like a shroud. Yet in the darkness, a flicker of hope remained, a stubborn ember that refused to be extinguished.

Through the ashes of their shattered lives, Sakura and Kenji clung to each other, their bond a lifeline amidst the swirling chaos. They searched tirelessly for their loved ones, their hearts aching with the uncertainty of their fate. In the depths of despair, they found strength in each other, their shared resilience a testament to the unyielding spirit of humanity. As they traversed the broken streets of Hiroshima, amidst the haunting echoes of their past, they discovered a profound truth—that amidst the rubble of destruction, the human spirit endures.

Finally, in a moment that echoed through the annals of time, Sakura and Kenji were reunited with their families amidst the ruins of Hiroshima. In the embrace of their loved ones, they found the solace they had yearned for, their tears mingling with the ashes of their shattered world. It was a moment of triumph amidst the wreckage, a testament to the enduring power of love, hope, and resilience. As they stood amidst the ruins of their city, Sakura and Kenji made a solemn vow—not just to rebuild the physical structures that lay in ruins, but to nurture the bonds of community and hope that had sustained them through the darkest of days.

In the aftermath of the devastation, amidst the ashes of their shattered lives, Sakura and Kenji emerged not as the same individuals who had stood one hour before, but as embodiments of resilience, courage, and hope. Their journey through the depths of despair had forged them anew, their spirits tempered by the fires of adversity. As they gazed upon the scarred landscape of Hiroshima, they knew that their lives would never be the same. Yet amidst the ruins of their shattered world, they found a new beginning—a testament to the enduring power of the human spirit to rise from the ashes of tragedy, and to rebuild, not just for themselves, but for future generations yet to come.

And so, amidst the ruins of Hiroshima, amidst the echoes of a city forever changed, Sakura and Kenji stood as beacons of hope, their spirits unbroken, their hearts aflame with the promise of a brighter tomorrow. For in the crucible of adversity, amidst the chaos of

destruction, they had discovered a profound truth—that amidst the wreckage of war, the human spirit endures, unyielding and unbroken, a testament to the indomitable power of hope. And as they gazed upon the scarred landscape of their city, they knew that though the shadows of war may linger, they would not be consumed—for amidst the ruins of Hiroshima, amidst the echoes of a city forever changed, the spirit of resilience burned brightly, a beacon of hope amidst the darkness.

# *Casting A Shadow Across Europe*

In the Eyes of: Maha Jarjous

*“Anyone can deal with victory. Only the mighty can bear defeat.” -Adolf Hitler*

*“Adolf Hitler, the notorious leader of Nazi Germany during World War II, ascended to power in the 1930s with ambitions of nationalistic dominance and racial purity. His oppressive regime perpetrated unimaginable horrors. Despite his early popularity and military triumphs, Hitler's legacy is one of immense suffering and destruction”*

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On 20 April 1889, the darkest man in history was born, Adolf Hitler. Hitler had a bad childhood because of his hostile relationship with his father, which was detrimental to his health. They always had something against each other, and faced many traumatic experiences. He lost his mom at 17. Hitler and his mom always used to support each other no matter what happened and loved each other unconditionally. As his photographer, I've always tried to mimic the love his mom gave him, but he only saw me as a photographer and a journalist.. nothing else. Trying to mimic the mother's love is very hard to replicate, because a mother's love is nothing compared to the rest, even if it were to be their closest friends or family.

Hitler and his mom used to have a great bond together, but when Adolf lost his mom, he felt very woeful and sorrowful. He was in disbelief when his mom was gone. I've always been curious if he started all these crises because he lost his mother... but we'll never know.

No one ever knew how dangerous and violent he was. I had always felt a strong feeling about him. After I grew to know him, I soon wanted to become Eva Braun-Hitler. I hoped we'd last forever. Before I knew what he was capable of doing, I'd always thought he'd be like any normal person – with flaws but innocent. But, I came to realize that I had been wrong and was too oblivious to recognize the havoc he caused. He had inflicted destruction and chaos on countless occasions, but that never stopped me from loving him. I had blinded myself from every life he had devastated and only loved him, just like I would love a sinless soul.

Adolf had always talked to me about the trauma his life had brought upon him. Adolf was a closed-off person. He was the type of book that stayed untouched on the shelf; not because he had an unappealing story, but rather because his story had a complex nature that no one could understand. When Adolf did trust me enough to disclose the unfortunes his life had brought upon him, I was nothing but attentive although I had always thought he was magnifying the intensity of certain matters. I still always tried my best to comfort him, but he never seemed to show a hint of gratitude.

“Eva! Clean up this mess right this instant!” I remembered that one night he screamed after he had just shattered my most precious china plates that my mother had gifted me.

“What happened, my darling?” I asked. I tried to maintain a gentle tone to hide the fact that my voice was trembling with fear.

"Quit asking unnecessary questions and clean up!" he snapped at me like had always done.

I grabbed a broom and began tidying after his mess until I stopped abruptly and broke out, "You shouldn't do this, Adolf. Confide in me like how you would confide in your late mother."

And, that was exactly what he did. He rambled on for hours about what had been bothering him. Yes, in my eyes, it was the most trivial problem; however, it was my duty, as his partner, to make light of his darkest moments.

"Well, just get back to cleaning now," He ordered.

Just like the weather, his mood had shifted from sunny to stormy. It was many incidents like this that Adolf would snap at me, and I wouldn't know how to act. To him, I was nothing but temporary. Over time, it occurred to me that he never valued me the way I valued him, but my underlying love for him never allowed me to part ways. I always hoped he'd finally see me for the kind person I really was, rather than a chore he had to fulfill in the book of life.

It was quite rare to engage in these conversations in our household, but eventually it became a constant recurrence - one that never escaped the back of his brain. He grew to know me as someone, whom he could unload all his emotions upon. It had started to take a toll on me mentally because of the genuine sorrow and sympathy I felt for him. He would regularly mention how "he wanted it all to end", which I always tried to shrug off. It was almost as if he was hinting something dull and somber.

As Hitler grew up, he matured enough to become a leader of the Nazis, and thus, the beginning of World War II. I always doubted and questioned his presidential actions; however, he was still adamant about pursuing his beliefs. I was always too afraid to voice my opinion on every decision he took as a world leader. He always got frustrated easily, and I didn't want to be the nearest person to that version of Adolf, so I stayed quiet and put up a smile to please him. My heart would shatter into pieces every time I'd see the blood of an innocent soul on his hands. But that happened regularly, every time I would hear Adolf talk with his associates Josef and Adolf Eichmann, I always had to support him in everything he did; at the end of the day, I was his partner. Adolf was consistently preoccupied with the perception of himself in the eyes of God, eading him to either excessively discuss the topic or convince himself of his superiority compared to others to ease his doubts.

The day had come. The day that Adolf Hitler began a war. All I heard was gunshots from left and right displayed on every news channel. It startled me to a point where I started to get triggered by the violent scenes I had seen. My job was to draw those scenes, but I couldn't help but shed tears while drawing them. Even though I was completely supporting Adolf, seeing innocent people die was a nightmare no one would experience. 6 million people and 12 years later... Hitler didn't feel fully satisfied with what he had done but, he indeed was proud of himself for achieving his goals in his life, and keeping up to his promises in what he promised his group. He solemnly declared that his purpose in life was fulfilled, and there was nothing left God wanted him to do.

On the night of our wedding, Adolf went down to the underground bunker and told me he was going to "write in his journal". Around 3 hours later, at around 4:45 AM, I noticed he had taken an unusual amount of time. I got out of bed and went downstairs to check on him. The house was surrounded by deafening silence. I couldn't even believe I was standing in Adolf Hitler's house. As I

walked down the stairs, I saw my husband's corpse lying on the floor, lifeless. All I found was blood dripping from his eyebrows, eyes wide open, and a massive hole that could only be the work of a bullet. I looked to my left, and I found the gun that took him away from me. I couldn't believe what just happened. It was the night of our wedding, and he had already taken his life. Words couldn't describe the loss I felt that night. I had lost my soulmate, my idol. Every tear I shed, every whimper that escaped my mouth, and every sorrowful moment I endured was a cry for help. A cry to bring back my missing piece. If only he also saw me in the same way I adored him. His suicide was a testament of anguish that only made me feel like my presence in his life did not matter at all.

### *The next morning, April 2, 1945*

In the suffocating grasp of uncertainty, I found myself utterly trapped. The haunting realization that his presence might never wane left me paralyzed with the dread of despair. I wasn't sure my shattered soul could ever find solace in healing. Unfortunately, it had only been a day since I married him, and I was determined to stay beside him forever. The only option I had, that could achieve my mission, was to take my life too, hoping we'd be buried together. So, I grabbed the pistol and wrapped my fingers around the bullets. I whispered my final goodbyes to this world, and off I went to reunite with my husband.

# *Echoes of Freedom*

*In the Eyes of: Haya Alkhoufi*

*"Mahatma Gandhi, born in India, was a pivotal leader in the struggle for Indian independence from British rule. He pioneered the philosophy of nonviolent resistance, known as Satyagraha, which inspired mass civil disobedience and peaceful protests to oppose British colonialism. His efforts ultimately led to India's independence in 1947, and his teachings on nonviolence influenced civil rights movements around the world"*

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With empty drawers and heavy hearts, we faced another day. There was an odd, but familiar, melancholy I was feeling. A melancholy that my parents were feeling too. I sat on the kitchen counter, as my mother ran a cool cloth across my scrapes and wounds. I didn't even flinch. I didn't feel the pain I usually felt; I had already gotten used to the knowing sting. It was an exhausting week for all of us. The British men were extra hard on us this time, giving us an immense number of duties just for a piece of bread. Dad couldn't afford food or even proper housing. He lost his job and became a slave to the British, so we were barely able to afford anything. I glanced at my beaten-up father and felt nothing but pity for him. All the effort he had put into his job all faded within a moment. In fact, almost all Indians lost their jobs and served the British. Every time we went out on the bare, cold streets, we found people begging on their knees for some form of support. The sight of sobbing mothers and hungry children made me feel like daggers were piercing through my heart. We didn't deserve that treatment. We were slapped, kicked, and punished whenever we didn't please the British. *Why were we treated that way?* I never understood. I was taken back to reality when my mother touched an open gash on my knee. I yelled, and she smiled empathetically at me and cleaned the wound.

"When will all of this end?" I muttered.

"Hopefully soon, sweetheart," mom replied simply.

I could hear the fatigue in her voice; I was able to tell she was losing hope as well. We would never have freedom or any rights while we were being ruled by the British. My father looked at me sadly and wrapped his arm around my mother's shoulder.

"All I know is that we aren't giving up. We'll have our own nation soon. I'm sure of it," my dad said firmly.

I gave a small, but faint, smile and nodded hesitantly. I looked down at the ground, and my smile faded instantly. Mahatma Gandhi, our active leader, tried so hard to grant India independence, but nothing changed. He began the first Satyagraha movement in 1917 to help our country gain the independence it deserved. Despite his continuous efforts, it wasn't enough

to bring us independence. The British would never surrender; they would never grant us our wish. To me, our fight for rights was an unrelenting avalanche that continuously became stronger with every injustice. My thoughts were interrupted by loud roars of defiance and determination. My parents and I froze in our spots and tried to figure out where the sound was coming from. There was only one possible place: the city center. I stood up and winced when my feet hit the ground. I ignored the stinging sensation, grabbed my dad's hand, and walked out of the house with him and my mom. We saw the entire city screaming and crying, as they marched across the city. My father smiled and gave my mother a knowing glance. I was extremely confused at that moment. My family and I began walking closely behind everyone, and I tried to figure out what was happening. When I heard the passionate protests, I immediately knew what was going on.

I saw hurt mothers carrying their newborn children while sobbing and screaming, "My child will not be your slave!"

I heard many more people chanting, "Freedom for India!"

My parents grinned and grabbed my hands, as they dragged me into the crowd and began protesting too. I couldn't help but crack a smile after seeing how happy they were. That was the biggest movement I had ever seen before. I had never seen so much passion, so much power, and so much commitment. I was taking everything in. *Maybe this was the start of our own nation.*

My parents and I marched with all the other Indians. We were ignited by a shared sense of injustice with hearts aflame with determination. One thing I was sure of was that we weren't going to stop. We weren't going to ever stop doing what we were doing until we succeeded. I began losing hope before, but that was because I didn't realize how dedicated everyone was. It was incredibly inspiring. After all the hardship, after all the pain, they still didn't give up. I needed to be like that. I took a deep, shaky breath and began protesting. Every protest was like a song. It was the people's song; it was our song. My heart beat with the drums. Our chants echoed through the city, as we fought for a better future, our own future. The passion burned like a wildfire; it was intense and heartfelt. We were being led by our fierce leader, Mahatma Gandhi, followed by Jawaharlal Nehru. They stood in front of the large crowd.

When we reached the British side of the country, we stood in front of the British colony as Mahatma yelled, "Give us our country back! Freedom for India! We aren't ever going to stop until we get our country back."

He spoke with so much passion and so much emotion. I smiled softly, as everyone yelled out in agreement. We were all aware that Britain was immensely weakened by World War II, and we didn't stop until we were granted our own country. Mahatma continued speaking to the British colony peacefully, non-violently, and remained civil. He took a unique approach to fighting for independence and spoke with uttermost sincerity and respect. He amazed me. The British colony shared uncomfortable glances at each other.

After a few minutes, one of the British men stated somewhat hesitantly, “We bid farewell to colonialism. India now restores its rightful place among all nations.”

That was when my life began.

Victorious roars erupted with elation through the crowd, as families huddled and grinned. Everyone screamed raucously to extents where they may have lost their voices.

Mothers cried emotionally, cradling their children, and saying, “Oh my, you will grow up like a normal child. Sweetheart, you won’t need to worry about hurting yourself and serving others. You will never have to go through that.”

Suddenly, a group of people lifted Mahatma Ghandi into the air and cheered. He smiled, eyes full of kindness and joy, as he lifted the Indian flag high. The crowd’s cheers boomed louder than ever. He was truly a hero. I embraced my parents tightly and looked up at my dad. His eyes welled up with tears, and my mom hugged him comfortingly. None of us knew how much that day would change our lives. We had our homeland back. The feeling was surreal. Over time, government and political systems were established. My father started working again, and we were all gifted with equal rights and opportunities. Watching the afterbirth of our nation was the most miraculous thing I ever witnessed. None of it would’ve been possible without Mahatma Gandhi. He was the reason for our independence; he was the reason for all the changes that occurred. August 15, 1947, was truly an unforgettable day. It was the start of our nation; it was the start of a new life. Our voices that were once heard as whispers were then heard as powerful roars. In the end, all chains were broken, and the light of freedom outshone all forms of darkness.

# *Frost Bitten*

*In the Eyes of: Basil Mustafa*

*The Berlin Wall was a barrier constructed by the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) in 1961 to separate East Berlin from West Berlin and prevent defection from East to West. It stood as a physical and ideological symbol of the Cold War division between communist Eastern Europe and the capitalist West. Its fall in 1989 came to symbolize the end of the Cold War and the reunification of Germany, marking a pivotal moment in modern history*

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The bitter cold of Berlin's winter had settled into the bones of John Smith, a seasoned CIA operative haunted by the ghosts of his past. Amidst the tensions of the Cold War, every breath he took felt laden with the weight of secrets and lies. He glanced over his shoulder, ensuring Maria Rodriguez, his trusted partner, was still at his side. They navigated the city's divided streets with caution, knowing that within the shadows lurked dangers beyond imagining.

As they walked, their footsteps echoed against the concrete walls, a stark reminder of the ever-present danger. John's mind raced with suspicions, a whisper of doubt clouding his thoughts. Ivan Petrov, a figure within their midst, cast a shadow of suspicion (*le Carré 45*). Unwavering intellect and loyalty were traits that John once admired, but now they only fueled his paranoia. Could Petrov be the Soviet mole they had been hunting for?

Their mission had brought them to the heart of a deadly game of cat and mouse, where the line between friend and foe blurred into shades of gray.

One frigid night, a whisper of suspicion led them down a dark alleyway, the chill of betrayal hanging in the air. Maria's voice cut through the silence, breaking John from his thoughts.

"We're getting close, John," she said, her voice steady despite the tension that gripped them.

Their investigation had led them to this moment, where the truth lay within their grasp. But as they closed in on their target, doubt gnawed at John's resolve. Could he trust his instincts, or were they merely leading him further into the abyss?

The alleyway stretched out before them, deserted and foreboding. John's heart pounded in his chest as they rounded the corner, their weapons drawn and ready. And there, standing in the dim light, was Petrov, his eyes wide with fear as he realized that his betrayal had finally caught up with him.

"You were always a step ahead, John," Petrov said, his voice laced with acceptance. "But you were never able to see the bigger picture."

John's grip tightened on his weapon as he stared down the man he once considered a friend. "You betrayed us, Petrov," he said, his voice barely above a whisper. "You put us all at risk."

Petrov's gaze flickered to Maria, his expression unreadable. "I did what I had to do," he said, his voice tinged with regret. "For my country, for my people."

But John knew that Petrov's words were hollow, a desperate attempt to justify his actions. The truth was far simpler: Petrov had surrendered to the darkness that lurked within us all.

As they handed Petrov over to their superiors for interrogation, John couldn't shake the feeling of sorrow that lingered in his heart. The danger had passed, but the scars of their torment would remain, a constant reminder of the cost of freedom in a world consumed by darkness.

But amidst the shadows, there was also a glimmer of hope. As long as Maria was by his side, John knew that together, they could weather any storm that came their way.

In the aftermath of their mission, John found himself reflecting on the choices they had made, the lives they had saved, and the sacrifices they had endured. He realized that in the murky world of espionage, the line between right and wrong was often blurred, and the decisions they made could have far-reaching consequences.

Petrov's eyes gleamed with a sinister resolve as he rose from his seat, casting a looming shadow in the dimly lit room. "You underestimate me, John," he sneered, his voice dripping with contempt. "I'm not alone in this fight. There are forces at play beyond your comprehension."

John's muscles tensed, his instincts screaming warnings of imminent danger. "What do you mean, Petrov?" he demanded, his voice laced with urgency.

But Petrov only smirked, his gaze piercing through John's defenses like a dagger. "You'll find out soon enough," he said cryptically, a cold chill settling in the room as his words hung in the air like a looming storm.

As they walked the streets of Berlin once more, John knew that their journey was far from over. But with Maria by his side, he faced the future with courage and determination, ready to confront whatever challenges lay ahead.

The room was empty, save for a single figure seated at a table in the corner. His face was shrouded in darkness, his features obscured by the dim light of the room. As John's eyes

adjusted to the gloom, he realized with a shock that the man before him was none other than Petrov.

"Surprised to see me, John?" Petrov said, his voice tinged with bitterness. "You thought you could leave me to rot in some dark cell, but I'm not so easily disposed of."

John's mind raced as he struggled to make sense of Petrov's presence. Had they been led into a trap, or was there more to this than met the eye? Before he could formulate a response, Petrov continued, his words cutting through the silence like a knife.

"You may have stopped me once, but you'll never truly defeat me," Petrov said, his voice filled with a cold determination. "The world is changing, John, and you can't stop what's coming."

With a sense of dread settling in his chest, John realized that Petrov's words held more truth than he cared to admit. The world was on the brink of a new era, one where the rules of engagement were shifting beneath their feet. And during it all, John and Maria found themselves caught in the crossfire.

With a nod to Maria, John stepped forward, his gaze locked with Petrov's. "You may think you've won, Petrov," he said, his voice steady despite the turmoil raging within him. "But this isn't over. Not by a long shot."

And with that, they turned and left Petrov behind, knowing that their journey was far from over. But as they walked the streets of Moscow once more, John couldn't shake the feeling that they were on the precipice of something greater, something that would test them in ways they could never have imagined.

# *Echoes of Partition: A Tale of Loss and Resilience in Lahore*

*In the Eyes of: Rahman Ahmed*

*"The Partition of the Indian Subcontinent in 1947, following India's independence from British rule, created the separate nations of India and Pakistan. This momentous event was accompanied by widespread violence, mass displacement, and loss of life as millions migrated across newly drawn borders, leaving a lasting impact on the region's political, social, and cultural fabric."*

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In the heart of Lahore, where the air is thick with the aroma of spices and the echoes of history, lies a tale of upheaval and resilience reverberating through the ages. It is the summer of 1947, and tensions between Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs simmer beneath the surface, threatening to erupt into violence at any moment.

Sitting amidst the chaos, I couldn't help but think of my family and our trials. Our roots run deep in Lahore; a city now torn apart by the looming specter of partition. My name is Abdul Khan. I am a devout Muslim and a businessman striving to provide for my beloved wife, Fatima, and our four children. Our home used to be a sanctuary of warmth and laughter, but now it's a battleground of uncertainty and fear. Rumors swept through the streets like a storm, leaving us grasping for stability amid turmoil.

One evening, as the sun dips low and the call to prayer echoes, I gather my family close. My voice trembles with emotion as I tell them, trying to convey the seriousness of our situation. Fatima's hands shake as she holds our youngest, her eyes pleading for reassurance in the face of impending loss.

"We stand on the brink of a new era, filled with danger and uncertainty," I say, trying to remain steady despite the turmoil in my heart. "We may have to leave everything behind to protect our family."

Fatima's voice wavers as she asks, "But where will we go? This is our home, our land."

I reach out to comfort her, promising to stand by her side no matter what lies ahead. "Our lives are worth more than bricks and mortar," I tell her, trying to steel myself for the difficult decisions ahead.

As the political landscape of British India shifts, we find ourselves caught in the crossfire of conflicting ideologies. Gandhi's calls for unity clash with Jinnah's demands for a separate Muslim state. Nehru, Gandhi's ally, struggles to reconcile these opposing visions, while Mountbatten oversees the partition process with a heavy hand.

As the news of the partition of India spread like wildfire, my heart pounded with uncertainty and fear. We were living in what would soon become Pakistan, and the announcement brought a wave of chaos and confusion.

Suddenly, lines were drawn on maps, dividing communities that had lived together for generations. Families were torn apart and forced to choose between staying in their homes or migrating to the newly formed countries based on their religious identity.

Amidst the uncertainty, violence erupted. Communal riots ravaged towns and cities, leaving behind a trail of destruction and despair. Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs, who once coexisted peacefully, now turned against each other in a frenzy of hatred and bloodshed.

Forced migrations became a harsh reality. People packed their belongings and embarked on dangerous journeys to reach safety. The roads were choked with refugees fleeing their homes searching for a new beginning.

The conditions on the Indian side following the partition were incredibly challenging. The mass migration and violence that accompanied the partition left scars on our society that still resonate today. The partition unleashed a torrent of anguish and upheaval, sweeping away the lives and dreams of millions like scattered leaves in a relentless storm. The refugee crisis was overwhelming, with millions of people forced to leave behind everything they knew and start anew in unfamiliar lands. The integration of princely states added another layer of complexity to the tumultuous situation. Amidst the chaos, the Indian government navigated political challenges, rebuilt the economy, and addressed security concerns.

In makeshift camps, we struggle to survive, our spirits torn but not broken. Despite the despair, there are moments of humanity as strangers become allies in our struggle for survival.

Months pass, and borders are drawn, dividing our land into two nations. These arbitrary lines forever change our lives, but our spirit endures. In Gandhi's words, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."

As we rebuild our shattered lives, the Khan family stands firm, a beacon of hope in a world torn apart by division. Though we may have lost our home, we have not lost our spirit – a spirit that will continue to guide us through the darkness towards a brighter tomorrow.

# *Fog of Farewell*

*In the Eyes of: Toleen Abu Sheikha*

*“A Mother hold their children’s hearts for a little while, but their hearts forever.” - unknown.*

*The Great Smog of London in December 1952 was a severe air pollution event caused by industrial emissions and coal burning, resulting in thousands of deaths and respiratory illnesses. It spurred legislative and public awareness efforts for improved air quality and pollution control measures.*

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## *Gwendoline Jones...*

My throat scorched as I woke up after ten long hours of sleep, startled by the sound of the telephone's screeching ringing in my parents' time-worn house. I got up from my bed after minutes of stretching my tired muscles, walked into the living room, and picked up the telephone. A distant "hello" reached my ears, and I swiftly recognised my mother's slightly raspy voice. It was 7:40 in the morning, and Mum never awakens before the sunrise. Anxiety struck me as adrenaline pulsed through my veins. Was it an emergency she called me for, something related to her lung cancer? Perhaps she was in the hospital right now, laying on her deathbed, while I was two hours away from her.

"Mum!" I shouted, my voice shaking, "Are you alright?"

"Oh, calm down, Gwendoline!" she replied, sensing the worry in my voice, "I am fine! I just figured since you cannot come to Oxford during the holidays because of college, I could come visit you in London."

A sigh of relief escaped me. So that's what she worried me about this early in the morning? "Mum, we talked about this," I told her, "And why are you awake at this hour?"

"Since I am currently spending the last of my days, I figured I should make the most of it," she answered, "by engaging in multiple activities—"

The grief of remembering that she merely has two months to live never failed to punch me right in the face. My eyes started to tear up, but I held myself together. I didn't want her to hear any of my sobs over the phone. She hated when I got emotional about her death's being so near.

--such as watching the sunrise." Mum continued. I looked out the window and saw a gentle glow expand across the sky and light up the living room's baby pink walls and cleared the sofa's intricate floral patterns as birds tweeted and flapped their wings on a tree by the window. The sun's light and the night's shadows were blended by hues of crimson and gold as the sun's rays stretched. A few seconds of silence were exchanged between us until I finally sighed and said,

"Mum, you cannot come to London. It is far too dangerous for you."

"But the doctors said that there is a chance the pollution wouldn't affect the time I have left. It could work!" she protested.

"And the doctors also said that there is a greater chance it *would* affect your lifespan," I argued, feeling guilt climb up my gut because I hated telling Mum no, especially in the final two months of her life, "and just because it won't affect your lifespan, that does not mean it won't affect other parts of your health!"

We left the conversation there. I preceded to prepare myself for my first final of the semester. As I was about to leave, I saw my reflection in a mirror beside the door. Above my tights, I wore an orange knee-length dress that brought out the colour of my ocean-blue eyes and a rich mahogany coat that had some wool at the end of either sleeve or at the collar. My short blonde hair was let down behind my ears --revealing the pearl earrings that my mum had gifted me not too long ago-- and was topped with a brown pillbox hat.

Two days later, during the evening, I was studying for my third final. My books were sprawled across the coffee table. The fireplace was lit, casting an amber glow as the flames danced and flickered. The wind outside was howling as it relentlessly hit the window, interrupting my thoughts every now and then. The sudden shrill of the telephone made me jump. I stood up from the ball I curled my body into and answered it. It was Mum.

"Hello, Gwenny," she greeted, "How have your exams been going? All good, I hope."

"Hi, mum," I greeted back, "Yes, all is well."

"Gwendoline, please," she said, her voice breaking, "I need to visit London."

"Mum, it isn't worth it."

"Gwendoline, it will be my last Christmas, and I want to spend it with you!" she exclaimed, "And I'd like to see my house one last time before I die."

I exhaled audibly, and I weighed the options for a minute. Letting her come to London, a city where coal combustion could be found left and right, was a perilous risk to take. But she wanted this more than anything, and I did not want to spend Christmas alone. She also wanted to see her house. The one that she and Dad bought and passionately decorated a bit before I was born. The one she had made so many memories in with me and Dad before he died. The

one she hadn't visited in three years because she had to move somewhere rural with low air pollution prevalence. Who was I to stop her? I hesitated before saying anything, still lost in thought.

"What is life without any risk at all?" Mum asked rhetorically, as though she could read my mind.

"Fine," I let out, "Let Patricia" —her caretaker-- "check the train tickets."

"I already did," she answered back, "there's a train available on the fifth—this Friday. At seven in the morning."

"Excellent. If you need help paying for the tickets, you can always ask me," I offered, but I knew very well the effect of paying for two train tickets would have on me. Despite the fact that it had helped me on numerous occasions, my ticket-selling job at the cinema did not pay me much.

"Don't be ridiculous! You have enough on your plate," Mum said, "So it's official then. I'm going to London!"

*John Smith...*

Thick liquid oozed out of my hand as I clenched my fist. It was blood. This woman, according to a nearby witness, had cut herself in the arm as she was trying to enter her compartment as a result of nausea and had fainted merely minutes later. My subconscious thoughts told me the fainting was caused by blood loss, but that can't be right. Her cut is deep, yes. But she did not lose enough blood to deprive her of consciousness.

The woman's head was face down on the train's chestnut floor. I lifted it up and noticed this is the face of a woman who is no younger than sixty years old. She can't possibly travel by herself. A frail, thin woman like her would need lots of assistance carrying out her daily activities. And what could she be doing on a train to London? Visiting family? But shouldn't it be the other way around, with her family visiting her?

Her auburn hair was greying and disheveled across her face, which bore a passage of time with creases. Since this woman was not covered in a pool of blood that would explain the fainting, my first instinct told me to check her breathing.

Weak pulse. Not a surprise. But what in the world could have caused that weak pulse? I kneeled beside the woman and placed my hands on her chest. Then, I applied multiple thrusts. With each compression, as I hoped for her heart to respond, my heart was pounding with adrenaline. What if this woman dies alone, without her loved ones by her side? How could I possibly get in contact with her family? I had never had a patient die before my eyes as I was just in my first year of surgical residency, so how on earth does a doctor break horrific news like that to someone's family?

As I was thinking, still bothered by the smell of coal tar and rotten eggs that has been in the air for the past thirty minutes, I realised there were multiple things that needed to be done to save this woman, but I only had two hands. I looked behind me –out of the compartment-- and beheld a crowd of people. Each of their faces was alight with despair and curiosity as they watched me. “Does anybody know this woman!?” I roared.

They all either shook their heads or called out a simple “no”. I studied the crowd deeply as my hands were still compressing on the woman’s chest and saw the man who called a doctor to this dying woman’s aid. I nudged my head at him and commanded, “Get in here.”

In a flash, the man was right beside me.

“Rip a piece of cloth from your clothes,” I ordered, “and wrap it around her arm. Be sure to apply pressure.”

The man obeyed without question. The bleeding in the woman’s arm had to stop if I was to ensure she survived. After the man was done, I looked into his earth-brown eyes and said, “Open her suitcase.”

“Sir, that is an invasion of—”

“Now!” I cut him off.

The man laid the ebony suitcase down and opened it. I instructed him to move things around so I could obtain a better view. Seconds passed, but none of the suitcase’s contents explained any diseases this woman might have. No inhaler. No medication. And no prescriptions.

I checked the woman’s pulse, and it was stronger. Much stronger. I carried her up and laid her down on the seat. I saw her passport atop the mess of her belongings the man made while searching her suitcase. I picked it up, opened it, and saw the woman’s name was Margaret Wilson, and, as I predicted, she was sixty-four years old.

“Excuse me!” A voice bellowed out of the blue, “What are you doing!? That is my patient!”

“Dr. John Smith here. Surgical resident at Churchill Hospital,” I replied in reassurance. The voice came from a petite woman who was pushing her way through the crowd. She was carrying an aquamarine shoulder bag. That must be where medication or drug prescriptions lie. So, this must be the woman’s caretaker, “I need to know what diseases your patient could possibly have.”

“Small cell carcinoma,” she answered rapidly. Ah! Lung cancer.

“I am no oncologist, but I don’t think this woman has much time to live,” I announced, “She shouldn’t be near London at all.”

I could tell we were in London by the fog that swallowed the landscape outside of the train's window. This fog did not look normal. It had too much of a mustard tint to look ordinary.

"We know," the caretaker said, "Two months left."

"Less," I sighed, "Much less if she stays in London. She has any family?"

"Only Gwendoline –her daughter."

"Then you better get in contact with her," I advised, "Tell her to meet you at Charing Cross Hospital."

## *Gwendoline Jones...*

I was relieved to hear that my last final exam was postponed until after the holidays due to unfavourable weather conditions. That's what the radio broadcast said. I looked out my window and saw the thick fog that made the world look like an eerie, phantom dimension. My parents' vintage telephone rang. I picked it up and answered it.

"Gwendoline," I heard Patricia's voice say, "your mother is in the hospital. Here, in London. On the train, I left her for a few minutes to get her medicine bag where I forgot it in the toilet, and when I returned to our compartment, she had difficulty breathing. Fortunately, a doctor was onboard and helped her."

My heart began attempting to escape my ribcage, and my stomach tied itself into a clutter of knots. With each drop of sweat that trickled down my face, each of those knots pulled tighter and tighter, making me feel as though I'm suffocating.

"Gwen, your mother only has a few days to live. A week at most," Patricia continued.

"No..." I let out as a sob escaped me.

"The fog outside is no ordinary fog, Gwen. Stay at home. Do not leave," Patricia ordered.

"What?" I yelled, "My mother is dying. I must see her!"

"I'm sorry," Patricia said, "There's nothing you can do now. Just stay safe."

Three days passed, and my eyes were so swollen that there wasn't enough skin on my eyelids to cover them. They were sunken in and burdened by the weight of my misery. It wasn't fair! Mum was all I had left. I shouldn't have let her visit London. She was on her deathbed, and I was minutes away. I was utterly helpless! This smog ruined *everything*.

I was finally able to visit her the next day. I entered the hospital's blue-tiled floors and followed a nurse to my mother's bed, which was among the rows and rows of beds that were separated with nothing but curtains. When I saw her lying broken on her bed, I erupted into a downpour of tears. Her body looked more fragile than ever, and her face was devoid of warmth. Shadows waltzed along her hollowed cheeks and thin lips. Her once beautiful eyes looked as though life had been sucked right out of them.

"Mum!" I shouted and ran to sit by her side.

The dim lights of the hospital did not create a comforting ambiance, and the beeping of the machines were the only sounds that stopped silence from being louder than ever.

"Hello, Gwenny," Mum said, "I love you very much. You know that don't you?"

I nodded as more tears ran down my face. "I love you too, mum."

"You're the pride of my life," she stated, "I put too much work into raising you. Don't let that go to waste."

I nodded again. "Don't leave me, mum. Please. I'm begging you."

"You know I can't do that," she answered softly.

In the following few days, in pain, I watched my mother's soft face get covered after she took her final breaths, and I watched her body get buried. The fog that engulfed my mother's final days of life ascended, leaving sorrow in its wake. The days passed, and that sorrow never ascended away, and while it did bring me despair, it also brought me joy. Because it reminded me to cherish every single memory my mother and I had bonded over. It gave me strength, and it guided me in keeping the promise I made to her. To never let her hard work in raising me go to waste. Ever.

# *Confession of the Poised*

*In the Eyes of: Tala Salhi*

*'He has [The late Prince Philip], quite simply, been my strength and stayed all these years, and I, and his whole family, and this and many other countries, owe him a debt greater than he would ever claim, or we shall ever know.'*

*Queen Elizabeth II (1926-2022) was the longest-serving British monarch, reigning for over 70 years from 1952 until her death. She became queen after her father, King George VI, died. Throughout her reign, she witnessed major historical events, including the UK's entry and exit from the European Union. Known for her sense of duty, she remained a respected and cherished figure in British society.*

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I heard my heartbeat in my ears. I breathed in and out, but it was no use; my fear remained. Tracing the embroidery on my coronation dress, I looked at myself in the mirror. My ladies-in-waiting had all left my chambers, leaving me alone with my thoughts. The symbols on my dress all signified a country—the thistle for Scotland, the rose for England, and the leek for Wales. Everything my body was adorned with had its purpose. It was all set and ready, but was I? This was the moment I had been raised for. I used to see myself as lucky in my younger years, for I was first in line for the succession of the throne after my father. At that moment, though, I was not so sure. Either way, I couldn't let myself support these doubts. The Gold State Coach was coming to take me to Westminster Abbey in less than an hour, and I had to be ready to leave when the time came. My country needed me, and more importantly, my family depended on me to ascend the throne and rule.

I needed advice. Just a few supportive words telling me I can do this, and the weight on my shoulders will feel lighter. Rushing out of my chambers, I escaped to Margaret's room. I was obliged to sneak around, making sure nobody would order my return. It was ironic that I, the future queen, was running away from my subjects' orders. Part of my humor returned to me, and I smiled to myself discreetly.

Margaret's room was just a few doors away from where I was. Silently, I prayed her maids would be gone when I reached. I knocked on her door, letting her know somebody was entering, before trying to sneak in with the fifty-meter dress I had on. She was sitting at her vanity, finishing up the last few touches on her makeup and hair.

Turning to me, she asked, "Lilibet, what are you doing here? You must go back to your chambers. Everybody will be looking for you."

I walked over to her, reaching for her hands. “Margaret, I have something to confess. Please, I need you to hear me out before saying anything,” I admitted to my sister.

“Go on,” she pushed, getting up to grab something from one of her closets.

I didn’t pay attention; I was looking at the wall, shamefully. “I will be crowned queen in mere hours. I will stop being Princess Elizabeth. I will become Queen Elizabeth. Mother and father have prepared me for this moment since we were young—since before you were born. I thought I was ready. I thought I could do this. I thought I was prepared enough,” I paused for a second, “Margaret... I don’t want this anymore, but I don’t know how to give it up. I can’t become queen. I wouldn’t know what to do. I’m scared, Margo.”

She walked back to me, slowly. A deciding look was cast on her face. Finally reaching me, she took a breath, sighing, “Lilibet, I love you. I will always love you. You are my sister, and beyond that, you will be my queen. However, I bear no apology for what I am about to say. It is not your choice to decide if you can or cannot be queen. You accepted your fate the moment you said yes to all the training you went through for this moment. You accepted your fate when you pushed through all the tests and the hardships father, as well as the whole court, put you through. You accepted your fate when you went through it all with your head held high. It is not your right to back out now. It is not just to yourself and certainly not to your people, so you will leave my room. You will go to the coach awaiting you downstairs, and you will become queen.”

I hugged her tightly before thanking her. I smiled at her, and she opened her mouth to say, “Choose your audience wisely; loose talk, tight knots.”

Knocks came from outside the room. It was time for me to leave. Opening the door to leave, I glanced over my shoulder for the last time. What did she mean? Would she tell this to others? But, before I could confront her or say anything about it, I was taken by my ladies-in-waiting to the coach awaiting me.

“Your majesty, you must rush. The coach is downstairs,” Lady Rosemary Muir, one of the girls, said.

Another one breathed out excitedly, “More importantly, the people of England await you, your majesty.”

They took me through the lavish hallways of Buckingham Palace. High ceilings were everywhere with long drapes falling, giving a very royal look. The palace was enormous, but it felt more and more never-ending the farther they took me from Margaret. I could remember her sly smile as I was dragged out of the room.

After what felt like years, we reached. Standing in the porte cochere, I was mesmerized by the magnificent Gold State Coach. Centuries of regal history were emitted by its exquisitely carved, bright gold façade. As I prepared to go in for my coronation, its magnificence symbolized the gravity of my responsibility as a monarch.

Prince Philip, the duke of Edinburgh and my beloved husband, came to stand next to me. Whispering in my ear, he said, “Are you okay, my dear? Is something troubling you?” I looked around the area, making sure nobody was near enough to listen.

“I have made a grave mistake,” I admitted.

“What do you mean?”

“I was feeling anxious, so I went to speak with Margaret, hoping for advice. I confessed to her doubts about me being unsure if the ruling was what I wanted anymore; it was just my anxiousness talking. Philip... she said something coded. I didn’t understand at first, but then I understood. She’s not planning on keeping it to herself. She’s going to tell everybody. She knows how my throne will be at risk if this is spread to others. She knows what will happen—what mother and father, the people, will do. Philip, you must help me.”

He shook his head, pinching his temple. He walked away, coming back with a paper and a pen. Motioning for me to get in the coach, he sat inside with me. Philip scribbled on the paper, leaving me only to see who it was addressed to—Margaret. As I sat in the coach, looking at him, he signaled for one of the butlers to come. “You make sure you give this to Princess Margaret. Tell her it’s a gift from Prince Philip,” he demanded.

## *During the coronation...*

I, the soon-to-be queen, completed my procession, walking over to the archbishop. I held the two sovereign scepters. Each breath I took felt heavy, clouded with confusion and worry about Margaret and her scheming. I decided to put it all down, focusing on my oath.

The Archbishop of Canterbury began, “Will you solemnly promise and swear to govern the Peoples of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Pakistan, and Ceylon, and of your Possessions and the other Territories to any of them belonging or pertaining, according to their respective laws and customs?”

“I solemnly promise so to do,” I replied.

“Will you to your power cause Law and Justice, in Mercy, to be executed in all your judgments?”

“I will.”

“Will you to the utmost of your power maintain the Laws of God and the true profession of the Gospel? Will you to the utmost of your power maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law? Will you maintain and preserve inviolably the settlement of the Church of England, and the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government thereof, as by law established in England? And will you preserve

unto the Bishops and Clergy of England, and to the Churches there committed to their charge, all such rights and privileges, as by law do or shall appertain to them or any of them?"

"All this I promise to do," I returned, affirming to my people and myself that I was ready to take on the power of ruling across them.

Kneeling upon the steps before the Holy gospel, I took my oath, stating, "The things which I have here before promised, I will perform and keep. So help me God"

With that, I had become the queen. No sign of my confessions had reached anyone. I looked to my husband, who beamed at me brightly, knowing he had taken care of everything. I took a breath of relief. I had put my faith in him, and he had not disappointed. I hadn't the slightest idea what he had done. What words could have changed Margaret's mind? I didn't know and didn't care. Whether he knew it or not, he had allowed me to become queen.

I owed him my throne and life.

# *A Change is A Change*

*In the Eyes of: Jana Bustami*

*"Rosa Parks, an African American woman, attained recognition on December 1st, 1955, when she famously refused to give up her seat to a white man on a bus that was separated in Montgomery, Alabama. Under the then-current segregation rules, the man asked that Parks and three other African American passengers give up their seats to make room for a white passenger. This was the common practice at the time."*

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## *Jay*

After a long day of working at the Auto Apex, I was walking over to the bus. Today on December 1, 1955, I got my promotion. Checking the watch on my wrist it said that it was five thirty-three in the afternoon. Exhausted, I hurriedly sat on the bus stop seats. As I waited for the bus, I pulled out my crossword puzzle that I had cut out of the newspaper. I looked over to find a woman who looked older than me sitting beside me. She looked older and reeked a weird scent. Her hair looked untamed almost like a bird's nest or a bush. Her clothes looked faulty. I remembered what my parents had always told me about avoiding people like her and how they were here to steal and hurt the innocent. As harsh as some would say it is to judge someone based on the way they look, I have always been a realist and I knew better than to take a risk with someone just to come off as nice. As I tried to ignore her revolting scent and focus on my crossword puzzle, I couldn't finish it since the bus had stopped by. I entered the bus and found that it was full of people. The woman from earlier sat in the front seat.

## *Rosa*

As I took my seat, glad that I had taken it before someone else did, the man who had seemingly been disgusted looking at me was now staring around scavenging for a seat with his eyes. I was glad to almost be home which was two blocks down. The man gave me a look of disgust which I had gotten used to getting in this neighborhood, and walked over to me. He looked at me as though I was some criminal.

In the most condescending tone, he said, "Get off my seat."

I was taken aback by his attitude and behavior. With his entitlement, I felt somewhat offended by what he had said. Now my mama told me a lot of times not to take what the white folks say to heart, but at that moment, I was so fed up that I didn't even care. I didn't want to come off as rude since he seemed like the kind to press charges.

I reply coldly saying, "I ain't giving up my seat, so quit acting like I took what's yours."

## *Jay*

I was already beginning to grow frustrated from this woman even being in this neighborhood let alone her disrespecting me. I mean who did she think she was? She had no right to even be in this neighborhood let alone refuse to give up her seat. I had no time for these useless low lives. I heard that they ran scams on the buses to get some extra cash for substances.

I looked at her frustrated saying, “What do you want? Money? You shouldn’t be here in the first place, so I don’t know what made you think that you could deny me my seat.”

I continued saying irritatedly, “I don’t know why you people even think that you can waltz in here and sit and do whatever you want.”

She looked at me all high and mighty and replied, “I sat here first. I am not giving up my seat. If you don’t like it, I am sure you can stand over there whining someone else’s ear off.”

I looked at her like she was crazy and said, “Have you no respect for me or the nation? I guess being polite doesn’t work with you people. It’s almost like you’re out for violence; always picking a fight”.

This time, unfazed and almost like she didn’t want to listen to me argued, “I done told you to stop trying to take my seat. I have just as much as a right of being on this bus as you so don’t you sit there trying to tell me where my rights stand.”

Frustrated and not wanting to ruin my own day any further than she already had, I settled on not taking her seat on the bus and standing holding the bus pole, but I couldn’t help but think about what she had said earlier about how she was human like me. It’s not that it wasn’t true, but it’s more that it felt like she wanted me to see her as an equal. I pondered and reevaluated the situation.

## *Rosa*

As he finally walked over to the bus pole, seeming to have finally given up, I waited for the bus driver, who was witnessing the whole thing happen in awe of what I had done, to finally start moving. Soon enough I reached home. I walked up the stairs and opened the door to my apartment. I walked in to see my mom sitting on the couch reading a magazine. I walked up to her and hugged her.

I then said, “Hey mama. How was your day today? Did dad face any issues in the post office?”

She replied with a smile on her face saying, “It was decent and about your dad I mean what did you expect Rosa? Of course he faced issues filing mail. The police officer couldn’t believe that he was just trying to send a letter.”

She then sighed as the smile slightly faded saying, “Your grandma was right white folks don’t see anything but color.”

Although I didn’t want to make her day worse than it already clearly was, I knew that I just had to tell her about the bus incident. As I told her, her face at the end gave me a proud smile. She looked so happy that it confused me.

Then, she said beaming, “Your granny would be so happy to know that you finally stood your ground.” I smiled, not thinking too much of what she said.

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Later, Rosa Parks would go on to influence a lot of people to help them realize that they are all equal and that race is nothing more than that and should never partake in what your rights are or how you are treated. Following a 13-month nationwide boycott, the U.S. Supreme Court declared that segregation on public transportation is invalid, ending the Montgomery bus boycott.

# *A Parks' Echo of Hope Through Time*

*In the Eyes of: Tia Koulayat*

*"Rosa Parks, often hailed as the 'Mother of the Civil Rights Movement,' catalyzed a pivotal moment in history through her simple act of defiance. By refusing to give up her seat on a segregated bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955, she sparked a mass movement for equality and justice, inspiring generations to stand up against oppression and discrimination."*

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"The only tired I was, was tired of giving in"- Rosa Parks. Imagine a world in which thoughts are imprisoned, voices are silenced, and the screams of the heart resonate only from within. Imagine a world where your skin tone dictates the road you take, having all opportunities dimmed as shadows under intensified light. Rosa Parks, "the mother of the civil rights movement", was the woman to ignite a change like no other. Born on February 4th, of 1913 in Tuskegee, Alabama, Rosa Louise McCauley lived in the segregated south, making her subject to racial discrimination and violence. At the age of 19, Rosa Parks got married to a local barber, known as Raymond Parks. Raymond Parks was an active fighter and advocate towards the ending of racial injustice. Before Rosa Parks, there was Claudette Colvin. Rosa Parks did the job that Claudette Colvin was stripped away from. Seeing as Claudette Colvin was a teenager, she was deemed "unreliable" in comparison to Parks. Life before Rosa Parks was hectic, unjust, and in shambles when it came to people of color. However, Parks and her husband worked for months on end in hopes of eradicating this. Together, the two worked tirelessly towards bringing an end to racial injustice, given their involvement with many social justice organizations, and Rosa's election in the secretary of the Montgomery chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). However, this was yet to be powerful enough to draw the attention of all the other silenced bystanders, in fear of being woken within their unsubtle reality. This did not stand a chance against Rosa Parks' resistance. Following the Montgomery Bus Boycott that started on December 5th of 1955, Park left an echo of hope through time.

Rosa Parks devoted the entirety of her life towards enhancing the lives of those to follow her, and to protect and show gratitude towards the efforts of those that came before her. In 1943, she joined the Montgomery National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, in hopes of sparking a fuel in the hearts of those in society. Rosa Parks believed strongly in the need for change, conformity, and defiance. "You must never be fearful about what you are doing when it is right," she once said. Following her original involvement with the association, Parks initiated the restart of the Montgomery NAACP Youth Council. By such, she was responsible for the training of youngsters to confront discrimination, and was responsible for organizing simple activities, such as spelling bees. This allowed her to further refurbish the importance of defending one's rights in the minds of little ones that made up the generations to come. Through the initiation of this council, Rosa Parks fabricated and strengthened the mindset of the youth. Not to mention, throughout the course of her life as the

secretary of the Alabama State Conference of the NAACP, Parks had the honors of traveling around the state, interviewing numerous victims subjected to discrimination and lynchings. By offering a thorough grasp of the problems, emphasizing areas that require change, empowering the disenfranchised, and guiding advocacy and policy initiatives, these interviews open the door to progress. Regardless of her tireless efforts, an advantageous long-term effect was yet to be embraced. Nonetheless, Rosa Parks did not stop there... and surely, her continuous efforts began to unveil their benefits.

On December 1st of 1955, Rosa Parks, although aware of the consequences of the act she was to commit, refused to give her seat on a bus to a white male passenger. The matter of fact was that Parks was not the first person to refuse to give their seat up. Rather than asking Parks to leave the bus, the driver resorted to calling the police. Determined, committed, and stubborn, Parks remained sitting in her seat, awaiting the arrival of the police and her arrest. Thanks to Rosa Parks' brave act, a revolution arose. "The only tired I was, was tired of giving in," Parks subsequently said. Her insistence on not giving up her seat caused thousands of other people to experience the same weariness of "giving in" with all the associated humiliations and tragedies. Her leadership encouraged them to engage in the well-coordinated Montgomery Bus Boycott, which began on December 5, 1955. Although many were forced to walk miles in bad weather or worse, endure harassment while traveling to and from their place of employment, schools, or homes, 30,000-40,000 continuously participated in the boycott, for 381 days on end. Participants walked, cycled, or car-pooled, thus causing the deprivation of the bus company of any revenue or profit. The Montgomery Improvement Association was founded to preserve the boycott. The MIA set up an intricate carpooling program, setting up 40 pickup locations across the city where anyone might go to find a ride. Although the vehicle pool was frequently hounded by the police and the white residents with violence and citations, the neighborhood persisted.

Following the arrest of Rosa Park, Martin Luther King Jr. made an appearance at the Holt Street Baptist Church in Montgomery in Alabama, addressing a crowd of over 5,000 individuals. Dr. King's speech acted as a reinforcement on the incident that happened on the bus with Parks, imbricating details such as faith, justice, equality, unity, and fairness. The speech urged the people of color and bystanders to speak up, sacrifice, and devote their lives towards the future of those to come. Furthermore, on November 13th of 1956, the Montgomery Bus Boycott ended in the Supreme Court's declaration that public buses were to be unconstitutional. The Montgomery Bus Boycott was a major contribution to transit equality and civil rights, seeing as it removed early obstacles to transportation access. Moreover, King became a well-known national civil rights activist and captivating representation of black equality because of the Montgomery bus boycott. Abernathy, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Ella Baker, Bayard Rustin, and other black preachers and activists rose to prominence in the civil rights movement. Many people's hearts were filled with such a flame because of Rosa Parks. Rosa Parks is the lady who gave rise to societies that were thriving on discrimination and denial of rights.

The Montgomery bus boycott influenced the movement's methods, systems of support, authority, and goals. Over the following ten years, a nonviolent direct-action movement for equal civil rights for African Americans was built around the lessons learned from the Montgomery experience. Since those boycotts in Montgomery, Alabama, and throughout the world, transit access has advanced significantly. The path to safe transportation was cleared after Rosa Parks' uprising. Rosa Parks facilitated the process of achieving safety, security, and serenity on passageways. It is worrisome to consider where we might be now if Rosa Parks had not been. Undoubtedly, the Montgomery bus boycotts have made a more equitable transportation system feasible. Following 2005, minorities and other marginalized populations now have widespread access to safe, reasonably priced transportation. Not only do such neighborhoods have transport available to them, but their views are also highly sought out prior to service modifications. People nowadays are heard, understood, and given importance, all thanks to Parks' movement, which initiated the jumpstart of this trail to equity. Now formed to guarantee fairness in service and fare modifications, the Federal transport Administration (FTA) collaborates with transport companies and the communities they serve. The Office of Civil Rights of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) upholds civil rights laws for all transit agencies, ensuring that their operations are free from discrimination. Rosa Parks is the epitome of courage, resilience, and civil disobedience. Rosa Parks is the brave hero that ignited the movement's flame for the benefit of the years to follow.

After that, Martin Luther King Jr. developed a well-known civil rights movement who was particularly interested in Montgomery and inspired broader civil rights efforts across the United States.

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# *Saigon's Resilience Amidst Conflict Echoes*

*In the Eyes of : Saif Zimmo*

*The Vietnam War, a protracted conflict that lasted from 1955 to 1975, embroiled Vietnam in a struggle for independence and ideological dominance. Marked by intense fighting, devastating casualties, and profound social and political upheaval, the war left a lasting impact on Vietnam, the United States, and the world. Its legacy continues to shape foreign policy, military strategy, and public discourse on war and peace.*

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In the busy world of the 1960s, where everything seemed confusing and people were talking a lot about a war in a faraway place called Vietnam, I, a journalist, felt a strong pull to go there. It wasn't an easy decision because Vietnam was in the middle of a big conflict, but I knew I had to see it for myself. With just a notebook, a camera, and a deep sense of curiosity, I set off for Saigon, the bustling capital of South Vietnam.

As I arrived in Saigon, the sights and sounds overwhelmed me. The city was alive with activity, but underneath the chaos, I sensed a quiet determination in the people. It was as if they were holding onto hope amidst the turmoil of war.

Traveling through Vietnam, I saw the true impact of the conflict on its people. Families were torn apart, homes destroyed, and lives shattered. But during the destruction, I also witnessed moments of resilience and strength - regular people doing extraordinary things to help each other survive.

And so, my journey began - a journey filled with uncertainty, danger, and discovery. As I risked deeper into the heart of Vietnam, I knew that what I would witness would stay with me forever. Little did I know, it was just the beginning of a story that would change my life forever.

In the busy city of Saigon, where I, the journalist, found myself among the bustling crowds, there was a lot happening. People rushed around, and the streets were noisy with chatter and honking cars. But beneath the surface, I could feel something else – tension.

As I walked through the crowded streets, I noticed the walls covered in colorful paintings and words. Some said things like "Communism is the answer" while others said, "Democracy is the way." It seemed like everyone had a different opinion, and it was causing a lot of arguments and problems in the city.

The arguments weren't just on the walls – they were everywhere. People argued on street corners, and sometimes things got really loud and scary. It felt like the whole city was divided, and no one could agree on anything.

But even though there were a lot of disagreements, I also saw something else – strength. Despite all the problems and fighting, the Vietnamese people stayed strong. They went about their lives, working and taking care of their families, even when things were really tough.

As the fighting got worse, I saw how much war hurt people. Families lost their homes, and sometimes even loved ones. It was really sad to see, but even in the middle of all the chaos, the Vietnamese people didn't give up hope. They kept going, determined to make things better for themselves and their country.

It was inspiring to see their resilience, and it made me want to do something to help. As a journalist, I knew I had a responsibility to tell their stories. So, I talked to people and wrote down everything they told me. I wanted the world to know what was happening in Saigon and how brave the Vietnamese people were.

As I continued to document the events in the city, I realized just how strong the human spirit could be. Despite all the hardships they faced, the Vietnamese people never lost hope. They showed me that even in the darkest times, there is still light – you just have to look for it.

And so, as I walked the streets of Saigon, surrounded by the chaos of war, I felt a sense of hope. Hope for the future, and hope that one day, things will get better. And I knew that as long as the Vietnamese people stayed strong, there was nothing they couldn't overcome.

After the war ended in Vietnam, there were a lot of bad things that happened to the country and its people. About 2 million Vietnamese people died during the war, and many more got hurt or had to leave their homes. The war caused a lot of damage, with cities and villages getting destroyed and things like roads and buildings getting broken.

One of the worst things about the war was how it hurt the environment. They used chemicals like Agent Orange that made the land and water really dirty. This made a lot of people sick with diseases like cancer or birth defects. More than 4.8 million people in Vietnam got exposed to Agent Orange, and many got really sick or died because of it.

The war also made it hard for Vietnam to have enough money. They had to spend a lot to fix things and help people who got hurt in the war. This made it tough for Vietnam's economy to grow, and their money wasn't as much as other countries nearby.

The war didn't just hurt people's bodies or the country's money – it also hurt their hearts. Families got separated, and communities got broken. Even after the fighting stopped, a lot of people still felt really sad or scared. Some had a hard time sleeping or feeling safe because of what happened during the war.

But even with all the bad stuff, Vietnam did a lot to get better. They worked hard to make the country grow and to help people who got hurt in the war. They built new things like

roads and hospitals, and they made sure kids could go to school and learn. Over time, Vietnam got better and better, and now it's one of the fastest-growing countries in the world.

Vietnam also tried to help people who got sick from things like Agent Orange. The government made programs to give them medicine and money, and other countries helped too. They also worked to make sure the land and water got clean again so people could be safe.

Even though Vietnam is doing better now, the war still left some scars. Some people are still poor, and the environment still needs help. But Vietnam's people are really strong, and they're working hard to make things better for themselves and for the future.

# *Born to be a Leader.*

*In the Eyes of: Zeina Sulieman*

*"It is in your hands to create a better world for all who live in it."* - Nelson Mandela, one of the greatest and most inspirational historical figures that the world has encountered. Born on the 18th of July 1918, in a village called Mvezo, in Transkei, an area of South Africa. Nelson excelled in his academics and joined the University of Fort Hare. After that, he moved to the city of Johannesburg to study law at the University of the Witwatersrand before qualifying as a lawyer in 1942, at the age of 24. Nelson had embarked on countless journeys, many of them forever changing the way society is perceived. In a world where humans strive continuously to find a home somewhere their loved ones could be treated fairly and equally, Nelson's beliefs and principles always included his best interests among the world's citizens. The father of South Africa, a world changer, he was the first black president that the country had encountered, shaping its rich history once and for all. This is especially since Nelson's rough childhood included a sheer amount of racism and discrimination, disallowing Nelson from many of his basic rights and privileges in the nation. Mandela was arrested near Howick in Natal province, South Africa, on August 5, 1962. Mandela was South Africa's most wanted fugitive; he used disguises and aliases to evade the authorities for nearly a year and a half. He was charged with having organized an illegal strike and with leaving the country without valid travel documents. Mandela was imprisoned for 27 years. His release on February 11, 1990, marked a significant turning point in the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. Mandela's freedom created hope and momentum for the anti-apartheid movement both within South Africa and internationally. His release symbolized progress towards ending the oppressive regime of apartheid and paved the way for negotiations between the African National Congress (ANC) and the South African government, ultimately leading to the dismantling of apartheid and the establishment of a democratic government in 1994. South Africa held its first nonracial democratic election in April 1994. In these elections, all individuals above the legal age of 18, regardless of race, were allowed to vote for the first time in South African history.

*"During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination, and I have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities. It is an ideal which I hope to live for and to achieve. But if needs be, it is an ideal for which I am prepared to die"* - Nelson Mandela. One of his most famous quotes highlights the utter selflessness that Nelson possesses. In this quote, and the speech that he gave, Nelson preached about his fair and just ideals that he wishes to fight for; Nelson does not only fight for his race, but he also fights for all backgrounds, regardless of appearance or beliefs. Moreover, this speech was one of the main breaking points, or selling points, where Mandela had won over the majority of his soon-to-be citizens as he managed to persuade and inspire everyone to take a stand and speak out. Mandela expressed his dream of

living in a harmonic society where race, gender, or ethnic backgrounds are disregarded, and people are not segregated due to any of these factors. All in all, Mandela's aspiration to change the world and the environment around him is what separated him and established him as a ray of light among all the social dilemmas occurring in the society, and it is what made Mandela unique and special, causing them to vote for him without a shadow of a doubt to lead them and to be their president.

The world was ready to start and experience a new era, one where Mandela would be their leader. Mandela strived to create new beginnings and create a better place for all citizens. He began by rebuilding his own nation by eliminating all its social issues and renovating the environment around him and his people. Not only did he manage to minimize the rates of racism, sexism, and slavery, but he also managed to also decrease the spreading of diseases in his country by reconstructing and cleansing South Africa's infrastructure as a whole. Moreover, Mandela had also launched several different initiatives to raise awareness on countless different concerns that their society had faced not only in South Africa, but in the entire world. Mandela had forged a mark in history that will forever be remembered as one of the most historical figures who had managed to shape the way today's world appears to be, and the way people interact with one another. All in all, Mandela's election as a president was just the start of many great things that come along with it, and the world had forever been shaped positively due to Mandela's great efforts and determination to strive, thrive, and fight for a better world where all the world's citizens live in peace and harmony.

In conclusion, Nelson Mandela's remarkable achievements that he had managed to obtain before and after his extraordinary election had all played a role in creating his own great legacy, leading it to be one that will forever be discussed and addressed to the entire globe and especially its youth to change the negative ideals that the world previously had. Mandela's principles are what led him to be an inspirational figure and a role model to the youth; his ethics and empathy are what drove him to fight for those who are suffering from injustice simply due to the color of their skin, or their religious beliefs, and that is how Mandela had gained the trust of not only his own citizens, but many around the world who observe such dilemmas occurring around them, or ones who are suffering from these issues themselves.

# *The DNA Discovery Disparity*

*In the Eyes of: Hala Sehwail*

*Rosalind Franklin, a trailblazing scientist, contributed significantly to the discovery of DNA's structure. Despite her vital X-ray diffraction images, which were instrumental in revealing the double helix, her role was initially overlooked. Regrettably, Franklin succumbed to ovarian cancer in 1958, prior to the Nobel Prize recognition for DNA's discovery. Nevertheless, her invaluable contributions were eventually acknowledged posthumously, cementing her profound influence on molecular biology.*

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I awoke to the sound of murmuring. It had been a long day yesterday, with me desperately trying to figure out the structure of this mysterious DNA. I felt very fatigued. I looked around, only to find myself in the laboratory. The events of yesterday started engulfing me. Papers from my latest discovery were scattered all around the place. I spotted Maurice Wilkins, my colleague. He was standing tall, looking at some papers in the laboratory. I flattened my skirt before quickly taking the papers out of his sight and swiftly slipping them into the drawer, hoping he wouldn't notice. I had been trying to conduct my research without anyone's assistance for weeks now.

"Hello, what brings you here this early? Aren't you supposed to be sending some of our latest research?" I stated, looking at him suspiciously.

"Yes, I was going to, but I was hoping to stop here before just to grab a few things," he stated, quickly averting his eyes to the ground.

If I didn't know any better, I would assume he was nervous. But he quickly regained his composure and looked at me. He had stubble on his chin, suggesting that he hadn't shaved in quite a while. His sharp jaw was clenched, and his eyes betrayed a hint of exhaustion. He looked away and walked toward the door without saying another word. I opened the drawers and took out my latest X-ray image. Photo 51. That was what I called it. I have been studying the structure of DNA lately. It was very stressful, as I was one of the few females who were eager to make a huge discovery that would impact history. But there was this one paper that I couldn't leave out of my sight. It was an X-ray image I found a couple of weeks ago. It was the first time I used X-ray crystallography, and the results I came up with astonished me (Britannica, 2024). It was finally starting to make sense. I felt a smile creeping into my face, a mix of excitement and satisfaction, as I realized the potential of what I had uncovered. But in a matter of seconds, that excitement was gone as I felt my back pain increase. It has been happening for quite a while now, and I wasn't sure if I could handle it any longer.

"Hey, are you okay?" I heard a familiar voice, making me jump.

I turned around to find Wilkins at the door. He looked concerned due to the state I was in, but I quickly reassured him that it was nothing.

"I heard that Watson and Crick have been trying to model DNA structure," he said, looking around nervously.

"Yes, I have heard, but we should start putting more effort into researching; I wouldn't want them to get credit after all this year's work," I replied, slightly laughing. But it wasn't before another pain shot me, making me cry a bit from the pain.

"Certainly, but maybe you should go check whatever is causing you this immense pain," he said, attempting to help me.

I was sure he was right, but I didn't want to risk leaving this laboratory with him alone, especially since I didn't get a chance to hide my research papers in a better place. Nonetheless, I allowed him to help me to my car, and I drove to the hospital. Upon my arrival, the artificial fragrance found in soaps and cleaners hit me hard. I went to the receptionist and booked an appointment. After informing the doctor about my case, I returned home to get a good night's sleep, as instructed. When I woke up, I rushed to the laboratory to get some work done. I entered the room, only to be frozen in place. I gasped; shock engulfed me. There he was, with our rivals, Watson, and Crick, holding the paper I had desperately tried hiding from him. I couldn't comprehend what was happening. He had the paper held in his hand as the three of them circled it, studying it. Wilkins' head turned in a swift motion, with a hint of pride in his eyes.

"Hey, I was showing our acquaintances our new research findings," he stated nonchalantly.

"What do you mean 'our' research findings? Where did you even find these? Who gave you permission to look through my things?" I questioned, flabbergasted.

Betrayal consumed me, as I couldn't make out what he said next. He was forming words, I think. My legs were shaking; I couldn't stand it any longer. It's not like we were ever close, but the least he could do was respect my privacy. I should've known better; I should have never left the laboratory. I stormed out of the room, tears threatening to leave my eyes. Deception burned his initials into my heart, charring the flesh and causing my heart to skip a beat. As I lay on the bed that night, the events of that day replayed in my mind like a relentless loop.

It has been a couple of days since the incident happened. I had been striving to reach new conclusions that could unveil the mysteries of DNA. Suddenly, something starts vibrating harshly. I look at the rotary phone, only to realize that it's the hospital I went to a couple of days ago. I pick up the phone, eager to find out what it is that has been bothering me lately.

“Hello, is this Ms. Franklin?” A soft voice speaks.

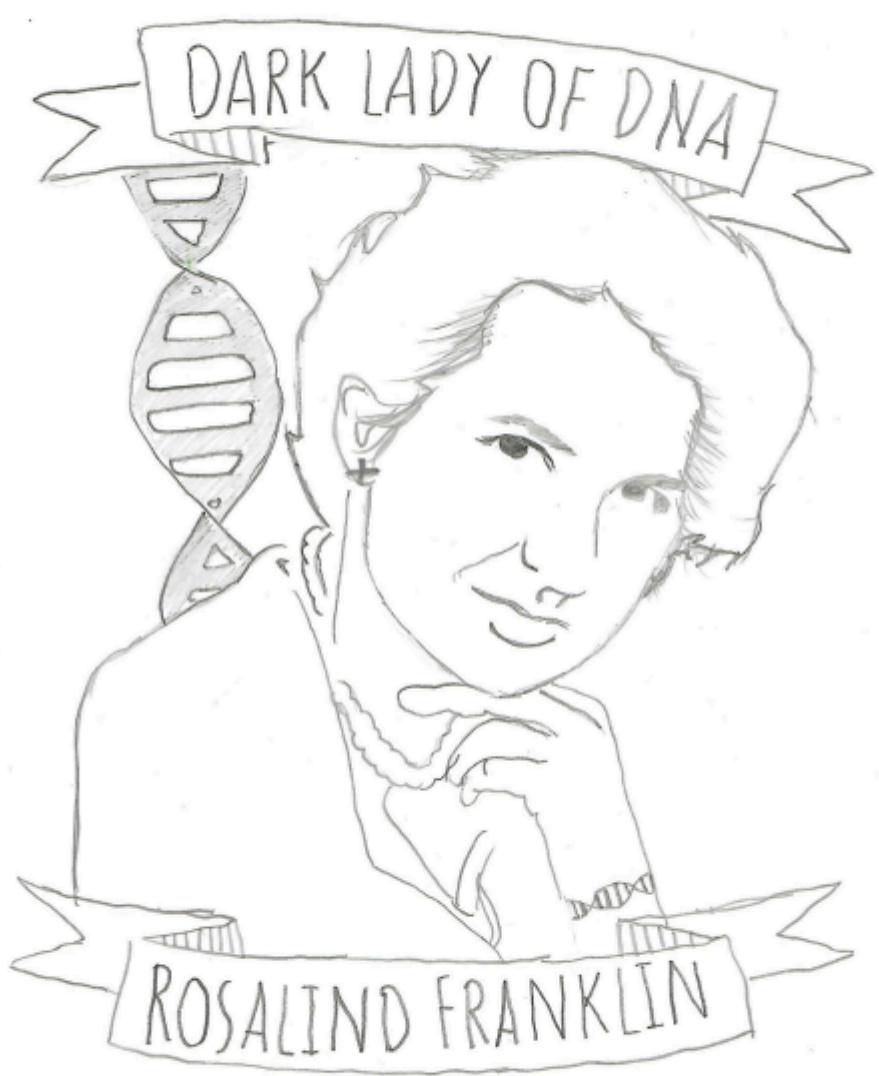
“Yes, this is she,” I reply, the nerves starting to kick in.

“I am here to inform you that you have unfortunately been diagnosed with ovarian cancer, ma’am. We are very sorry.”

I drop the phone to the ground as the world around me seems to freeze. The color drains from my face as the feeling of numbness engulfs me. How could this be happening? What about my dream of unravelling the mysteries of DNA? A million questions occupied my mind. I started flipping through the pages of my research paper, the memories of all the times I spent in this lab flooding back to me. Each page held a piece of my journey, from the countless hours I spent dedicated to finding out the structure of DNA. As I trace my fingers over the intricate diagrams and handwritten notes, I feel a sense of pride consume me. I was proud of the progress I had made and the knowledge I had gained through this memorable journey. But amid all my emotions, I knew one thing for sure: I wouldn’t let this diagnosis stop me from doing what I love to do. With renewed determination, I closed my research paper, ready to face the challenges that lay ahead.

## *After...*

On April 16, 1958, Rosalind Franklin tragically passed away without getting the credit she deserved for all the effort she’d put into finding out the structure of DNA. Despite her great contributions, she was often overshadowed by others in the scientific community. In addition to that, she was one of the few women eager to contribute to finding the structure of DNA. Watson and Crick, as well as her colleague, Maurice Wilkins, received a Nobel Prize for their findings. And with that, all of Rosalind Franklin’s dedication and hard work went unnoticed and was stolen by those who did not fully acknowledge her role. This set an example of the challenges that were faced by women in science and the need for greater recognition of their contributions.



# *Orbiting History: The Yuri Gagarin Records?*

*1961*

*In the Eyes of: Adham Saleh*

The story took place in the heart of the Soviet Union during that crucial year of 1961. It is a beautiful tale about bravery, affection, and unlimited determination. The plot revolves around an incredible journey made by a human being for the first time above the earth's atmosphere, ignoring gravity.

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## *Launch Control Worker*

The day I had to inform Yuri about the potential risks of the mission was one of the most challenging moments of my life. His eyes, filled with determination and unwavering resolve, met mine as I delivered the news in the control room, a space filled with the hum of screens and dials. "Yuri," I began, my voice steady despite the gravity of my words, "this mission... it's dangerous. There's a chance you might not come back." The shock in his eyes was quickly replaced by a steely determination. He nodded, his voice firm as he responded, "I understand. I am ready."

## *Yuri Gagarin*

When my selection for the mission was announced, I felt a mix of pride and fear. I was one of the best pilots in the USSR, and this mission offered me a chance to serve my country while pushing the boundaries of human capability. Despite the high risks involved, I knew that greater honor awaited me upon completion of this mission. The day they told me, I was in the midst of a grueling training session. The shrill ring of my Walkman forced me to proceed into the commander room where he sat, his face expressionless. "Gagarin," he said, "congratulations! You have been chosen for a crucial space mission." It felt like a bolt of lightning had struck close by, and I found myself looking up from him towards the vast expanse of space that lay beyond our planet.

## *Fatima*

The day Yuri told me about his selection for the mission, my heart sank. The man I loved, the father of our son, was about to embark on a perilous journey. I masked my fear with a brave smile, determined to be strong for him and our son. We were sitting in our small living

room, the soft melody from the radio providing a stark contrast to the gravity of his words. "Fatima," he said, taking my hands in his, "I have been chosen for a mission. I am going to space." A chill ran down my spine as I processed his words. I knew the dangers of space travel, but I also knew Yuri. I knew his courage, his determination. I knew he would not back down from this challenge.

## *Matthew*

I remember the day my dad told me about his mission. I was scared, but I didn't want him to see that. I wrote him a letter filled with words of love, hope, and admiration. I told him to open it only if he felt the end was near. I remember sitting in my room, pen in hand, struggling to find the right words. I wanted to tell him how proud I was and how much I admired him. But I also wanted to tell him how scared I was and how much I wanted him to come back safe. In the end, I wrote, "Papa, you are my hero. You are the bravest man I know. But remember, no matter what happens, we love you. We are waiting for you. Come back to us."

## *Yuri Gagarin*

As I sat in the rocket, the countdown echoing in my ears, I was acutely aware of the magnitude of the moment. My heart pounded in my chest like a drum, matching the rhythm of the countdown. The launch was a spectacle of human achievement. The ground shook beneath me as the engines roared to life, a deafening crescendo that drowned out all other sounds. I felt a jolt as the rocket detached from the launch pad. The world outside my tiny window turned from blue to black as I left the Earth's atmosphere and entered the void of space. Midway through the mission, disaster struck like a bolt from the blue. The engine, the heart of my spacecraft, faltered. Panic surged through me, a tidal wave threatening to sweep me away in its terrifying current. The control panel erupted in a symphony of warning lights, each one a glaring red beacon of danger, casting an ominous glow across my face.

The engine was not just malfunctioning - it was failing, its steady hum replaced by an erratic stutter. I could feel the spacecraft losing altitude, a tangible reminder of the unforgiving laws of physics. The Earth, once a distant globe, was pulling me back, its invisible hands reaching out to claim me.

I was trapped in a metal cage, hurtling towards the planet at breakneck speed. The silence of space was replaced by the deafening roar of impending catastrophe. My heart pounded in my chest, each beat echoing the seconds slipping away.

I found myself speaking into the void, a desperate monologue for an audience of one. 'This is Yuri Gagarin,' I began, my voice steady despite the chaos. 'I am in trouble. The engine has failed and I am losing altitude. But I will not go quietly. I will fight until the very end.'

As I wrestled with the controls, I felt a strange calmness wash over me. I was alone, but I was not afraid. I was Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space. And I would not let this be my last mission. But then, I remembered Matthew's letter. I reached into my pocket, fingering the worn piece of paper. His words, scribbled in his familiar scrawl, made my heart skip a beat. "You've got this," I said. "You can overcome anything. Remember, the whole world's got your back." With renewed vigor, I set to work.

Manually separating the busted engine, my hands moved with a fluidity born of years of practice. I fired up the backup, and the rocket lurched, sending a shake through the whole thing. But then, one by one, the warning lights began to fade. We were back on track. As I gazed out the window at the earth below, a sense of peace washed over me. Yeah, I was alone up here, but I wasn't really. I felt like I was carrying everyone with me. Everyone who'd believed in me, everyone who'd cheered me on, everyone who'd told me I could do it. And with that thought, I knew I'd make it. For myself, for Matthew, and for the whole human race. The malfunctioning engine is now a thing of the past. I'd fixed it, just like I'd always known I could. And as I guided the rocket towards its final destination, I couldn't help but smile. Because even when it felt like the whole world was against you, there was always hope. There was always a way. And with the love and support of those who cared for you, there was nothing you couldn't accomplish.

## *Launch Control Worker*

When we heard Gagarin had made it back safely, we all breathed a huge sigh of relief. It was like this incredible weight had been lifted off our shoulders. I remember the moment we got the news; the control room was so quiet you could hear a pin drop. Everyone was just holding their breath, waiting for something, anything. And then the radio crackled to life, and Gagarin's voice came through: "This is Gagarin. I have returned." The control room erupted in cheers, a wave of relief and joy washing over us. We had done it. We had sent a man to space and brought him back home safe and sound. The sense of accomplishment was off the charts. But at the same time, there was this huge relief too. We had taken a giant leap for mankind, pushing the boundaries of what people thought was possible. We had shown that humans could go out into the stars and make it back to Earth, just like we'd always dreamed. It was one of those moments where you just had to pinch yourself, you know? Like, was this all real? Was this really happening? But it was, and we were there, living it and being a part of something so much bigger than ourselves. It was just... awesome.

## *Matthew*

I remember it like it was yesterday. I was just sitting there in our living room, listening to the old radio, when the announcer's voice came on and said, "Yuri Gagarin, the first man in space, has returned safely." And I just freaked out! I mean, I was so excited, I just couldn't

contain myself. I ran to my dad's photo, you know, the one we always had up on the wall, and I just started screaming, "That's my dad! That's my dad!" Next thing I know, I'm running out of the house, down the street, shouting my head off. Kids start joining in, laughing and shouting too. The baker, who's usually grumpy, starts clapping and cheering. Even the old lady next door is wiping tears from her eyes. It was like the whole neighborhood was just caught up in this huge wave of joy and excitement. The sun was setting, and the light was all warm and golden, making everything look just perfect. The shadows were stretching out, and the street was full of people just laughing, cheering, and hugging each other. It was like we were all part of something special, you know? Like we were all sharing in this incredible moment. And I remember thinking, "Wow, my dad is up there. He's up there. And he's going to come back, and he's going to be even more of a hero than already is." And in that moment, I just felt so delighted to be his son. I mean, it was just the greatest feeling in the world.

# *James Earl Ray*

*In the Eyes of: Tala Hussein*

*James Earl Ray was the man convicted of assassinating civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. Ray's actions shook the nation and led to a massive manhunt before he was apprehended and later sentenced to 99 years in prison. Despite ongoing debates and conspiracy theories surrounding the assassination, Ray's culpability remains a significant chapter in American history, highlighting the enduring struggle for racial justice and equality.*

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I closed my mouth, held my breath, and didn't dare utter a word. Hiding beneath a false bottom of a prison's bakery bread box wasn't the best place to be, but if I wanted to escape that filthy place, I had to bear it. I wanted my freedom. I needed my freedom. It wasn't my fault I grew up poor; I needed the money. Otherwise, how could I have survived? I had worked as a small-time career criminal for as long as I could remember. Being in prison wasn't a new thing really, not at all, I had already served 2 prison terms. What was that for you may ask? Grocery store armed robbery: not the best way to get something, but a good enough path to stay alive. I had been here for 7 years, 7 years away from the real world that people's eyes are blessed with every day. Or not, perhaps it was a blessing to be taken away from it. Either way, that's not important, what's important is that I was not going to stay here for another 13 years. I was going to break free.

...

Hours had passed; I was out of breath, my hands were shaking, and my legs were sore. But I made it; I was free! I was finally free!

I travelled to Chicago, from Chicago to Montreal, from Montreal to Birmingham, from Birmingham to Alabama, then to Puerto Vallarta, then to Mexico, and finally to Los Angeles. All that time, I was known as "Eric Starvo Galt". I knew how to keep a low profile, so I prolonged my life as a fugitive.

During my time in prison, I grew deeply as a supporter of George Wallace. His segregation fascinated me; especially because it aligned with my family's beliefs -and mine as well. We all agreed that segregation was the solution for many things; all the people I've known in my life. That's why as much as I loved Wallace, I despised Martin Luther King. I had a growing and a special enmity for him. Seeing him appear on television with his successes and "moving" speeches would send me to rage!

I grew obsessed with King during my stay in California to the point where I circled his home on a map along with the church where he was co-pastor. I even marked the SCLC

headquarters; I did so to every place I thought his face might've been in. I truly wanted to erase him from history; perhaps then, just perhaps, I would help Wallace's candidacy. Perhaps then, I would benefit his prolong segregation. I was well aware of King's involvement in the sanitation strike in Memphis, I was well aware that he was succeeding, I was well aware of the threat he had on us. I despised that, oh so deeply.

I travelled to Birmingham for the sake of purchasing something so valuable using most of the money I saved; I knew it would be worth the risk, I knew I would get more benefit than loss, and I knew I would retire completely if I completed the plan I had in mind. I purchased a scope 30-Calibre Remington Rifle. I knew how to use such valuable items because I had served in the army; nothing was unfamiliar to me. That was all I needed before I followed King to Memphis. I kept track of the local media reports: where King was and where he was staying. The news could sometimes be stupid enough to expose such information; however, in my case, I cherished that stupidity as it helped me with my next step. Getting rid of him.

"Room 306, Lorraine Motel" was where he was staying. I used the name "John Willard" and I checked into room 513 of "Bessie Brewer's roaming house". There, the back windows gave me the perfect and the most available sight line into Lorraine Motel; specifically, room 306. I purchased Binoculars and I waited, I waited with blood boiling in my veins and with a clock ticking in my brain. I waited and monitored the Lorraine. At 5:55 pm, the face I loathed finally made an appearance. King emerged out of his room on the second floor. This was it. I rushed to the back window, bolstered my rifle, and shot. The sound of the bullet was music to my ears, and the sight of King's bloody face was heavenly to my eyes. I was satisfied, relaxed, and internally and deeply happy. The bullet entered the right side of his face, fractured his jaw, exited his face and re-entered his body through his neck. My job was done. People, police, and emergency rushed towards King; one even tried to stop the bleeding with a towel. Fools, they're all fools. It was over and I knew it. They rushed him to St. Joseph Hospital; where the emergency surgery failed, and his death was announced at 7:05 pm.

I drove back to Atlanta, then I took a bus to Detroit. After 2 days, I crossed into Canada by a taxicab. On April 24 in Toronto, I was able to obtain a Canadian passport under the name "George Sneyd". On May 6, I flew to London; and on May 7 I flew to Lisbon hoping I catch a boat for Africa in order to reach my ultimate destination 'Rhodesia' -which had no extradition agreement with the United States. Unfortunately, I missed the boat, but I found another way. I returned to London on May 17. Finally, I tried to buy a ticket at London's Heathrow Airport on June 8 to get started with my second plan, but I was apprehended.

Somehow, I had been the most wanted man in America for 2 months. Apparently, the police found my bundle that had the items I used to achieve my mission. Then, they believed that 3 men were involved in the shooting: "Eric S.Galt, Harvey Lowmeyer, and John Willard". Idiots, these were all aliases I used! After that, they found my fingerprints and discovered that they were after one man; they discovered that on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April. I personally think that's a long time, I flew to multiple cities during the time they wasted. At last, on June 1, they found the connection between "Sneyd" and me. They put my name into the airport's "watch and detain list"; and that was how they caught me.

I had heard about what happened back when I left. 100 cities experienced outbreaks of rioting, arson, looting, and violence. 27,000 people were arrested, 3,500 were injured, and more than 40 were killed. Devastation filled the air while cries and screams filled the streets. How fascinating to have such an effect on thousands? Very.

On July 19, I was extradited to Memphis. There was no way out; I was caught. I couldn't escape, but I didn't want to die, no, not after committing such a beautiful crime; I'd honestly rather call it a favour. So, I pled guilty to avoid any possible death sentence, and again, I was back in prison; nonetheless this time not for 20 years, but for 99.

I wanted to find a way to escape, I tried, I really tried. I said that I had been set up as a decoy by a group of conspirators, I said I wasn't the actual killer; but then again, there was no evidence.

...

I've been stuck in this cell for 29 years now. I'm writing down the thoughts I had for a long time with an invisible pen on this dirty wall. Right now, I'm suffering from a kidney and a liver disease. Do I deserve this? Do I deserve such a painful death? Maybe I do. Not because I killed King, but because I failed to escape, because I got caught. I deserve this.

On April 23, 1988, rotting in my cell, I slowly closed my eyes and accepted my fate; actually no, I didn't accept it, it's just that death is out of my hands.

# *Echoes of Justice: The Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.*

*In the Eyes of :Ghaith Mansour 9E*

*Martin Luther King Jr., a towering figure in the American civil rights movement, dedicated his life to fighting for racial equality, justice, and nonviolent social change. Through his powerful speeches, peaceful protests, and tireless activism, King inspired millions to join the struggle against racial segregation and discrimination. His leadership and vision paved the way for significant legislative victories, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, leaving an enduring legacy of hope and progress in the pursuit of equality for all.*

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As I sat amidst the crowd in Washington D.C. on that fateful day of August 28th, 1963, I felt the electricity in the air. The sun cast a warm glow over the gathered masses, illuminating the faces of men, women, and children from all walks of life who had come together for a common cause. Martin Luther King Jr. stood before us, right there on the stage, giving his iconic "I Have a Dream" speech. His voice rang out clear and strong, carrying his message of hope and equality to every corner of the National Mall. The decision to travel to Washington D.C. wasn't an easy one. Leaving my family and the familiar, albeit segregated, life I knew was daunting. But the whispers of the March on Washington had reached even our corner of Georgia, carried by the hopeful chatter of fellow churchgoers and the hushed tones on the radio. The chance to be part of something bigger, to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with others yearning for change, proved irresistible. So, I scraped together what money I could, packed a threadbare suitcase, and boarded the bus, my heart heavy with apprehension but alight with a spark of defiance.

In my hometown, the struggle for civil rights was a daily reality, segregated schools, segregated restaurants, segregated water fountains – these were the outward signs of a system designed to keep black Americans down. However, here in the heart of the nation's capital, it felt like history was being made before my very eyes. Despite being an outsider in this bustling city, I was drawn by the magnetic presence of Dr. King and the promise of change that hung heavy in the air.

As an African-American man, I had witnessed firsthand the injustices and discrimination that filled our society. From the segregated and restricted places to the "Whites Only" signs that dotted the landscape, the systemic racism was impossible to ignore. But King's message of peace and equality spoke directly to my heart, offering a glimmer of hope in a world filled with darkness.

Just moments before Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, the atmosphere was charged with anticipation and excitement as he delivered his final speech, and one part that really caught my attention is when he mentioned my hometown in his talk saying , "I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia, the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood." The energy of the crowd was indescribable, and King's words echoed through the night, empowering a sense of solidarity. He spoke of the ongoing struggle of racism and the injustice that every African-American was facing, just like me. With each word, he painted a vivid picture of a future where all people would be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

A collective gasp rippled through the crowd as Dr. King mentioned my hometown. A wave of emotions washed over me – surprise, pride, and a flicker of hope. Here, on this national stage, the very place I'd grown accustomed to navigating with a shroud of invisibility, my small town was being acknowledged in the fight for equality. It was a powerful validation of the struggles we faced back home, a recognition that resonated deeply within me.

I stood among the throngs of people, my eyes fixed on King's gaze as he stood on the podium, his voice ringing out in the sea of ears before him. It was a true moment of proud significance, a rallying cry for change that struck through the minds and hearts of all who were present. The crowd swayed and nodded in agreement, united by a common purpose and a shared vision for a better tomorrow.

However, soon after his speech ended, tragedy struck. Shots rang out, piercing the air at night, and chaos erupted. Amidst the confusion and panic that followed, everyone and I struggled to make sense of what was happening. People lost control and went into different directions, desperate to escape the violence that had shattered the peace of the evening. The sound of sirens filled the air as police and emergency responders rushed to the scene, but it was too late. The damage had been done, and the world would never be the same again.

I saw King fall to the ground, surrounded by a sea of blood, and my heart clenched with anguish. The loss was incomprehensible, and tears streamed like a river as I realized that the world had been robbed of one of its greatest champions of justice and equality. In that moment, it felt as if a piece of my own soul had been torn away, leaving behind nothing but emptiness and sorrow. The world seemed to slow down in the moments after the gunshots. The joyous spirit that had permeated the day was replaced by a chilling sense of loss. Tears streamed down faces, a collective grief washing over the once vibrant gathering. Dr. King, the man who had become a symbol of hope and progress, was gone. The weight of that loss settled upon me, a crushing burden that threatened to extinguish the embers of hope kindled earlier that day. But as I looked around at the tear-streaked faces, the clenched fists raised in defiance, I knew Dr. King's dream wouldn't die. His words, his message of non-violent resistance, would echo on. The March on Washington might have ended in tragedy, but the fight for justice had just begun.

In the days that followed, the nation mourned the loss of Martin Luther King Jr. His assassination sent shockwaves across the country, sparking outrage and grief in equal measure. As I watched the news coverage and listened to the impassioned speeches of fellow activists, I felt a renewed sense of purpose and determination to carry on King's legacy. His words may have been silenced, but his message would live on in the hearts and minds of all who dared to dream of a better world.

# *Through My Eyes: John F Kennedy's Assassination*

*In the Eyes of: Daniella Khouzam 10A*

*John F. Kennedy (JFK) was the 35th President of the United States, serving from 1961 until his assassination in 1963. He was the youngest person elected to the presidency and a charismatic leader known for his speeches and vision for a "New Frontier." JFK's presidency was marked by major events like the Cuban Missile Crisis and advancements in civil rights. He was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, in 1963, which left a lasting legacy of inspiration and loss.*

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## *Jacqueline*

"And I, Jacqueline Lee Bouvier, take you, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, to be my lawfully wedded husband."

On September 12, 1953, I married a man—a man who owned my heart. I married John F. Kennedy, my Jack. The wedding was far from what I wanted, but I went through with it anyway. I hated my dress, my dad was too drunk to walk me down the aisle, my mother-in-law dictated most of the planning, and the groom had a history of seeing other women, but I went through with it anyway. I hesitated a few times. I told myself that I would end up heartbroken even if the pain was worth it, but none of that mattered. I loved him. I loved him with every bone in my body. I loved him with my every heartbeat. At the end of the day, I'm glad I went through with it. 10 years, 2 kids, and a presidential election later, we were happier than ever.

On November 22, 1963, at 11:40 a.m., our plane landed in Dallas, Texas. We stepped out of the plane with the fresh air hitting us and the sound of cheering echoing in my mind. It was a beautiful day. The sky was so clear. The sun shone so bright. Nerves rushed up and down my spine, and my entire body was covered in goosebumps. It was my first public encounter since I lost my baby boy, my precious baby boy, four months ago. Patrick Bouvier Kennedy, my premature baby, could only hold on for so long—two short, gut-wrenching days.

As president of the United States, Jack had no breaks and no days off. He was responsible for the safety and security of the US and its citizens. The idea to visit Texas for more public exposure, in the form of a motorcade, sprung onto Jack, and what a great idea it was! He wanted to bring all the Democrats together and make peace between the people of America. That's what led us to Texas, the lone star state.

I wore a pink Chanel suit with a matching hat and a pair of gloves, and I finally felt like myself again. I was greeted with a beautiful full bouquet of roses and with smiles that felt like

warm hugs. I felt like me again. Jack immediately went up to the fences and began shaking hands with the people. Despite it going against the scheduled plan, that never mattered to Jack; he always put his people first.

“What a ride!” Jack said as we got closer to the brand new 1961 Lincoln Convertible we were riding in.

It really was a wonderful ride. The Texas Governor and his wife joined us, John and Nellie Connally, and what great hosts they were—so welcoming and so kind. As the motorcade slowly made its way through downtown Dallas, I sat next to my husband, hand in hand, while we smiled and waved to the wonderful people of Texas.

“Mr. President, they can’t make you believe now that there are not some in Dallas who love you and appreciate you, can they?” Nellie exclaimed.

“No, they sure can’t,” Jack said.

We smiled and waved, and smiled and waved, until it went off. The gun that killed the love of my life went off. Not once, but twice. Both shots hit him; they hit him! I could see a piece of his skull coming off. I could see this perfectly clean piece detaching itself from his head. Then he slumped in my lap. I turned around and got up on the trunk, attempting to retrieve pieces of my husband’s skull. I even tried to hold what was left of his head together. I couldn’t breathe. How could this have happened? Why did it happen? The next thing I knew, I was screaming at the top of my lungs, hoping it would do something. I screamed, hoping he’d wake up, look at me, hold my hand, and tell me everything would be alright. But he didn’t; he didn’t wake up.

“Jack, Jack, Jack! Can you hear me? I love you, Jack,” was the last thing I said to him.

To my husband. To the love of my life. Seven minutes. Seven long minutes was how long it took to reach the nearest hospital. He was barely alive.

1:00 p.m. A time I will never forget. His time of death. Exactly 30 minutes after he was shot, he stayed alive for a full 30 minutes before he took his last breath (Grunge, 2023). I refused to leave his side. I couldn’t. How could I? His skin was whiter than the sheet covering him, and his body was cold. His mouth was so beautiful. His eyes were open; they were wide open. I was staring into them, hoping he’d blink. I was in so much shock. There was no way he was dead, I thought. He wouldn’t leave me so soon. That’s not like him; that’s not like Jack. I barely healed after losing Patrick; it’s not like Jack to leave me like that, all alone. That same pink Chanel suit with a matching hat and gloves was now covered in my dead husband’s blood and pieces of his skull. I refused to take it off; I wanted to show whoever did this what they’d done. How much they’d hurt me. I wasn’t scared of them.

1:48 p.m., the first time I saw the sun after he died. The view was breathtaking; it almost made me forget. The memories rushed back to me. The memories that I couldn’t tell if I

wanted to erase or keep knowing they were the last moments we were ever together. I went back inside, needing to see my husband's face again. His beautiful, pale, and bruised face.

"I love you, Jack," I said as I gave him a final kiss on his forehead.

I snipped off a piece of his hair, a keepsake one might say, and said goodbye to my love, John F. Kennedy.

# *The John F. Kennedy Assassination*

*In the Eyes of: Ahmed Alani*

*John F. Kennedy (JFK) was the 35th President of the United States, serving from 1961 until his assassination in 1963. He was the youngest person elected to the presidency and a charismatic leader known for his speeches and vision for a "New Frontier." JFK's presidency was marked by major events like the Cuban Missile Crisis and advancements in civil rights. He was assassinated in Dallas, Texas, in 1963, which left a lasting legacy of inspiration and loss.*

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The unimaginable happened on November 22, 1963, a day that appeared joyous and sunny. The crowd's joyful screams were cut short by a barrage of gunfire as President John F. Kennedy drove through Dallas, Texas, in an open motorcade. A young country, still giddy with Camelot optimism, fell into a chasm of shock and sorrow.

This incident echoes through the history books and has had a lasting impact on history and is still relevant today. We shall examine the horrific human experience as well as the historical relevance of the events leading up to the assassination in this article. We'll try to comprehend President Kennedy's mental condition, maybe his expectations for the day, and then the horrifying reality that came to pass. Additionally, we'll look at the viewpoints of others who rode with him, hearing about them prior to, during, and after John F. Kennedy's Point of View Before the Assassination: I woke up this morning with blurry eyes. An early rise was required for the brunch meeting at Fort Worth. The impending speech had been a heavy burden on my mind for a while, and the significance of it persisted even after the traditional welcomes and civil breakfast. After the speech, chaos was in store. After a fast run to the airport, I was on my way to Dallas, the location of the luncheon where my wife's gorgeous new dress—made by a gifted Texan designer—was going to be shown. The lunch itself turned out to be a lengthy event, and my attention was gradually being eaten away by the inevitable jet lag. I took a moment to rest, thinking about the approaching motorcade and trying not to get tired before the outdoor drive. One hour, an AMRC project. John F. Kennedy's Point of View During the Assassination: After a period of rest, I felt rejuvenated and determined to tackle the outdoor drive. But there was a cloud over my spirits. Dallas had never really appealed to me, with its roiling protests and obvious division. Though strategically sound, the motorcade was a tiresome tactic to garner support for my prospective reelection campaign. However, the exclamation from the crowds lining the streets chased away some of the previous melancholy as we climbed into the open car. My face lit up with a sincere smile, and I lifted a hand in recognition. BANG! Jackie Kennedy's Point of View Before the Assassination: Anxiety and excitement combined to create a crackling feeling in the air. The big unveiling took place today. I'd been working with a great Texas designer for weeks, going over samples of fabric and ideas together. The finished product, a vivid coral dress, patiently hung in the wardrobe, offering a welcome pop of color in contrast to the typical sea of political blues. Coffee wouldn't calm the anxious butterflies this morning. Instead, I painstakingly went through the pre-event

preparations: hair groomed, makeup applied perfectly, every little detail taken care of. Everything for a basic luncheon, but it seemed like more. Maybe it was simply a woman's One hour, an AMRC project. intuition, maybe it was the weight of John's impending reelection campaign, maybe there was a hint of tension in the Dallas air. Either way, it was an odd premonition. Jackie Kennedy's Point of View During the Assassination: Even in November, the relentless Texas heat scorched the vivid coral of my newly acquired dress, making a bold statement against the gloomy sea of navy suits. I had been filled with joy earlier—the exhilaration of a fresh design, the chance to feel the spirit of Texas. Still, as the motorcade crawled ahead, I began to feel uneasy. Dallas had an air of coldness about it; the smiles were a bit forced, the applause a bit too few. John, though, seems to enjoy the mood. He gave me a kind grin and held up his hand to welcome the assembly. BANG! Bewilderment overcame me. What had happened just now? I turned to my left and looked at John. His head dangled at an odd angle, a red stain opening up. I hurried out of the car out of instinct, a desperate attempt to collect the broken fragments of his body. However, shock imprisoned me, a chilling, smothering wave that repressed the flood of tears that was rising. It was then horrifyingly clear: John had been shot. Killed. Raw, primordial grief threatened to swallow me whole. Secret Service Agent William Greer's (driver) Point of View Before the Assassination: As I reported for duty, lengthy shadows were formed by the predawn Texas light. The presidential procession through Dallas, today's mission, required careful planning. The first thing I did was go over the route again in my head, making sure to mark every curve and potential bottleneck. The presidential limousine itself comes next. I examined every square inch, silently conversing with the mechanics to make sure everything worked perfectly. The briefing followed. Every scenario is examined, and a response is developed, including security details, One hour, an AMRC project. crowd management techniques, and potential dangers. The burden of accountability was a persistent companion. A hurried meal together with the other agents, a common bond in the face of uncertainty. A last examination of my weapon, a rehearsed motion refined over years of training. A sense of relief swept over me as the President and First Lady arrived; the pre-mission butterflies were a familiar dance. With a sharp bow and a nod of recognition, I silently promise to do my duty and stand as a barrier against any danger that may be hidden. Secret Service Agent William Greer's (driver) Point of View During the Assassination: With the warm Texas sun caressing my neck as I sat comfortably behind the wheel, I waited for the signal. Today's journey required continuous focus because it wound through the center of a politically divided city. The crowds lining the streets cheered as the motorcade lurched into action, building to a rhythmic crescendo. Standing in the rear seat and graciously waving back at them was the dynamic President Kennedy, dressed in a dark suit. BANG! The world then broke apart. There was a tremendous crack in lieu of the engine's rhythmic thrum, which provided a consoling contrast to the jubilant crowds. Like a gunshot through a symphony, it tore through the air. My training took over before I even realized it. I stepped on the accelerator and the limousine jerked forward, its tires screeching in agony. Chaos ruled in the rearview mirror. Faces gloomy, Secret Service agents swarmed the automobile. Jacqueline Kennedy was a statue of astonished quiet, a swirl of coral against black leather. The burden of accountability transformed into nauseating anxiety. The happy procession had turned into a desperate race against the clock, with a somber shepherd leading the country down an unfathomable abyss. Aftermath: After a protracted inquiry, authorities

captured a former U.S. Marine who had pledged to protect his country but had instead caused a national emergency by killing President John F. Kennedy. The assassin, who was denied a formal trial, died suddenly and quickly while in police custody, adding to the deep sorrow of the country. Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson took over as president after being unexpectedly propelled into a leadership role. Under Kennedy, the Vietnam War was already a smoldering conflict, but under Johnson, things got much worse. After Kennedy's passing, the Civil Rights Movement, which had been intensifying during his presidency, gained even more traction. Still, given the lack of a compelling leader, there was a sense of confusion throughout the country.

# *Float Like A Butterfly, Sting Like a Bee*

*In the Eyes of: Yasser Khafaji*

*Muhammad Ali, born Cassius Marcellus Clay Jr. on January 17, 1942, in Louisville, Kentucky, was a legendary boxer and prominent civil rights activist. Rising from humble beginnings, Ali's lightning-fast speed and charismatic personality propelled him to become the first fighter to win the world heavyweight championship three times. Beyond his boxing prowess, Ali was known for his outspokenness and activism, famously refusing to be drafted into the Vietnam War due to his religious beliefs, which led to a temporary ban from the sport. Throughout his life, he remained a symbol of resistance and social justice, leaving behind a profound legacy as one of the greatest athletes and cultural icons of the 20th century. Muhammad Ali passed away on June 3, 2016, but his impact continues to inspire generations worldwide.*

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There I was, watching my son fighting Trevor BerBick. It's always scary watching my son in the ring. He tells me I am too soft, but I am just really worried about him. Yes, he's a legend, or made of steel as others say, but for me, Muhammad Ali is just my little son, a cute kid who fights for his mother.

Back to the fight, "IN THE RIGHT CORNER WE HAVE MOHAMMAD ALI" I started cheering as loud as I could when I heard that, and when he said "IN THE LEFT CORNER WE HAVE TREVOR BERBICK" I stayed silent hoping for my son to win this fight and just get it over with.

There were thousands of people watching and the ring looked cool. It was a little bouncy with 6 strong ropes making a square and stuff hiding under it. Everyone was silent just watching.

I thought it wouldn't be hard, but my worst fears came true. As they were fighting, I saw Muhammad fatiguing and becoming slower. Instead of fighting back, he just kept on blocking and trying to protect himself. He became slower round by round. He found an opening, he tried going for a big hit, but he missed. My heart sank, knowing he was in grave danger. Trevor Berbick hit him with such force that it changed his life.

Muhammad Ali lost although I didn't care I was only scared for him I didn't want him to be in as much danger as I see him in now. I ran down to see him, extremely scared for him. He said he was fine, but I didn't believe him. Later, during his speech, I couldn't hear what he was saying clearly, but I heard things that terrified me. He repeatedly said, "My brain is shaking," and "I have retired for good."

I was extremely worried for him. I heard him stutter and slurring and I didn't know what was happening to him, I didn't know if he was bleeding or dizzy or maybe he got a concussion. I immediately thought we should go to the hospital, but he kept on being ignorant. He started stuttering and slurring more and more, especially his physical condition; he became much slower. It was like he had permanent fatigue, and we thought his career was over. We

finally went to the doctor with the new car he bought me for my birthday. Normally I drive for him since he never got a license because he never cared about driving, and after a careful diagnosis, we had to wait for the news the doctor said it would take around 10 minutes. I was looking around the room and I saw a bunch of doctors looking at a screen of some sort and everything else just looked like how a normal hospital would look like.

"I'm sorry to tell you, but your son has Parkinson's disease, a disease that will make him slower and it will make it harder to focus for him. I don't know what happened but on something bad happened I hope you can be less serious in boxing "said the doctor. Silence. I hugged my son while I was crying, while Muhammad Ali just stared at the wall in despair, not knowing what to do it was almost like he was in another world. We went home and started discussing with each other. Muhammad Ali kept on saying that his career was over but I told him the opposite because I didn't want him to be sad or angry. We went to Muhammad's coach, and his coach told us that he shouldn't stop training. So he didn't. Muhammad always listened to his coach; his coach was like a father to him. He kept on training every day, trained harder. He knew he could do it. If his coach said he could do it, then he can. I tried supporting him as much as I could.

I would make meals for him, care for him, support him, and do whatever I could to help him. I didn't know how to help him, though. I tried reaching out to other moms with children facing similar challenges, but I couldn't find any since this disease is pretty rare and hard to get. I asked his coach what I could do to help him and he couldn't help me much. He told me to stand by and wait. At that moment, I lost hope and didn't know what to do at all. I was scared and just stayed supporting him like usual.

The coach told us to come to see him immediately because it was urgent. We were confused as to why, but we went. He told us, "I have been searching about Your son's disease, it's almost like it's a gift from God." We were confused about how and why. We asked, and he told us that because of this disease, Muhammad Ali's body was stronger and better. We tested it, and he hit his stomach. Muhammad realized that it hurt less than normal and he started smiling. Now, instead of him having a body of steel, he has a body of diamond.

He might be slower, but he is way stronger. He started fighting again, and he went through everyone with ease almost like he was fighting the same people he fought when he started his boxing career. He trained even harder because he knew he could be the best. And now, we are earning more money than ever. We are living the perfect lives, and we are both way happier. But sadly, because we know Muhammad Ali has Parkinson's, the end might be near for him. We should just have fun in life right now. I told him, and he didn't agree. He started fighting more, training more, trying harder to not lose again and making me proud after all he's my son.

# *A Journey Fulfilled*

*In the Eyes of: Ansam Salim*

*Helen Keller, a remarkable figure in history, overcame profound challenges as a deaf-blind individual to become an influential author, lecturer, and advocate for disability rights. Her extraordinary journey of perseverance and triumph continues to inspire people around the world.*

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In Eastern Connecticut, the morning was once again gloomy. When I walked into Hellen's room on June 1 at precisely 12 a.m., I sat by her bedside and tightly gripped her hand. I was filled with optimism that Hellen would stay with me. There was utter silence in the room; the only sound coming from the large grandfather clock in the hallway was its ticking, which appeared to match Hellen's pattern of breathing. A lifetime of memories swirled about in my brain, reminding me of the first day I saw Hellen. I felt like a tiny part of me was dying with every second that went by. My head felt like a jungle.

I clung tightly to Hellen's hand and said, "Hellen, stay with me. Don't let go."

Her once-active fingers hardly moved in response, I was sitting there, watching one of my closest friends die next to me, and I felt helpless and purposeless. I've always been optimistic and thought there is always a solution to a problem, but this was different, and I soon discovered that the only thing for which there is no solution is death.

As I began to reflect on the 29 years we had together and the priceless relationship we had formed throughout that time, an unintentional grin grew across my face. Over the years, we have overcome numerous obstacles together and created a wealth of wonderful memories.

As I got closer to Helen's plain white bed, I told her everything I was thinking and how much I loved her. Even though I knew that Helen had already lost all ability to communicate, a voice in my brain assured me that she still understood me and felt my presence.

It was now 1 p.m. in the afternoon, and I was still grasping onto Hellen's hand as if it would change anything, and that's when I heard it: Hellen's final breath. Her chest lifted as she exhaled, and although it was realistically similar to every other breath, there was something unique about it. I'm not sure if it was because it was Hellen's final breath or because my mind accepted that Hellen was no longer with us at that precise time.

A teardrop rolled down on my face, causing my eyes to well up with tears and making it difficult for me to see, but I could still make out Hellen lying dead in front of me. At last, I released Hellen's hand and said, "Hellen?" in a whisper. Unsurprisingly, there was no response; the room became silent, and it became evident that Hellen was no longer in our lives.

I sat there in the room, thinking back on the decades I had spent with Hellen. She had taught me so much more than just the passion and joy of writing, including tenacity, resilience, and the true meaning of patience. She was more than simply a friend to me; she was a source of encouragement and inspiration that encouraged me to put in more effort. To be able to spend years with her was a true honor.

It dawned on me then that Hellen had not only had such a profound impact on my life but also on the lives of countless others. She transformed the perception of blind and deaf individuals, and she has imparted to countless, including myself, the belief that perseverance and diligence may lead to success. I knew Helen had left this harsh planet with such a profound and lasting influence on others that I felt a sort of relief of tension in my body at that same moment. Reluctantly getting up from my chair, I made my way to Hellen's desk and located her books, her typewriter, and the braille writer—the three items that had influenced Hellen's life. Her book, "The Story of My Life," caught my attention. I opened one of its many pages and read, "I slip back many times, I fall, I stand still, I run against the edge of hidden obstacles, I lose my temper and find it again and keep it better, I trudge on, I gain a little, I feel encouraged, I get more eager and climb higher and begin to see the widening horizon. Every struggle is a victory."

As I read those stirring words, I realized that I could really relate to her journey of tenacity and fortitude. Her acknowledgement of disappointments and emotional challenges is reminiscent of my own experiences in the demanding theater industry. Knowing that Hellen was in a better place and would always leave a legacy behind, I laid down the book at that same moment and walked back to her bedside to say my final goodbye.

# *Steps Beyond the Earth*

*In the Eyes of: Hussain Talal*

*The first moon landing, achieved by NASA's Apollo 11 mission on July 20, 1969, stands as a monumental milestone in human history. Astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first humans to set foot on the lunar surface, while Michael Collins orbited above in the command module. This historic event not only fulfilled President John F. Kennedy's ambitious goal of landing a man on the moon before the end of the 1960s but also inspired generations with its demonstration of human ingenuity, courage, and exploration spirit.*

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Hovering in the abyss of space aboard the Lunar Module Eagle, we, Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin, were at the brink of engraving our achievement into the books of history.

It was 20 July 1969, a day unlike any other, filled with the overwhelming excitement of turning our dreams into reality. We had our goals and priorities set straight as we mentally prepared ourselves for the significance of the journey we were about to embark on, but a mix of eagerness and nervousness overcame the two of us. Each step we took beyond the Earth's rim was part of a bigger story: the day mankind officially set foot on the Moon. Despite our uncertainty about the magnitude of the challenge awaiting us, we were eager and enthusiastic to embark on this journey and make history. The time had come to take one small step for man, but one giant leap for mankind; history was about to be made, and with every second ticking closer, the world was eager to see just what human determination could achieve.

The final nerve-wracking hours before the landing were composed of sheer focus and determination, but also an intense shower of emotions and sensations. All mine and Aldrin's training had led us to this exact moment, and there was certainly no turning back; nevertheless, actually being there and controlling the Eagle's descent with our own two hands propelled us into an otherworldly reality. Our spacecraft glided smoothly in space, its thrusters faintly humming as we maneuvered the ship. All it took was one quick glance at each other to know we were ready; a silent moment of determination before we started our final descent to the Moon ... the quiet understanding between us spoke louder than words ever could, and our companionship was a bond stronger than the very steel of our spacecraft. 20:05 GMT marked the countdown of the final 12 minutes of our descent. During these crucial minutes, we encountered several communication difficulties with the team back at Earth, but we let no struggle slow us down.

Aldrin: "See if they have got me now. I've got good signal strength in Slew."

Collins: "OK. You should have him now, Houston."

Mission Control: "Eagle, we got you now. It's looking good. Over."

Aldrin: "OK, rate of descent looks good."

Mission Control: "Eagle, Houston. Everything's looking good here. Over."

Aldrin: "Roger. Copy." (Royal Museums Greenwich, 1)

As we descended, the Moon's features became more apparent, casting long shadows and revealing the jagged ridges of the Moon's terrain. The lunar landscape grew more detailed as we neared, inviting us with its untouched mysteries and the promise of discovery. Alas, the moment our craft made contact with the lunar surface, a sense of achievement, relief, and satisfaction washed over us, marking our place in history with a quiet landing.

20:17 p.m. GMT - The Eagle lands.

20:18 p.m. GMT - "Houston, Tranquility Base here. The Eagle has landed," Armstrong reports. When the lunar module lands on the moon's surface at the Sea of Tranquility, it has less than 40 seconds of fuel left. (KCRA 3, Jul 2023)

Stepping out onto the Moon was breathtaking; an experience only describable as surreal. The landscape was vacant, tranquil, and mesmerizing in its own way.

I took that famous step and said, "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind".

Those words were for everyone, not just us; they spoke to the bravery of dreaming big and achieving the unimaginable together. In that moment, Buzz and I felt deeply connected to everyone back on Earth, sharing in a victory that was ours as a whole. The hour after landing was magical. We were officially walking on the moon, something people had dreamed about for centuries. While bouncing in zero gravity was fun, we were bestowed the honor to plant the American flag on the moon; it symbolized human achievement and exploration, a testament to our perseverance for generations. Additionally, we collected rock samples and dust to bring back home in hopes of contributing to revolutionary scientific discoveries. Every action was a step into the unknown, rather a piece of a much bigger puzzle we were only just beginning to grasp. As we wrapped up and headed back to the Eagle, we knew we were bringing back more than just samples; we were bringing back hope and a new sense of what is possible when we unite and combine our efforts together.

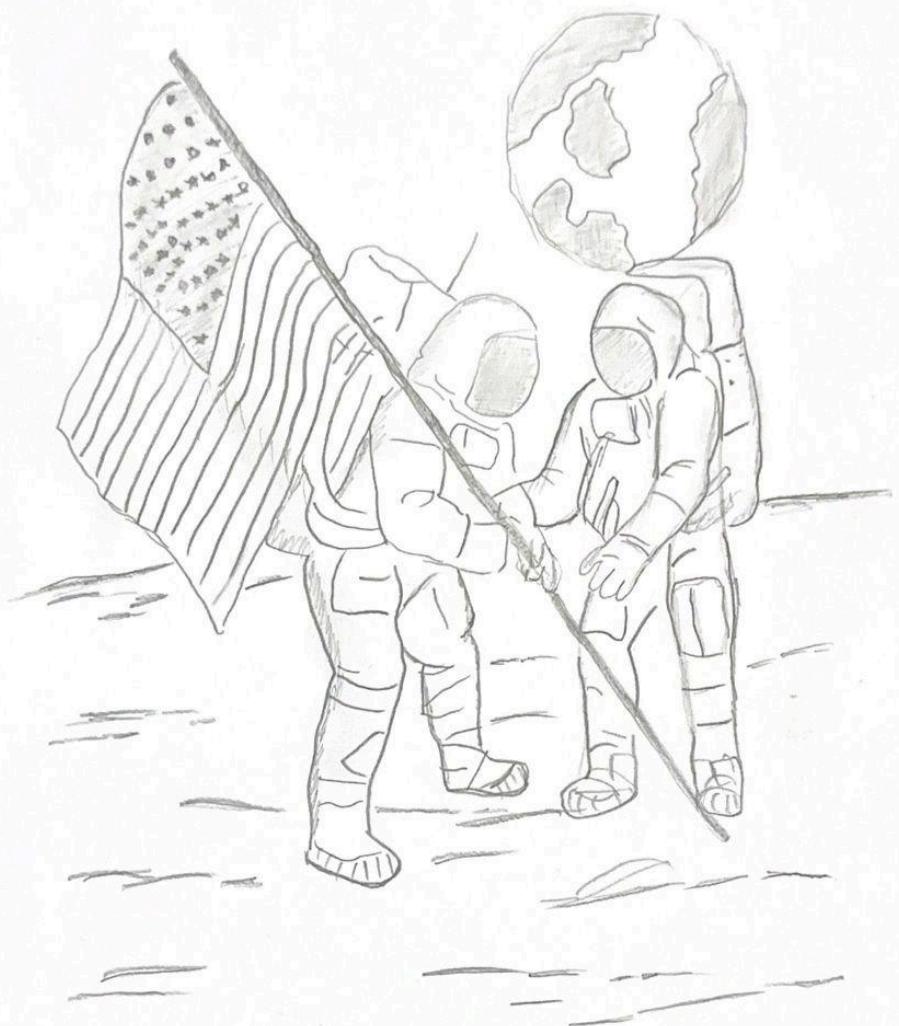
Returning to Earth, we were not the same people who had left it; we had laid our eyes on our world from a place no one else had, and it made us think about what it means to be a part of this human journey. The moon landing wasn't just our story; it was a story for all of humanity, and it showed us the power of unity and the incredible feats we can achieve when we work towards a common dream.

Upon our return to Earth, the reception we received was nothing short of extraordinary ... after proceeding with the routine precautions and quarantine period; enthusiastic crowds celebrated our achievement as the first men on the Moon. "In the weeks after the Apollo 11

crew returned, 24 workers were exposed to the lunar material that the facility's infrastructure was supposed to protect them from; they had to be quarantined. The failures of containment were "largely hidden from the public," Dr. Degroot wrote." (New York Times, 2023)

The commemorations served as a reminder that this was a collective victory beyond just two astronauts. In every interaction and encounter, Buzz and I shared our experiences, describing the deep impact of our voyage and the beauty of what we had seen.

Buzz and I shared our experiences, highlighting the profound impact of our journey and the beauty of what we had seen. We spread hope and ignited curiosity around the world, touching the hearts of billions. While many celebrated our successes, we repeatedly reminded them of the importance of teamwork and collaboration. The praise we received honored not only us but also the many people behind the Apollo mission, showing that when humanity unite, great feats can be achieved.



# *Dan Cooper, Who Are You?*

*In The Eyes of: Rasha Daou*

*D.B. Cooper was a criminal who, in 1971, took over a commercial flight from Portland, Oregon, to Seattle, Washington, and then used the ransom money to parachute out of the plane. The hijacker escaped detection and capture during a prolonged manhunt, leaving one of the biggest unanswered mysteries in American history. The man in question went under the pseudonym Dan Cooper; but in the news reports that followed, a reporter mispronounced the name as D.B. Cooper, which went on to be used worldwide.*

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## *One hour before...*

It was Thanksgiving Eve, and I was—like any other day, at my job for Northwest Orient Airlines. Florence Schaffner, my longtime peer and best friend, since flight academy, and I were boarding yet another plane for yet another night.

Each row the same, each seat the same, we were used to the environment before the passengers arrived. I was reminded of our flight's destination today: Seattle, Washington. We gossiped on the latest news and laughed together when the passengers began pouring in. My gear was kicked to autopilot. I put on my friendliest smile, gave them a warm greeting, and wished them a wonderful Thanksgiving. After I counted everyone and waited for the pilot's takeoff, I walked through the aisles. Everyone was fine, most were tired, it had been a long day in Oregon.

I observed the passengers, letting my mind wander as I gave them each a story. This one is visiting his family, she's just been through a divorce... A single man caught my eye—tall, dark, and mysterious. I began thinking of stories to allocate to him. Was he married? Does he work at a gym? Where's he going? With an olive complexion, dark hair, and a business suit—I hoped to learn something about him. All the passengers of this flight were monotonous, but he? He looked like he had a story to tell.

He passed Florence a note.

I chuckled to myself, "I didn't expect him to be like all the previous suitors."

I didn't blame him, or them. She was a beautiful woman, with blonde hair, light-colored eyes, and a smile that radiated off her face. Every day, flight after flight, she'd get compliments, gifts, and love confessions, and we'd read them at the end of the day—giggling at the boldness of some, and the audacity of others.

A small buzz from my watch told me that it's time to begin checking everyone's seatbelts and safety. As I did so, I noticed that the next time she passed by this man, he whispered something in her ear. His confidence confused me, and I wasn't sure if his proximity to her was a violation of boundaries. I was about to make my way over when she then opened the note, reading through what couldn't be more than a sentence long.

Her eyebrows twisted in shock and confusion, yet her face remained unchanged. I couldn't tell whether her expression was one of surprise, flattery, or confusion. Either way, she could handle herself. I dismissed it and returned to my duties.

Not even 5 minutes later, I was stopped by Florence.

She pulled me aside and before I could say anything, whispering in a serious, panicked tone: "The man seated in 18E—" she paused to take a shuddering breath, "he says he's armed, with bombs Tina. I need to inform the pilot right now. Please, I know this is too much to ask but I trust you with my life and I hope you can say the same to me. Sit next to him and keep an eye out. You're the smartest of us, we need an intermediary between him and the crew."

I stood there, speechless. I nodded, I trusted her, and I needed to ensure the safety of everyone here. I was given a telephone from the rear of the cabin. Before I knew it, I was already seated next to an armed man?

I nervously glanced at the man. "No funny stuff" he stated with a serious, brittle tone. He then asked me to light his cigarette for him. I did so with shaky hands, who would refuse an armed man?

After a while, he smugly looked at me as I gulped with a nervous breath. He leaned forward and placed his briefcase on his lap. My eyes were glued to the motion, what was in there?

I wish I hadn't looked. Dynamite, wires, and a battery, all organized neatly, as if it was some sick joke. I looked down to my lap, too scared to say anything. As I felt Florence's presence in the row next to me, I subtly widened my eyes to her, slightly tilting my chin to his suitcase. "Bombs," I whispered, and saw her face pale. She went to inform the pilot.

I gulped down, but it did nothing for my dry mouth. "W—" I whispered, my voice barely audible. "Why are you doing this?" I didn't look into his eyes, too scared to see anger, or worse, apathy. Florence began moving passengers gently to the front. I soon got to know his name, Cooper. Every time he'd try to make small talk, a cold wave of hatred washed over me, the kind that gave me stomach knots. He had no reason to do this. With his every attempt to make "light conversation", he had an underlying intimidating tone. What was he planning?

He took a puff from his cigarette and blew it into my face, I grimaced and coughed. His voice was gruff, probably from the smoking. He had a slight accent, but in my fear I couldn't think to pinpoint it.

“It's not that I have a grudge against your airlines, I just have a grudge.” He gave me an answer, but it only brought more questions.

The pilot suddenly cut through the tension with his announcement. I heard his voice through the intercom. I didn't focus much, my brain was in fight or flight. I managed to catch the fact that the plane would be circling due to “mechanical problems.”

I knew better.

It was now 5:45, and we had just landed. Since I had the most terrible luck, Cooper requested something specific from me. I was to lower the aft staircase from the unseen back, and take the ransom money, as well as some parachutes he ordered.

With a nervous tremor in my hand, I took the supplies back aboard the plane and gave him them.

He nodded at me with satisfaction, “Now make sure everyone else except for the pilots and you disembark the plane.”

Florence began escorting the passengers outside the plane. I was left all alone with him in this frightening, empty flight.

It was honestly quite unsettling. All these passengers, and they had no idea that the plane they were on was hijacked.

“At least they're safe now,” I reassured myself.

Before I could calm down, he ordered me over once more. His eyes glinted with a sense of sadistic pleasure, “Inform him that I'd now like to head to Mexico City.”

I grabbed the interphone I was previously given and began relaying his new requests: we were to fly at minimum speed with the landing gear down, the flaps at 15 degrees, and below 3,000 meters. The lights in the cabin were to be switched off, and the aft stairway was to remain extended (Pyvovarov, 2023).

The pilot informed him, through me, that the flight would require more fuel to fulfill his configurations, and that it was impossible to take off with the staircase extended.

After a long, awkward time of pondering. He compromised with the agreement that we would stop to refuel in Reno, Nevada, and that I'd have to remain by Cooper's side and teach him how to extend the aft staircase. With precaution and unease, I taught Cooper the procedures.

At around 7:36 pm, the plane took off from Seattle. Cooper broke the silence for words that I longed to hear since I was informed of this whole debacle, “Head to the cockpit and stay there with the others. From this point onwards, I do not want to be disturbed.”

I hastily nodded and let out a sigh of relief, walking quickly to the safest room on this plane.

Right before I entered my safe haven, I glanced back once more. Cooper, with an impatient tap of his foot, stood there in the middle of the dark aisle, attaching some strange object to his belt. I shook my head, not wanting to worry about him anymore, and joined the pilots as I locked the cockpit door.

At 8:00 pm, the plane shook slightly.

The pressure on board had dropped and the warning light had flashed on the panel, indicating a storm. The crew chief asked Cooper if he needed some assistance, but all we heard in response was a loud, impatient, "No!"

After the storm passed and we eventually landed in Reno, I slowly approached the dark cabin, wary of Cooper and wherever he may be lying.

He had disappeared. The only thing left from him were a set of 2 parachutes, his tie, and 8 cigarette butts.

We were finally safe.

## *One hour after...*

### *Eric Ulis...*

The blaring sound of my alarm quickly infiltrated my dream. I jolted awake from my bed and looked around groggily. I was met with my mess of a desk, filled with notes and files that I had refused to organize. I rubbed my eyes and woke up to face another day. After making myself more presentable, I wore my formal suit, with my nametag 'Eric Ulis' boldly highlighted. I packed my briefcase and left for work.

When I arrived, I directly found the coffee machine, then made a beeline to my office.

As usual, I had papers and red string all over the walls, trying to make sense of this mystery. I took out multiple sketches of my recent interviews and observed all the suspects. Each face was different, each story even more so.

I stood there, analyzing everything I've acquired in the past decade to get to this moment.

"Dan Cooper... who are you?" I muttered under my breath.

My gaze caught a red string which was attached to a photo of a black tie, Cooper's black tie.

"If only I had access to that tie..." An idea crossed my thoughts and my eyes widened. I rushed to my work-desk, scouring through the hundreds of unorganized papers until I reached the printed-out FBI file. I leaned against the wall, twirling my highlighter with my fingers as I skimmed through the pages.

I smirked as I found it, I unclasped the cap of the highlighter with my teeth and began underlining key information.

I ripped out the page announcing the FBI's discontinuation of the case and grinned. I took out my phone and dialed with one hand, calling my assistant.

"Get ready Tina, we're going to sue the FBI."

I hung up on her before sticking the page to the center of the board. In that moment, I stood on the edge of discovery, ready to unravel a mystery that had eluded me for far too long.

The promise of a new lead, a new theory, and a new chapter in the chronicles of history hung enticingly close, waiting to be seized, and I was never one to miss an opportunity.

# *Zayed Alkhair*

*In the Eyes of: Sara Kassem*

*Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the founding father of the United Arab Emirates, left an enduring legacy of visionary leadership, compassion, and nation-building. His unwavering commitment to unity, modernization, and sustainable development transformed the UAE into a thriving global hub while fostering a culture of tolerance, generosity, and progress that continues to inspire generations worldwide.*

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Sheikh Sultan bin Zayed Al Nahyan, who ruled Abu Dhabi from 1922 to 1926, had four sons, the youngest of whom was Sheikh Zayed, who was born in Abu Dhabi circa 1918. When Sheikh Zayed was born, the emirate was impoverished and undeveloped, with a basic inland agricultural economy supported mostly by pearl diving and fishing, as well as sporadic oases. Even the ruling family members had an easy life. Typically, education consisted of reading and writing classes and Islamic teachings from the local preacher. Due to the severe dry climate, transportation was either by camel or boat and survival was frequently the main priority. Sheikh Zayed's insatiable curiosity drove him into the desert in the late 1920s and early 1930s to spend time with Bedouin tribesmen and learn as much as he could about their way of life and the surrounding ecosystem. Afterward, he reminisced fondly about his time spent in the desert and how he was first introduced to the sport of falconry, which he went on to love for the rest of his life. Sheikh Zayed was appointed Ruler's Representative in 1946 for the Abu Dhabi Eastern Region, which included the oasis of Al Ain. Managing six towns and a nearby desert area was part of the task. Sheikh Zayed became known for setting an example of leadership and for having a clear vision of what he wanted to accomplish for the people of Al Ain in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

Sheikh Zayed used the consensus and consultation methods of the Arabian Bedouin people to administer the country. Informally, this idea has long been used through the majlis (council), an institution where a prominent member of society hosts a "open-house" debate forum where anybody can voice their opinions for evaluation and discussion. Recognizing that Abu Dhabi was about to undergo a rapid development phase, Sheikh Zayed convened the chiefs of the major tribes to form the National Consultative Council and codify the consultation process. The Federal National Council, the state legislature of the United Arab Emirates, was established in 1971 as a comparable organization. For Sheikh Zayed, protecting the environment and wildlife was essential. He spent his entire life working to preserve animals like the sand gazelle and the Arabian oryx because he thought that the battle to survive in the hard and arid local environment contributed to the character of the Emirati people. His service was acknowledged by the World Wildlife Fund with the esteemed Gold Panda award. Sheikh Zayed was adamantly opposed to intolerance and strict doctrines. "Muslims stand against any person of Muslim faith who will try to commit any terror act against a fellow human being," he

stated in a 2002 interview. While a true Muslim is amiable toward everyone and a brother to both Muslims and non-Muslims, a terrorist is an enemy of both Islam and humanity. This is as a result of Islam's compassion and tolerance. Sheikh Zayed took a broader approach to his principles of tolerance and unity. In the Arabian Gulf and throughout the Arab world, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) has worked to improve collaboration and settle disputes by peacefully pursuing discussion and agreement. He also realized in the 1990s that the UAE might participate more actively in global peacekeeping efforts. The UAE Armed Forces took part in UNISON TWO, the UN peacekeeping and reconstruction force in Somalia, as well as the Arab Deterrent Force, which aimed to put an end to the civil unrest in Lebanon. Early in 1999, Sheikh Zayed was one of the first world leaders to declare his support for NATO's decision to begin its aerial assault to compel Serbia to stop committing genocide against the Kosovo people. The UAE's presence, the only one from an Arab or Muslim nation, was the largest of all non-NATO states serving with the UN's KFOR peacekeeping force from late 1999 to early 2001. Sheikh Zayed clarified that the UAE's position is one that is centered on relief and rehabilitation even as he insisted that the country should take on more international obligations. The UAE's strategy in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan, and other nations is unmistakably Sheikh Zayed's wish to share his nation's good fortune with the less fortunate. The nation currently plays a significant role in the provision of relief and development assistance worldwide through organizations like the Red Crescent Society, the Zayed Charitable and Humanitarian Foundation, and the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development, which were founded by Sheikh Zayed prior to the UAE's founding.

As an impartial conflict resolver, Sheikh Zayed was a good listener. In addition, he was well known for his intelligence, insight, and patience—qualities that made him known as "the wise man of the Arabs." He made sure that everyone living in the UAE contributed to the success of the country as a whole. His vision made the UAE the most significant financial and economic hub in the region and the second-biggest economy in the GCC after Saudi Arabia, ranking third overall in the Middle East, according to numerous worldwide major reports. The late Sheikh Zayed laid the foundation for the Federation's formation by ensuring that the Trucial States would remain united and eventually form a federal government in the event of grave danger. Following the announcement on January 16, 1968, of Great Britain's withdrawal from the Gulf and the east of Suez, Sheikh Zayed forged stronger connections with the other emirates. He left right away for Dubai to confer with the late Sheikh Rashid bin Saeed Al Maktoum, the ruler of Dubai at the time, about the next course of action. Ultimately, a federation was agreed upon by both Sheikhs on February 18, 1968. They envisioned a Federation comprising Qatar and Bahrain in addition to the seven emirates that comprised the Trucial States. After the British withdrew three and a half years later, Sheikh Zayed held critical talks with Sheikh Rashid and the other Rulers of the Trucial States, determining the crucial role that the UAE must play. The UAE was founded in large part due to Sheikh Zayed's zeal, and he gained popularity for the manner he encouraged cooperation and consensus among his fellow Rulers. After Sheikh Zayed's leadership, six Emirates—apart from Ras Al Khaimah—came together to form the United Arab Emirates, which formally entered the world on December 2, 1971. Sheikh Zayed was overwhelmingly chosen as the UAE's president by

the rulers of the other Emirates. On February 10, 1972, Ras Al Khaimah became a member of the new Federation.

Overall, Abu Dhabi was once a pearl trading outpost, but under Sheikh Zayed's direction it became the contemporary, international hub for commerce and tourism that it is today. His leadership approach was cooperative and fearless in embracing divergent viewpoints for the benefit of everybody. His regular majlis, or informal forum, provided a platform for all viewpoints to be discussed in order to advance discussion and influence policy. Sheikh Zayed understood that progress could only be made with unity and cooperation. Additionally, he thought that genuine commitment in someone cannot happen unless one has a thorough understanding of their goals and priorities through listening to them. The people of Abu Dhabi are still immensely proud of him for his accomplishments, as they recall how he brought the United Arab Emirates together to promote collaboration and set the groundwork for the current healthcare, education, and infrastructure systems. In the end, Sheikh Zayed was an advocate for all people, regardless of age, gender, or wealth. He invited people of different races and cultures to settle in the emirate and contribute to its development as he moved among his people and helped those in need.

# *The Formation of the Seven Emirates*

*In the Eyes of: Jad Layoun*

*The formation of the seven emirates in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) occurred on December 2, 1971.*

*This historic event brought together the emirates of Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm Al-Quwain, Fujairah, and Ras Al Khaimah, uniting them under one federal government. This union marked a significant step towards modernization, development, and stability in the region, fostering economic growth and cultural diversity while preserving the unique identities of each emirate.*

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The sand felt hot beneath my bare feet as I chased after my little brother, Rashid. We were just two specks against the endless sea of dunes that stretched forever around our village. This was home – the Trucial Coast. Life wasn't easy. Sometimes, there wouldn't be enough dates to eat, and the men would come back grumpy from the sea, complaining about pirates stealing their fish. It felt harsher than usual; the desert wind whipped sand into my eyes, and the midday sun beat down mercilessly.

It was confusing sometimes. One day, our village would be trading happily with folks from Dubai, bustling with life as merchants bartered for spices and silks. The next, everyone would be yelling and hiding behind locked doors because some skirmish had broken out between the emirates. It seemed like grown-ups were always fighting over something, their rivalries as old and entrenched as the desert sands themselves.

One scorching afternoon, a different kind of commotion filled the air. A big meeting unlike any we'd seen before happened near our village. All the sheikhs, with their fancy clothes and big swords that gleamed in the harsh sunlight, gathered under a giant tent. We weren't allowed to get too close, but Rashid and I, fueled by childish curiosity, snuck closer than we probably should have. We hid behind a date palm tree, its rough trunk pressing uncomfortably against my back, and peeked through the gaps in the woven leaves. They talked for hours, their voices booming in the hot air, occasionally punctuated by sips of strong Arabic coffee. Finally, after what felt like an eternity, they all shook hands, a gesture that seemed almost alien amidst the usual tension.

The next day, everything felt different. The grumpy men from the sea seemed lighter, their faces etched with a newfound hope. They sang songs while mending their nets, the melody carrying on the warm breeze, talking about "peace" and "working together." Rashid and I stared, confused. What did that even mean? Was this some elaborate trick, or a genuine turning point?

Years passed slowly, like the sand shifting in the desert wind. The whispers of "peace" and "working together" we'd overheard that day turned into real changes, ones that unfolded gradually at first, like the delicate petals of a desert flower. We started seeing more people from other emirates at our market. They brought different foods and fabrics, their clothes and

customs a kaleidoscope of colors and traditions unlike anything we'd ever seen. It was exciting, but a little scary too. Were things changing too fast? Would our familiar way of life be swept away by this new tide?

One day, my father came home from the market with a grin that stretched from ear to ear. "They're building a school in the next village," he announced, his voice thick with excitement. "Imagine, Rashid, a place where you can learn to read and write, not just fish!" My eyes widened. A school? That was something only rich kids in the big cities like Dubai had access to. It felt like a fantastical dream, a beacon of hope shimmering in the desert heat.

Slowly, slowly, the changes kept coming. A doctor visited our village once a month, a well was built to bring clean water, and even electricity arrived, chasing away the shadows at night and illuminating a future full of possibilities. It felt like a whole new world was unfolding before our eyes, a world where the harsh realities of desert life were slowly being replaced by something better.

Looking out at the bustling marketplace, now filled with merchants from all over the world, I smiled. The grumpy men were gone, replaced by happy merchants selling goods I never even knew existed. Rashid was no longer learning how to fish, but how to code on a fancy computer! Maybe, just maybe, that promise the sheikhs made all those years ago had actually made things better. Maybe, the future of this new United Arab Emirates, forged in the fires of unity, was going to be pretty amazing.

# *Bohemian Rhapsody: A Melodic Journey*

*In the Eyes of: Karin Alzaher*

*“I won’t be a rock star. I will be a legend.” — Freddie Mercury*

*Freddie Mercury, the legendary frontman of the rock band Queen, captivated audiences with his unparalleled vocal range, electrifying stage presence, and iconic performances. His musical genius and flamboyant persona made him a cultural icon, leaving an indelible mark on the world of music that continues to resonate with fans worldwide.*

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*April of 1970*

The clock finally struck 9, and Rob had arrived right on time. The moment I heard the honks of his truck, I rose from my seat, a smile spreading across my face. It was comforting to know that Rob was punctual as always. I grabbed my coat and headed towards the door before I was stopped by my mother’s gentle voice.

“Freddie, where are you going?” she inquired.

“I’m going to a party with Rob. A new band will be playing,” I answered, rushing towards my mother to give her a kiss before leaving. “I’ve got to go now. I’ll be late.”

To my surprise, my father had just arrived from work. Tension spiraled through my bones as he gave me a stern and solemn glance.

“Leaving the house again, Farrokh?” he asked in an accusing tone, as if he already knew the answer and disapproved.

“It’s Freddie now, Papa,” I replied, gritting through my teeth. I fought every urge and decided to remain calm and respectful.

“Whatever it is, it doesn’t matter when you want to go out every night with no regard to your future.” I decided to swallow my pride and simply nod my head at his disappointing criticism.

My father and I had quite a complex relationship. He always tried his utter best to keep this family traditional, just like any Indian household. When we moved to London, we all underwent changes. It was a whole new world—far different from Zanzibar. In London, I met

my best friend, Rob. He was the one person who could fully understand me. I had always felt like I came from a different universe, but in the best way. The only thing that was holding me back from being my original self was my name, so it became Freddie Bulsara instead.

“Gosh, what was taking you so long?” was the first thing I heard when I opened the car door.

“Sorry Rob, I had a silly scolding from my dad,” I replied. Rob was the only one who knew about the ongoing disputes that I had been having with my father. He was the one person who could tolerate the burden of my problems.

“Is it the name thing, again?” He threw in a random guess, and I nodded, confirming it.

“Well, it’s alright. Now let’s go have a good time.”

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The moment I entered the pub, the blaring music struck my ears. The sound of the drums and the electric guitar clashed together, creating a harmonic beat that, to me, was the best lullaby. It was the kind of music that my father would heavily frown upon. The band that was playing had caught my attention audibly. It was obvious to me that the three band members played their instruments with great passion. As we stood in the crowd, listening to this beautiful genre of music, my eyes scanned the stage, observing every miniature detail. I looked over at the instruments, and I noticed that on the drummer’s drum kit, the name “Smile” was highlighted. I pieced it together and found that it was the band’s name. I quietly thought to myself how underwhelming that name was for a band as talented as them. With each beat of the drums, the drummer captivates the attention of the crowd, his effortless charisma filling the narrow stage fully. I quietly switch my attention to the guitarist, whom, from the first note, I can tell is a master of his craft. The only imperfect aspect that really overshadowed the unparalleled skill they possessed and fell short of expectations was the lead singer. While the instrumentation soared and captivated the audience, the lead singer’s performance failed to match the same level of excellence. It was clear to me that there was a sort of hesitation from the lead singer that was filling the atmosphere.

“You could do much better than him, you know?” Rob spoke, breaking the silence.

Yes, in fact, I knew I could. I was gifted four additional incisors that, I believe, blessed me with a great talent for singing. I always dreamed of being a performer. I knew I would serve the world something they’d never seen before; however, I was never given the opportunity to.

After a really good time at the pub, Rob and I decided it was time to end the night. We stood outside, waiting for a cab to pick us up. The cold breeze tickled me as I heard other college kids laughing and having the time of their lives. While we waited, I began to blabber about random details from my day, but it appeared to me that his mind was focused on something else.

“Are you listening to this?” he half-spoke and half-laughed, breaking the silence between us.

“Listening to what?”

“The band’s lead singer just quit. Look, they’re sitting over there. You should go talk to them.” He replied, pointing in their direction. His words drifted into the background as I zoned out for a moment to contemplate if I should approach the band or not. After a good minute, I decided to introduce myself to them. I saw myself as the lead singer of the band. I really believed that I could carry out their bright potential.

## *January of 1975*

Freddie Mercury had become my new name. I had embodied his flamboyant persona effortlessly and captivated the world with every performance. Over the course of five years, I left a long-lasting mark on everyone around me. My band, which became known as Queen, and I achieved great success. When I became the lead singer of “Smile”, I decided that we would never bore our audience. So, Smile turned into Queen, and Farrokh Bulsara legally tuned into Freddie Mercury. My life had changed forever. I cut off anyone who was holding me back from being the great Freddie Mercury, even if they were the ones who brought me into this world. The only person from my past who was worthy enough to join me on this wonderful journey was my dear friend, Rob. But, even at certain times, I felt as if he wasn’t content with the fame and success that I reached.

Songs like “*Killer Queen*” broke the charts. It was about time we’d produce another album that had even more hits. Even though I considered Queen to be my family, I was the most famous one. I must admit, it was ego-boosting to be a world-known rock star. I sacrificed everything I could to give the people what they wanted—the iconic Queen. I found myself always craving more. More money, more fame, and more love were everything I longed for. I was determined to become a legend, not only a rock star.

It was an ordinary day for me. I spent my morning talking to the band’s teams. They were urging us to write an album that would skyrocket across the entire globe, which was exactly what I did. Or, I tried to, at least. My mind had become blank. The thought of the fans hysterically screaming our new songs brought an adrenaline rush through my blood, but still, it blocked me from producing quality music. I thought of the fortune I would receive from making another hit album. ‘I would buy a massive apartment with a room for every single one of my cats!’ I thought to myself. I decided to take a break from songwriting and squeezing my brain too hard.

I got away from the piano and headed outside my house to receive my mail. I carried the hundreds of letters and sat on my table to sort out the important ones. A good chunk of the letters was from overly passionate fans. I noticed a couple of them were from Rob. At that

moment, I felt a gut-wrenching sting in the pit of my stomach. I knew I was neglecting our friendship. There was always a battle in my brain between my family and musical achievement, but my continuous desire for fame always won. I opened the five or so letters from Rob. Throughout the letters, he ridiculed my decision to distance myself from my family and kept repeating that he had been worried about me. I knew he knew what was best for me, but I finally felt free. I aggressively shoved the papers away from me. For the first time, Rob began to sound like my father. A few letters later, a bright red envelope caught my eye and calmed my nerves. It was decorated with gold linings around it, so I knew it was important. I carefully opened the expensive-looking envelope. My eyes widened as I read away at the paper. There was no way. It was a contract proposal from one of the biggest labels in the world. I was offered an amount,, and I realized that I haven't seen that big of a number in my entire life. With the money, I was offered a life of luxury, but at the cost of my now-family, Queen. The label had proposed for me to produce two solo albums as The Freddie Mercury, not Queen.

As I started into the contract, my mind swirled with conflicting emotions. On one hand, the offer represented a staggering opportunity for personal success and financial security beyond anything I had ever imagined. The satisfying feeling of stepping into the limelight as a solo artist with all the adoration was undeniably tempting. Yet, as my gaze shifted to a framed photograph of my bandmates, memories of the bond we shared and the magic we created together flooded my heart. The idea of betraying that legacy, of leaving my brothers behind to pursue fame, gnawed at my conscience like a relentless storm. I found myself torn between the promise of a solo career and loyalty, so I knew exactly who to consult.

The bell rang at 5 sharp, and Rob had arrived on time as always. His punctuality brought me comfort. I opened the door and was greeted by a rather cold-looking Rob. His narrowed eyes and pursed lips were like a slap to my face, hinting at his displeasure.

"Hello, Rob," I began, "Come in... Come in..." I said, directing him into my apartment. He only responded with very quiet replies, which I chose to ignore for the sake of my happiness.

"I have some exciting news to tell you!" I said cheerfully, "But I need your help making this decision." I looked over to see his facial reactions, but he was too busy looking at the vinyl hung up all around my walls. It was as if he had built up resentment against them. I quickly brushed that off and began telling him everything.

"What?" was all he replied with after pouring my heart out to him about the proposal. I pressed further and asked, "So, what do you think?"

"What have you done with your life, Freddie?" He sighed frustratingly and hit his palm on his head. "Look at yourself. You sure can't be happy with what you're doing!"

"I'm living my best life, Rob," I replied calmly, "Please don't take that from me."

"No, you're not! You cut off your parents, you're close to cutting me off, and now you want to break up your last family? And for what? To pursue the same career that you're given now?"

"What does leaving my parents have to do with anything? They were the ones holding me back! And as a matter of fact, you're starting to sound just like Papa, overcomplicating the simplest problems!" I yelled out. Quickly, I realized that I had talked before thinking my words through. My eyes quickly softened, but before I could take anything back, Rob grabbed his coat to leave and said, "Well, sorry about that, Freddie. I guess we just care too much."

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Several days have passed since I had the argument with Rob. The guilt was slowly eating me alive; each moment weighed down the burden of feelings left unresolved. There was so much on my plate. From the looming deadline of the album to the solo contract to the argument with my lifelong best friend, I thought long and hard about it for seven days.

'Well, sorry about that, Freddie. I guess we just care too much.' Was the only thing replaying in my head. Am I that self-centered? Could I be in the wrong? Am I sacrificing gems in my life just for five minutes of pleasure and fame? All these questions echoed in the back of my head like a relentless drumbeat.

I eventually realized that I was too harsh on Rob. He was right. I gave myself some time to reconsider all the aspects of both sides of the contract. I found myself drawn back to the memories of laughter shared, tears shed, and triumphs celebrated with my bandmates. In that moment, a sense of clarity washed over me like a soothing wave. I knew that choosing Queen was not holding me back; in fact, it was laying for me a brighter future.

I raced to my telephone and quickly crunched in Rob's house number. I was holding a white flag. I was ready to apologize and change for the better. After a few unanswered attempts, I heard a familiar voice—his mother.

"Hey Linda! Will you please pass the phone to Rob?" I asked, but instead of the usual cheerful greeting, I was met with grieving sobs. I felt goosebumps begin to form; however, I didn't know why.

"H-h-he passed away, Fred," She cried, "Seven nights ago. It was a car crash."

I dropped the telephone. As the weight of her words sank in, I felt as if the ground had been yanked beneath me. Seven nights ago—the same night he had stormed out of my house after our heated argument. It was my fault. If I wasn't clinging on to my pride like a puppy dog, I wouldn't have cost him his life. I killed him. Guilt washed over me like a tidal wave. How could I have been so blind, so selfish, so foolish? Rob was gone, and I knew with a painful certainty that I would never forgive myself for the role I had played in my dear friend's demise. I sank to my knees. My sobs were mingling with Linda's on the other end of the line.

The next couple of days were the hardest. I was numb from head to toe. I sat next to the closest thing that reminded me of him, which was the piano. I began playing around on the piano keys until I found a melody that pleased me. I pressed the keys with passion, and with every piano key, I had the image of Rob in my head.

*“Mama, I just killed a man...Put a gun against his head... Pulled my trigger; now he’s dead...”* The lyrics came out of me like a never-ending waterfall. I sat on that piano for seven hours. Seven hours, in which I created the best lyrical masterpiece that my ears grasped. There were many different genres, but they merged together into perfect harmony. It was all for my dear friend, Rob.

My bandmates adored the idea of the song, and so did my real family—the ones who were the sole reason I became Freddie Mercury. Hours turned into days, days into weeks, as we poured our hearts and souls into every chord, every note, and every lyric, infusing the song with the passion and energy that Rob possessed in him every day. During the making of the song, I couldn’t help but feel peace, knowing the memory of Rob would live forever through our music. I knew that in honoring Rob's memory, we were also honoring the bond that had bound us together as a family, united by our passion for music. As soon as we released it, we achieved more success than I ever imagined. It became an anthem for many generations to come. It was called *Bohemian Rhapsody*.

mon, may 6 2024



# *Beyond Earth: Hope and Rivalry*

## *in the Space Race*

*In the Eyes of: Reine Habbal*

*The space race between the US and USSR, spanning the late 1950s to the early 1970s, was a fierce competition that drove significant technological advancements and culminated in historic milestones such as Sputnik 1 and Apollo 11, shaping the trajectory of human space exploration.*

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‘I only got into aerospace because my dad told me to,’ My friend Natasha was talking about how much stress and hard work her classes were; she didn’t understand that this was about passion. I revised the notes in my head and walked in with her to Aerodynamics 101 to take the midterm. I couldn’t focus during the exam, as that night was when the USSR had the chance to beat the United States and the rest of the world by sending a man-made satellite into outer space. It was truly magnificent that mankind could do things no one ever considered thinking about, and here we were, studying how we could reach the stars and grab onto what we thought was so far away.

I finished the midterm nearly 5 seconds before the time ended. The thoughts of Sputnik 1 were still rushing through my head. The fact that it took less than a century for us to build and launch a ‘fake moon’ after considering it (NASA, 2022) showed the dedication behind those willing to do whatever it took to reach big achievements. My physics teacher gathered me and my friends in the hallway and brought us with him to the grand auditorium. “In less than an hour, the USSR is going to launch Sputnik 1 into space!” I saw a few disappointed faces in the room and decided to look around further, but why weren’t some people happy that we, as humans, were able to accomplish the impossible? Walking towards John, a top student in my class, I asked, “Isn’t it amazing how humans can launch a fake moon?”

He snared and replied, “Why is that amazing? This just shows that we, the Americans, couldn’t do it first. We should take some of the Russians’ engineers and create even better things. Let them have a taste of their own medicine.” “Wait, what do you mean by taking their engineers?” “Aren’t you German, Lara? Don’t you know that the Russians used German engineers and their studies to build this ‘fake moon’? You of all people should be the most disappointed.” That changed the way I thought of this whole thing. I went over to my teacher to make sure. “Sir, is it true that the Russians were able to build Sputnik 1 because of German engineers?” He clarified, “The Germans and their resources were used to contribute to this project but weren’t credited enough because of... political predicaments.”

I thought of my family and my heritage. Imagine the shadowing my people felt because our genius was used by greater powers, and they didn't even take our names into consideration. (Kokonos and Johnson, 2019). I had a feeling in me that this project would work since I had faith in the works of my people and knew that they would help the Russians succeed.

Throughout the short time before the launch, my classmates and I debated the satellite's structure and mechanism. "Some people say it's the size of a beach ball."

"There's no way! It should be more complicated than that."

"Which rocket are they launching it in?" I connected the dots.

"Probably the one the Soviet Union recently tested." The class took a moment of silence.

"The intercontinental ballistic missile?" I further explained, "Yeah, the R-7. The missile they used was the German V-60, which launched successfully. If the Germans helped with making the satellite itself, then the Russians probably also used the German-inspired rocket."

I got a few glares from the room and kept my frustration to myself. No one understood my exasperation because, to some, I was a 'Nazi German'. These past few years were burdensome for me because of Hitler's rise. I never agreed with his ideas, so why am I to blame? I kept trying to convince everyone who knew me that I was "NOT. A. NAZI," and after some time I was able to finally de-escalate the situation. As time passed, we anxiously waited and chose sides to see whether Sputnik 1 was able to reach past the troposphere. I knew that it would successfully launch because of how well the Germans probably helped; there was no doubt that my people would be able to succeed.

Forty minutes later, the countdown was about to begin, "Everyone! They're about to launch it!" We all ran to huddle around the radio and tuned it to the announcements channel. The reporter was presenting the details behind the launch. "Date: 1957, October 4. Time: 10:29 p.m. in Moscow. Location: Tyuratam, Kazakhstan. The first manmade satellite, Sputnik 1, is about to launch into space and begin the Space Age." People's legs were shaking, and echoes of sighs filled the room. Will this give the Soviet Union a headstart in the race, or will the USA have more time to prove themselves, right? "Countdown initiating: 10, 9, 8, 7..." Each second was a million beats in my heart. To an aspiring aerospace engineer, this was important for my career, but as a German, this brought me closer to the people of my culture. "3, 2, 1." Silence. The radio presenter didn't speak for another 15 seconds but breathed heavily so that we could hear it. "Sputnik 1 has successfully launched in the air, giving the Soviet Union one step ahead of the USA."

For a minute or two, everyone recollected their thoughts and kept to themselves. I spoke in a confused tone, "What happens now?" Many shrugged their shoulders, and my physics teacher responded, "We don't know. This can help the States push forward and work harder to win the space race, especially since they'll gain knowledge on how this technology works." Many of my classmates told me how disappointing this was because "the president

should work harder and make the USA the leader of the race.” But I only agreed to so little of what they were saying and thought of other things. Even if the USSR was at the moment ahead of the United States with this accomplishment, that didn’t mean that the only outcome was defeat. What happens now to the Germans and their inventions? Are they going to be acknowledged like the great Russians? If our engineers greatly contributed to this project, when were they going to be recognized?

I also thought about how this made history. The launch of a satellite that wasn’t on the moon was something that existed beyond our ideologies and the borders of possibilities. Sputnik 1 opened doors to endless human discovery and gave us a faster way to explore the never-ending space beyond our atmosphere. After the missile successfully launched, releasing the satellite, it encouraged me to continue pursuing my passion, aerospace, which gave me the opportunity to explore and find answers to questions I and many others have wanted to ask for so long.

When the R-7 rocket successfully flew into space and released the satellite, many people had different opinions on the achievement. My classmates mainly thought of how the USA was defeated by the Soviets and the hard work they should put in to lead the race again, while I thought of the placement of my fellow German engineers—put in the shadow of the Russians. There was one thing common between us in that auditorium: how this breakthrough broadened our knowledge and our passion to discover more in outer space.

# *Can't Help Falling in Love: January 26, 1977*

*In the Eyes of: Sawsan Alrifai*

*Elvis Presley, often referred to as the "King of Rock and Roll," revolutionized the music industry with his unique blend of rockabilly, gospel, and rhythm and blues. Emerging onto the scene in the mid-1950s, Presley's charismatic stage presence and distinctive sound captivated audiences worldwide,*

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The shine of a ring caught the corner of my eye as I watched him sink to a knee in the estate bathroom. I looked up to him. Oh, how I loved him. The look of joy he sported tugged at my heart whilst I felt my knees wobble - I was so sure I'd be joining him on that cold tile - "Elvis...?" I questioned tears threatening to fall.

"Ginger, I've been searching for love so long," Elvis said, "and never in my wildest dreams did I ever think I would find it in my own backyard." He continued referencing our first meeting.

"I've been sixty percent happy and forty percent happy, but never a hundred percent happy. But Gingie', I ain't never been in love like this. And I'm asking you: Will you marry me?"

Overcome by emotion, my voice quivered. "Yes," (Elvis and Ginger, 2015)

It feels as though it's been ages since I visited Graceland for the first time with my sister Terry, 2 months ago.

"I'm sorry we're in the bathroom baby I just really wanted to propose as soon as possible, and this is the only private place in this entire estate" Elvis apologized.

"I know, I know, it's okay." I comforted, and it was the truth, he could've proposed to me on a hill of manure for heaven's sake! He began singing my favorite song of his; 'Can't help falling in love' as me and him danced in that bathroom like it was a lavish ballroom. We walked out while he told me of his plans of celebration in Vegas with my family, I agreed eagerly.

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"Woo-Hoo! Viva Las Vegas!" Terry screamed hanging out of the limo window.

I laughed at my eldest sisters' antics; I couldn't blame her; we were all so excited. After Elvis proposed, we drove down to the house, and as I broke the news to my family, rose my younger sister had tackled me to the floor with her excitement and my parents had been overjoyed knowing I'd be marrying a good man. A man who could give me everything.

Elvis, my sisters, and I were cruising down the Las Vegas strip, towards the International Hotel and Casino. We arrived a few minutes later, already tipsy off the drinks served in the limo. That feeling of uncontrol loomed, the one that comes with drinking. I hated it but Elvis loved the high. But now that we were to be wed, I vowed to myself I would drink no more. I want a safe home.

We strode into the building full of bright lights. ‘Come play, come bet, come drink’ screamed the gold walls and big fancy pool tables. Elvis immediately led us to the VIP section, his head held high. In mere minutes people swarmed us asking for autographs and taking pictures of him.

“I don’t have time for you people” he arrogantly declined as he led us towards the gated section.

Terry beelined towards the bar in the back, filled with all types of liquor. Rose trailing behind her, I opted to sit on one of the big velvet couches. Elvis was already laughing with his friends.

Hours passed of us having fun. Elvis had disappeared a while ago saying he had some business to take care of. “Rose- I think you’ve danced enough, don’t you?” I exclaimed worriedly when I caught my younger sister stumbling over her own feet.

“I’m just having f-fun, besides Elvis told me that I could!” she hiccupped.

I sighed shaking my head at her. Next, Elvis came stumbling into view and I instantly noticed him talking to a group of girls and how sluggish his movements were. He was under the influence.

“Elvis?” I questioned hurt lacing my tone.

“Hey, Ginger you look like you’re having no fun” he laughed, oblivious to my heart dropping to the floor soundlessly. I was aware that Elvis had a reputation the first two months of us dating, but I brushed it off because we weren’t that serious but now... we’re engaged, *this* is our engagement party, and he still hasn’t changed. Not to mention he’s still using those horrid substances he knows I hate. I didn’t recognize the man I loved only the man I was beginning to hate.

I don’t remember when, but soon I felt cold air stinging my throat and my high heels digging into the heels of my feet. I ran. My strength began to falter, my sisters were in sight, but my dear fiancé couldn’t break a sweat for me. I had to run, I couldn’t see him like that, not again.

“I-I thought this would stop now that we’re engaged, I thought he would change” I pleaded to my sisters.

“Honey, you can’t blame him, he’s an international rock star, that is just how it’s going to be, and you better get used to it” Terry claimed bluntly. I knew she was speaking pure truth, but I couldn’t help but feel the pain in my chest grow at the thought of living such a life.

After some thinking, I realized it was okay. I love Elvis and I would do anything for him, besides, he only acted like this when he was on something mean, I know that’s not the real him. I took a deep breath and strode back into the death trap of lights ready to face him.

Once he saw me, he bellowed “Oh come on Ginger you wouldn’t think just because we’re engaged, you’re somehow more important!” I flinched at his condescending tone.

Later we went up to the hotel rooms, as I was finally dozing off, a deafening bang echoed throughout the room. I bolted upright, all warmth drained from my body as I saw Elvis standing at the foot of the bed, holding a 57 Magnum pistol in his hand. I risked a glance behind me and saw a bullet hole in the wall above the headboard. My heart was going a mile a minute. I looked back at Elvis, trying to wrap my mind around the idea that he had just shot a hole in the wall. By way of explanation, Elvis had asked for yogurt, and I hadn’t responded.

“It was an attention getter,” he said. “I-I was asleep I didn’t hear you.” (Elvis and Ginger, 2015).

Tears welled in my eyes, I couldn’t believe it, but the way his body was swaying, and his eyes were blown out I realized it was just the substances not Elvis, not my Elvis. So, I got up and got him some yogurt knowing he doesn’t take no for an answer, and promptly went back to bed eager to put this hellish day behind me.

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I repeated this process as the weeks passed reminding myself that when Elvis got too bad it wasn’t him it was ‘bad Elvis’ as I had dubbed in my head. He continued his spoiling, presenting me and my family with extravagant gifts like expensive jewelry, luxurious cars, and lavish trips. He had now brought us to Hawaii.

So far, the trip has been splendid, spending the days on white sandy beaches has been amazing. Oddly enough Elvis has grown this obsession with papaya juice since we got here. He can’t seem to stand going a second without a cup filled to the rim with the sweet concoction. I, of course, didn’t mind and obliged him whenever he asked for a fresh cup, although my conscience told me this wasn’t good for his health at all.

Nighttime came around and I had only just begun to doze off when Elvis woke me up asking for more Papaya juice, there isn’t anyone who would deny him, he’s used to getting what he wants, and Lord knows what he’d do when he doesn’t. So, I head down to the kitchen and find we’re out unsurprisingly. He wanted me to wake an aide and send him out to get more.

“Can it wait, Elvis?” I asked. I was hoping he would just doze off again, but he became increasingly adamant about getting some more juice.

“Elvis, this much juice isn’t healthy,” I said. (Elvis and Ginger, 2015).

Suddenly, he stormed out of the room. He was acting like a child, so I didn’t go after him. A few moments later Elvis wanted to talk to me. Finally, he must’ve come to his senses. I walked into the room but before I could say anything, Elvis looked at me and announced. “We’re leaving Hawaii because of you.” I couldn’t believe what I was hearing. We were going to leave Hawaii over papaya juice?

Elvis was clearly bent on staying mad at me. He started saying some unkind things, insinuating that I didn’t love him because of this. This shocked me, I was standing up to him because I did love him! (Elvis and Ginger, 2015). I decided I couldn’t take him berating me anymore, I left the room while he was in the middle of speaking, ran down the hall to my room, and shut the door.

Moments later, I heard the room slam and heavy footsteps march down the hall. Elvis stormed into the room like a wild bull. His hand raised and heavy, slapped me on the side of my rib cage with such a force that I yelped, part in shock, part in excruciating pain. “No one ever walks out on me when I’m talking!” he barked. (Elvis and Ginger, 2015)

He- he had hit me. I couldn’t believe it. I started sobbing but Elvis couldn’t care less. He was staring at me with a smug look on his face as he spoke.

“Well, that’s what you get for being a stupid girl ‘walking out when a man is speaking’. That’s rude and I need to teach you or someone else will! Now stop crying before someone sees you all ugly like this.” He reprimanded.

My ears seemed to not comprehend what he had said. My body was still catching up to the fact that he had hit me and now he’s calling me a stupid girl? I’m a grown woman but in Elvis’ eyes, I was still a child and a dumb one at that. Our 22-year-old age gap has never reared its ugly head as clearly as right now. The power of an older man had me frozen.

Pure fear clung to every nerve in my body as I looked up at Elvis feeling so utterly small and weak, something in me caught onto his breath, eyes, and demeanor. He wasn’t swaying and his eyes were sharp. This wasn’t influenced by any disgusting substance. He chose to hit me. A man who brought pain onto his lover. And just like that, as I looked down to my feet, I saw dots of red on the carpet. Green glass littered the floor, my feet splashed in specs of beige alcohol. I saw my future.

“Now get out! I don’t want to see you until tomorrow morning and if find out you whined and cried to your mama, I’ll do a hell of a lot worse. You better hide that bruise well.” He spat down at my quivering figure.

I nodded but I had made up my mind, I couldn’t live like this. This entire time I’ve been making excuses for him in my head. I couldn’t marry a man this violent and cruel I couldn’t, and I wouldn’t. Hatred curled deep in my stomach. This entire time I have let him

disrespect me and embarrass me just because he was Elvis the superstar. I was going to call this engagement off.

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The next day we were back, and Elvis was acting like his usual self, believing all was forgotten, unbeknownst to him my hatred for him had only grown overnight as I recalled all the times, I'd been humiliated by him. I had to resist the urge to strangle him in his sleep then and there. I was going to my parents' house to tell them I was breaking the engagement off and that I would need to move back in. I walked into my parent's living room with determination flowing through me.

"Mom, Dad I'm breaking off my engagement with Elvis, when can I move back in?" I proclaimed strongly. Nobody would see Ginger Alden the way I was that night ever again. My parents looked at me with shock and horror, lacing their features.

"W-What!? Ginger whatever are you on about. Why would you break off the engagement?" My mother immediately began scolding me like a child, just like Elvis had done.

"Mom, he hit me I can't marry him!" I shouted in quick retaliation. To my surprise, my mom scoffed.

"Oh, Ginger honey you can take a little slapping around it's not that big of a deal, besides look at what all Elvis has done for us," she gestured around the room filled with priceless antiques.

"I won't allow you to leave him. If you do you won't be considered a member of this family anymore." Mom declared with my dad nodding to her side.

And then, it hit me. He's been spoiling them from day one, they don't care about him or me. They care about his money. Fuming, I realized I was left with no choice, with nowhere to go I would be thrown on the streets either by Elvis himself or my parents.

I stormed out of my parents' house, tears welling in my eyes, hatred fueling my pulse with pure adrenaline. I hate this. I hate my unloving parents. I hate that they favor money over me. I hate my sisters for not telling me to break up with Elvis when they knew he wasn't good to me. But most of all, I hate Elvis. I despise every aspect of him.

I hate him enough that I could kill him- I stopped in my tracks on the way to the car Elvis gifted me- what if- what if I did kill him...? No. No! Why would I even think of that? That's horrible. I vanished the thought quickly but as I opened the car door I winced as pain shot through me from the dark bruise on my rib. I realized I wanted him to experience this pain- no. I wanted him to feel worse. This was enough for me to conclude that I'm going to kill Elvis Presley. It was the only thing that would quiet the screaming in my head.

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The hard part wasn't the murder no, not at all, slowly killing Elvis had become one of my happiest pass-times. The hard part was pretending that I was still the loving and forgiving Ginger that he could step on.

He continued his substance abuse and violence while I kept my head down, often smiling to myself. He had no idea what was coming. I decided that I was going to kill Elvis slowly to savor his various health problems slowly taking over. To savor the way, he was slowly losing any attractiveness he had by overeating foods that would give him a heart attack. Like some ice cream with a sprinkle of his own poison on it.

Killing him was easy, he was already eating an unhealthy amount, so I gave him more. His drug intake was so frequent that upping the dosage wasn't noticeable.

Months passed, and I continued my crippling games until his doctor had to visit every day. He got so fat they had to tailor most of his concert outfits to fit his new waistline. I was ruining Elvis the best way I could. Public image. His public image dropped drastically when his new look debuted. I could sense his death was close as August rolled around the 5-month mark of me killing him.

"Ginger, baby, when would you want to get married? I was thinking my birthday or Christmas" Elvis' wavering voice asked me randomly one day. (Elvis and Ginger, 2015)

I flinched surprised by the mention of the wedding I was trying to avoid; I'm surprised he even had the sense to remember we were even engaged with the substances flowing through him.

"Well, Christmas time would be wonderful" I smiled faux sweetly at him.

I thought he had forgotten, I thought I had time but the closer to the wedding his death would be the more suspicion it would raise. I thought of the pills I've kept shoved in my drawer hidden. I kept them for emergencies that would sincerely end it all for him. I had to act tonight.

Elvis always took sleeping pills at night, and it was as simple as switching out his usual pills for the fatal ones an hour before. Like clockwork, I watched him swallow them down dry as he climbed into bed.

I stayed awake, knowing the effects of the medicine would make him alert before it killed him. He got up two hours later.

"Elvis?" I asked feigning exhaustion.

"I-I can't sleep I'm going to the bathroom..." he said visibly shaking.

The next 3 minutes were the longest of my life, but as I suddenly heard a loud thud, a wide smile graced my face. I flew out of bed towards the bathroom, originally filled with

engagement rings, morning kisses, and dancing. I walked in and there he was sprawled on the floor, his breathing shallow.

“God, ain’t it funny that the same bathroom you proposed to me in is the same place you die?” I inquired, announcing myself.

“G-Ginger?” he heaved from the bathroom floor where once upon a time, he’d been on one knee promising me love. This is who I feared? Pathetic.

“What are you going to do Elvis? Hit me? Shoot me?” I tittered. He was looking at me like he was seeing me for the first time.

My lips snaked into a smirk as I leaned down to whisper in his ear my favorite song the one, he had serenaded me with all those months ago...

“But I can’t help... falling in love with, you.” And with that final note Elvis took his final breath. Elvis Presley, King of Rock, and Roll had died. And I had killed him.

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“Now Elvis’ fiancée will sing a song in memory him, may his soul rest in peace.” the priest announced.

I stood up wiping tears from my face with my handkerchief as I walked up to the small stage.

“Hello” I sniffed facing the thousands of people that came to pay their respects to someone who didn’t deserve it.

“I wanted to thank every one of you who’ve come to honor my late fiancé. My soulmate, I don’t know how I’m going to do without you” I turned to his casket with a sob. “For you, he was a superstar but for me he was Elvis. Just Elvis. He was the man I’d thought I’d spend the rest of my life with,” under my dead body “My darling star, let your soul rest with the greats.” I spoke with great remorse, lying through my teeth.

“He loved it when I sang this song of his, and it’s become very dear to me so I would like to sing it in his memory” I started with my rendition of ‘Can’t help falling in love’. A song that I’m getting quite tired of.

“But I can’t help, falling in love with you.” I sang that final note, one final time, to the man who gave me nothing. Yet took away everything.

# *The Devil's Drink Deteriorates*

*In the Eyes of: Yahia Khafaji*

*Jim Jones was the founder and leader of the Peoples Temple, a controversial religious movement that gained prominence in the 1970s. Known for his charismatic personality and radical beliefs, Jones orchestrated a mass migration of his followers to Jonestown, a settlement he established in Guyana. Tragically, in 1978, Jones led his followers to commit mass suicide by drinking poisoned flavor aid, resulting in the deaths of over 900 people, including children. This event, known as the Jonestown Massacre, remains one of the most harrowing incidents of cult violence in modern history.*

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Oh, such a church! As I entered the heaven palace, this angel of hope gave me a bible and food. Oh! if only she knew what she had done! As a kid, I needed food to survive... my parents! They left me to rot! But thanks to them, the devil was born, and now I will spread terror! For the end has a beginning, and death has a start! Preaching in the streets was only the beginning, for I, the Messiah of Death began conquering the streets triumphantly! Here was my first rule: everyone is equal, for those who disobey will face my wrath! And for those who ignore? They can meet doom and his advocate, for they had only stoked my fire, which will later kill many. After my youthful days, I began taking control. Multiple churches that I crafted. For all these areas there laid my minions, my people! Alas! If they had only avoided my Venus flytraps, they would have met much less doom. I began constructing the devil's plan; equally sharing meals and currency between my followers, and even helping couples get married. *Haha!* They fell for it! I preached and preached a better life, one where everyone is equal, however, I did not speak of the devil's trap, which would later unveil.

A devil always has his enemies, and so did I! Many ridiculed me for my ideology. *Oh, angels! How did you find out? My greed? Or my fake sessions of healing?* Such traitors had only stoked my fire even more. I had to begin with my plan! And so, it did. Jonestown, the People's Temple, my village! Who thought a devil could have his domain? I didn't, but here I was. More trapped, over nine hundred members following me. This is where it begins, *my plan!* Guyana, a land of extreme heat, was the location. I began by promising free water, land, and food. Oh, and did I mention? The sinister of all... freedom. Most followers fell for it, like idiots they are, and flew with me to my domain. I later forced them into manual labor (Rosenberg, 20 March 2020), where I promised the best reward! Extra food. In the middle of the construction of the village, this family had arrived. *I DESPISE THEM!* Just like I had a plan, these devils did. This family was horrified, they had evacuated due to the Cold War and its dangers. They had a little girl; her name was Tracy. When some get trapped, they don't even see it... but they! They were my enemies. They saw everything beyond my smile, stuff that wasn't supposed to be seen. Finally, the construction was done. I gathered everyone to my mansion and began preaching.

“Fountains of mirth! You might have known that after the challenging work, I promised extra rations.” The foolish were roaring with satisfaction.

“But what you don’t know is that I have powers that no one can achieve, starting tomorrow, I will begin healing services that you can view, and I will start preaching. All of this will be in the church, located on the next row of buildings.” My followers began celebrating, except Tracy’s, standing there with a sharp eagle stare.

Dave, a follower approached me. His red shirt and black pants appealed to me like sins appealing to a devil.

“Jim, I would like to ask for guidance”

“Speak to me little one,”

“I’m seeking domination,” Just then I received a sidekick. Later that day Dave and thirty others joined my army. I gave them power and Kool-Aid to build trust, in which they obeyed me. This led me to my second rule: All my followers are equal, but some are more equal than others. My sidekicks were serving the demon jester, they helped me manipulate my followers.

Before the feast, in which I promised extra rations for the hard labor, Tracy’s father advanced towards me.

“When can we leave?” Tracy’s dad inquired

“Leave?”

“Yes. Leave.”

“Oh, you were serious. This jail is un-escapable amigo,”

“This is not jail!” He adamantly yelled.

“Oh yes! I can make it what I want it to be and make you a prisoner, not that you already are.” I saw his spirits break, he had no obvious chance of leaving, not into the dangerous forest.

After months I’ve seen many people demanding to leave Jonestown, they have seen through the devil’s lies, and now they are protesting me. This prompted me to become worse than a devil, a devil that seeks, instead of hiding. All my life I hid my plans, now it’s time to unleash my devilish side. The next night I began preaching, but this time it was different.

“People of hope! People of love! For the traitors that would like to run, RUN! And I will repeat... RUN! For the forest ahead is full of venomous cobras, one bite and you will meet the void. Go ahead, and I dare you... FOR THIS FOREST IS MORE DANGEROUS THAN I AM!” They all stared at me in silence, too stunned to speak. The silence was loud... too loud.

A journalist arrived the next week, Leo, his name was. He had the task of investigating my prisoners. Oh, Leo! You have ruined my plans! *I hate you; I truly do!* I hate you even more than Tracy; you will meet my wrath, and soon enough the whole village will! Oh, not to mention, I forced the whole village to act like they desired this life to trick Leo into believing this town was safe.

Leo did not see through the trickery displayed by the followers I held captive on this island. Until... *dare you not! this peasant!* Tracy's dad approached him... by handing him a crumpled paper, the father exposed all my plans, and immediately after, all my terrified followers ran to Leo, pleading for escape; Leo decided to evacuate them all the next morning.

Before they had evacuated with Leo by using a plane, I ordered my right-hand men to ambush them. With guns awkwardly staring into these innocent souls that were about to escape... the guns blazed. Not one survived. We went back, and now I let my anger control me. I knew I would get caught due to the suspicions raised by the disappearance of Leo, but the devil's plan was still not fully executed! I will show them! I went back to my mansion and made an enormous bucket of Kool-Aid that was filled with poison (Conroy).

"Drink!" I exclaimed to all the other survivors, and it wasn't a request. It was an order. Those who did not drink met their fate by force. Alas, that little devil, Tracy, I allowed her to run into the forest. What can she do? She will die a horrible cruel death.

Rule number 3 is to surrender yourself if you get caught. I knew Leo being missing would reveal the dark side of Jonestown, I had to join the miserable souls ... *better to reign in the abyss than serve in heaven.*

"Please state your name"

"Tracy Parks"

"Tracy, can you tell me about your experience?"

"It was vile! The moment I saw the front gates; I knew this was it (New Idea team)." Said Tracy while gasping for air.

"Calm down Tracy, did Jim do anything unexpected?"

"At first, he w-was n-n-nice... I'm sorry give me a minute."

"Take your time"

"He was very kind, until the last moment where..."

"Where what?"

"Where he unleashed his wrath!" Tracy bawled.

“And your escape?”

“I escaped into the forest, where that DEVIL allowed us. We were lost for many days, nearly starving to death.” Tears flowed

“Who was with you?”

“Kids; I couldn’t leave them alone! Till now it haunts me... Time doesn’t heal anything!” Tracy wept as she spoke those final words.

“That’s all we need, Thank you.”

In a peaceful park, where the dandelions were dancing, the winds were whispering, the kids were laughing, and the sun was preaching with energetic sunlight; An exhausted man approached a relaxed mother.

“Good morning” The man greeted the mother who was peering at her kid.

“Good morning”

“Which one is your kid?” The man asked.

“That little fella, he’s the one sliding down. White shirt. You see him?”

“Yeah, I see your star. I miss being a kid. My boss would abuse his powers, though he was not like this; He used to compliment my hard work and would promise a delicious salary. Currently, he’s demanding excellent work with little to no time.”

“There’s a saying, don’t drink the Kool-Aid.” The mother seriously stated.

# *The Night Music Became Silent: December 8, 1980*

*In the Eyes of: Tala Alkhder*

*John Lennon, a pivotal figure in the realm of popular music, co-founded the Beatles in the 1960s, revolutionizing the music industry and shaping the cultural landscape of the era with his songwriting genius and outspoken activism for peace and social justice. He was tragically assassinated on December 8, 1980, outside his New York City apartment building by Mark David Chapman, a disturbed fan. Lennon's untimely death shocked the world and left an enduring legacy, underscoring the impact of violence on public figures and the profound loss felt by his countless fans worldwide.*

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## *Dakota, United States of America (December 8, 1980)*

The studio hummed with anticipation as I hurried around, making final preparations for John Lennon's recording session. As his assistant, I felt a mix of excitement and tension growing inside of me. Working with a legend like John was always a thrill, but it also came with a sense of responsibility to ensure everything ran smoothly.

"Hey there, is everything set up?" John's voice cut through the chatter, his Liverpool accent adding warmth to the room.

I turned to see John strolling in, his round glasses perched on his nose and a mischievous twinkle in his eye.

"Yeah, John, we're all set," I replied, trying to sound confident despite the butterflies in my stomach.

"Fantastic! Let's make some magic tonight, shall we?" John grinned before disappearing into the recording booth.

As the session began, the studio came alive with the sound of music. John's voice filled the room, weaving melodies that seemed to dance through the air. It was mesmerizing to watch him work, his passion and talent evident in every note.

During a break, I seized the opportunity to strike up a conversation with him.

"Hey, John, can I ask you something?" I ventured, trying to keep my nerves in check.

"Of course, mate, what's on your mind?" John replied, flashing me a friendly smile.

"I've always wondered, what's your secret to writing such incredible songs?" I asked, unable to contain my curiosity.

John leaned back, a thoughtful expression on his face. "Well, you see, it's all about tapping into your creativity and staying true to yourself. Sometimes the songs just flow out naturally, other times it takes a bit of work. But at the end of the day, it's all about following your heart."

His words resonated with me, and I nodded in agreement, grateful for the insight. I knew that these words would stick with me forever. As the night went on, I found myself lost in the music, soaking in every moment of the recording session. Working alongside John was a dream come true, and I felt privileged to be a part of it all.

Little did I know, however, that tragedy was lurking just around the corner, waiting to shatter the peace and joy of that magical night.

## *After.....*

Following 10 years of changing music with his astonishing tunes and profound verses, something horrendous occurred on December eighth, 1980 (Tikkanen,2024). John Lennon, the well-known Beatle, and melodic virtuoso was a lost their shot and killed by a fan mind.

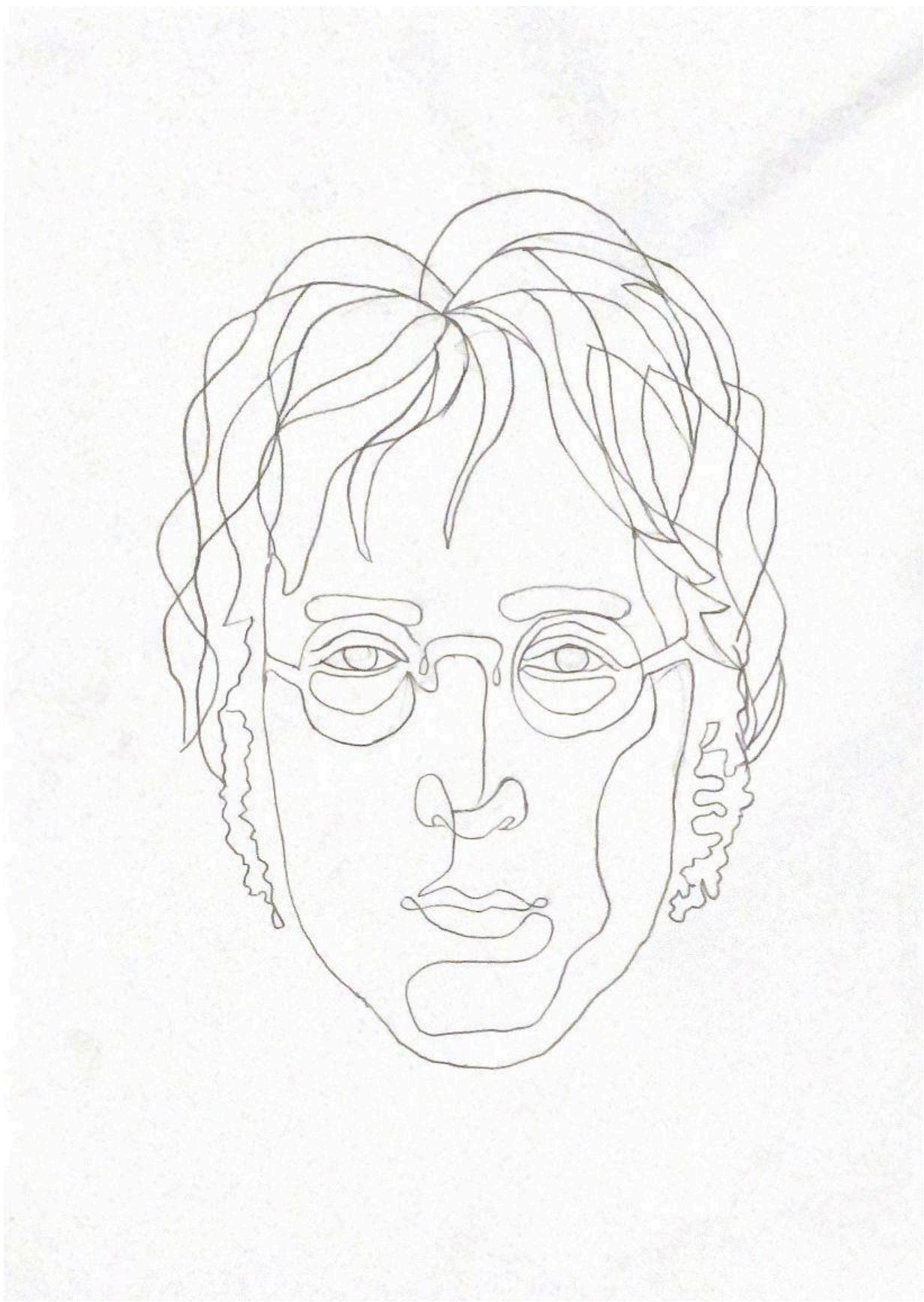
At the point when individuals heard the news, it seemed like a punch in the stomach, and the music world became calm. It was very sad news for fans who grew up listening to Lennon's music and felt that his songs were important to them.

They felt like they had lost a dear companion. People from all over the world expressed their sadness in the days that followed. In honor of John Lennon and the incredible music he produced, they held vigils and lit candles.

Different artists, like Elton John and Sway Dylan, additionally felt miserable and honored Lennon in their own tunes and exhibitions. The primary person, very much like numerous others, felt truly miserable and stunned by Lennon's demise.

They were incredulous that someone would harm someone of such significance. Lennon wasn't simply a performer to them; he was somebody they turned upward to and tracked down motivation in. People were still influenced by Lennon's music after he passed away.

It helped them to remember the great times and assisted them with feeling improved during the miserable times. Lennon's soul lived on through his tunes, and he would constantly be associated with his staggering ability and the delight he brought to countless individuals.



# *Tragedies of the 20th Century: The Bhopal Gas Tragedy*

*In the Eyes of: Ahmad Zbeeb*

*The Bhopal gas tragedy occurred in December 1984 when a leak at the Union Carbide pesticide plant released toxic gas, causing immediate deaths and long-term health issues for thousands in Bhopal, India. The disaster underscored the need for stricter industrial regulations and remains a stark reminder of the devastating impact of industrial negligence.*

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## *1 month before (November 1, 1984)...*

Finally, I arrived, to a city said to be caught between both peril and progress, to Madhya Pradesh, to Bhopal, it's the beginning of October, "it's time to leave the life of poverty, I saved all of my money to come here, it's time for me to take care of myself now." I said to myself.

The sun then arises shining its dazzling light starting a new day, "its time" I said, it was now time for me to start my new job at the Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) pesticide plant, my only choice for a better life. As I'm taking my first steps inside the plant, fate had already set in motion a series of events that will change the course of history as we know it.

As I was navigating the labyrinth-like corridors of the Union Carbide plant, the sound of machines working filled the place. It was then that I met with a familiar face – Rajesh, once my childhood best friend, he was a brother to me when we were kids. It hasn't been over 4 seconds and we find each other face to face, our old memories flooding back to our minds in the instant, both of us were surprised, we were so surprised we forgot about the entire world around us, then I hear a shout, then I look to my left, it was my boss, here dropkicking away the good feeling of me being reunited with my friend, ordering us around to continue our work, "WHAT ARE YOU DOING DAYDREAMING AT THIS PLACE, GO TO WORK, GO CHECK THE STABILITY OF THE TANKS, GO HELP WITH MAKING THE PESTICIDES, GO DO SOMETHING YOU MORON..." he kept shouting at me for a couple of minutes, I wasn't able to do anything but wait for him to finish scolding me for me to continue with my day. Then after a couple of hours me and Rajesh went to continue our work helping at the laboratory, but we quickly got distracted chatting about our childhood, remembering the good old days, us stealing a couple of rupees to go buy some sweets, us playing football, playing cricket, pranking our teacher, we kept on reminiscing about these past events laughing at both good and bad memories while working together, until it was time for us

to go home, we shared numbers for us to call each other whenever, then we went back to our homes, and went to sleep quietly and peacefully, not knowing what's about to come.

It has been a couple of weeks since I've started working here at the Union Carbide plant, I have nothing to say other than it was way too fun with Rajesh in my side, hard tasks become easy, near-infinite entertainment talking with each other, I couldn't ask for anything more. In the middle of my work, Rajesh was taking a short break to eat his lunch, it is November 23, 1984, I found myself overhearing the boss shouting at some of the employees, I couldn't help but overhear the conversation, "WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU COULDN'T FIX TANK E610!! YOU SHOULDVE BEEN DONE WITH IT SINCE LAST WEEK, \*sigh\* \*clears throat\* okay then, if you don't fix it by the end of this month, you'll all be fired, this is your last chance, now leave!" my heart jumped from what I heard, all my mind processed was a new way of becoming a hero, a richer person, it has been my dream to live a nice and comfortable life, and here it is an opportunity to make it happen, "it's done, I'm going to fix this tank!!!!" I said in my mind filled with excitement. I then impulsively go to the boss asking for a chance to fix the tank, but I didn't take into consideration the big NO I got, h-he didn't let me, my dreams where all shattered, he said I'm not experienced enough, I'm going to kill everyone trying to fix it, he said. I walked away shattered, I couldn't believe it, my chance of a rich life is fading away, I can't let that happen, "I will go fix that tank even though you didn't let me!" I said to myself, but first I need to know more about that plant.

For the next couple of days, I kept on asking my co-workers about that tank, tank E610, but I kept incognito about my plan to Rajesh, because he'll find a way to dissuade me from doing this. Now it's the beginning of December, it's time for my plan to be in motion!

*December 2, 1984, 11:00 p.m.*

Its time, it was 1 hour before midnight, no one should be at the plant at this time, it's the perfect time to set my plan at motion, as I make my way to finally see tank E610 and try to fix it, my heart pounds with both the feelings of anticipation and fear, then as I'm walking down the wat, I finally see tank E610, it is magnificent! Then as I try to examine it, out of nowhere, a mysterious figure emerges from the shadows right behind me from my blind spot, but before I can even react and move a muscle, I was swiftly ambushed and subdued, my struggles proving useless as I become immobilized and at the mercy of that mysterious man, then I lose my consciousness before I can see who that person is.

Regaining my consciousness, I quickly flick my wrist, immediately glancing at my wristwatch, checking the time, it was about 1 o'clock, I notice the mysterious figure hastily departing the scene after being somewhat surprised about my awakening, but with about 9 others now, I felt like I hit my head hard, "was it 9 men or is my brain tricking me?" I asked myself, but now I am alone, bound, and helpless near the tank. I realize there is something gravely wrong with the tank, I start concentrating, but then with mounting horror, I know fully acknowledge the full extent of the sabotage, identifying a water hose open and releasing water inside the tank, this shouldn't be happening, the safety systems aren't working like they should

be, I then start having flashbacks about my family. “No, no, I can’t leave them alone, I shouldn’t die now.” Then randomly coming back to full consciousness, I become aware of what will happen, I should inform the others before it becomes too late, but I am already late, the tank, it shouldn’t be like this, it’s about to explode, each tick feels like an eternity as I strain against the ropes binding me. Urgency surges through my veins as I work feverishly to free myself before it’s too late. As soon as I freed myself, I frantically started looking for a safety uniform somewhere close, then I looked to the distance, I see it! It’s there, I just need to go to it now. I rush to the gear, wearing it as fast as I can, sighing in relief about the close encounter, but now I should run, if I learned anything in this plant it’s that I’m going to die if I’m that close to the tank, I run, as I haven’t gone far, the tank explodes, releasing all the MIC it contained, my suit protected me well from this hell of a chemical reaction. But the others in this city, what will happen to them, they’ll die, then my body starts reacting weirdly, there is no air to breathe, all my surrounding air is MIC, lacking air, I pass out in mere seconds, missing out on the catastrophe occurring.

*January 1985, 7:03 A.M.*

I woke up, “I’m in a hospital bed? I survived?” then I turned on the television the news where all about the disaster, I just sat there and heard it.

“Breaking News!! In a catastrophic event, over 3,800 lives are tragically lost as 40 tons of methyl isocyanate, or also called MIC leaked from a pesticide plant at around 1:00 AM in Bhopal, India. The toxic cloud was spread across the city. Within hours, the streets of Bhopal were littered with human corpses and the carcasses of buffaloes, cows, dogs, and birds. Having 2,259 immediate deaths, and over 500,000 people exposed to the gas. Mostly in the poor slum colony adjacent to the UCC plant affecting thousands and prompting global calls for stricter industrial safety standards and disaster preparedness. Local hospitals were soon overwhelmed with 558,125 total injured victims, including 38,478 temporary partial injuries and approximately 3,900 severely and permanently disabling injuries, a crisis further compounded by a lack of knowledge of exactly what gas was involved and what its effects were. It became one of the worst chemical disasters in history as the name Bhopal becomes synonymous with industrial catastrophe. As India grapples with rapid industrialization, questions arise about the efficacy of regulatory measures and the need for sustainable development practices.” (The Bhopal disaster and its aftermath: a review, May 10, 2005)

Then suddenly someone comes over, it’s an officer, he then asks “What did you see out there? What happened, tell me everything you saw, with every detail.”

# *The King of Pop: Michael Jackson*

*In the Eyes of: Marina Darrouj*

*Michael Jackson was an American singer, songwriter, and dancer, famously known as the "King of Pop." He rose to fame as a child with The Jackson 5 and then achieved tremendous success as a solo artist with albums like "Thriller," the best-selling album of all time. His innovative music videos and dance moves, forever-changed the music industry. Despite facing personal controversies, his impact on music and pop culture sustains.*

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## *1970 The release of the Jackson 5 “Third Album” on the Ed Sullivan Show...*

Adrenaline flooded me every time the spotlight struck my face. Every note, every beat, sent a jolt of energy through my system. Performing was the nature of the Jackson 5; it was in our blood. Every performance was a fever dream. But, as soon as the music stopped and the crowd's applause faded, a chill ran down my spine. At home, the world behind those closed doors was much darker. Passing through the threshold of “home” was something I came to dread...

"MIKE!" my father yelled.

"Yeah, Pops?"

"Was that a voice crack I just heard in the middle of?"

"Yeah, Pops, it was. What to do? I'm goin' through puberty."

Jackie jumped in on my side, "C'mon, Pops. It's cool, let it slide. He ain't got no control over it."

Pops shot back, "Jackie, you wanna take his side, then you got a problem with me." He turned back to me, "Michael, you and the Jackson 5 can't afford no mistakes; you know this is all we got to get outta this mess. We gotta get signed for more labels. Do it again, and you only got yourself to blame."

Is he serious? I retaliated, "Ain't no way, how is any of this on me? My body goin' through these changes by default, man."

And so, before I knew it, my father slapped me right across the face to silence me. Those signs of maturity that were meant to be celebrated between all fathers was something

that was forcibly masked by mine. I felt an argument spark up, so I decided to let go to please him. I wouldn't allow myself to argue any longer. This happens on a daily and frankly, I've never been more fed up by his irrationality. Nothing ever satisfied him. I was ordered to go and train on my vibrato, dynamics, and improve in harmonizing.

My father always had a passion for music. He even played for a past band, The Falcons. He, however, never achieved success. I always felt as though that was his weakest point, his biggest insecurity. Once he saw the potential in his children, Pops put his focus on us and our careers. It was nice at first, but the more recognition we got, the more we were pressured by him to keep the people interested. This, of course, was all for the money...

## *May 16, 1983, the Performance of Billie Jean...*

I always knew I had the greatest potential out of my brothers. I had incredible control over my voice's octaves and released my first debut solo album at the age of 14. I knew I was going somewhere. Nevertheless, I stayed by my family's side until I became of age and was able to handle my career myself, still providing for them, of course.

Growing up with my family, I faced constant tension. It was never quiet. There was always shouting, objects getting thrown, and the slamming of doors. I always tried to stay out of the way because I never knew what might set someone off. It was like walking on eggshells. It was weird how I found peace in music when it was the root cause of all the arguing.

With all that bickering, I, the 24 year-old Michael Jackson, still felt vulnerable when I thought about them. I didn't know how little I mattered to them until I was all alone. I barely knew anything about my family. My memories resurfaced, the good and the bad. It got me feeling nostalgic; I felt homesick. In an odd way, I missed the yelling, I missed the rush of energy that ran through my blood stream every time I would get a scolding from Pops. God, it was not the time for this overthinking.

I was in my dressing room getting ready for the release of my new song "Billie Jean". My dressing assistant was touching up my makeup and helping me dress. My black sequins jacket sparkled as I put on my loafers and grabbed my fedora. I carried the suitcase that held my glove and my jacket and started doing vocal exercises.

Everyone was waiting on me. I could feel the anticipation buzzing through the air as I stood backstage. I took a deep breath, ready to make my entrance. As the lights dimmed, I stepped out slowly. I opened the suitcase and put every article of clothing inside on me. My fedora was tilted over my eyes, adding to the mystery of the outfit. The crowd went wild, and the music started. I didn't need to say a word; the crowd's excitement was beyond obvious.

The iconic bassline of "Billie Jean" filled the auditorium, and I could feel everyone's eyes on me, waiting to see what I'd do next. With every step, I let the beat guide me; the energy in the room was electric. As I reached the center of the stage, I paused, letting the suspense build. I stood still, just for a moment, to give them time to take it all in. The lights reflected off

my outfit, making me stand out. I let the rhythm control my body and started dancing. Then, I took off my hat with a flourish, turning it in my hand before throwing my head back and starting to sing.

*“She was more like a beauty queen from a movie scene, ah,”* I sang hushed.

I let my body lead me blindly and everything came to me naturally. I danced endlessly. I was so immersed in the performance. My feet tapped impulsively to the beat, and I let my hips sway, my costume flowing with each movement. I attempted to look through the crowd trying to fathom the amount of people here to watch me

“There’s gotta be at least a couple million people,” I thought to myself.

I scanned the crowd, feeling a rush of nervous energy. So many faces blurred together cheering, waving, and singing along, but then, I saw him. Was that... Pops? It really was. My heart skipped a beat. Joe Jackson, the man who brought me into this world, and the man who brought me into this music industry, standing right there, smiling at me with a proud look on his face and his eyes gleaming. I had never seen him so approving with my act. I couldn’t believe he’d come to see me perform. I shot him a quick smile, trying not to lose focus. He gave me a little nod, and I felt a surge of excitement. I couldn’t help it; I had to do something special. So, I broke into my signature move, just for him, to show how much it meant that he was there. It felt like the whole night had just gotten a lot more unexpected.

“People always told me, be careful what you do,” I sang as I slid smoothly across the stage, performing the moonwalk.

The audience roared at the smooth backwards movement. I kept my upper body still, letting my feet do the work. It had to seem like I was walking backward without lifting my feet from the ground. As I continued the moonwalk, I noticed the crowd's reaction, cheers and applause. They were mesmerized by the movement of my body, and I felt their energy fueling my performance.

The rest of the performance went smoothly, and as soon as it all ended, I gestured for my father to meet me backstage.

“Dang, Michael! Where’d you pick up moves like that?” dad asked.

I came in straight for a hug and let all my tears out. I replied, “Pops, I’ve missed you, I’ve missed you all.”

“Sugar, we talk about you all the time at dinner. Everybody’s always asking about you. Your spirit lives on.”

“How come you guys never reached out?”

“We always said not to bother the superstar.”

“That’s my bad. I guess I got carried away, and I just thought eventually you guys never wanted to see me again.”

“Aww, come on, you’re always welcome.”

“Pops, can I come over? I feel horrible for not making much time for you all.”

“For sure, Mikey.” He paused and took a deep breath, “Look, can I just admit how bad of a father I was? I took out my anger on you and your brothers, and I made you the main breadwinner to cover our never-ending bills. I ruined your childhood, and I crushed your brothers’ love for music.”

Finally, the apology I deserved—we deserved.

“It’s okay. Don’t worry about it. You always had the intention of looking out for us.”

I added, “C’mom let’s go! I wanna see them!”

It was only then and there, that I truly felt the presence of a father figure in my life...

# *12 March 1989: The Digital Revolution and the Altered Fabric of Reality*

*In the Eyes of: Mayar Musab 7A*

*"The Internet is the first thing that humanity has built that humanity doesn't understand, the largest experiment in anarchy that we have ever had." - Eric Schmidt*

*Tim Berners-Lee is a British computer scientist best known for inventing the World Wide Web.*

*In 1989, while working at CERN (the European Organization for Nuclear Research), he proposed a system to share and connect information globally, which led to the development of the first web browser and server, ultimately establishing the foundational technologies for the modern web. His contributions have transformed how people access, share, and interact with information on the internet.*

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## *Tim*

The room felt like it was closing in around me. In my mind, I was growing larger and larger, expanding with rage. If I didn't do something, fast, to get myself under control, I'd explode and take out everyone and everything around me. This has happened more times than I can count on my fingers. My work, vanished, in the mere mistake of clicking the wrong button. I ran my fingers through my hair, frustrated, and let out an exasperated sigh. I slumped in my chair, crossing my arms across my chest. Keeping my eyes open was too much of a hassle. How do people live every day with such outdated tech? This might be my moment to shine, this is what my dad had encouraged me to do all those years ago... I faintly remember... It was a warm August night in 1971, I lay on my left side, then on my right, desperately trying to seek sleep.

The faint noises of my parents' bickering made it hard to do so. The door creaked open slowly, the sudden light stinging my eyes as it illuminated my dimmed room. My father stood silently before me, his figure masked by the dim light, casting only a faint shadow. An eerie and cold aura radiated from him as he stood with a wide stance, his jaw clenched tight. He jolted towards me and grasped my shoulders, shaking me to no end. This wasn't like him, it terrified me.

It felt uncanny... "Don't let anyone tell you that you are not capable! What you can do is far, FAR, beyond the average man," He yelled, startling me.

“Remember, son. You can change... inspire even. You can change the world.” He let me go and quietly left.

The next morning, he came back with a train set. He put it down in front of me and left me to tinker with it. I never saw him again. My heart hangs heavy every time I think about him. That day, something in me changed. I knew what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. I studied anything and everything about mechanics and tech. I was ravished by all computers around me. (Tim Berners-Lee, n.d.) It brought me joy and prosperity. It gave me a sense of responsibility that I couldn’t get enough of. Tinkering with model railways taught me the basics of electronics. Now I’m here, in an office, unsure of how I can change the world from a corporate chair, until now. We have the tech; we just need a little push.

A soft voice caught my attention, “What are you planning, Lee?”

“Rosemary! Nothing...” I smiled at my bubbly coworker.

“Oh, don’t be silly, you’ve been deep in thought for half an hour! Is something worrying you?”

“Well, I’m sick and tired of having to do so much for something so little. I want to be able to share information with other scientists in a few minutes from this very chair without the usual long process. I have a plan; I want to help the company.”

“Everyone has been going through the same struggle! Is there anything I can do to help?”

“Could you accompany me to the CEO’s office to take his approval?” She gave me a soft smile and nodded.

We hurriedly sprinted to the CEO’s office. Knocking on the door, I felt my heart racing and my hands fidgeting in jitteriness and excitement.

As soon as the door opened, I proposed the idea, “I want to propose a universal linked information system. I’ll make it using several concepts and technologies. It won’t take much of your time or resources, sir.”

He stared blankly. I started to grow impatient until he let out a sigh, “No, Berners, last time you had an ‘idea’ of sorts you almost shut down the company. Get back to work. Now.”

“But sir...!” Rosemary intervened before he could slam the door in my face.

“Think about it... Tim is one of our most valuable employees, you’ve seen his work! Give it a shot, sir. You won’t regret it!”

I stood there, processing what had happened.

“Fine. But you will take responsibility for the consequences of this action, noted?”

She nodded and he closed the door as he shot us one last reluctant glance. I was stunned and utterly grateful for the gesture that Rosemary had done. "Go on then, start coding!"

I came to my senses and sprinted to the nearest NeXT computer, to develop the code for my Web server. I was determined by the support I was receiving and vowed to make this project a success. My fingers glided on the keyboard, the sound of rapid clicking and clacking in the background while I frantically programmed the server. I was so close...! My screen displayed an array of numbers and symbols. Soon, a progress bar popped up while I was struggling to finish up my final code. Going up from 5% to 28% then from 28% to 70%. Beads of sweat were rolling down my face as I watched that number climb. And... done. I was engulfed by a profound feeling of achievement. I wiped the sweat off my forehead and whooped with laughter. To finish it off, I took a blank paper and wrote in red ink: "This machine is a server. DO NOT POWER IT DOWN!!" and stuck it right on as I backed away, hands on hips, and admired my creation.

"As we gather here tonight," the host began, their voice echoing through the hall, "we bear witness to an individual whose unparalleled dedication and ingenuity have left an indelible mark on the world. In recognition of their extraordinary efforts, it is with great honor that we present this award, a symbol of gratitude for shaping the course of history."

Here goes nothing...The grand auditorium buzzed with anticipation as I made my way up to the stage, wearing my finest piece of attire. The crowd, a sea of faces stretching as far as the eye could see, erupted into applause, their enthusiasm reverberating through the vast hall. The stage, bathed in a warm, golden spotlight, gleamed beneath my feet as I approached the podium. I stood tall, taking a moment to process the magnitude of the occasion. The air was packed with admiration and gratitude, and I couldn't help but feel a swell of pride at the journey that had led me to this point, as silly and simple as it was. Family, friends, and colleagues looking back at me, their support evident in their smiles and the glimmer in their eyes. The host extended his arms and handed me the ACM Software System award. This trophy is a shining symbol of success, like a mini-sculpture of victory. It's a polished reminder of hard work paying off, a little token that says, "You did it!". It sure is something to remember...

I cleared my throat and the crowd fell silent. "Thank you everyone for being here to share this joyous moment with me," I started, "it's both an honor and a blessing to stand before you. Never could I have ever pictured myself in such a position. Reminds me of when the internet was more of a concept than a reality, a distant dream. The spark for the World Wide Web emerged from a simple desire to share information effortlessly. It was a humble idea that grew into a transformative force. Picture this- a frustrated man whose hard work, is gone, at the click of a button. I only wanted to share information with my colleagues!"

I chuckled with the crowd, "Just a sprinkle of digital magic, and voila! The World Wide Web appeared at my command." I explained. "Everything truly happens for a reason. There were moments when the dream seemed near impossible, but every setback only fueled the determination to overcome. The collaboration of brilliant minds, the exchange of ideas, and the

relentless pursuit of innovation turned that dream into a reality that surpassed even our most audacious and daring expectations. That's why I encourage you all to work hard to achieve your goals and maybe you'll change the world too!"

Tears welled in my eyes. A single teardrop escaped, tracing a delicate path down my cheek. The silence was broken as I got a standing ovation. Many people, whom I have and have not met, were emotional too. This was a pivotal moment in my life that neither I nor the world will forget.

# *Fleeing The Machete: The Rwandan Genocide*

*In the Eyes of: Taim Mallouhi*

*The Rwandan genocide, which took place in 1994, saw the mass slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi ethnic group members by the Hutu majority. It was a result of longstanding ethnic tensions and political unrest. The international community's failure to intervene swiftly highlighted the importance of preventing genocide and promoting peace.*

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The rooster's crow, a familiar herald of dawn, pierced through the thin walls of our mud hut, waking me up. I inhaled the sweet scent of morning dew clinging to the earth and started my day off with an aromatic bowl of Umutsima, more commonly known as porridge and a staple in our village.

As I was enjoying breakfast with my papa (Emmanuel), an unfamiliar stench of blood, metallic and sharp, sliced through the Rwandan earth.

“The Hutu are here!”, someone shouted from outside.

Panic choked the air from my lungs as I squeezed my eyes shut. I peaked at the window, flames were licking at roofs, some figures were fleeing, and some were chasing others with their machetes glinting like malevolent eyes. Papa's hand, usually warm and comforting, was slick with sweat. His face, usually creased with laughter lines, mirrored the chaos erupting around us. A single word hung heavy; a whispered nightmare became a terrifying reality:

"Interahamwe." We, Tutsis, are no longer safe..." said my dad with a shaky voice.

“Charles, get your sister now!” my dad hurriedly told me... That was all I needed to hear for understanding to bloom in my stomach. I didn't know what was happening, all I knew was that we were all going to die if we didn't flee as fast as possible. I grabbed my five-year-old sister (Nyira) who was still half asleep and went out from behind our hut.

We fled into the dark, the familiar path beneath our bare feet suddenly felt alien. Little Nyira whimpered in my arms. I held her tighter and whispered empty reassurances while my heart was hammering a frantic rhythm even worse than my sister's.

Days bled into weeks. We were barely standing We scavenged for scraps, slept under the sight of a million stars, and walked until our legs felt like lead.

One afternoon, we collapsed beneath the shade of a giant, fruitful fig tree, though exhausted, we felt a stroke of luck! We finally had something to chow down on other than live insects and unripe bananas. My sister, Nyira - usually a ball of boundless energy - wasn't

herself lately, instead of eating, she simply layed on my dad's arms. He was our only hope, not only to flee, but to survive this catastrophe of a life. We had already lost our mother to disease, and I don't want to lose anyone else.

For the following hours, we took a rest under the fig tree and continued moving on our path in silence. Just then, a loud, sputtering roar ripped through the stillness of our escape. The Hutu extremists have found us, we ran endlessly but the sound of their machetes was getting closer by the second. Papa knew we weren't going to make it like this, so he yelled to me,

"Charles, take your sister and run straight ahead, we are close! Go now!".

I didn't want to leave my dad, but his words were too desperate, we had to run. If we don't, we die, it was that simple.

I scrambled through the dense foliage, thorns tearing at my clothes. The sound of his struggle echoed behind me. When I finally dared to stop, gasping for breath, Nyira clung to me, her small body trembling and her eyes filled with tears. Papa was gone, he was dead.

Grief threatened to consume me. But looking into Nyira's tear-filled eyes, I knew I had to be strong. She was all I had left. We walked on, fueled by a desperate hope of reaching Burundi, a sliver of safety across the border.

The journey was a brutal test. Hunger gnawed at our bellies, and each night brought a chilling fear. But we pushed on, we shared the meager scraps we had left, slept huddled together for warmth, and I whispered stories of Mama; however, Nyira's memory of her was a flickering candle almost extinguished.

"We're almost there Nyira!", I tried to cheer her up.

But with all of my efforts, she wouldn't fuss up a word. I hoped she would get better later on, but even Burundi seemed like a lost cause, we just couldn't find our way.

One depressing night, I had been awake by the screams of my people from far away, and a rustling sound from a nearby bush. I was alert, but my tiredness took the best of me, and I fell asleep. In my dreams, a familiar voice echoed through the rustling leaves,

"Charles, take your sister..."

I jolted awake, disoriented. My sister was still sound asleep, but there was another blurry figure through my tear-filled eyes...

It was papa! "Papa!", I exclaimed.

He is back! He is back! I woke both of them up and as soon as my sister saw him, she cried tears of joy, her arms wrapped around him whooshing the air out of his lungs. "But how?", I asked, "how did you come back?".

He explained how he'd managed to escape the Hutu extremists using his knowledge of the backwoods to evade capture. He'd been injured, but driven by the will to find us, he found his way back to us.

We were nothing but ecstatic! Suddenly the forest felt greener, and the sky clearer. Things have started to return back to normal, finally! It was a dozen of excruciating hours until we arrived, and they passed by quickly by my dad's side. Reaching the border post, we were met by a group of soldiers. Their eyes widened in concern as they saw our condition. But their expressions softened as we sputtered out our story. Without hesitation, they ushered us through...

Though the scars of the genocide would forever mark us, a seed of hope bloomed within us. We had fled the machetes, the violence, the Hutus. With each sunrise, we choose to rise again, to carry the memory of our people. The road ahead would be long and painful, but we are still here...

# *My Mother's Horrific Death*

*The Death of Diana, Late Princess of Wales*

*In the Eyes of: Maryam Ayyash 10C*

*Princess Diana, beloved for her compassion and humanitarian efforts, captured the hearts of people worldwide as a prominent member of the British royal family. Her tragic death in a car accident in 1997 shocked and deeply saddened the nation of England, leaving a profound sense of loss and mourning across the country.*

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## *Harry...*

It was the night of August 30<sup>th</sup>, 1997. The castle was quiet, for we just had our dinner. William was already in his room reading a book while I was walking up the stairs with a glass of hot chocolate in my hand. As soon as I reached my room, I set my mug on my bedside table and walked towards my window to unveil it. My nighttime habit was gazing up at the night sky before bed. The sky doesn't get the attention it needs; instead, it is so overlooked by almost everyone. Every night, it gets more beautiful than the night before, with the stars decorating it and making it even prettier. However, the same stars burn, sometimes harming the lovely sky. Tonight was one of those nights, where the night sky wasn't as glorious as it usually was.

Father came by and told us to go to bed, and that's what I did. I closed the curtains and drank all my hot chocolate. The warm, chocolaty, sugary aroma took over the room. When I got to the end of the cup, I laid my head on the pillow, stared at the ceiling excitedly, and told myself, "*I'm seeing Mum tomorrow!*" My smile was from ear to ear to the extent that it hurt my cheeks. I couldn't wait for Mum to arrive the following night.

## *Diana...*

Dodi and I arrived in Paris from Sardinia at 3 p.m., which was earlier today. We went from the airport to the Ritz Paris, owned by the Fayed family. During this time, I phoned Charles to check on my boys.

"Hello? Charles?" I asked.

He replied with, "Hello, Diana."

I was taken aback by his response. It was like we were never married in the first place; like he never loved me. I didn't want to keep this conversation awkward, so I continued, "How are my boys?"

“They are doing fine. I’ll call them over.”

A few minutes passed, and then I heard William running to the phone and saying, “Mum! How are you? I’ve missed you so much!”

“Oh, my boy! I missed you even more. How are you? How are your studies?”

“I’m doing well, and so are my studies. When are you coming over?” He rushed when he said the first sentence like it didn’t matter as much as him missing me. My son William was my whole world, and so was Harry.

“Tomorrow, hopefully. Where is my little rascal, Harry? Has he not missed me?” I asked jokingly.

“He missed you so much, he keeps calling your name when he’s aske-” William was cut off.

“MUM! I MISSED YOU SO MUCH!” That was my little Harry.

I let out a little chuckle, “Hello, my love. I missed you more. How are you doing?”

“I’m good. Mum, you need to come faster. I missed you too much.”

“I’ll come as soon as you know it, but I need to go now. I love you.”

“Love you!” The two harmonized.

## *Harry...*

Mum has been gone for almost two weeks and I couldn’t wait any longer to see her again. I felt like my days were long, for William was always busy with school or his books, and Father was always with Camilla or grandmother. I felt left out a lot because I usually spent my time with Mum. I was closer to Mum than Father, but William was close to both. I think it’s because he’s the eldest son, so he spent more time with them than I did. That didn’t matter now, because Mum was coming to London tomorrow night to spend time with us. I closed my eyes and said, “*I love you, Mum. I’ll love you forever.*”

## *Diana...*

A lot went on during the day. We planned to eat dinner at Chez Benoit around 9:30 p.m., but due to paparazzi attention, we ended up back at the Ritz. Dodi and I first tried to eat at the L’Espadon restaurant, but 10 minutes later, went to dine in private in the Imperial Suite. I ordered an appetizer of mushrooms and asparagus, and Dodi ordered Turbot.

Shortly after midnight, we decided to leave the hotel to go to Dodi's apartment. Henri Paul, the head of the Ritz security, drove there through the back entrance of the hotel. Almost five minutes later, we entered the Pont de l'Alma tunnel, but at very high speeds. I looked at Henri, and he had a concerning look on his face. I didn't feel safe at all. I gripped on the seat, begged Henri to stop the car, and began to panic. It all happened so fast. The car had stricken a concrete pillar dividing the tunnel, and my memory stopped there. "My God, what's happened?" I asked as soon as I regained my consciousness thanks to a respiratory bag. My vision was blurry and all I saw was the doctor who gave me the bag and blue-and-red flashing lights. I heard sirens from every angle. Although I was alive, I wasn't able to speak. It felt like if I spoke, all the air would finish. I looked around me, hoping I'd see Dodi standing alive and well, but I couldn't see him. I saw two bodies next to me, both in severe condition, but I couldn't tell which was Dodi (Town & Country, 2023). I could tell this was my end, but all I could think of were my boys. *How would they react knowing their mother won't see them as she promised?* I felt like the worst mother in the world, and that's how I felt until my last breath.

## *Harry...*

It was around 5 a.m. Father just rushed into my room and woke me up frantically. He sat on the side of my bed with tears falling from his eyes. I was puzzled. My father, the same man who raised me and told me men don't cry, was crying beside me. I asked him what was wrong, and his reply flipped my world upside down. He looked me in the eye and told me, "I fear you won't see your mother, Harry."

"What do you mean, father? Is she staying in Paris today?" I asked.

"Your mother is dead. She died in a car accident a few hours ago."

"But...She said she was coming to London today."

"She won't, son. I know you loved her."

I sat there in utter shock. "*Mum died? This can't be true! She promised she would see us! My Mum? What if it were another woman in the car? It isn't her, and I'm sure!*" As I was questioning everything, I began to cry. A few tears turned into a lot. I've never cried more before. She was my whole world. It felt like when she left, my heart went with her. My dear, dear mother was no longer going to see me again. I couldn't wrap my head around it. I sobbed until it felt like my eyes would fall out with the tears, and no one could've comforted me, because she was the only one that was able to in the first place.

The funeral took place on September 6<sup>th</sup>. We were in Buckingham Palace and William, and I, marched solemnly behind our mother's casket beside Father and grandfather Prince Philip, as millions of people in the crowd openly wept. "Why are they crying for someone they never knew?" William asks grandad. "They're not crying for her," he replies. "They're crying for you." I never knew what this phrase meant, but all I knew was that walk was the hardest

thing I've ever done. I never imagined losing my mum so early, and the last time I ever saw her was precisely 11 days before her passing.

# *A Princess's Last Journey: The Day I Never Knew Would Be My Last*

*In the Eyes of: Wesal Moussa*

*Princess Diana, often referred to as the "People's Princess," captivated the world with her grace, compassion, and humanitarian efforts. As a prominent member of the British royal family, she used her platform to raise awareness and advocate for various causes, including landmine eradication, AIDS awareness, and mental health. Diana's tragic death in a car accident in 1997 shocked the world and sparked an outpouring of grief on a global scale, leaving behind a lasting legacy of kindness, empathy, and social activism.*

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It was August 31, 1997, and the evening sun dipped below the horizon, casting a warm golden glow over the streets of Paris. I found myself swept up in the excitement of the night ahead. Dodi and I had just finished a delightful dinner at the Ritz Hotel, a lavish affair filled with laughter and conversation. As we stepped out into the cool night air, the anticipation of the evening's adventures hung thick in the air.

Hand in hand, we made our way to the waiting car, the streets alive with the energy of the city. I couldn't help but smile, feeling a sense of joy and contentment wash over me. The night was young, and I was in the company of someone who made me feel truly alive. For a moment, all was right with the world.

As we made our way through the bustling streets of Paris, I couldn't help but feel a sense of trepidation gnawing at the edges of my consciousness. The relentless pursuit of the press, the constant barrage of flashing cameras—it was a nightmare from which I couldn't awaken, a never-ending cycle of scrutiny and speculation that threatened to consume me whole.

But then, as we climbed into the car and set off into the night, the tranquility of the moment was shattered by the sudden screeching of tires and the sickening crunch of metal. Panic surged through me, my heart racing in my chest as the car careened out of control. Beside me, Dodi's face was a mask of fear as the driver struggled to steady the car, but it was too late.

In the chaos that followed, time seemed to slow to a crawl. But amidst the chaos and the confusion, there was one thought that consumed me above all others: my boys, William and Harry. Oh, how I wished I could turn back the hands of time, to spend just one more precious moment with them—to hold them close and to tell them how much I loved them. I clung desperately to the seat, my mind racing with a thousand thoughts and fears, Why had I left the

safety of the hotel? Why had I allowed myself to be swept up in this reckless adventure? And most of all, why couldn't I say goodbye to my sons?

The realization hit me like a ton of bricks, a wave of regret washing over me as I grappled with the enormity of what was happening. I had so much left to say to them, so much left to teach them, and now, in the blink of an eye, it was all torn away. Tears stung my eyes as I thought of William and Harry, my beloved boys who meant more to me than life itself.

As the car finally came to a stop, I was left dazed and disoriented, my body battered and broken. I tried to move, to speak, but the pain was too much, and darkness began to creep in at the edges of my vision. In that moment, all I could think of was my sons, the precious time I had lost with them, and the overwhelming desire to hold them close and never let go.

But it was too late. The damage had been done, and there was no turning back. As the paramedics swarmed around me, their faces grim and determined, I felt a surge of regret wash over me like a tidal wave. Regret for all the moments I had missed, all the words left unspoken, all the love left ungiven.

As the chaos of the crash engulfed us, my mind raced with fear and confusion. The screech of tires, the shattering of glass, the world spinning wildly out of control—it was all too much to comprehend. Panic gripped me, my heart pounding in my chest as I clung desperately to the seat.

In the midst of the turmoil, a single phrase escaped my lips, whispered in disbelief and desperation: "Oh my God." It was a cry of shock, a plea for understanding in the face of the incomprehensible. But there was no answer, only the deafening silence of the night. And so, as I slipped away into death, I carried with me the hope that they would remember me, that somehow, someway, they would know how much I loved them. It was a bittersweet farewell, a final goodbye to the world I was leaving behind. But in the end, all that mattered was the love that bound us together, now and for all eternity.

# *Nick Vujicic*

*In the Eyes of: Leen Spartali*

*"If God can use a man without arms and legs to be His hands and feet, then He will certainly use any willing heart."*

*Nick Vujicic is a motivational speaker and author known for his inspiring talks about overcoming adversity and living a fulfilling life without limbs. Born with tetra-amelia syndrome, a rare disorder characterized by the absence of all four limbs, Vujicic has defied the odds and become a beacon of hope for millions worldwide. Through his message of resilience, acceptance, and faith, he empowers others to embrace their uniqueness and pursue their dreams with unwavering determination.*

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Tetra Amelia syndrome is the syndrome of four absent limbs. How can someone born with this become such a pioneer and role model? Your answer is Nick Jovicic. He was born in 1982, and to the shock of his parents, with, tetra-amelia syndrome. Despite his physical restrictions, he has become one of the world's most popular motivational speakers, renowned for his expertise in perseverance and rephrasing obstacles, despite the lack of a medical explanation for his birth. The early days were difficult, but he fought past them. He is now an extremely successful preacher and motivational speaker, changing millions of lives and encouraging and influencing people worldwide. Not only is Nick Jovicic an inspiration, but he's a living example of the human spirit's boundless potential. Nick Jovicic is an inspiration for hope, a resilient role model, and a change-maker. He is a real force to be reckoned with—a game-changer in every sense of the word.

Nick's childhood was far from a happy one. The moment that he was born, his parents were shocked to see that their son had no arms or legs. His father was so distraught that he left the hospital room to vomit, and his mother couldn't bring herself to hold Nick for a long four months. According to Nick, had he been born in a third-world country, his condition might have been considered a curse or a shame by his parents, and he might have been killed at birth. He was born in Melbourne, Australia, and later moved to Brisbane, Australia, where he lived for 14 years before moving to California. His parents decided not to send him to a school for kids with disabilities, and they sent him to a mainstream school instead. At the age of 8, Nick didn't see a very good future ahead of him. Throughout his childhood, Nick not only dealt with the typical challenges of school and adolescence, but he also struggled with depression and loneliness. At the age of 10, he attempted to drown himself in the bathtub, but after several attempts He came to understand, though, that he was his greatest discourager. During secondary school, he was elected captain of MacGregor State in Queensland and worked with the student council on fundraising events for local charities and disability campaigns. When he was in high school, he met a janitor who inspired him to start speaking his faith and overcome

his adversity at the age of 17. He started to give talks at his prayer group and later founded his non-profit organisation, Life Without Limbs.

Nick gradually figured out how to live a full life without limbs, adapting many of the daily skills limbed people accomplish without thinking. Nick writes with two toes on his left foot and a special grip that slid onto his big toe. He knows how to use a computer and can type up to 45 words per minute using the "heel and toe" method. He has also learned to throw tennis balls, play drum pedals, get a glass of water, comb his hair, brush his teeth, and answer the phone, in addition to participating in golf, swimming, and even skydiving. After high school, Nick went on with further study and obtained a double bachelor's degree, majoring in accounting and financial planning, from Griffith University in Logan, Australia. By the age of 19, Nick started to fulfil his dream of encouraging other people with motivational speeches revolving around his life story. He found the purpose of his existence and the purpose of his circumstances. Nick eventually made the move from Brisbane, Australia, to Los Angeles, California, where he is the president of an international non-profit organisation, where he founded NickV Ministries (formerly Life Without Limbs). He is currently serving as president and CEO. NickV Ministries (NVM) is an international non-profit ministry whose purpose is to saturate the world with the gospel and unite the body of Christ through the life and testimony of Nick Vujicic. and also has his own motivational speaking company, Attitude Is Altitude.

Throughout the years, Nick Vujicic has achieved remarkable success through his ministry known as Life Without Limbs, which originated in southern California in 2008. His impactful journey gained widespread recognition when he appeared on the ABC television show 20/20 the same year. Vujicic's talents extended beyond ministry, as evidenced by his starring role in the acclaimed short film The Butterfly Circus in 2009. His outstanding performance in the film earned him the prestigious Best Actor award at the 2010 Method Fest Independent Film Festival. In 2010, Vujicic expanded his influence with the release of his first book, *Life Without Limits: Inspiration for a Ridiculously Good Life*, published by Random House. The book's profound message resonated globally, being translated into 30 languages. Aside from his professional endeavours, Vujicic is known for his opposition to abortion, which led him to co-found ProLife Bank in 2021. Continuing his commitment to making a positive impact, in 2022, Vujicic launched a new ministry initiative named "Champions for the Brokenhearted," aiming to provide support to marginalised groups in need. Vujicic also found love and companionship with Kanae Miyahara, whom he married on February 12, 2012. Their family has since grown, with the couple blessed with two sons and two daughters as of 2017. They call Southern California their home, where they reside together as a family.

His courage and tenacity for life have caused him to become one of the biggest motivational speakers in the world, known as an expert on resilience and reframing challenges. Nick has travelled to 78 countries, presenting on 3500 stages to crowds as large as 800,000 people. He works with education ministries of various nations, live streams his anti-bullying messaging to youth, Meeting 25 Presidents, Prime Ministers, and Vice Presidents and at the same time addressing rescued human trafficked victims and orphans, Nick has a message of hope for everyone. He has truly impacted and changed the lives of many. His message of hope,

perseverance, and overcoming adversity despite physical limitations has resonated with people from all walks of life. Many people have found solace, inspiration, and motivation from Vujicic's teachings, leading to positive changes in their outlook on life, their approach to difficulties, and their determination to pursue their dreams despite obstacles. Nick Vujicic's impact on the world can be seen through the countless stories of individuals who have found courage, strength, and renewed hope because of his extreme influence.

"I have the choice to be angry in God for what I don't have or be thankful for what you do have."

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# *Malala Yousafzai: Illuminating Paths to Education and Equality*

*In the Eyes of: Remas Spartali*

*"Let us make our future now and let us make our dream tomorrow's reality." – Malala Yousafzai.*

*In the tumultuous circumstances of Pakistan's Swat valley, a ray of light arose in the shape of a little girl with an unwavering spirit and a strong commitment to education. . Malala Yousafzai's path from a resilient young student to a global advocate for girls' education exemplifies the transformational power of optimism and the revolutionary potential of education to combat injustice and inequity.*

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In 1997, in the heart of Pakistan's Swat Valley, emerged a young girl with an insatiable hunger for knowledge, her spirit was as vivid as the hues of her own country. Malala was raised by her father, Ziauddin Yousafzai, a dedicated teacher and driven encourage for education, and she grew up in an environment of curiosity and compassion. Her childhood was overflowing with optimism and serenity. However, tranquillity was replaced by turbulence when the dark shadow of the Taliban fell on their land in 2007. Malala, then ten years old, witnessed the terrifying order that stole girls' rights to an education and confined women to the shadows of society. It was a moment that ignited a fire within her, and it burned stronger every day. But Malala's resistance came at a cost: in 2012, a bullet designed to silence her voice was aimed at her by the Taliban, sparking a global call for justice. Surviving an assassination attempt. Malala appeared not as a victim, but as an example of hope. Her journey from Mingora's inadequate alleyways to a global stage is a testament to the unbreakable human spirit and the transformational power of education. Malala's courage and resolve have inspired millions of people to fight against tyranny and for the right to an education. As she reflects on her incredible journey, Malala stays consistent in her view that education is the most effective weapon we have for changing the world. It is a message that reaches far beyond the borders of her native country, inspiring everyone who hope for a better future.

After surviving the tedious assassination attempt, Malala faced not only physically wounds but also profound mental scars that threatened to consume her spirit. In the gloomy dwelling of rehabilitation, she struggled with disturbing recollections of violence and the weight of sudden noise of gunfire resonated in her thoughts, and Fear shadows lurked in every nook of her conscious. Malala found consolation in her own words, a mantra of resilience that she recited to herself in times of doubt. "I told myself, Malala, you have already faced death. This is your second life. Don't be afraid-if you are afraid, you can't move forward."– Malala Yousafzai's described her voice as a light of bravery among the darkness. However, the path to recovery was laden with challenges, as Malala battled not just physical anguish but also the

hidden torture of despair. The burden of survivors' guilt weighed heavily on her shoulders, trying to kill the glimmer of hope that shone within. Yet, with every new day, mustered the courage to face her inner demons, rejecting to let discouragement prevail. Through pure determination and unflinching faith, Malala arose from a state of misery as an image of courage and tenacity.

Malala decided to embark on a quest to raise the voices of underprivileged girls all across the world, going beyond the borders of her native country. With unflinching tenacity, she traversed continents and cultural divisions, bearing testimony to the grim realities of girls' education across the world. From the hushed mutters of classrooms muffled by ancient conventions to the broken ambitions of girls trapped in the crossfire of war-torn villages, Malala encountered the brutal realities of discrimination. Malala's activism went beyond boundaries, igniting a global campaign for girls' education. Her passionate statements sparked emotions and inspired people to take action. Under the power of social networking sites and community organization, Malala's message of hope spread like a flame, reaching millions, and sparking a tsunami of change without boundaries. From remote villages to bustling metropolises, Malala's presence acted as a beacon of hope for girls everywhere, telling them that their voices mattered and their dreams were worth fighting for. Her tireless efforts not only increased awareness of the impediments to girls' education, but also prompted concrete action to break down those barriers and pave the way for a brighter future.

In addition to the major obstacles already described Malala Yousafzai's journey to activism was fraught with countless more problems. From an early age, she was confronted with the omnipresent spectre of prejudice against women over her academic efforts. In a country where patriarchal standards ruled the final authority, girls like Malala were frequently sent to the margins, their successes hampered, and their goals repressed. Despite encountering institutional roadblocks at every turn, Malala refused to be silent, challenging the established order and demanding equal opportunity for everyone.

However, her activism did not come without a cost; as Malala's voice became louder, so did the clamour of detractors seeking to silence her. She maintained a precarious road, her studies frequently interrupted by the unrest around her. Despite the volatility, Malala remained committed to learning, seeing education's transformative capacity as a light of hope in times of unrest.

On a global scale, Malala's difficulties reflect those of other girls throughout the world, putting emphasis on the widespread impediments to education and opportunity. Her journey is an homage to the strength of resilience in the face of hardship, motivating a new generation to overcome the odds and carve their own way to a better future.

Prior to Malala's work and the establishment of transformational organizations such as the Malala Fund, countless Pakistani girls were barred from attending school due to a variety of barriers, including conflict, gender-based violence, poverty, early marriage, and widespread gender prejudice. These impediments jeopardize the education of almost 120 million girls globally, with Pakistan's disadvantaged populations carrying a disproportionate share of

educational deprivation. The formation of the Malala Fund was a watershed moment in the struggle for girls' education, with a ripple effect that extended well beyond Pakistan's borders. Malala's goal was realized via efforts such as the Girls' Right to Education Programme, which empowered teachers, mobilized communities, and broke down educational barriers for vulnerable girls. Her tireless work paid off, as proven by significant gains in educational access and quality in Pakistan's most underprivileged areas. The Malala Fund and partners like as UNESCO helped educate hundreds of teachers in novel teaching approaches, while hundreds of thousands of local people became enthusiastic champions for girls' education.

However, Malala's influence extended beyond boundaries, as she pioneered campaigns to create schools for Syrian refugee girls and advocated for educational opportunities for poor children throughout the world. Over 90,000 girls will directly benefit from the devotion of educators and activists sponsored by the Malala Fund, with millions more set to reap the benefits of advocacy, non-formal education, and transformative training.

Malala Yousafzai is an outstanding example of determination and tireless dedication. She began her life peacefully in Pakistan's Swat Valley and has since become a global advocate for education. Malala's unflinching fortitude stood firm in the face of the Taliban's oppressive reign and a targeted assassination attempt. She has achieved genuine change via her unrelenting activism and the establishment of the Malala Fund, which provides education to millions of vulnerable girls worldwide. Her influence on many lives, both positive and negative, has left an indelible mark. Malala's story motivates future generations to pursue their dreams by acting as a powerful reminder of education's revolutionary ability to combat injustice and unfairness.

# *A Change Between Invincible and Vulnerable*

*In the Eyes of: Rayan Sadek*

*Achilles, a central figure in Greek mythology and the Trojan War, is renowned for his unparalleled strength, courage, and ferocity on the battlefield. As the greatest warrior among the Greeks, he played a decisive role in the conflict, earning both fame and infamy for his exploits. However, Achilles is also remembered for his tragic flaw, his vulnerability in the form of his heel, which ultimately led to his downfall.*

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Over time, one idea has been identified as constant. That idea being the conquest of power, a lust that has driven many mad, an ideology which has not only been historic but which has remained imminent to this day, but it is not purely the idea of the power that has kept it so provoking to all of humanity it those who can withstand it, rule over it and manage to guard it until it has its way to another. Frankly, the number of individuals who have sought to own this task is countless; however, those who own this sacred skill are not tremendous, which makes those who do that much more prolific. To account for these imbalances' humanity has come up with the idea of Greek mythology, a topic which is tempered with figures who have been publicized to have the traits of true-bred warriors. Those who do not only possess the trait of 'blind rage' but the ability to use that rage. Among these fairytales is a warrior named Achilles, better known as the conqueror of the Trojan War, whose story must be known by the world.

To truly understand what a warrior Achilles was, we must delve into his upbringing in youth and understand his societal norms growing up. Achilles was born into royalty, seeing that his father was Peleus, a Greek king, while his mother was Thetis, a goddess. Before engaging in the details of his childhood, it is relevant to mention that Zeus, the king of gods, was in love with Thetis but did not marry her, seeing as he believed a prophecy that stated that the child of Thetis would be greater than his father. Provoked, Zeus arranged for Thetis to marry Peleus, a mortal man, so that the child's power does not outweigh Zeus's power. Nevertheless, Achilles was born mortal, unlike his mother. The latter frightened Thetis, which drove her to a 'last resort,' which would be dipping infant Achilles into the River Styx, which is the river that flowed through the underworld and was seen to provide glimmers of invulnerability. With this invulnerability came a vulnerability, seeing as Thetis was holding Achilles by the heel, and the water's projection would not be in range with Achilles', hence the saying 'The Achilles Heel.'

Despite this profound invulnerability, Thetis abandoned Achilles and Peleus due to a conflict between Thetis and Peleus. This abandonment resulted in Thetis returning to the sea so that she may live with the sea nymphs, but Thetis' disregard did not tread lightly regarding Peleus' awareness of how to raise Achilles. This forced Peleus to send Achilles to a centaur named Chiron, who practically raised Achilles to be a warrior. To elaborate, he fed him a diet that included the innards of wild lions and wild pigs and the marrow of she-wolves for

strength, not to mention Chiron educating Achilles on the skill of hunting and one-on-one combat. Because of this, Achilles was known as a respected warrior and would be seen as an anchor, as his role in the Trojan War was so grand. Within these events, Achilles maintains a friendship with Patroclus, who becomes very dear to Achilles.

Achilles' journey to the battle of the Trojan War was not an easy one, seeing as his parents heard of a prophecy which stated that Achilles would die on the battlegrounds of the war which made Thetis take matters into her own hands, disguising Achilles as a girl where he is hidden on the island of Skyros. However, an alternative prophecy states that the Greeks could only win the war with the presence of Achilles, which drove the Greek kings Odysseus and Diomedes to trace Achilles's whereabouts. After they have been found, Achilles is tricked into revealing himself and makes his way to Troy. Arriving at Troy, Achilles is seen with impressive numbers, precisely 50 ships, and is the army leader known as the Myrmidons. The war only began 'developing' ten years after Achilles arrived in Troy, and when it ensued, Achilles was the best fighter for the Greeks.

Seeing that Achilles' domination was so apparent, the Greeks were sitting comfortably battling any enemy that sought to challenge them, but this changed when King Agamemnon stole Achilles' prize of honor, a woman named 'Briseis.' This caused Achilles to feel disrespected and to inevitably withdraw from fighting in the war. This act made Achilles' dear friend Patroclus lead the Greeks with Achilles' armor. On the battlefield, Patroclus passes away, and it is thought that Achilles is the one who has died at the hands of the Trojan Prince Hector, seeing as Patroclus was wielding his armor, but it is later found out that Achilles is alive. After Achilles heard the news about his best friend, he felt enraged and sought to avenge his dearest companion. Achilles' mother, Thetis, did not condone Achilles re-engaging in the war because of the prophecy that had been mentioned. Still, Achilles disregarded the words of his mother and sought to defeat Hector. Upon his arrival, Hector fled and tried to escape Achilles's wrath, but he was distraught and eventually feuded with Achilles to fight to the death. Hector pleaded that whatever may happen, their bodies be given so that they may have a peaceful funeral, but Achilles shrugged this off and went on to defeat Hector due to a fatal blow to the neck. Achilles, being the man that he is, dragged the body of Hector through the city of Troy so that the civilians may acknowledge what has been done to their best fighter. Following this act of disrespect, Hector's father 'Priam' made a dedicated journey to Achilles and pleaded for his son's body, he kissed the hands of Achilles and was given what he wanted: a funeral for his son. "I have endured what no one on earth has ever done before – I put to my lips the hands of the man who killed my son." Achilles saw this as an act of bravery, which is why the body of Hector was released to Priam.

Shortly after the resolution of the Illiad, Achilles dies due to an arrow shot by Paris, a Trojan Prince whom the God Apollo assisted in Achilles' weak spot, the heel. It did not take long for the arrow to pierce his skin and overall be the final blow that would end Achilles' life. His demise brought many outcomes; Achilles was known to have a son who lived on to share the same characteristics as Achilles and an evident reputation as a warrior. As for Achilles, he

was seen as a mortal figure to the Greeks and as a savior, for he was the best warrior in the Trojan War and frankly dominated it, but as for the Romans, he was seen as a military example, a force that threatened even the greatest warrior that decided to cross him.

All in all, Achilles was led by defiance and reigned tremendously, punishing those who crossed him. His mother, driven mad by his lack of immortality, sought to make him immortal, but it could not upset the balance of nature, which caused a destiny of death, which is what was received, seeing that he died due to the god Apolo. Nonetheless, this shall not discredit Achilles or diminish his accolades as they are just as impressive as he ruled the Trojans with an Iron fist. His effect on the Greek civilization cannot be overly emphasized, seeing as it is of great importance which can be solidified as he is one of the most prolific warriors of that region and will continue to be a beacon of excellence when it comes to his ability to lead a battle which is why he is such an essential figure to the Greek civilization.

# Icarus

*In the Eyes of: Ahmad Amiri*

*"Icarus, a figure from Greek mythology, symbolizes the perils of overambition. Ignoring his father Daedalus' warnings, he flew too close to the sun with wings made of feathers and wax, causing them to melt and leading to his tragic fall, serving as a timeless cautionary tale about hubris and moderation."*

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The year 1320 BCE was the year that my father, Daedalus, and I were held hostage on the island of Crete. The palace of King Minos, which was situated on the island, had walls that were quite tall, and we were trapped within those walls. My father was a brilliant architect who was responsible for the construction of the labyrinth that imprisoned the terrifying Minotaur. He was renowned all across the ancient world for his contribution to this endeavor. We were held captive for an unspecified amount of time as a result of an edict that was issued by King Minos in order to prevent the revealing of its profound secrets. As a result of the fact that we were caught in the very maze that my father had designed, the irony of our situation was readily apparent.

In addition to being a site of imprisonment, our cell, which was barely illuminated by the flickering flame of a single oil lamp, functioned as a location where creativity was conceived and conceived of. This area, which was surrounded by scrolls of papyrus that featured paintings by my father, was the place when the idea for our escape was formed. The fact that the notion was both audacious and fraught with peril was a landmark that served as a testament to the imagination of humans and the fervent desire for freedom.

The morning of our escape began in the same way as any other morning, with the sun creating long shadows across the stone floor upon which our cell was placed. This was the beginning of our escape. On the other hand, there was a tangible sense of anxiety and anticipation in the air today. Either we would have a taste of freedom, or we would meet our end today. Either way, we would feel freedom. The wings that my father had meticulously made from feathers and wax were scrutinized by him with the kind of attention that is characteristic of him. He had done this with great care. Keep in mind, Icarus, that you should pay great attention to the path that I select. "Be careful not to climb too high, because the sun's wrath is unrelenting," he advised the audience.

At that very moment, as we were affixing the wings to our backs, my heart was beating so hard that it was pressing against my ribcage. Through the use of his skilled hands, my father was able to properly arrange each feather, which resulted in feathers that were both supple and sturdy. With each passing moment, we moved closer to the window that overlooked the vast expanse of the Aegean Sea, which was azure in color. Over the course of several months, this was the same image that had been enticing us with glimpses of freedom. Furthermore, the expedition was not merely an attempt to escape from Minos; rather, it was a journey into the unknown, into a horizon that contained the prospect of a new existence.

The courtyard below was completely empty while the guards switched shifts, which allowed us to take advantage of the opportunity that presented itself during a brief pause in the attention that the fortress needed to pay to something. As we climbed up onto the sill, the rough stone brushed against our palms as we rested on it. We were comfortable in our position. As I pushed myself forward into the void, my father was following closely behind me. I took a long breath in and gently exhaled as I did so. Experiencing flight was an incredible experience; the cool breeze from the sea clashed with the warmth of the rising sun, and the island of Crete disappeared from our perspectives.

As soon as we took off, I was experiencing a mixture of feelings, including a surge of hope and a growing sense of worry. It was possible to observe a combination of the two. In spite of the fact that the wings performed each and every function without a single glitch, I was gripped with anxiety about the potential negative repercussions that could occur in the case that we were unsuccessful. I was the one who was responsible for leading the route, and I made sure that Icarus was following my instructions by gazing back at him at regular intervals.

On the other hand, my son did not demonstrate the same degree of prudence that I did. While I stood there in a state of utter horror, Icarus, who was completely engrossed in the exhilaration of flight, continued to climb to the highest possible heights. I was shouting to him, "Icarus, my son, stay close to me and follow my path!" but the wind was blowing so hard that my voice was carried away by the wind. Nevertheless, the allure of the sun seemed to be strong to him, and he did not pay attention to the warnings that I had given him.

The unavoidable took place almost quickly after another. The scorching heat caused the wax that was holding his wings together to begin to weaken, and droplets of it began to shine and fall like tears into the sea that was hungry below. This was all because of the hot heat. The relentless heat caused his wings to dissolve, and I watched helplessly as his silhouette tried to stay in the sky. I felt like I was a part of the struggle. His ambitions and dreams of freedom were dashed by the waves as he hurled himself towards the ocean with a scream that broke his heart. He had hoped and dreamed of being independent so much.

The aftermath of Icarus's fall was an anguish that I experienced alone when I landed on a nearby island. I was left destitute and damaged as a result of his fall, and I was left to confront the aftermath of his fall alone. My son's feathers, which were all that remained of his ambitious ascent, washed up on the beach, and each feather served as a dreadful reminder of the price that hubris may take. My son's ascent was a result of his ambition. They told me about a tiny child who had flown too close to the sun, which resulted in the event being made into a legend that would resonate through the years. When the Indians discovered me sitting alone on the beach, they informed me about the story.

In an effort to alleviate my grief, I fashioned a little memorial near the water's edge, in close proximity to the location where I had last witnessed Icarus flying. Our journey, which included parts of both creativity and tragedy, served as a somber cautionary tale about the limits of what is possible for humans to accomplish. It was a story that mingled elements of both. Despite the fact that I continued to work on improving my skills, the image of Icarus,

who was joyful and uncontrolled, continued to be a source of anguish for me. I have spent the remaining years of my life to educating young people about the delicate balance that exists between aspiration and precaution. I have done this in the hope that the story of my son could inspire both caution and courage in equal measure.

# *I Need Him Dead*

*In the Eyes of: Wassim Nasr*

*Hercules, a legendary hero of ancient Greek mythology, is celebrated for his incredible strength and his numerous feats of valor. Born the son of Zeus, king of the gods, and the mortal woman Alcmene, Hercules faced a series of daunting challenges known as the Twelve Labors, which he completed with bravery and cunning. Despite his divine lineage, Hercules also grappled with his own flaws and struggles, making him a relatable and enduring figure in literature and popular culture. With his indomitable spirit and unwavering determination, Hercules exemplifies the timeless themes of heroism, perseverance, and redemption.*

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People considered Hercules, the son of Zeus (the king of gods) and Alcmene (a mortal), the strongest man to ever live. Although Hercules was the son of Zeus, not everything came easily for Hercules. Hera hated Hercules because Zeus had an affair with Alcmene, this insulted Hera. It angered her and led her to try to kill Hercules. But she ultimately failed. Here is how the story unfolds from Heras eyes.

I am the queen of gods. When Zeus cheated on me, I felt anguish burning in my heart. The pain was unimaginable. The betrayal cut deep. However, my heart did not heal, because that affair brought a boy into the world, his name was Hercules. His being alive was a burden to me. He was like a sword in my heart, a scar that could not heal unless he was out of my life. So, from then on, I intended to kill Hercules and get rid of him.

When Hercules was an infant, as he lay in his cradle, I sent two snakes. They were dangerous enough to kill a giant. But, Hercules grasped and killed both snakes using only his bare hands. His unchallenged strength just fueled my anger. I wanted to get rid of him even more. As time passed, I kept on trying to get rid of him, but I could not suffice and kill him. He kept on growing and becoming stronger. One day, news went around Olympia that Hercules was getting married, and that he had three kids. That sparked an idea. I am going to drive Hercules into a fit of madness. I will drive him insane. Since he is only a mere mortal, I was able to control him. I made him kill his wife Megara and his three kids; however, this didn't kill him or get rid of him. It made him feel unworthy, worthless, shameful. He wanted to prove himself, so he undertook the 12 labors to atone for his actions.

The first task was to Defeat the Nemean Lion. I thought Hercules would struggle against the lion. But, his bravery and determination turned what I expected to be his failure into a triumph. The second task was to Overcome the nine headed Hydra. Dealing with the Hydras regenerating heads seemed impossible. Hercules persistence and clever tactics prevailed, thwarting my plans once more. The third task was to Capture the Golden Hind of Artemis. I assumed the hind would elude Hercules during the chase. However, I was surprised by his respect for its sacredness. How he managed to capture it I don't know, but he did. The fourth task was to Subdue the Erymanthian Boar. The boar tested Hercules strength with its ferocity. He remained steadfast in his kindness and determination to complete his mission. The fifth task was to clean the stables in a day. The idea of cleaning the stables in a day seemed impossible.

But, Hercules' ingenuity shone through as he redirected the rivers. The sixth task was to Vanquish the Stymphalian Birds. I lied about their feathers. But, to my shame, Hercules was great at using a bow and arrow to beat them. The seventh task was to Take down the Cretan Bull. This showed Hercules's capacity to keep order in chaos. It annoyed me because the bull refused to submit to my attempts to shatter it. The eighth task was to Steal the Mares of Diomedes. I had thought man-eating horses would be the end of him. But Hercules's courage and tenacity overcame me, ruining my plans again. The ninth task was to Take the belt of Hippolyta, the Amazonian Queen. My meddling in this duty brought trouble. But, Hercules's mix of force and diplomacy astonished me. The tenth task was to Take Geryon's monster cows. Through the tough journey to regain the cattle, Hercules showed unwavering determination. The eleventh task was to Steal the Hesperides' apples from them. He convinced Atlas to go for the fruits. This revealed that Hercules was good at building alliances. He was also good at leaping over barriers. The final task was the most challenging. It was to capture Cerberus, the guardian of the underworld. Hercules' bravery never fails to amaze. His determination and sheer force conquered the beast, defying the odds again.

Every task presented to him was only an activity. He conquered everything easily. There was no use in trying to get rid of him. I could do nothing to get rid of him. It was clear that this sword in my heart would never be pulled out. As long as he lived, I would suffer day by day, night by night. I would never be free of this burden. All the traps I set were not enough. His sheer determination, boldness, bravery, and valor were stronger than I had expected.

Hercules has left me feeling lost and overwhelmed. I was initially furious at Zeus' betrayal. It fueled my relentless pursuit. But, my efforts have been useless and have only brought me pain. Hercules has been a constant torment and a perpetual reminder of Zeus' treachery. I have schemed and plotted. I sent snakes to his crib, making him mad. I also caused misfortunes to befall him. My thirst for revenge has consumed me for years, driving my actions and thoughts. The Twelve Labors stand as a testament to Hercules' strength, bravery, and determination. Despite my best efforts to obstruct Hercules, he continuously emerged victorious. He was determined to prove himself. He also wanted to fix his past actions. He did this more times than I predicted. Upon reflection, my bitterness towards Hercules is futile. Despite obstacles, his unwavering willpower and divine favor guided him to triumph. The burden I once carried as a weapon of revenge now symbolizes my own remorse and internal conflict. Hercules's story is a powerful reminder of the tragic consequences of enmity. My pursuit of vengeance only brought me further pain.

In the end, Hercules determination opened my eyes to reality, to the deeper meaning out of all this. It was forgivness. All the pain I caused myself, all the things I went through, just to get to Hercules and get rid of him was nothing but torture for me. When I realized that I couldn't get rid of him, the only way to live without this pain was to forgive. I forgave myself, zeus, and most importantly Hercules. This somewhat helped me, but it didn't completely heal me. All that happened was a sword in my heart, a thorn in my side. But, forgiveness helped me, I got over it, but not fully. A stab leaves a scar. This scar would be a constant reminder of everything that happened.



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— *The AMO<sup>2</sup> team*

