

ENGLISH LITERATURE
AND
CULTURAL STUDIES CLUB

SHORT
STORIES  issue:3



NINE SHORT STORIES FROM LITERATURE STUDENTS

HAZAL BÖKE | ENES ÇAKIR | KADIR DEMIRPENCE | IREM GORGA
EDANUR HAÇKALI | TUYET BANG NGO | BERKAY OKSAR
HAZAL SONAY | NUR FERZAN UZUNPINAR

ÇANKAYA ÜNİVERSİTESİ

2022

TABLE OF CONTENTS

KJÆRESTE	3
THE FORBIDDEN BOOK	12
STRUGGLE FOR HOPE	26
MAPPLE DESTINY	29
GRADMA'S ETERNITY MIRROR	43
THE POWER PLANTS	47
HE WATCHES	57
THE LAST DATE	60
PARALLEL HEARTS	65

* The stories were written by the English Language and Literature Department students in the scope of elective courses offered by Assist. Prof. Dr. Berkem Sağlam, Assist. Prof. Dr. Özge Üstündağ Güvenç, and Dr. Yağmur Sönmez Demir.

* The cover page was designed and texts were typeset by Emir Can Kara.

* For inquiries please contact: cankayaelcs@gmail.com

KJÆRESTE

by Hazal BÖKE

It was a time when power was feared but wanted to be possessed. The wind, the waves, were completely dominated over humans, and some people used to dominate others without realizing it. On the island of Kythheria, people were competing with each other, but on the one hand, hidden forces were also causing difficulties. People thought that it was because of these forces that nature created such compelling conditions. Above all, they think that the baby they found in a little wooden shallop that came to the island drifting above the water exactly twenty years ago when the weather was cold at most is the greatest threat to Kythheria. Only one person has ever raised this child. Everyone else tried to steal and kill her. Even there were those who wanted to burn her, because they believed she was created out of darkness. Hadrian was the first and only person to take the baby from the boat. He made a deal with his mother and told her to take care of the baby until she stopped drinking milk, and then he will take and raise her himself. His mother had been ostracized by the rest of the people because she accepted his son's offer. Hadrian then always stood by the child day and night to protect her and called her Kjæreste. However, no one else called her by that name. For the others her name was Ødelagt which means corrupted one.

Although Kjæreste learned a lot from Hadrian, she could never use a sword as well as he did in self-defense, but Hadrian saw that there was something different about her. She was so smart from childhood, she would always find a solution or reason for everything, but she could not find a reason why people hate her. Then there was an event that would make her to realize that those people hate everything that is different from them. From the far right front of the island, everyone ran with their guns in their hands to a sound that would make the ground tremble. When they saw a dragon with its only wing torn, people were first surprised where to run, but then, as usual, they thought that if they killed it, the problem would be solved. But because they did not have the strength to do this, and the Dragon also challenged them, they would tie its mouth with the largest ropes in the middle of the night and throw him into the water. Hadrian, who had heard of this plan, took Kjæreste with him and said that he would not join them, and they took all their belongings and settled to little further south, from the middle of the island. At night, people found the dragon at its weakest moment, so much so that it could barely breathe. Another island was located opposite the island of Kytheria, but there was no settlement there. They put the dragon in the water and pushed it all together and it disappeared towards the island on the horizon. No one had any idea what happened to the dragon, but everyone wished he was dead. Kjæreste knew that these people also wanted to hurt her before like they did o dragon, but after this incident she was determined not to show leniency towards them. She was always silent towards them. Because they took advantage of the Dragon's condition, Kjæreste was determined never to be weak.

Hadrian always got up early and watched the sun rise, but this time he could not get out of bed. He tried to take a piece of cloth that was now worn out from the side of Kjæreste , who had not yet woken up, to wipe his sweaty face, but he felt so weak that he dropped a vase on the floor. After that, Kjæreste woke up jumping, but at that moment there was an event that surprised them both. With Kjæreste's leap, the wooden door was ripped out of place and jumped up to four meters away. There was no wind outside, no one intervened. Hadrian looked at Kjæreste with a fearful look, but she was just looking at her hands. Her veins were black,

and it was from her hand to her elbows. Kjæreste had encountered this situation before and was again very scared. There was a child who jumped on her and tried to hurt her, and Kjæreste's veins were like this again, throwing the child backwards. No one had seen it, and then she had never seen that boy. Hadrian was fired up and so sluggish that the words barely came out of his mouth: "Kjæreste what is this?" Kjæreste turned to him and said, "It's happened before, but I couldn't tell you. There is something different about me, Hadrian. Inappropriate things to the world of these people. I don't even know my mom and dad, people hate me, there must be a reason for all this, maybe I'm a Ødelagt, like they say, maybe... even the blood in my veins is cursed, not normal blood." said. Hadrian barely swallowed and said, "I know you're different, Kjæreste, but I don't think you're cursed. You have a power that is waiting to come out, a power that people both fear and want to have." He had only finished these words, and he began to tremble. After Kjæreste put her hand on his forehead, she got scared "I'm wetting this cloth and bringing it." she said and ran out of the house. At that time, she noticed that a few people were coming to their house, and she stood up and looked at their faces, but those who came did not even look at her. Without even bothering to get permission from Kjæreste, they just looked at the door on the floor and entered. Although Kjæreste was very uncomfortable, she stopped when she saw Hadrian nodding at her. Hadrian was trying to look like he was strong, even though he was in very bad condition right now. After a while, the men went out and turned to Kjæreste, the youngest among them in front, and said, "I've heard a lot about you, Kjæreste, but they didn't mention that you were so beautiful," and Kjæreste frowned because no one but Hadrian called her by that name. "Thank you," simply said. The man smiled at her and said, "My name is Ingram, it has been decided that Hadrian's entire asset should be confiscated, so I have come to convey this message. He agreed to a duel to protect everything he had, even though he did not already have much. Both sides will swing swords to death. I can see he is not in a very good condition. You better try to get him ready in three days. Oh, and it looks like he needs a new very strong and sharp sword." he said, then pushed the men next to him away and whispered in Kjæreste's ear, "Dig beneath the most different among the roses on the highest point of the island on the horizon. There you will

find a mine that is very rare and, when processed, can be made a very powerful sword.” Kjæreste’s mouth was open in amazement, but she was just nodding. Ingram took a flower from the ground and put it on Kjæreste’s hair, and said, “No need to thank me, just remember,” and he went away with the other men. Kjæreste was very upset and waited next to Hadrian’s bed until he felt a little better. She was still thinking about the possibility that the duel would end badly in her mind and then fell asleep.

Hadrian was still asleep when Kjæreste got up from her bed at the first light of day the day before the duel. Taking advantage of this situation, she took some water and something to eat and headed to the side where the small boats were. With no one here at this hour, she got on one of the boats and headed for the island on the horizon. When she arrived, she realized that she also had to walk a lot to get to the top. As she walked, she looked around, seeing that everything here was very different from Kytheria. Even the earth was so dark that it could be called Black. Eventually, she climbed to the top and saw a rose that was very pale among all the red roses but had too many spines. She ate before dug this place up. Then she put her water next to her and started digging up the earth with all her might. She dug for hours but found nothing. She was determined not to give up hope, so she kept digging harder. At the end of all this fatigue, her hands were torn apart. When she realized she was running out of water, she panicked and, angry, put her hands on the ground and started screaming. At this time, she noticed that the ground was shaking and her veins were black again. Hadrian’s “You have a power that is waiting to come out.” words came to her mind and pressed her even more forcefully into the ground, trying to fully feel this power flowing through her veins. As the Earth was thrown completely sideways and the bottom opened, Kjæreste raised her hands and looked at the bottom in surprise. It was brighter than silver. Kjæreste looked at it admiringly, to this mine she had never seen before.

She realized that she had slept for a few hours, waking up when she heard a trembling sound on the ground. She found the sound too familiar and stood quietly to hear it again but could not hear any other sound. Her hands were very sore, and she also made an effort to remove

the mine. Her blood was dry, but it was black as usual. She had to clean up and come back. Hadrian's sword should have been ready by morning. She put the mine in a wicker bag she brought with her and took it on her back. And then she started walking to find a water source. She came near a cave and drank plenty of water from the puddle that had accumulated in front of it. At this time, she heard the deafening sound again, but this time the situation was different because the owner of the sound was looking at her with a pair of eyes from inside the cave. Kjæreste started screaming as she threw the mine to the ground. It caused the same effect as the sound trembled the ground. The owner of the voice came out of the cave. His single wing was torn, his feet as hard and rough as a piece of wood from immobility. He stood a little ahead and barely sat down, pulling his other wing towards him. Returning to Kjæreste, and said, "At last you have come... The girl who left from Aaliyah." Kjæreste looked at the Dragon until it came to her as if it were hours, although it lasted a few minutes. Upon this silence, the Dragon said, "I assume that you remember me, man does not forget that he shows mercy, does not harm, but always forgets that he does harm. Especially the undesirable ones." said. Kjæreste said: "Me and Hadrian were not wanted either... we knew what it felt like" said. After the Dragon slowly closed and opened its eyes, "You were not asked because they didn't know who you were or who you came from. They felt there was no limit to your power, but you still don't realize it, do you, the one born of Aaliyah?" Kjæreste sighed, "I don't know what I am, I just know that I have a power that scares me, that makes me feel like it's going to come out of my veins and spread everywhere... And who is Aaliyah? Do you know my mother?" she asked in amazement. "That's what they call you, but I have no right to say more, your fate is already written, even you can't change it. I know exactly why you came here and what will happen next, I just do not know what my own fate will be like... The value of the blood you carry is so great that all the plants you see around you take that blood from the Earth, but what is different about you is the power inside you, the soul you have. You are not the only one in this world. There's another one of you, but you've already met him." Kjæreste listened to the dragon in amazement, but just when she was about to ask a question, the Dragon intervened and interrupted her. "I know what you're going to ask, I can't answer them, you

have to live what you have to live. It's just that you have a mission to hurry right now, and I'm going to help you do is make a sword out of that that mine using your power in control." said. Kjæreste was shocked, her power was scattered around by itself, she did not know how to do it. The Dragon had realized how she felt "It takes strength to control fire, just believe and focus." After he said, he squinted and started watching Kjæreste. Kjæreste pulled the mine out of the bag and put her hands on it. She forced herself as hard as she did to pull out the same mine with all her might, but it did nothing but break up the mine. The Dragon slowly blew into the wood that was on the edge and, looking at Kjæreste, said, "Control the fire, before it controls you." Kjæreste went to the fire and tried to regain her strength and hold the fire in her hands, while she closed her eyes in fear, but when she felt nothing, she opened it back and smiled when she looked at the flame in her palm. She put her hands together, and they were in flames, and they were ready. Hours had passed, and now only the moon and the sword in her hand shone in the dark of night. The dragon turned to her and said, "The mine you made this sword is strong, but it's not enough. If you want to strengthen the sword, you must brand it with my breath. You can be costly." said. Kjæreste turned to the dragon "I do what I have to do. I don't want this sword for myself, I can't lose Hadrian." said. The Dragon shook its head, "You have to get me out of here. I can only get off this island with the help of someone with your blood, just like when I was brought in." said. Kjæreste remembered that the Dragon said there was another one of her, so that person was the one who brought him here, but the people in Kytheria made him come here. She could not ask him who that person was, and even though it bothered her, she said, "Okay, I'll help you." The Dragon asked her to come close. "Your blood must be in my body." said. Kjæreste took a stone from the ground and cut off her palm and extended it towards the Dragon. After the dragon took the blood in his mouth, Kjæreste felt as if she had tasted it herself. "Now bring that sword and we will take the step that is the biggest part of your destiny." Said dragon. Kjæreste brought the sword and raised it up to the Dragon. The Dragon no longer seemed powerless, so he blew the flame with all his strength towards the sword. The island, lit only by Moonlight, but now it was as bright as day by the light of the flame. Kjæreste closed her eyes tightly until she stopped seeing the light

that came out even when it was closed. When she opened her eyes, she did not notice anything different about the sword, but she smiled and turned to the Dragon and said, “Thank you, I will never forget your kindness, but I don’t know your name.” The Dragon glided up and flapped its wings in the air, saying, “I have already given it to you.” Then he flew away and disappeared. After all this, Kjæreste, with thousands of questions in her mind, reached and boarded the boat and returned to Kytheria. Kjæreste placed the sword next to Hadrian’s clothes in the tent in the area where the duel would be held and covered it. When she approached the house, she saw Hadrian sitting on the floor crying and Kjæreste ran and hugged him. Hadrian started screaming, “Where have you been? I’ve been looking everywhere for you, I thought they killed you, I thought they burned you, I thought I lost you!” Kjæreste’s eyes are filled with tears “I left a gift for you to succeed in the duel.” said. Hadrian began sobbing as he was moved. Kjæreste said, “You saved me, I owe your life.” and grabbed Hadrian by the hand. “You need sleep tomorrow will be a very difficult day.” said. They went in together. Hadrian had barely put the door back in place. After Kjæreste went to her bed, she looked at the island on the horizon through the open window and smiled then fell asleep. In the morning, before anyone else, Kjæreste woke up, sitting outside for hours trying to calm herself down. Hadrian pushed the door that he had installed in its place with such excitement that the door broke again. They laughed at it together, and Kjæreste patted him on the back, saying, “Apparently, we have power, we don’t even need a sword.” Hadrian smiled, “Now I have to go to the tents and get ready. Kjæreste, you are most valuable to me if you lose me today, move on, just don’t stay here.” he said and hugged Kjæreste and walked away. When Kjæreste saw him wipe away his tears, she felt as if her heart had been ripped out. But she had to support him, so she went to get prepared and started walking towards the duel area. When she arrived, all eyes were on her. Wherever she wanted to sit, people did not want to. So, she took a cushion she found a little further away and put it on the floor and started sitting and waiting. First Hadrian came out of the tent. People started booing him. So Kjæreste stood up and jumped by shouting, “You’re the best !” Hadrian smiled at her and put his hand to his heart. Kjæreste sat back and started watching him. At that moment, she saw something that caused her to

panic so much that Hadrian had his usual sword in his hand. Kjæreste stood up and held her head between her hands, almost crying. Then the crowd greeted the man, who came to by applauding and shouting. Kjæreste felt like she was dead for the second time. Ingram was holding a magnificent sword, bright enough to attract everyone's attention. Kjæreste shouted at Hadrian, but the crowd was making so much noise that no one could hear her, and the duel began. Hadrian had suffered a very severe wound to his waist, so he threw himself to the ground and tried to stop the flowing blood by pressing it with his hand, which was so dark and fast that it was very frightening. Kjæreste ran into the duel area and quickly pulled the sword out of Ingram's hand and shouted, "You lying bastard! This sword does not belong to you!" Ingram looked at Kjæreste's face and smiled, and suddenly he jumped on her and pressed the sword against her throat, "Remember? "when he asked, Kjæreste couldn't think of anything because she couldn't breathe. At that moment, a great storm broke out, and no one could see in front of them. Over a period of time, very different screaming sounds were heard. When the storm subsided, everyone slowly opened their eyes. This time, not only Kjæreste, but everyone was looking at with astonishment and fear. The veins of the hands pushing the sword were black, but they were very familiar hands, and the owner's face was not Ingram. Although Kjæreste forced herself to resist the sword, tears began to flow from her eyes. As Hadrian pushed the sword with all his might, he said, "For one to live, the other must die." Kjæreste did not even know what to do, what to think. Her recovery began when the sword touched her throat. Kjæreste thought Ingram was really her brother, in disguise of Hadrian's body, and Ingram thought that Kjæreste might not attack if she saw Hadrian's face. But it is not so. She shouted with such force that Ingram in disguise of Hadrian lost control of the sword and was thrown backwards. Kjæreste, barely breathing, crawled and took the sword and lifted it up on him and closed her eyes. Each of the grains of sand on the ground was black with the separate head on the ground and blood flowing from the body. The people of Kytheria had already left the area. Kjæreste was sitting on the floor with a sword in her lap, crying. At that time, she found a closed necklace around Ingram's neck that she had never seen before. When she opened it, she saw the inscription of "The one born of Aaliyah." A full week had passed, and

Kjæreste had taken nothing with her to leave the island. She just walked out to sea with the sword in her hand and all her clothes off. When she came to the place where the sea crossed her height, she dived under the water and passed the sword through her heart. The reflection of the sky no longer affected the sea. Everything was black with the blood of the great Aaliyah.

THE FORBIDDEN BOOK

by Enes ÇAKIR

The pebbles under his feet slipped and he stumbled while climbing the mountain. Oliver swung his batons forward to stop from falling. His German Shephard canine Otis turned his head to see what was happening, Oliver said “looks like I was about to fall huh? Go on boy!”. This season it rained a lot, the soil was fruitful, and the sides of the path was spouting thousands of flowers and clovers. The little trees in the distant hills were casting shadows on the valley, Otis liked the view too, his tongue was dangling from his mouth.

A soft warm breeze hit Oliver’s face and he thought to himself’ all years’ work for this climb was worth it, wonder how it will be next year’s summer”. The shack on the top of the hill appeared and he cried with happiness “Otis you see that! Finally, we have arrived at our little place!” and Otis barked him back as he was to answer his master. His little shack which he called fortress of peace was a little beaten up by the rains and snow last fall and winter, the planks on the walls turned dark green and the windows were covered in muddy spots. “Lots of work it looks like” he said to himself. His vintage water pump was still intact. To see if it still works, he pumped for a while, the pump made gurgling noises and following it came some mud and red water, he thought “the water must be waiting the-

re so much that it turned into blood red”. Oliver continued pumping and the water cleared out and later came crystal clear water. While washing his face he saw a silhouette in front of him, he jumped back with a startle and wiped his eyes to see who it was, turned out it was Otis who wanted to drink water too. “Damn its Otis! You freaked the crap out of me!” said he and proceeded to pat the head of the guilty feeling innocent dog.

Oliver had a key on his keychain, and everybody knew about it where he is working, its known for a reason, he was playing with it all the time and when he was dreaming about his fortress of peace on the hill he would deeply stare at that key. Yet he was about to use it again. He took his beloved key out of his backpack and unlocked the lock, took a deep breath and pushed the door. He put one foot and immediately felt the flowing emotions and all the bad feelings disappeared. It had been a long time since he did not feel this way, not even his love could make him this way, it was something special about this little place, a deep bond. He lay his backpack on his chair facing the little window, the chair let out a thick cloud of dust, “god, for next year I ought to lay some cover over my stuff” murmured Oliver. The drawer of his countertop was full of rags, he washed them and cleaned the little shack. In one compartment in his bedside table, he found a freshly cut four leafed clover, he was confused “That’s odd” he thought to himself and sat on his bed with the clover in his hand. He tried to figure out how that clover could have come there, but nothing made sense to him, “over thinking isn’t helping” he thought and put the clover between his book he brought to read.

Oliver continued to clean the shack, but the clover was still in his head. Otis on the other hand was playing outside, drinking water from the little puddle under the water pump, he was having his time! It was getting late, the sun was at the horizon, Oliver found some branches little down the hill and brought them back to light up a fire and cook some canned meat and beans. The steel saucepan came from his deceased grandmother, he kept it in his little shack for the last few years, as a useful souvenir. Everything he cooked in this saucepan was tasting splendid. They ate their meal with the beautiful sunset of Northern Ireland. It was such a nice weather; the air was calm, and the warm touch of the sun came

upon Oliver's face the last time for the day. The wind brought the humid chilled air from the sea, it was getting cold, the two friends got into their cozy little palace. Oliver lit up the oil lamp, with a little stick he found, he carried the fire to the stove. Heating up the little shack took not long. Otis already fell asleep on the little blanket in front of the stove, it is understandable for he walked about three hours without stopping. But Oliver was not tired, he was in his palace he was longing to see for a year.

The wind was howling and caused the weak little shack to creak at times. It is not troubling Oliver nor Otis, because they expected to hear these noises. The water was boiling on the stove, Oliver could not read his novels without having a cup of coffee, it was a habit he got in university. The coffee cup he prepared, was waiting to be filled with hot water, and so he did. He took his book and coffee and sat on his chair to start his journey in the minds of other people. It was always fascinating to see what people could imagine and put into words.

The dark settled on his little distant hill, the light pollution was so low you could see each star on the sky, the sea was pitch black and the light of the moon fell upon the pine trees, "such a peaceful night" said he with little words. The book he brought captured him that he lost his feeling of time. It was two in the morning, but Oliver did not feel any tiredness he was in the middle of his novel, the clover, it was there but it was not fresh anymore, he took it to his palm and carefully examined it. The clover dried up like it was waiting there for years, "it can't dry like this in such a short time" thought Oliver. He was startled to meet with such a case. Confused, he looked around as he did not know what to do with the clover. An Idea sparked in his mind and he opened the flap of the stove and threw the clover into the ember red fire. "What was that? Four leafed clover means luck, but what was it doing in my shack? Was it Otis who brought it? No Oliver, what even are you thinking, he is just a dog, they don't know what a clover is!" he was thinking. He sat there looking down with empty eyes, he was drowned in lots of unanswered questions. "It is getting late; I must be hallucinating" he said with a deep breath. Oliver turned the knob on the oil lamp and the little flame faded, the twinkling light coming from the

hole on the stove hit the ceiling and dimly lighted up the room. Oliver fell into deep thoughts while watching the dancing lights on the ceiling, later he let himself to the arms of the little death as some call, sleep.

“Grandpa, what is in the sea?” asked the four-year-old kid, it was Oliver in his green and orange jumper, blue shorts, and unmatched socs in white and red. “There are fish Oliver” said he without looking. “Are there goldfish too?” asked the little kid, his grandfather answered “No, goldfish don’t live in salty water, they live in fresh waters” with a few nails between his lips and with a higher voice he said, “bring that pliers here”. The little kid ran and brought them to his grandfather and crouched there, next to him, watching the sea behind the hill. With a straight but curious face he asked “grandpa, when will you finish building my house?”, grandpa answered, “I’m working on it, it will be finished in a few hours, the roof shingles are left, go see what your granny is doing” and got rid of the little lovely but annoying kid. His grandmother was sitting with his daughter on the hillside facing the woods, they were chatting and giggling. “Granny! What are you doing?” asked Oliver, “Nothing love, come here! What did you do with you grandpa?” she asked, and Oliver looked at her mom and said “Mom, goldfish don’t live in the sea, did you know this?” and sat between his mother and his granny and started to tell what they did with up there with his old man.

The sun was climbing the stairs of the day, dew drops gathered on the grass leaves, a light mist was resting on the decade’s old trees, yet the sky was clear. The shacks door opened, and Otis ran out, Oliver followed him after. He put his bare foot on the wet grass, it was cold but the freshness; Oliver felt a rebirth such the cold world when a newborn leaves the warm belly of the mother. He stretched his arms and loudly whined like the first crying of a baby, the sign of life. Otis was wagging his tail, and stuck out his tongue, he was doing tippy taps, which meant he was hungry. “Come here boy, come!” said Oliver, the dog came, and he scratched the dogs head and neck. Otis’ canned foods were already on the counter, Oliver poured them in a case and put it outside for Otis to eat. “let’s see what I have for breakfast” he said to the dog. A classic breakfast with a toast and a cup of coffee sufficed

him. After his breakfast he got his tools from a cabinet in the shack and started to repair the broken roof and failing wooden boards on the walls.

All the tedious work took him hours and the night came, because his work engaged his mind, Oliver did not have a minute to think about the clover. Yet it was time for him to be with his mind alone, his lifelong friend and foe. The images of the clover immediately appeared in his mind, but he still could not make any sense of it. The book was waiting to be finished on the little coffee table, like yesterday he sat on his chair and started to read. But he heard something, a knocking on the glass pane. He lifted his head to see who was knocking but he could not see anyone. “Odd” he thought, and leaned forward to see who was there, but nobody is out there. He stood up and walked to the door and opened it, he cried out “hello is anybody there!”. It is not expected to have visitors on a hill like that, far away from any residency. Oliver thought it is the creaking of the shack that caused the windowpane to make the knocking sound. Later he heard a knocking from his misty-back mirror hanging on the wall, the sound was not as deep as the windowpane, he was sure that the sound came from the mirror. Oliver calmly put his book to the coffee table and slowly walked to the mirror, Otis was watching his master while lying on the blanket but did not make any noises. His little room was lit decently, but the mirror looked darker, like it was reflecting another room. Oliver squints his eyes and cautiously looked at the mirror, he saw a vague figure of an old man’s face, he did not know that man, but it was a familiar face. He felt the weakness in his knees, they were shaking, cold sweats trickled down on his face, he was shivering of fear and in a split-second Oliver fell from terror. He lost his consciousness and fainted. When he opened his eyes, the old ticking clock from his grandfather showed three o’clock, he felt heavy on his chest, and struggled to breath, something was cutting of his breath. Oliver rolled over and tried to get on his knees, but felt very weak like a newborn, he collapsed and fell asleep on the floor. It was morning, Oliver heard Otis barking, and hardly opened his eyes, he was still laying on the floor, his back hurt a lot. The sun was shining through the window on to his face. He stood up and tidied himself and sat on his bed. The last night, it was awful he thought. The man on the mirror, he wondered if it was still there, but no it was not, it was

just a normal mirror. Otis did not understand what his master was going through but he felt something was wrong with him, and he put his head on Oliver's lap. Oliver said, "you don't know what happened, you're so fortunate not to see what people have to go through, right?" Otis with his purity and innocence blinked to Oliver like he was there to support him.

Bells were ringing outside Oliver's shack, bells of a sheep herd. A middle-aged lady was shepherding them. Oliver looked out from the window and was shocked to see the lady and all the animals near his place. She had white hairs like snow and blue eyes like of the oceans, she was wearing an ultramarine skirt with many folds, a long-sleeved black sweater and a crème cardigan, but something was disturbing her looks, there were sticks, bird feathers and pieces of tattered cloths hanging on her. She looked young but very old at the same time, maybe it was her hair, or her clothing. The lady was approaching Oliver's shack with her herd, with a great wondering he was checking her from the window behind the curtain, she was singing a song, but 'twas not a familiar language, the verses sounded like an ancient language, that has been heard of ages. Oliver opened his door and greeted the lady and asked who she was. The lady answered "pardon me if I disturbed your peace, this herd of mine likes this side of the island, the grass is always ripe and fertile here. I am Roisin and I live near the Giants Causeway, not very far from here". Oliver was quite interested in this lady and asked, "what was the song you were singing, I've not heard that language at all?", the woman answered" well, my son, it's an ode to the goddess of fertility, Narura". Oliver was surprised and confused at the same time, he asked where she learned it from, but Roisin said" my grandmother taught it to me when I was a young little girl, since then I sing it whenever I am herding". Oliver said" that's a sweet memory of yours, and could you please tell me, I am not indeed in the aim of offending you, what are these trinkets on your clothing?". The lady stood there with a little smiling on her face and said" A lady shall have her right to keep some secrets, don't you think so, Oliver?". A cold shiver captured Oliver's body, he did not introduce himself to this mysterious lady, nor did he say his name. With a trembling voice he asked" how do you know my name?". The lady smiled, with a breath she said" the road awaits me" and leaned to Oliver

and whispered, “not shall it break or seen by eye”. She whistled to the herd and continued her path, the confused lad stood there and watched the lady go on her way, with a concern he cried “What should not break?” the lady shouted back from a distance “the dark, Oliver, the dark!”.

Nothing was making sense anymore, who is that lady, what did she mean by “not shall it break or seen by eye”, Oliver delved into deep thoughts again, but he could not find the light of answers. “I cannot break the dark nor can I not see it” he thought. What kind of riddle was that, and why did she warn him?

The sun descended into the void, and the night crept over Oliver’s shack. Oliver was tense and feared the night and waited for something to happen, yet it was calm and silent, nothing seemed to happen. Oliver said to Otis “boy, if something is wrong tell it to me alright?” and Otis indifferently yawned and lay down on his blanket. The mirror was still hanging in its place, but Oliver was uncomfortable to see it again, he covered it with a cloth and sat to his chair and drank his coffee. “That lady, she mocked me with the darkness, she knew I was alone up here, to make me uncomfortable she did this, nothing has happened, I’m just setting this up in my mind”. The book he was reading was on his coffee table, Oliver reached to it and continued from where he left a night before. Everything was usual, creaking sounds of his shack, Otis’s snoring, the crackle of the burning wood, the beautiful night sky. He licked his finger and changed his page, but he heard it again, that awful sound from the mirror. Olive said “No Oliver, it’s just a trick of your mind, you know sometimes they betray us” but the mirror was knocked again. “Oliver no! it’s not real, look! The dog does not hear it”. The knocking this time was so intense that the cloth on it shook, and Otis woke up. A chill ran down Oliver’s back, he trembled in his seat. He did not want to open the cloth and shouted “No! Go away!”. Yet the knocking did not stop, it was getting louder and louder, the knocking pounded in his mind like drums, a torturing noise, he felt his head will blow. Oliver squeezed his head with his hands and shouted again “No! Go away! Please! Go!” while tears burst from his eyes. A Voice talked to him in his mind “Hi Laan Wah Koraav Zu’u”. Upon hearing the voice, Oliver stopped

crying and stood up, he lost his control over his body, but his mind was still with himself, his feet started to walk towards the mirror, Oliver felt like he was wearing a suit which he could not control, he thought that he lost his mind and freaked out and just watched his out of controlled body. It started blowing in the shack, yet the window and the door was closed, Otis did not stop barking and bit Oliver's trousers leg to stop him. Lights extinguished and the shack sank to darkness, the body continued to walk, it was only a few steps away, but it felt like years for Oliver. He reached out to uncover the mirror, and questioned "what power am I dealing with that I cannot control of? Shall this power of the mirror stay unknown to me? Might this be the darkness which the lady warned me about?". With a sudden the lady rushed in and pulled Oliver back, and Oliver's body fell to the ground. Roisin murmured some unknown words to Oliver, he fell unconscious, and the howling wind calmed down.

"I told you to not look at it" a female voice uttered, "get up, come on, get up". Oliver hardly opened his eyes and saw Roisin's face. "you've been sleeping for two days, wish I could do that too, waking up early in the morning is not something funny you know.", "I was not trying to see it, I couldn't control myself, it felt like a sleep paralysis, I was conscious, but I could not move myself, I couldn't scream.". "Calm down young man, I saw what happened, you have to rest now, you woke up from a strong spell.". "A what! Spell?". "I did not put you asleep with some cheap chloroform!" the woman protested. She had some water in her hand and forced it to Oliver's hands "this will do". Oliver was thinking to himself, "did she really broke into my place and put me asleep? Well, everything looks in its place, and I feel kind of alright.". "Don't be a fool, I know what you are thinking, If I have had stolen something I would not be here." Said Roisin. "And you read minds too!?" asked Oliver, the lady answered "Of course I don't! Everybody could tell from looking at your eyes that you check your stuff". With a distressed mood Oliver said:" I want to sleep like a normal person, it is the fourth day I fall...", the lady interrupted saying "the fifth" and Oliver continued "Yes, the fifth day I fall unconscious, I don't have a clue what is going on, first day a clover, second day the mirror, now you ". "What does that mean, am I being a problem to you? "asked Roisin with a reproachful voice.

Oliver with his face down answered: “No! I do not mean that I am sorry, I am just... overwhelmed with what is happening in this shack, I do not even know if all these are happening or it is a trick played by my mind, everything feels so real and phony therewithal, a world of dreams. I did not expect this little room of mine to draw me to deep darkness. I am lost in it, and the fear of helplessness blows with bellows my misery. My only companion is Otis here and my dreams, I am very thankful to them. But they fail to rescue me from this mess.”. Roisin interrupted the long silence “C’est la vie, Oliver, life is a long path made of slippery rocks, you will fall but it’s your choice what makes you, not your path.”

Roisin is not a regular lady, no, she is from a covert sect which they call themselves the White Orchid. These are the people who deal with dark powers that wants to find the bearer of the Macula. The macula is an elder blood capable of controlling the black magic. For centuries, the white orchid protected the bearer from the dark powers. In every country, a member of the White Orchid is on duty to find the bearer, and to protect them, yet to find them is not an easy task. The Macula transfers from the offspring of the bearer themselves, and not each offspring can have it, it’s the ones who can handle the power of it. The child overcomes fever, and pukes in black, yet the medical doctors cannot unravel what the child’s illness is. The bearer and their families do not know what the problem is, and the signs fade away. The Bearer leads a normal life, without any disturbance of the macula, until it triggers when the words of the trial is uttered.

“My dear son, many were killed, hanged from trees, drowned in canals for carrying your illness. Babies still suckling on their mothers were butchered, the ones who managed to run away could not see the morning sun, because the hunters knew where to look, people feared what possessed your blood. It brought destruction upon folks, the black death, floods, earthquakes and fires. When its handed to a hand unpleasant, deaths were inevitable.” Explained Rosin to the puzzled Oliver who listened in awe. Oliver could not comprehend what the lady said, his confusion could be read from his eyes “I do not understand you Roisin, what is my illness? Why did the die?” asked Oliver. “You have The Macula my son, its an illness of the elder blood. Black art is a vagabond school of

magic, the ones who cast the spells are not totally in control of it. Somewhat around the 3rd century, a group of masters of the black art did a trial which they called the trial of dismay, its aim was to give strength to their blood to have total control of their magic. But they did not know it could be passed through blood. Later they called it the macula, and the ones who possessed it were exceedingly precious to the warlords, it brought mass destruction to the folks and warzones. This power was so destructive that many authorities ordered to kill the bearers of the macula so that it will not bring more death upon people. To stop evil from reaching this power, offspring's of the bearers are killed with dire practice's. But few escaped and lose their trace, for three hundred years nobody heard from them. And everyone forgot this destructive power.”. Oliver was stunned and sat on his bed for a few minutes in silence, “this must be another dream, no, I don't have this kind of illness, I never felt like I am ill besides the usual things” he thought to himself. “But I don't feel sick, I never felt like it, and I'm wondering how you know all about this, and how did you found me, here?” asked Oliver to the still mysterious lady. With a little smile Roisin answered Oliver “You are right, this illness of yours will never reveal itself to his bearer. You would never know that you had an such an illness even before your death. The Macula will set off only when the words of the trial is uttered, the immense power will make them lose control of their body, their eyes will turn into obsidian black, around their eyes the veins will fracture and appear in black. In the old times some of the hunters waited beside the midwife for the birth of the babies, they read the words of the trial of dismay and waited for the infant's reaction, if they did, they killed them, and if they did not, they let the child live. Which Is how I found you the last night, you were not in control of your body and your eyes were black too. On the other hand, I am a member of the White Orchid sect. For the last two hundred years we are on our mission to find the unknown bearers and their posterity. We are doing the same thing as the Hunters”. Upon hearing this Oliver got pale and tauten, but Roisin comforted him by saying “Please do not fear, we do not kill, we too pledged to eradicate the macula, yet our method is to purge the blood not the bearer”. “I do understand now, I am glad you are here dear lady, yet I do not understand how the macula has set off, I don't believe I have read anything new besides this book from my Fathers library” and

points to the book he brought with him. Roisin stood up and took the book from the coffee table and scrambled it. “this is not a regular book Oliver; I don’t know why your father did not gave us back” said Roisin. “My father knew you?” asked Oliver. “Indeed, and he knew about your illness too. Many years back when you were a newborn, he saw you lie in fever and puke in black. It passed in a few days, but your father did not forget about it and departed to find what was going on with you. He consulted numerous pediatricians, other doctors of practice yet he was left empty handed. One day he visited a psychic, which was also a member of our sect. She told him about an old illness that disappeared hundreds of years ago, without raising his curiosity. Your father kept looking for this legend and found us. He was a permanent visitor of us for he wanted to know the macula best. This mystery caught his curiosity, it conquered his heart, because he knew the vast power that you are carrying. But he did not know who the bearer was before you, he took the books of old studies from our library and read the trial, but nothing has happened to him. He was aware you will mutate when he reads it out loud, so he kept it secret. Later he found out it was your mothers’ father who was the bearer, but your grandfather was not aware of it, until when William, your father mentioned of the situation and read the trial to him; your grandfather mutated. He feared what possessed you and his blood, and his emotions hardened like rock.” Oliver still was bewildered for all the things Roisin knew about his family and the essence of the Macula, but he knew one thing, and it was to brake off of the ill-fated curse. “How can I get rid of the illness? Is there a way to destroy it?” asked he. “Yes, indeed there is young man, glad you asked.” She answered sanguinely and put the book down.

“Now! Give me the book” yelled Douglas, “No dad, I know what you want, and no its not in it, believe me” answered William calmly. The son in law hid the book under his coat “you know that I want my child to be healthy, and I am looking for the remedy. Yes, you too have it, but your time has already passed, but my son is still an infant. His mother does not know about it, she still thinks it is something normal. I will keep my word and free him of this illness without anybody knowing it.”. The old man understandably shook his head facing down he said “I wanted to know what is in my blood, I am sorry for putting you in such hardship.

But think of the possibilities, I am fine and healthy.” William did not expect this answer of him, he stood by the fireplace and looked at his father-in-law with the eyes of fear and disgust. The Grandfather raised his voice and said: “Don’t look at me like that, I know that you wanted to have this power yourself, you told me that you read the words written in there to experiment on yourself, but because you don’t have it you don’t want your son to have it too don’t you”. William lost his temper and pushed his Father-in-law and shouted: “You don’t understand what has happened and you want to bring the curse upon us! Never ever will you mention about the illness to anybody, understood!” The old man with an accepting but angry face looked furiously in Williams eyes, and shouted “Get out, get out!”. William packed his case and left his father in law’s house.

After nearly thirty years since Oliver’s birth, the Grandfather left to travel to the east Asian countries, but his travel had a purpose, the wise living in the high mountains taught the old man about nature and magic, but he did not tell them about the illness he bears. Life gave him the senile gift, he could not hear or see well, nor could he walk straight, and the bags of pills were getting heavier.” ’tis not the death I deserve” was he thinking to himself. “this power should not die with me, no, everybody should see what power has come with my line of blood. No royal or heroic blood is equal to mine, no they can’t be”. His fear of the macula now appealed to him, the power he possessed now was eating him from inside, death was no longer an end for him. He found various books of black magic in the diverse bookshops of China; these books were no longer used by people, but they were precious for Douglas for he wanted to find the cure for mortality. However, things did not work out well, he was not an experienced sorcerer like the ones were hundreds of years ago. He did not know how to use the Macula, and the dark spells he casted were not in control of him. His assistant was exposed to his spells, and his body did not act normally anymore, the sickness he caught spread from person to person and to crowds which now roams every inch of earth. People choked and some died standing still, the sickness destroyed their inners and the ones who survived were left with permanent damage. It spread through the air and whoever was not covering their mouths caught the illness. The hospitals stopped serving people and all were full of the sickened.

He created the third biggest pandemic. The forces rooted the start of the pandemic to Douglas's place, but they could not find him, he vanished to thin air and still today nobody knows where he is, or even if he is alive.

“You have a long journey my dear, because the answer is not here, nor in this book, but where the evil is.” Said Roisin to Oliver. “What do you mean? Is this another riddle of yours” said Oliver sarcastically. But his question was followed with an uneasiness, his body heat was rising, the night covered his eyes, and a shivering captured his body. He hardly could talk and tried to reach Roisin, he forced these words to her: “Roisin, please... something... is happening to me, Help!” but Roisin kept her silence and watched Oliver suffering, with a quiet voice she said, “your journey is long my dear, do not worry for your suffering, I set you free of your illness Oliver, no heir is left of your bloodline to the macula. Thank you for allowing me. May god give us the serenity Oliver”

Oliver's Grandfather is a man who fell from the sky for his desire to immortal life. The hunters were still at their duty for searching the bearers of the ancient illness, and Douglas knew about them very well. Although he learned about The Macula at his late ages, he wanted to taste the power of it, and preserve it. In his journey for the immortal life he failed, each experiment he did alerted the hunters. They had special devices that indicated the presence of the macula, and the frequent use of the trial words made it easy for the hunters to find him. But one day Douglas felt something odd with his blood, it was thicker and darker than ever. He understood that his heir, Oliver was reading the Macula. But he knew that at this time around he was at his shack, he looked at the other pair of his misty back mirror sitting in his dark cellar, and there he was, his grandson sitting and reading the book of the trial, he knocked on the mirror to draw Oliver's attention which did, upon seeing the old man in the mirror Oliver was scared and dropped unconscious. The next day, he wanted to warn his grandson to never again should he read the trial and draw the hunters to him, but it was already late, because that night Oliver triggered the Macula, the Grandfather casted a spell that would draw Oliver to uncover the mirror and make him see but Roisin caught Oliver and prevented him.

The White Orchid was a pure-minded organization that was protecting the bearers and helped them with potions and spells to get rid of the Macula, but for the last few hundreds of years since the Hunters disappeared their function shifted to be the hunters, they had all the sources remaining from the hunters, to find the bearers. They killed more Bearers than the hunters did centuries ago. The elders of the White Orchid promised a better world for who exterminated a bearer of the Macula, and whoever killed the bearer caused a good deed for the world, which should please god and give admission to heaven which was no different from the hunter's tenets. Their mission converted into a religious duty and salvation of their souls. The spell Roisin casted on Oliver was to make him sleep, but a sleep he will not wake up ever after.t

STRUGGLE FOR HOPE

by Kadir DEMİRPENÇE

It was close to dawn, the rangers had been tracking poachers for four hours since midnight. One of them, Jason, said to another ranger “Hey, Brian, look I can see the tracks, we must be close.” This was their biggest mission yet because the word got out that the leader of the poachers they were hunting down were actually a crime lord whose entire criminal empire was based on illegal hunting and selling trophies that they got during their hunts. If the rangers could take them out, the wild life would be relieved greatly. The animals in the African Savanna, mainly rhinos, elephants and lions were being hunted down for years and years because of their valuable assets like their horns, tusks and pelts. Although there were laws that prohibited poaching in the area, they were not good at stopping people from illegally doing it. For this very reason, the government decided to form an army division whose only job is to hunt down the hunters of these precious and beautiful animals. The division was entirely made of special forces rangers and they were armed with rifles and many other gadgets that help them find and eliminate anyone who dare to disobey the rules in this regard. Jason was the commander in charge of the rangers and they saved many animals from the cruelty of illegal poachers. This was it, Jason thought, after this mission they all would take some deep breath and relax for a while as the death of the cri-

me lord would deter poachers for at least a few months from hunting. The tracks got more apparent as they moved through the thick yellow bushes of the savanna. Brian could see the movement on his thermal goggles just a few meters ahead. He was informing Jason when he just stopped talking entirely. His face was in shock and he could not move one single step further. Brian was literally frozen on the spot and none of the rangers could make him come to his senses. He then, with rage, started to move hastily towards the crime lord and his men. Jason was signaling him to stop all the time during this incident yet Brian refused to obey his commander. This was the first time rangers have seen Brian this furious and refusing direct orders. They had no chance but to follow him and a gun fight broke up between the crime lord and the rangers. Rangers had the superior firepower and the clash did not last for too long thanks to it. What they discovered afterwards hit them harder than the mafia mob could ever imagine to do. Jason immediately went next to Brian, "What the hell were you thinking about! Why did you not listen to anything I said! You could have easily gotten one of us, god forbid more, dead with your reckless actions!" Just as Jason was about to continue yelling at Brian, he rushed to the place where they gunned down the criminals. Jason also ran after Brian and when they arrived, the scene they discovered would hunt them for the rest of their lives. The horrible people who were lying on the ground now thanks to the rangers had killed a gazelle just before the fight. They shot her in her head, two bullets, the first one killed her instantly and the second one was shot probably just out of pleasure of the sickly criminals. This was not the whole picture, however. The gazelle was pregnant and it appeared that it was close to giving birth. This was the reason Brian got all furious and acted irresponsibly. They had to do something about this or the baby would also die. Jason had medical training in his younger years and decided to cut the belly of the mother and take the baby prematurely. "I am sorry Jason, I could not keep my temper after noticing the baby and hearing the way they were laughing about it." Said Brian. "I understand Brian, none of us would do anything different in your shoes." answered Jason, but he had to keep the squad organized and in line so he also added, "Next time though, do not engage without telling us what is going on, or you will make me do things that I will regret later." "Understood, captain" said Brian and walked away after salu-

ting Jason. They took the baby gazelle with them to the headquarters after the area was cleared. It was a girl and they gave her the name “Hope” as for her survival, they had nothing but hope. She was not able to open her eyes, not even keep her head straight. Jason gave the responsibility of taking care of her to Brian as he risked his life and the life of his brothers in arms’ lives trying to save her. Brian fed her with milk using hand feeding syringes for days and would occasionally sleep next to her. Other rangers, including Jason, would joke about Brian being a great father figure and how he is the perfect family guy. After many weeks the baby gazelle started to walk around and run around the camp. It was during this time when the little gazelle was playing around the camp happily that they decided to release the little beauty into the wilds to a herd of gazelles where she would grow up and become a member of her herd. Before they set off, Brian came to Jason saying that he designed a new badge for the rangers. “What do you mean a new badge? What is wrong with the current one?” asked Jason jokingly. “Actually this badge is okay too, but let me show you what I have done.” answered Brian as he pulled up the badge from one of his pockets. It was a beautifully crafted badge. Half of it was red, representing the blood that is spilled on the struggle to save the animals from the poachers, and the other was yellow representing the thick bushes of the African Savanna. In the middle there was a gazelle symbol with the words under it saying “We Fight for Hope”. Jason requested the change of the badges after seeing it and by this means, the little Hope became the symbol of the resistance of rangers and preservation of the wild life in the savanna. A week after this, rangers with their new badges on their shoulders carried Hope to her new family. They last saw her jumping with excitement among the other gazelles. Their struggle against the poachers continued, with Hope on their sides, giving them hope for a better future for the beautiful animals of the immense savanna.

MAPPLE DESTINY

by İrem GORGA

The Festival Day

I woke up early because of my excitement. It was the big day, Maple Day. It was like human's Thanksgiving, but our festival was more fun. We could not sit and eat a turkey because our day was a festival! By the way, I am Ruby, a maple fairy!

Eliza was screaming: "Hey! You have 15 minutes to be ready, or I and Robb are leaving." "Robb?"

Eliza stole my brother, too!" I screamed: "I am ready, I am coming! Have you taken everything?"

I, Eliza, Antonio, Sasha, Lillie, and Messenger Victor were friends who grew up together and Robb was my brother. We used to do everything together when we were children, and we were still together. Antonio was my best friend. It was the first time I spoke to him about Lillie and he encouraged me. He fell in love with Sasha, but he still could not talk to her because of his embarrassment. Also, Eliza, Lillie, and Sasha were very close friends. Antonio and I used to watch and make fun of them playing with their dolls. I missed our childhood. Eliza always wanted to do it right time She was like our queen. We would do whatever she wan-

ted therefore she was so attentive and hectic all the time. We were very fond of theatre and reading plays, so we decided to perform a play for the festival this year. Why not? We were so excited, as I said before, Eliza was experiencing everyone's excitement.

Eliza: "Yes! Just we need you. Please hurry, we would be late! Antonio and Sasha are gone."

When I came, we flied to rehearse. After a wonderful banquet in this evening, we had a theatre and was called "Mamplet" by Shakespeare. After repeating our rehearsal three times, we were ready. We left to see each other that night. I laid on the grass to rest, looking up at the sky. It was so clear, and the sun was smiling. I dreamed of some certain shapes by looking at a few clouds. Then Lillie was here. She laid next to me with a kiss on my cheek.

Lillie: "Hey, it is a nice place to listen for us, but today is a festival day! Did you rehearse?"

"Yeah, we will get ready right after the banquet. I am so excited; I hope everything will be fine." I said.

Lillie: "I am sure it would be wonderful. Come on, cheer up. Get up, I will show you something."

"Where are we going? We have to inflate the balloons. Also, I need to check the syrups. Uncle Duck said he would have punished me for a day if I had not. I cannot bear to spend a day with him."

Lillie: "Relax, it will not take long."

We were flying down a flowery road. Because of the Festival, Maplecity was very colourful, but the image of the flowers impressed me more. I was in love with the nature.

Lillie: "Could you please follow me?"

I saw some maple trees and took their coordinates. Lillie just said: “You have to look!”

I could not believe my eyes. It was a maple tree, but different from the others. It was a Pink Maple Tree that was famous all over the world because of pink maple syrup, and very rare species. Humanity had destroyed our own regions and stole our syrups when they found. I could not believe my eyes; it was the same pink maple I had imagined when Grandpa Eddy had told us when I was a child.

Lillie: “It is beautiful, I should share it with the syrup chef after the festival, but I am keeping it now. I put signs on the road that is written, “Attention, people can come out!” That’s why no one comes this way. Only we know, Ruby.”

I could not speak because my mouth was open, and when Lillie touched me, I could speak:

“This is the reason that why I fell in love with you! You are both smart and beautiful hahah!”

Lillie was embarrassed, but we had to go back.

Lillie: “Let’s come back after the festival and spend our night here. Pink Maple shined at night; I would find something to hide it.”

We were back in Maplecity. I helped with the preparations, inflated the balloons. I gave gifts to the kids. Our banquet table was ready. After a nice dinner, we had a theatre. After us, there was a concert by Lillie’s band. I was going to grab my maplewine and watched my Lillie. I was looking forward to this moment because Lillie was the love of my life. We had met three years ago when we were collecting syrup. Everyone had their own tree, and Lillie and I had the same tree. Lillie was mad at me, but when the facts were found out, she apologized to me. So, I took this opportunity and asked her to eat mappizza with me. Ever since then,

whenever I saw Lillie, I could hear my heartbeats and I feel in love again. Our game got a lot of applause. I had not thought it would have been so liked, I thought we should do it more, and I made an announcement. I said that I would open a theatre company and waited for all the volunteers there. The young people were very happy and said they would attend. Lillie was out. The first song was the song of our love.

By the way, I could not stop thinking the Pink Maple Tree. Lillie had warned me not to tell anybody because of the joy of festival, everyone would share it with each other, and then everyone would hear it. She was right, and I did not tell anyone.

The Pink Maple Tree

After everyone was back their home, Lillie and I secretly went to the Pink Maple. Lillie was so right, the glows from the tree could be seen from a far away. Fortunately, everyone was startled by the sign.

Humans. Humans were dealing with a virus right now, so let's just say we had not been in danger as maple fairies for two years. Four years ago, humans captured all the syrups in East Maplecity. Humans had no idea about the fact that we were fairies, they had thought we were bees. It was better they had known that because they were a danger for us. As I said, yes, the virus. This virus was called "Covid-19" and people were quarantined at certain times and could not get out of their houses for 2 or 3 weeks. The vaccine had been found, but not everyone had been vaccinated. The whole world stopped, so nature was on our side. All the places where man did not touch were green, and nature refreshed itself. Witnessing about what people were doing, it was what I wanted to see most. Mother nature was so happy thanks to the virus.

There was an old man who protected us from humans and human's secret raids, George. We had met him in a forest two miles away from Maplecity. I hid when I saw him. George had told me not to be afraid of him and that he wanted to be friends, but I had not believed him at first. Because humanity was our worst enemy. I was so happy since the virus came. If I had a child in the future, I would name it "Covid." No, it was a joke! George had said that he was a biologist. George always tra-

velled alone to solve the secret of maple syrup. He examined all the trees, took samples from the syrups without damaging them. There was a lot I did not know about syrups either.

Important Day

George was here. I talked about the rare Pink Maple Tree that Lillie showed me before. He was very surprised and happy, but he had bad news. Experts claimed the antidote for the Covid virus, and it was pink maple syrup. By finding our trees in Denimable, our colony in Norway, they confirmed this claim. George told me we had to hide that tree very well, and I had to go and warn the other fairies right away. If people found it, our tree, our future, would be destroyed.

I have arranged a meeting for the evening. I told everybody that The Pink Tree would provide the antidote for the Covid virus and we should protect it from people. We did not have much time because people were walking all over the forests. Our column, Maplecity, was in the western part of Canada, but people chopped up Pink Maple trees in southern Canada for the antidote.

The Pink Maple Tree was guarded every day, and if there was any trouble, Messenger fairy would fly to Maplecity and let us know. Our weapons were ready. We were fairies, and our weapons may be small, but the poison in them would blind and neutralize a person in 5 seconds. Since people thought we were bees, we made a bee needle gun in every fairy's butt. All precautions were taken. George said he could not come for a few months because if he came, other people would come after him. George's plan was to trick people and stall them.

Lillie's Missing

On the way home, Eliza called behind me: "Have you seen Lillie?"

"Yes, they went to the pink tree this morning. When she comes back in Maplecity, they are going to work on a new song with her band. Oh, Eliza! The song is so beautiful, listen—"

"Ruby! Lillie is not back in Maplecity! Something must be wrong. Nobody saw Messenger fairy, too."

I was scared. I had a lot to be afraid of. First, Lillie, my friends, and the Pink Tree, our future. I gathered a team and prepared to go to the mission. I told Eliza to stay here and make sure no one knew what was going on. Eliza reluctantly agreed because she wanted to help. I told my brother Robb to stay with Eliza and we were on our way for control. Antonio was worried about Sasha because Lillie and Sasha left together. It was raining when we got to the Pink Tree. There was no sound or movement around us.

It was as if the Pink Maple Tree had hidden all our friends and was playing game with us. I told everyone to be careful. After a few steps, we fell into a hole. I was with Lillie. We were trapped. I opened Lillie's mouth:

"Sasha, The Spy!" she said.

When Lillie and Sasha with the other friends arrived this morning, Sasha said she was going to walk around to check it out. Then, Lillie, Messenger and our friends did their jobs, such as collecting syrup, repainting the sign. Suddenly, people appeared around them, and they could not escape because the trap was made for fairies. Sasha shared all our secrets with people. Before Lessie finished, people came and separated Lessie and me.

A Trouble Day with Humans

I think it was morning, no, no, it was not the sun. This light was a light that represented pessimism. It was taking my eyes off me. They put us to sleep. The last thing I remembered was our attempt to escape. When I tried to open my eyes, we were at the lab. I saw Leslie, she was still asleep. I was never going to leave him alone again and my friends were unhappy and were scared. I made a move to keep them calm. Leslie woke up, and when she realized where she was, she stood up. She saw me, she looked like she was going to cry, but she did not cry.

Two men came in white clothes and a mask. They took me out of my box. I had my wings tied so I could not fly. I checked my needle, still I had it. It was a hope for me. I was trying to stay calm and figure out what was going on. I saw Sasha. I was so angry, and how could a real idiot by putting her own future in danger? They asked me a few questions. Every time I lied, they said they were going to hurt our friend. For example, they would rip off their wings one by one! I told them everything. These people were a group of three. They were sneaking into the forests illegally, trying to find Pink Maples. The reason was to find Covid's antidote, to share it with other states and to earn money. That is the point, man, and money! It was nature's fearful dream, both!

They also told Sasha that she could live among people, as a person. And Sasha really believed in them. Sasha was so stupid that she compared herself to a person.

Uncle George

Uncle George was delighted to hear what I had to say about Pink Maple that I was talking about and went home and took notes. He was very happy and would sacrifice himself to protect the tree. The fire in his fireplace was about to die out, and he immediately sparked the fire and sat down against the fire with a glass of wine. There was a classical piano sound in the background. Suddenly he heard a noise and went to the window.

“Uncle George! Uncle George!

Uncle George opened the window and let his little guest into the house.

“Who are you, little man?”

When they caught Lillie and my friends, Messenger Victor managed to escape and immediately found Uncle George. But how?

“I was a Messenger Victor fairy from Maplecity. Lillie sent me. We are in a big trouble.”

So, Leslie was able to tell about Uncle George and she sacrificed herself for Messenger Victor so that he could escape.

“What is going on, Messenger? You can put it on my arm and get some rest, I would get you maplewater.

Uncle George did everything he could to get Messenger Victor to rest and he began to tell:

“There is a shift change today, Leslie and Sasha’s group come. Sasha wants to fly because she is going to look around. Reports are given to Leslie at that time. Just as the report is over, Leslie recognizes something: Sasha and the humans. Leslie tells about Uncle George in five seconds. She says that ‘Only Uncle George could save us...’

Uncle George was very upset. After a little thought, he started making plans. He learned all the details from Messenger like the number of people, their appearance and whether there was a lab. Messenger told him all about. They were on their way, on the path to our victory...

The Second Day in Lab

The second day. There was that damn light again. I never thought I would miss the light of sun and the sky so much. Now I would like so much to lie on the grass and watch the sky.

I heard a sound. I immediately got up and checked on Leslie. She was stroking her wings. I heard another noise and Antonio managed to get out of his box. I told him to open the others, but he was running towards me. There were five boxes between us, and he had to be quick. He had to open our cage to escape before people came, but he could not manage because people came. They saw Antonio who was in trouble. Sasha caught him. He was so upset because I knew he had fallen in love with Sasha. His broken heart wound in him reflected on his face, so I understood him as a lover.

Sasha took Antonio to the people. People were very angry. First, they removed Antonio's needle. Antonio pretended it hurt because if people found out it was not real, they would take ours out, too. They put Antonio on a stretcher. I saw a knife in a man's hand. I was jumping in my box and trying to break it to save Antonio. They cut off one of Antonio's wings in front of us. It was so bad... Antonio was screaming in pain, and then they put Antonio in his box to sleep. I looked at Lillie. She was still trying to stay strong. She tried to not look at me because she would cry.

I could not understand how we came here. Until the day before, we were so happy, we had everything planned.

Sasha. She is the worst enemy. One of our own species was more dangerous than humans. We could not understand how she tricked and deceived us all. Once I get out this place, Sasha would be mine, and I would punish her.

My eyes glowed. They started using our pink maple syrup. Dirty human hands have touched our tree, our future. I was very upset. I guess we were screwed. Our hope was gone... Lillie, the love of my life. I know we would meet in mapleheaven.

The light went out, and I closed my eyes.

Returned Hope

I heard a voice again. However, there was no light that thought it was the sun. A little light was trying to break down my door. When I looked closely, I knew it was the Messenger. Hope had returned. Messenger told me everything about Lillie's talking to Uncle George that they came to save us. Messenger told us to stay here calmly. He said he would report to Uncle George. Messenger left after asking a few questions. My hope had returned. I did not sleep until the light came on.

Our Liberty Day

I sat quietly and waited for everyone to wake up. I told him in my body language that Messenger was coming, and he was going to save us. Messenger and Uncle George were the reason Leslie stood strong. She could not tell me because they separated us when she was telling me. I wish Antonio knew, not me.

Uncle George was at the door with a few people. I could see him through the window. He was going to catch that three humans with his friend next to him, Uncle George hid us and put us in his bag. That's was the plan.

One of Uncle George's friends knocked the door and said he was bringing food. The bad guys must have been so hungry that they ran to the door. As soon as they opened the door, Uncle George pepper-sprayed them. He told the men to tie them up and stay with them until the cops arrived. Uncle George found us and put in his bag before anyone saw us. I told Messenger to find Sasha and put her in a bag. Messenger could find her and put in a bag. We were safe now. The only problem was that how we were going to keep these bad guys away from the Pink Maple Tree?

The cops arrived, and they took all three men to the police station. Uncle George said the three men stole maple syrup from the forest illegally. Before saving us, he went to the forest to find a normal Maple Tree and he painted pink and showed the cops the wrong tree's coordination. The three men did not already know where the real pink Maple was and there was no danger.

The three men were to be punished both for illegally stealing syrup from

the forests and for trying to sell fake pink maple syrup by deceiving people.

Uncle George took us home. The whole city knew about Uncle George, and he became our hero. We wanted it to be our day of liberation, and Uncle George would be invited to this celebration.

It was very valuable to us that Uncle George tried to protect our ancestry, not his own. He really loved us, and we loved him....

We declared Antonio a veteran because he lost his wing. Even if it was hard for him, he was still happy. Uncle George said he would make artificial wings and make him fly again.

The Most Wonderful Day

After a month, I had a surprise for Lillie. I was going to marry her. I took her to the Pink Maple Tree. Antonio, Eliza, and our other friends helped to be ready like lights, candles, and romantic atmosphere for us. Lillie was stunned and thought it was birthday, even she was apologizing. I told her to be quiet. As we ate our romantic dinner, the Pink Maple Tree's lights were hitting Lillie in the face. She was so beautiful like an angel.

After we finished our dinner, Lillie's band played romantic music and I invited Lillie to dance with me. After our dance, I proposed:

“Lillie Rosemary, would you marry me?”

“Yes!”

I could not hear her answer because of my excitement:

“What did you say, no?”

Lillie laughed:

“I said ‘YES’, you idiot! YESS!”

We hugged each other, and all our friends came to us shouting:

“Surprise!”

After they celebrated us, they were back to Maplecity.

Lillie and I had long conversations about marriage, we were very excited. Together with our love, we would protect our city and our future together. We were so strong together.

Sasha

What happened to Sasha? We told Sasha what she had done to everyone in the city and no one wanted to be friend with her. She was asked to be punished or even exiled. I opposed it because if Sasha was not with us, she would be a danger. Thanks to Uncle George, we inserted a chip into Sasha’s wings, and we could see where she was going, and if she got out of Maplecity, that chip would give us a warning to catch Sasha. Antonio did not feel sorry for Sasha because he said he could not fell in love a woman like that.”

My mouth was dry, I drank a glass of maplewater. My children were looking after me. Every time I told this story, they listened with the same excitement and happiness because of their mother’s longing. When Edward was 7 and Arya was 2, Lillie had gone to walk around forests to collect syrups. But one of our trees was chemically treated by humans, and Lillie had not known it. Then she came home, and said she felt sluggish. After half an hour, she started shaking because of a fever. I took her to hospital, and doctors told us she could have contact chemicals. I went to Uncle George for help. He took some medicine, ointment, and came to Maplecity. He tried to help Lillie as much as he could, but it was too late. Lillie told us not to do anything and to take her to our children and our home. We have come home. I was very upset. There was nothing I can do, I could not help my love, Lillie.

Eight days later, Lillie took her last breath and her last words were that we would have met in Mapleheaven.

My children remembered their mother because of our story. Dear, my love, Lillie, we know you were with us.

THE END

GRANDMA'S ETERNITY MIRROR

by Edanur HAÇKALI

I woke up to hear knocking on glass. At first, I thought it was the window until I heard it come from the mirror again. I opened my eyes immediately and checked out the watch hanging on the wall. It was almost midnight because the room seems as if I lost my sight. Nothing was visible, though I opened my eyes. I got up and tried to search out a candle however, the corridor was so narrow that I could not easily walk without fear because I felt like someone chasing me from behind.

“It was the fault of the house, everything was happening because of that crumbling house,” I thought to myself.

Then, I was able to find a candle on the table, took it, but my hands were choked with dust at that moment. It had been a protracted time since I had not cleaned the house that even if I did, it was impossible to avoid the spills from the ceiling.

It was my grandmother's big manor, that is why it was not easy to take care of the whole manor. I moved into this heirloom manor after my grandmother died three years ago. She perpetually wanted a grandson, but she had no one except me and my cousin Alice, since my cousin did

not live in England, I had to require care of this huge manor.

Anyway, I took the candle and lit it. Then, suddenly my reflections began to appear everywhere. Wherever I turned my head, I was there. “I hated that room which is full of mirrors,” I said to myself.

My grandmother was very fond of her beauty so there were huge mirrors almost everywhere in her old furnished chamber. Every time I came to my grandmother when I was little, I found her looking at herself in the mirror. The moment I lit the candle and saw my reflection reminded me of a conversation with my grandmother. When I came to my grandmother one day, as usual, she was looking at herself in the mirror with great enthusiasm. Afterwards, I asked her why she was constantly looking in the mirror, and without even turning her head, she continued to look in the mirror, saying that mirrors were the supply of her eternity. When this conversation passed between us, I was either six or seven years old, but I was so impressed by her answer that is why this conversation came to my mind the moment I saw my reflection in the mirrors. My grandmother’s response frightened me so much that I had not really liked mirrors, I was even afraid to look in mirrors ever since.

Therefore, I immediately got out of there and took my way to the upstairs where there was no mirror. I had fallen asleep in the room downstairs because today I got home exhausted for this reason could not find the strength to go upstairs. However, I came to understand that I should have found the strength because I hated those bright mirrors, I hated!

I should not have stayed there; I should not have let those mirrors to see me. There was something in those mirrors, I was sure. They were not inanimate objects as they should be. There was somebody behind them, these mirrors always make me feel like I am under the surveillance by an evil spirit. Life in this manor was terribly scary on behalf of me because of those damned mirrors.

Then, my fear abated, therefore I went into my room and continued to sleep where I left off because of the sound from the mirror. All of a sudden, I detected the same voice again, this time the voice was coming too deep that I could not easily take cognizance. I pinched myself to understand whether I was still in dreaming, my mind was confused unable to separate the dream from reality. I tried to get up, but I could neither move nor scream as if I were paralyzed. Dusky walls of the house were coming on to me, then I tried to soothe myself, but in vain because something got my eyes. With the reflection of the moonlight, I saw a glow.

My bed was standing recessed at one end of the wall and I saw that there was a mirror next to my reading chair in the other corner of my room, I was horrified seeing the mirror.

“How could this be?” I said to myself.

I was losing my mind, there could be no other explanation for this. Then, I quit questioning its presence and trembling started to examine it. The frame of the mirror was full of furnished with dingy diamonds. Despite their dingy appearance, there is something enchanting in them because it was not possible to take my eyes from them. While I was looking in the mirror it seemed as if it was sucking my soul, like I was slowly losing my consciousness, if this can be referred as consciousness, because I was not sure that my consciousness was in place at first.

Was I still asleep or was I awake? I failed even to understand that. The room suddenly turned into a dark dungeon because I was not able to leave my bed like I was enchained in my bed by some ghoul or something.

At that point, I decided not to look at the mirror anymore, but the problem was not that I was looking in the mirror because it was as if the mirror was staring at me even though I was not looking at it. I was feeling it. Still, I turned my face to the other side and closed my eyes affrightedly. Removing the mirror out of my view, I opened my eyes and checked out the window with the light of the moon. At that moment I saw the reflecti-

on of the mirror in the window. The mirror seemed to have taken over the room, it was there wherever I looked. That is why this feeling of being possessed by the mirror provoked a great fear in my mind and I could no longer cope with it.

I tried to calm myself down, but suddenly a reflection appeared in the window that I could not quite distinguish what was moving towards me. Trying to cover my face with my arm, I started observing the reflection of the mirror with one eye open. For an instant, I saw a hand with long fingers and having quite dirty nails reaching out from the mirror. The movement of the hand seems as if it was pointing something to me. Turning my head to the point where the hand was pointing, I saw my portrait with my grandmother.

Then, my name started echoing within the room, someone was whispering my name it was so deep that I even held my breath to understand, someone was uttering my name continuously, I was sure the sound was saying “Liza, my honey look at me how stunning I was.”

The sound was constantly echoing, I attempted to cover my ears with my hands to avoid hearing it however, suddenly it caught my attention that the sound was pretty familiar.

“The tone of the voice is quite similar to that of my grandmother,” I thought to myself, terrified. I must have started going crazy. It was not my first time to say to myself, I knew, but this time I was feeling really like an insane person.

Then, I abruptly opened my eyes to the knocking of the door and found myself downstairs where I first fell asleep. I looked out of the window; the sun was about to show itself from the hills. I was relieved when I realized that they were all dreams. Subsequently, I ran to the door but when I opened it there was nobody. Thinking that I might have heard it wrong, I went back to where I slept and continued sleeping.

Suddenly I heard someone knocked on the door and woke again.

When I woke up, I jumped in horror, finding myself lying upstairs in a cramped position with my hands covered my ears. I got up in fear and saw the mirror in the corner.

“Great God!” I cried, “how did I come back here again?”

My heart was beating so quick that I could hardly breathe. Flickeringly, I went downstairs to open the door. Taking a deep breath, I opened the door with great anxiety, but my blood seemed frozen from what I was seeing at that moment. The person at the door was my grandma who died three years ago. She looked so stunning and young that I could not take my eyes off her. Just then, her saying “mirrors are my source of eternity” echoed in my head. While I was staring at her in shock she started laughing eerily as if there was nothing strange. Then, she started to approach me, and I could tell from her lip movements that she was about to say something, so I just stood there and started listening to her, but what she said drove me even crazier.

“Liza, my honey look at me how stunning I am” said she.

THE POWER PLANTS

by Tuyet Bang NGO

Walking along the beach in my hometown every morning with my family was the most pleasure that I had never forgotten despite the course of time. However, there was a time I could not keep enjoying that great moment in my precious hometown which was once washed out by the anger of mother nature; And human practices were the primary causes of the nature's anger.

Metaphorically, I was “the daughter of the sea” in the Southern Vina since my parents were Chinese immigrants who sought for a potential future during the French Rule of Vina in the early twenty centuries. That was the time of great difficulties for Chinese immigrant population because of the adaptation to new environment, dealing with isolation and struggle for survival. However, my parents were seen to be successful immigrants with their labor effects. My family's financial conditions were better than other working-class Chinese settlers at that time because of their frequent incomes from their labors. My father was a very hard-working fisherman who usually sold his fishing achievement to local restaurants and people along the beach while my mother was an active soap and dish detergent seller in a local market.

After several years of settlement in a small Chinese community, my parents gradually had seven children who also directly confronted with different types of difficulties, such as racial inequality. I remembered that we were named with an irritated term “Two ships” which derives from the historical context of Chinese immigration. That brought so many hostile acts of discrimination. Nevertheless, besides the negativity of cultural integration, Chinese immigrants had gradually gained more ground in Vina due to some open exchange market programs between Vinian and Chinese. These programs helped different ethnic people share their languages, beliefs and cultures to one another. However, each different ethnic group was still remaining their distinct cultural values. For instance, the native Vinian celebrated important Chinese festivals like Luna New Year and Autumn festival because of the closure of Chinese business in these holidays. In the same vein, Chinese immigrant population were willing to enjoy the native’s national holidays. Gradually, the Chinese community grew larger while the issues of racial inequality diminished, so hyphenated identities Chinese Vinian children also had equal chances to compete with the native.

Yet, to some extent, racial discrimination was still continuing in different forms although Chinese communities had been contributing to the country’s economic growth. A lot of countries came to our seaside city to do business with Chinese immigrants, thus, soon after the leader of my country’s president from the Nationalist party had converted our seaside city to a complete developed tourist destination. The unregular, old and ugly constructions were replaced by high and attractive buildings, luxurious resorts as well as regular and coordinated houses. Moreover, new road constructions were updated, which made the roads wider and more appealing with colorful plants and green avenue of trees. Especially, there were wide constructed sidewalks along the beach to keep pedestrians safe while walking in my neighborhood which was the center of the city. That’s why it was crowded all the time, yet night view was the most beautiful. At night, the streets were sparkling with colorful lights and were surrounded by energizing music from restaurants and coffee houses. It created a joyful and enthusiastic air. Honestly, I fell in love with this new face of my neighborhood at once but later I felt the naive beauty of it

had been lost. I could no longer hear the sound of waves and the songs of little insects in the silence of night. As well, the neighborhood was the most dangerous place compared with other neighborhoods in my city. Either travelers or local people were attacked by criminals if they were alone outside at night. That's why my family did not often walk along the beach at night together. Instead, the dawn was my family's walking time along the beach for morning exercise, watching sunrise and buying fresh seafood from fishermen coming from their early fishing. This period was the moment we felt peaceful and somehow belonging to the city since the city welcomed a variety of people and embraced the fast urban developments.

Besides the contribution of Chinese to the city's urbanization, the power plants were seen the most significant improvement of the president after his inauguration in the first five years because this project helped the citizens unburden the price of electricity and attracted more and more countries to invest in our city. On the surface, the project brought big benefits for the city, yet it was the major cause of the wreck-havoc of the sea city that led to the national evacuation of sea-siders in my city at the end.

However, before the final devastation of the city, the plants had cruelly tortured the sea which had been endeavoring to express its sufferings from the plants but the sea-siders were blind with the project's benefits so they did nothing to protect the sea. The first injury of the sea was a large number of carcasses of fish which were floating on the shore in an early morning. When we witness that disillusioned scene, we were in tears to imagine how much painful the fish suffered before death. That event had obsessed me for a week that I was constantly seeing nightmares in which I saw a troop of fish crying. The event was investigated of course, yet there were insufficient explanations given. This event was also the reason of the decline of fish stock along with human's negligence of the sustainable environment due to the high demand of restaurants since the city was turned to a prominent tourist city.

Moreover, the plants had a big impact on the issue of climate change. The unpredictable weather was also a controversial topic related to the plants back then. Although the weather in seaside was always much hotter than other areas, it gradually became worse than usual. Sometimes, the heat rose up to fifty degrees that we were not often used to. Forest fires, lack of oxygen and water and unharvested crops were the following consequences of climate change. The extreme heat also caused uneasy feelings in rainy season since the weather was not fresh enough anymore. Due to all unprovable consequences caused by the power plants, people just threw the power plants and the role of the president into questions without concrete actions. They accepted the government's accusations of human irresponsibility toward the sea and the climate without questioning. In fact, a minor group of people acknowledged that the power plants should be blamed for, yet their weak voices could not help to improve the situation.

Apprehending these environmental issues in my city, I had chosen journalism second degree since I wished to bring some hidden and ugly facts to light. While hesitating in choosing a topic for my graduation thesis, a striking topic expectedly came to my mind when I was in a local customs port to complete a tax return procedure for our family company. When I glanced my eyes to a hasty logistician's customs declaration, I could not keep my mouth closed because I had never imagined the amount of Shark fins that were exported to other countries. It was about fifty tons for each customs declaration. After that, I tried to have some conversation with him to gain more information.

“Your business seems good, isn't it?” asked I.

“Well, today is not counted because I just have the customs declarations for one type of fish.” answered he, with a bit boastful tone.

“So, you seem to export the whole soul of our sea, don't you?” mocked I.

“Does the sea have a soul? you are so much romantic, I think.” retorted he.

After that I did not want to converse with him anymore because of that senseless answer.

“Well, that makes me human.” Answered I, with a small smile and I left the place.

My thoughts on that topic were in a whirl all day that I could not stop thinking about innocent sharks. Undeniably, my family sometimes consumed “the shark fin soup” which was our Chinese’s traditional cuisine. This soup was generally served at banquets, wedding or special occasions because it was a luxurious meal for the wealth. It was thought to be a rich nutritious dish because of its variety of medicinal benefits. In fact, shark fin was tasteless without the soup’s ingredients. After having deep research on the process of collecting shark fins from the sea and a dramatic decline of shark population, my morale was deep down. Some sense of hypocrite ceaselessly attacked me because I was unconsciously contributing to this inhumane, unsustainable and wasteful act but I thought I was grateful to the sea and all submarine living creatures, especially sharks. I did not know shark fin was a vital part of it. Without the fin, shark was not able to swim well in the sea. It would fall into the bottom of the sea when it got exhausted from swimming. Seriously, this knowledge was not taught to coastal children. I just knew that shark meat was toxic and harmful for consumers so alive sharks were thrown back to the sea after removing their fins. Finally, I decided to choose this environmental issue for my graduation thesis with a high expectation that my thesis would be chosen and published at school to increase the awareness of others about the detrimental effects of shark fin trade.

Then, the topic was shared with the local newspaper editor office which received me as an active reporter for this internship program. I did not know I was chosen to do a secret mission when I was accepted to do my internship there. Soon after, I became a secret reporter for a political purpose because this office was a representative of the Unionist party, the opposing party of the Nationalist party. At first, I could not make myself to accept that risky suggestion which would ruin my family’s reputation and life. As my parents always taught us not to interfere into political

issues because we were just Chinese Settlers who were too vulnerable in the adopted country. That's why we had been living here in silence from generation to generation. For us, it was a matter of survival. Yet, my awakening conscience was torturing me day and night since I felt extremely sorry for the innocent shark population. As well, I felt deeply attached to the sea whom I personified as my second father. Every time that I approached the sea, I felt inexplicable inner peace as if my real father was consulting and embracing me. Although I was aware that it was just my imagination, I sometimes did feel it so real. That's why I always respected it with all my heart because it was the natural resource for my family as well as the sea-siders. In that moment, I also smelt the salty ocean in my breaths that recalled my all memories. I knew my happiness was closely related to the sea, long beach and marine living creatures. I knew I owned the generous sea apologies but it was not enough to keep those apologies to my coward self. After all, I took that suggestion without sharing with my family who would say "no" to anything related to political issues. Soon, I was arranged to fill the position of a general accountant in the power factory which had been supplying electricity to all the households of Vina for years. That arrangement made me frightened when my recruitment was done easily with some magical tricks between the local editorial office and the department of human resource in the power factory.

After two weeks working in the new place, again the sea tried to show its sufferings from human ill treatment when its color turned dark pink. It was almost red as if it was the blood of my imagining sea father. I felt my father like being robbed and beaten by us. We robbed my father's living submarine children in cruel ways. Especially, the shark fin trade showed that we got my father's generosity for granted. However, investigations were made carelessly that made people come to actions. Immediately, some strikes were done in front of the factory every day to force the factory to close or give proper explanations and solutions for the environmental damage and labor exploitation, which was the first task of my espionage in the factory given by my leader in the newspaper editorial office a week ago. Some groups of demonstrators stopped the factory's worker transport buses entering the factory. Those strikes made me more

vehement and intensive. My fears were piled up day by day that made my life so miserable.

Finally, the strikes were dissolved by military forces as soon as the situation was reported to the president. Everything was put into order again as nothing happened so I went back to the factory and restlessly tried to find some defects. Nevertheless, it seemed the fact slowly came to light when I encountered a foreign worker of the factory who I offered him a drive to back home since it was a bit hard to take a bus in a late rainy night. The tall young man came from a country in the Middle East region that his excellent Vinian caught my attention. After our conversation. I found that the labor exploitation, one of the topics of the previous strikes, was happening in the factory. It was acknowledged that labor exploitation in workplace was not unusual in capitalist countries. The class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie was always resulted from inequalities that the disenchantment of proletariat always existed. As my perception, the young man should have been suffocated for some three years working in the factory. With my courage, he told me some examples related to the factory's law violations although he was a little bit hesitant to express his sufferings from inequalities at the beginning. Somehow I felt a kinship with him after the conversation because he was a foreigner who sought for a new opportunity in a new place but again fell into the iron cage of bureaucracy in which human rights of foreigners were not deeply acknowledged.

After some deep investigations, I secretly collected some essential information related to the labor issues of the factory. When I was going to leave the factory to report to my manager in the editorial office, suddenly I could not keep balance and fall down to the floor after an awful bomb sound from the west side of the factory. When I lifted my head up, I saw some colleagues also lying on the floor and some were laying their heads down their tables. After the bomb sound, the phones in my office were ringing ceaselessly. Under the pressure of all types of, I could not perceive well. Yet, I did hear that four power plants of the factory were exploded due to some technical problems from the radiation reactors of the power plants. Everyone was ordered to stay in the room and close the

doors and windows carefully because of the radiation. When I pictured a mass of miserable deaths in that explosion, the Middle East young man and came into my mind. My fear grew intensively because of the arrival of earthquake. The earth started to dance or move crazily. I was following the crazy dance with no choice. I felt myself unable to stand up again but I had to move myself as soon as possible because the ceiling upon the place that I was resting was going to fall. I ran to my close colleague's table to hide myself. I was so horrified to see the ground constantly opening and closing and the ground was filled with wrecks. Finally, the earthquake ceased after three minutes. Later I learned that the earthquake had nine magnitude power.

Then suddenly my cellphone was ringing and I was so happy to receive the phone call from the Middle East man. Yes, he was alive after the explosion and earthquake but I sensed that he was injured.

“Leave the place to the car parking lot.” screamed he, with a low voice.

I was so confused with his order because everyone was ordered to stay in the same place because of the radiation. But then,

“Tsunami will come soon, cover yourself and meet me in the parking lot.” Ordered he.

“Tsunami, Tsunami, run, run, run.” screamed I, unconsciously.

Immediately, a flood of people screamed out loud and broke out of the room and. I was shocked within a few seconds to see that scene. My close colleague grasped me out of the room. At that time, my mind was so busy with some stupid thoughts. I could not perceive reality because what was happening looked similar to movies. I just followed my friend's direction to the parking lot. On the way, I saw some people slowly falling down and vomiting due to the radioactive effects. My friend and I covered ourselves before leaving the room, so we were immune from the radioactive effects. From a short distance away, I heard the voice of the Middle East man who was calling and signalling me.

After getting in the car, I realized that his left hand was injured. However, he just said precisely “Call your family and ask them get ready to move out of the city as soon as possible. We will all die if we stay here before tsunami’s arrival.” I followed his direction and called my siblings and parents to get ready. In fact, my siblings came back home to get my parents after the national warnings had been activated. Coastal people were ordered to evacuate to higher places. Finally, we united with my family and started to leave the city. When we just left the home for twenty minutes, we saw the seawater was floating behind us as if we were being chased by my sea father who was like a sea monster growing taller and taller to swallow our cars. It meant that tsunami had hit our coast so the city was covered by sea in five minutes and the roads turned to rivers with trashes and trees. Later, we learned that Tsunami wave had reached five hundred miles per hour like the speed of an airplane.

Apprehensively we were not able to move out of the city because of the traffic jam on the highway and the level of the seawater. We must turn our direction to a higher hill on the Eastside. In front of me, cars were floating like ships. Some big trees had not been broken yet, but they were bent down according to the flow’s course. Everywhere was water, water and only water so it was so hard to reach the hill. Our cars also were floating when the level of water reached the second floor of a house. Looking at my parents in the car, I saw them sharing the same feeling with me. That was the fear of nature and we just wanted to run away from nature. When we passed a house with an open terrace, we broke the windows of the car to escape and swam to the terrace. Everyone could reach the terrace but my mother was struggling to swim because her left leg was hit hard when a sudden flow hit our car. Thanks to the existence of the Middle East man, he was our savior to help us reach the terrace. I was ashamed for my country’s ill treatment to foreigners. I became more emotional when I looked at that young man.

Sitting on the terrace, the young man was revealing many confidential things about the factory. He told us that he saw the factory releasing wastewater to the sea twice when the water tanks of wastewater had some technical problems but they could not fix before the pools became

full. It was clear that this humanitarian disaster was mainly result of the factory's violations. The factory was not only treating human cruelly but also abusing nature day by day. Then, suddenly my father turned to me and asked "Can you be a brave reporter to write all inhuman acts of the factory after graduation?" My eyes opened widely because I could not believe those words coming from my father's mouth. My father had become braver than before to give a voice to unjust acts that encourage me to disclose my actual spy in the factory.

After all, I did believe that this catastrophe had given us a precious and unforgettable lesson that how human should see nature as a living entity and learn how to respect and protect nature. If not again, we would die as soon as nature dies because all creatures in this universe were interdependent to one another. Besides, nature had agentic capacities to express itself if nature got hurt. As we had seen, the sea had been warning us about its unhealthy conditions for so many times. However, the question was that whether we truly listened to those responses, contemplated the messages of the sea and did something to protect nature.

After some hours waiting in vain on the terrace, helicopters came to rescue one by one and sent us to local concentration areas. We had been there for three weeks before the government sent us to new settlements to start a new life again. When we acknowledged that we had lost our houses, properties and memories, we could not hold our tears anymore. Unexpectedly, we became homeless after this catastrophe. We felt so much impotent at the moment. The president was ashamed himself because of his wrong doings so he resigned his position. Therefore, reporting the evidence of the factory's misdeeds was unnecessary.

After ten years, the government had been encouraging us to return the city to restart a new life, but we were feared that the soil of the city was still containing radiation and the sense of losing everything was so terrible to us. However, after deliberately reconsidering, we decided to come back to our wretched hometown later without caring our anthropocentric views anymore. Instead, we brought our strong and brave hearts to protect nature as our own lives.

HE WATCHES

by Berkay OKŞAR

I wouldn't call any of my days passing by a miraculous one, other than my father's cooking my favorite food. I was at the park one night with two of my friends, speaking to each other. There was only the voice of the wind calmly howling and also my own voice while I was telling my friends about what happened at the school that day. The winter was almost here and we've had to keep our hands in our pockets to prevent them from the cold. The moon was not bright enough behind those dark and swifty fog-like clouds. As I was telling my story in a fast pace, in an excitement, I turned my eyes involuntarily and rapidly towards the path that we have come from to the park. I was in utter silence and my friends were curious. They were curious about what happened with John and me next that day but I couldn't speak any further, at least for a ten whole seconds. I felt that someone was watching me behind the trees but when I looked, there was nothing. My body became weak for that time while I was having hard time to concentrate back into reality. I couldn't get enough sleep yesterday, that was probably it. In anxiety I left my friends there to go home quickly. My home was near the woods, I liked the smell of the trees. It takes some time to reach home, it's not a short distance to the city where I left my friends. After I reached home, papa was waiting for me, he always gets nervous about me when I come home

late after returning from the town, of course he has the right, phones don't get a signal when you're this far in the country. He told me to go to bed because it was already getting late. Even the stairs to your room becomes hard to climb when you walk such a distance. However, I was rather fatigued this time, which seemed unusual. Horus was on my bed, sleeping. It strangely makes me feel that my cat could sense my depressive or painful moments. She got up to my approach to the bed, to give me that stare again, little fellow. To think about these sweet moments give me a bit of hope, at least. She sat on my lap to share his rest with me. I missed the warmth of Horus and my room, snug in my bed.

I woke up to see if it was time for school, my chest was hurting. I got up to see that Horus was already awake near the door staring directly into me. Tree branches outside of my window were black, reaching into the sky, darkening each other. They were frenzied, hitting my window back and forth and making crackling noises with the gale outside. While I was looking at the storm outside, I suddenly felt a freezing air behind me, as if someone was breathing and whispering in my ears, giving me a spine chill by covering my neck, making me unable to move with a weariness and fear. The cold air filled my whole body with chill and shudder. Horus did not move her eyes from mine. I always thought my cat had a staring problem. She always seemed fixated on my face. Until that day, when I realized that she was always looking just behind me. Then, I could make sense out of it, I could feel a presence behind me. The door knocked, papa was calling my name to ask if I was ready for school. I turned my head behind me quickly, to see an empty wall. Papa entered the room and I watched Horus running downstairs. I shook my head and saw the sun rays revealing themselves slowly outside my window. I got ill from the cold weather yesterday, and used my imagination too much for a morning, I thought to myself. I had a nice breakfast, I was already feeling much better. It was time for school.

We were walking to the park with my friends again after school, had our usual little chat and laugh before going home. I was a bit hesitant to go home, but my friends would have to go their way eventually. I was going through the woods. The town's noise was cut completely, the only sound I could hear was the wind's strange shrill humming. It was all dark and cold, trees seemed a bit calm as opposed to this morning. I could not keep my eyes from the crowd of trees all around me, the shapes were all similar, shady and obscure. I never looked at them with such concern before. A bizarre sense pushed me to turn my head behind. My heart started to beat like it has never done before. My eyes saw a few bright flashes when I looked, as if I should not keep looking but the curiosity pushed me to look. Everytime my eyes flashed while I was trying to see, he was getting closer to me in a slow pace, standing in the same position making not a single movement. His arms and legs were motionless but he kept getting closer and closer. A seven feet shadow, a large and obscure figure of a humanoid, he was watching me when I looked directly into his non-existent eyes. On my way through the forest, I could feel my whole body was shaking but I was never sure if it was from the cold, or from the darkness that haunted me amongst the trees. My steps were fast, but I could not run, feeling exhausted. That spine chill again, makes me want to look behind but those unknown flashes were preventing me from looking at him. What is happening to my eyes, I thought to myself. That shrill noise became harsher like it is cutting my ears. I already lost my way home, my brain felt foggy. I found an old abandoned shack and stairs inside that leads down into a dark stone corridor. I have had no other chance but going down in there, I would not let him take me. I can't stand up anymore. The dark stone corridor leads to nowhere, I crawled up in that dark corner. It feels extremely cold, and I still hear that shrill voice with footsteps upstairs. I could write this letter in my final hours, in this remote shelter, my body starts to feel numb slowly, I can't feel my legs now, and my arms feel weak. Don't look into his eyes.

THE LAST DATE

by Hazal SONAY

I stood there for a long time without any move when I saw the frame. I had lost the concept of time at that moment. This black and white photo somehow managed to fascinate me, possibly because her eyes were looking directly at me, even though she was far away from me now. It was as if those huge almond-shaped black eyes were giving me wrathful looks. At that moment I thought that how could my wife be in my arms in this photo frame but I wouldn't even be able to touch her physically anymore? It took me a long time to be freed from the photo's effect and then I realized something that I couldn't even remember a photo of us like this. However, this photograph, which I had difficulty about remembering, had been put in an appearance on the shelf of the fireplace in my grandfather's strange and spooky living room.

It had only been a day since I arrived at this old mansion, located in the middle of a huge estate and surrounded by huge pine trees, but I was already questioning whether I made the right decision by coming here or not. I wouldn't have stepped in this frightful and eerily decorated 14th century manner situated a town named Grantshouse which is 40 miles away from Edinburgh and almost 10 miles from the downtown, if I didn't have to but I could no longer cope with the evil thoughts wispe-

red in my ear by my remorse in our house where my wife died. Actually, this house had a characteristic that made me feel different, I mean in a bad way, since I was little. So, maybe out of necessity, after she died I threw myself into this outdated house inherited from my grandfather, which I had only come to a few times when I was little, in order not to lose my mind. After grandfather McDuff's unexpected death about a year ago, this was the only thing that fell to me from his will. At that time, I hadn't questioned this heritage thing because I thought I wouldn't step into this house, which had been shuddered me since I was little boy. But now for some reason I was looking for a reason for this. But of course no reason came to my mind back then.

While I was standing there and questioning those all in the middle of this odd hall where curtains with double casement burgundy backdrops covered all the walls and deer heads hung on the walls with this old and spooky decoration, suddenly a very strong wind poured into the house and it was raining heavily since it was autumn. I just went through the main door and I found it open, I understood the reason for this freezing cold inside the house; I thought that I must have forgotten to close this door of the house, which is huge, made of wood and has steel ornaments on it which keeps pace with the strangeness of the other furniture in the house. But how could I know that it was not my fault? After closing the door I turned back and looked at the house, I was confronted with the fact that I am now alone in this large mansion which terrifies even the ones who sees it from distant. Also, its exterior was dark-coloured and its right wing was surrounded by ivy due to disrepair. When I started wandering inside of the house later, I remembered why I couldn't love this house; there was a disturbing statue in every corner and on almost every wall there were portraits of people I assumed to be our ancestors, following the ones who look at them directly through their eyes. In addition to that, when I was a little boy, I had told my grandfather that I saw one of the portraits eyes really move, and the only answer I got in return was just a smile. Now when I remembered all this, everything became clearer, as if my old memories were coming back to life and the little oddities I experienced while I was here were merging and taking on a new dimension in my brain.

When I passed to the right wing of the manner, I closed the doors of all the rooms both because I was going to live alone and it was more neglected than the left side. Having been busy with all these for a long time, I soon realized that the sun was setting, and an incomprehensible fear and restlessness filled inside of me. So, I immediately lit the candles and kerosene lamps which positioned at almost every point of the house. I had neither gone to my room upstairs nor I had eaten anything, I just sat by the fireplace and tried to warm with the heat of the fire and o glass of wine or maybe a bottle, I can't remember right now. At that moment I heard a voice of door creaking like a squealing and I immediately desired to get up and see where the sound came from, but I couldn't. With the fear I felt, I immersed in old memories in my head again. One day, we had come to visit my grandfather on a rainy and stormy day like today, and that night while I was lying in my bed, the door of my room was creaked and opened to the end by something I still don't know. I say I don't know because when I got up that night and looked out into the hallway to see what caused the door to open, what I saw was nothing but emptiness. I thought I might be experiencing the same things happened when I was 10 again, or that all this might be nothing but a game of my mind. Thus, trying not to think, I had fallen into sleep.

The next morning, something weird had happened, I woke up in my room, on the bed but I couldn't remember how I came to my room the night before. I thought my heart would explode with the horror and surprise of what I was going through. After I calmed myself down, I opened the closed curtains hoping to see some sunlight but I found nothing but huge dark clouds and pouring rain covering the sky. Watching the heavy rain, I realized a black-haired woman walking around the garden, but I could barely see her as the rain increased its speed. I ran downstairs with a little curiosity and a little fear. Although I have completely circled this house, I have neither found a woman nor a sign of life, except for the ivies that surrounded the right wing of the house like a disease that envelops the human brain and drives it insane. Although now I am aware of how many signs this house gave me to leave there and that I was ignoring them all, unfortunately I was not at that moment. Maybe I didn't want to realize just because I couldn't go back to my house

A few days

after my brain convinced me that these events were not real, but a delusion or a brief loss of consciousness, and one afternoon I went out for a walk around the garden and my eyes again fell on the ivies whose dark green foliage had surrounded almost half of the great mansion. I saw this female silhouette again in one of the windows of this section where I had closed all the doors. Affrightedly, I went to the right wing of the manner but what I found was perhaps something I should have left this house at that moment. But instead of this I just stood there for a few minutes, I think my body went cold in the face of what I saw, and it wouldn't even allow me to move. I found all the doors open, the doors that I had closed them all when I first came the mansion. There were four rooms and two bathrooms in the right wing; I, again, closed the doors of each one by looking inside of them slowly. But that day I did something that I say I'm glad I did, right now. I started to write what I have been through down with dates. In others words, I began to keep journals.

Day after day I witnessed similar weird events and even stranger things, but I consistently wrote them down in detail. It had been about a month since I came to this house, I arrived in the first week of November. Since the winter of 1874 was already making itself felt, I had a hard time heating this huge mansion and I was sleeping in the spacious hall. And in this one month period, whenever I went to the right wing, I found the doors open. In fact, at one stormy night, when I woke up at 5 am in the morning, the fire was about to die and I was really cold. I guess I had heard a sound of footstep but instead of getting up and looking at where this unsettling sound is coming from, I immediately found a piece of paper and a pen and put it on paper. Days and nights chased each other and it's almost the end of the year and I am now realizing that during the time I lived alone in this house I closed more doors than I opened and yet I didn't leave because I think what made me come here scared me more.

My days passed in that way, until this morning, on 20th of December 1874. Today again I saw that black haired woman wandering around the estate and with fear I barged myself in a room. I had assumed that this is my grandfather's workroom and this was the first time I entered this room. There is a large wooden desk standing in front of the

huge window, the right wall consisted of a floor-to-ceiling bookcase, and in the left corner a long armchair stands with purple suede cover. While glancing over through the dust-covered library, I saw my grandfather also was keeping a diary. There were diaries in this library that had kept a diary for almost 30 years and had a leather-covered outer surface for each year and it is written on them the year it belonged to. I tried to resist my desires not to read the diaries, but I could not help myself. The whole day passed by reading the diaries and the more I read, the more I understood that my grandfather and I were not that different. He too had killed his own wife and wrote in his diary in detail how he committed my grandmother's murder. I must admit that this gave me a monstrous relief at first and I felt as if my remorse had subsided and I found a valid reason for what I had done to her. However, when I read the part that explains these things that I live in this house, this relief gave way to fear and terror. Since I have been keeping a diary of things I've been through for the last month and a half, comparing them to my grandfather's experiences I found much more terrible similarities. He was seeing the silhouette of a woman just like me, but according to what he wrote in the diary, this silhouette was just like my grandmother and as I read the pages I could clearly see how he was driven crazy by what he had been through in this house. At that exact moment I pictured the woman silhouette that I have been seeing in front of my eyes and I remembered that my wife had also black hair. This fact shocked me and my whole body went cold. I could feel that all my blood draining.

Just a couple of minutes ago I am terrified by the last words I read. This was his last diary page, dated December 20, 1873, the day before his unexpected death. On the last date he wrote in his diary, it is exactly written these two sentences: "I again saw her but this time was different, I knew. And now, while writing this, there is an appalling scream echoing in the house and I know it's her voice."

Now, writing these I am hearing a scream echoing in the house, just as my wife screaming while I was taking her life.

PARALLEL HEARTS

by Nur Ferzan UZUNPINAR

The two steps were echoing among the empty city buildings. At least it used to be a city. Now there are demolished buildings covered with wild plants. There is no animal anymore because humankind destroyed every species that they can consume. She starts to look at the empty shops with the hope of finding something to eat or a better drink. There was only a couple of cough shrub in the pharmacy. Other than that, her hands were empty. She said to herself, “better than nothing.” Her destination was the tall building that use to be called Empire State, and it was not as tall as in old times. It seems dangerous to climb it, but nothing is left that is not dangerous for a human. So, she started to walk on the huge rocks and pull herself to higher parts of the building. The view was not beautiful. It was the same for every city that she went to, dusty, tumble-down, not alive. She cleaned her throat and realized she had not spoken for a long time because there was no one to talk to her. A hurtful memory occupied her mind. They were living in a camp four years ago, maybe more, maybe less than that. She stopped to count days at some point. There were fifty people who lived together in the camp, not happily, but at least they were living. She did not know the life before the camp because there were the where she was born, but she heard the stories. The stories of covetous, insatiable humankind. They destroyed the world they

live in, and when they realized what they had done, it was too late for the earth. They were too sure that the world would give them everything they need for all the time. It was a huge mistake. Everything comes to an end, and this was the end of the world. First, they destroyed the sources then started to kill each other for those sources. Wars had begun between almost every country. Every time her mother told this story, she stopped at this point and took a deep breath because, in one of those wars, her parents lost everything they had, their house, parents, relatives. They were lucky or, for some people, unlucky because they had time to escape out of town. So, they found people like them and together built a little camp to continue to live. However, people did not stop destroying it. One day people from another camp came and attacked them for food and water, but it was not only the source they took. She was alone right now. She opened the cough syrup and took a sip. The taste was awful, but she did not care at all. Lately, she has stopped caring about a lot of things.

There was a hopelessness in her that is chewing her soul. It was strange because she was born into a world that has no hope. Maybe that is why she could still try to find a way to live. Maybe a person who lives in this demolished city when it was huge and beautiful or a person who woke up every day for work and the only problem was to catch the bus could not do what she was doing. It can never be known. There was no one to ask. She felt a tightness in her chest. It started to happen frequently. This nothingness makes her question everything; even being alive has no point for her now. Why she still tried to continue to live? There is obviously no god that punished her for ending her life. She did not know this, but she knew that she is getting close to an end. She found traces of other people like footprints, a warm campfire, or leftover packages a couple of times, but she never found them. They were hiding just like her camp used to do because of the invaders. She sat on the edge of the huge rock and opened her bag. She need to try again even though she knew it would not change anything. She found a radio set couple of years ago and used it to communicate with people who might still be alive. Her hands quickly pushed the button, opened the antenna, and put walkie-talkie upon her mouth. It was like a ritual for her, and she has no idea how many times she did this. She pushed the side buttons and talked:

Hello. Is there anyone who can hear me? My name is Sophie. I am alone.

Hello?

She put her head between her legs and sigh deeply.

Hello? Is there anyone? My name is Sophie. I am alone.

She whispered 'so alone' and put the radio beside her.

Hello?

Sophie jumped from her place. First, she thought she started to hallucinate, but everything became real when she heard the sound again. Like an animal that tries to catch its prey, she took the walkie-talkie and started to talk.

Hello. My name is Sophie! I have no gun!! I swear the god I am alone. I am not dangerous. PLEASE tell me where you are. Begging you. I AM NOT DANGEROUS.

Her heart was pounding, and without realizing her, tears dropped from her face.

Please. Help me. No comeback.

I am begging you. At least let me hear your voice again. Please.

The desperation in her voice shows the loneliness in her heart. The radio spluttered again.

Hello Sophie. Can you hear me?

Yes, yes, yes, thank god, yes.

My name is Gloks. I am going to help you, but you need to calm down.

Can you do that for me?

Yes, okay. She wrapped the tears on her face and took a deep breath.

Can you tell me where you are? Are you in danger?

No, I mean yes. I am at the top of the Empire State building. I have little food and water, but I can work. I am 24 years old. Please tell me where you are. I can come and show you I am not dangerous. I can be useful for you. Are you alone? Are there any other people? Is there a camp?

She started to wait for an answer, but it took so long. Did she say something wrong? Maybe they did not want to help. Maybe they did not believe in her. Her eyes were on the radio as if Gloks can get out from it. She had no idea how long she waited, but she could not take it anymore and pushed the side button and said:

Gloks? Please talk to me.

I am here, Sophie. Do not worry, I am not going to leave you.

Those unexpected words crushed her soul into pieces. She started to cry as if her lungs were crumbling and screamed 'Thank you' to the sky.

Sophie, can you tell me how you can communicate with us? In her mind, the word 'us' echoed, which means there are other people.

I found a device couple of years ago I am using that. Silence for a bit.

What happened to you guys?

A lot of things happened if you tell me where you are, I can come and

explain to you. After a long silence.

No, Sophie, I mean what happened to the earth?

She frowned. She was completely confused. What did he mean when he asks what happened? Why didn't he still tell where they were?

What do you mean? You know we lost everything.

No, Sophie, I do not know anything, and clearly, you do not know too.

Is this kind of a joke? What do you mean you do not know? Where are you? How can this happen?

It was impossible not to know what happened. Are there places that were not affected? No, it cannot be. Or can it be?

Sophie, let me make it clear this. You do not know what you are doing right now. Am I right?

She has no idea what is going on right now. What was she doing?

Answered with hesitation

I am trying to communicate with people.

Yes, Sophie but not from your word. Right now, you are talking to another one. I thought you know this. How can you reach us without knowing? What did you do?

There is no proper answer to this. It was a joke. They were messing with her, making fun of her misery. The hope that fills her heart, despair, and her angry take place.

Are you serious? What did I do to you? I JUST WANT HELP!
Calm dow-

She yelled, 'Shut the fuck up,' threw the device, and started to walk in circles while crying hysterically, but Gloks continues to talk.

Sophie, let me help you. I am from Iream. We are living in a world just like you, but this is different. It is a parallel universe. Do you know what this is? -No answer- Sophie, just answer me. No one is kidding you. Are you still there?

This was not real, it cannot be real. She must have slept and seen one of those weird dreams. No, it does not feel like a dream. She cannot create these things in her mind. His voice was so convincing, so calm, so real. He was talking without hesitation, sincerely as if he really tries to help her. She took a couple of deep breaths, dips another slip from the syrup. The hope that wakes up her every day, this time, made her pick up the device and answer it;

Yes, I am here. No, I do not know. I- I never went to school.

The place for education, right? Okay, no problem. I will explain to you, but you have to believe me; otherwise, I cannot help you. There is no reason to fool you, and this can be your only chance to survive please use it wisely. I do not know how long we can talk about this. You can think of time as a straight line, but every decision, events create a different line. Time is like a huge tree that has tons of branches, and that branches also have branches. There are thousands of different realities Sophie, and as I understand, you live in one that comes to an end. In my word, we discover time to travel thousands of years ago and find a way to communicate with other realities that are created in that line. I am working in the Reality and Time Institute. Right now, tons of people are working to help you. However, you have to help us to and answer my questions quickly.

What is your world called? What kind of device are you using right now?
Can you find a laborat-
Her eyes opened widely.

No, no no no Gloks?! Can you hear me? No please don't go. NO!

It had been almost four hours since Gloks' voice cut it down. After half an hour, she gave up to try and sit there like a mannequin. Her mind was like the city she stared into. Messy and untidy. She was still trying to understand things that Gloks told. Now, she knew that he was not kidding, but it was the only thing that she knew. Parallel universe? Can it be true? I wish my father was here, she thought. He was a computer engineer, and before they killed him, he was trying to teach everything he knows to his daughter. However, their topics were like basic math or language, nothing like this advanced science. If there is another universe, can they save and take her to their world? Is there hope for this one? Can she save people like her? A lot of questions but no one to answer them. She decided to sleep here because she was scared that if her place is changed, Gloks cannot reach her. The sleep was far away from her because the waiting for that sizzle from the radio prevents her from falling to sleep. She pushed the button on the device and said, good night Gloks. The stars can be seen clearly. Actually, for her, there is no time that stars were not seen, but her father was amazed every time he saw the sky and said this might be the only good consequence of this disaster. She had no idea how long she waited, but finally, the voice of the savior heard

Sophie, are you there? She was already holding the walkie-talkie in her hand and answered immediately.

Yes, yes. I am here. Oh, thank god I thought you were gone.

No, do not worry, I am here. The way we are communicating is not a proper way. There might be other cuts, but you must never change your place. I reach your coordination, and I can only find you there.

How are you?

This simple question was touched her heart. She did not hear this for a long time.

I am okay little bit sleepless, very confused, but okay. How are you?

I could not sleep either. I was trying to find you. Did you understand what I explained to you, or more importantly, believe in me?

To be honest, I could not understand anything, but I believe in you.

That is okay, Sophie. I am going to help you. There is a council meeting right now, people try to find a way to reach you physically. And also, there are billions of people who heard your story and are waiting for you to come here. You are on every channel right now. The last time we reached another reality, it was 120 years ago. I thought I was going to get fired before you. So, actually, you saved me.

His laugh was the most calming thing in both words for Sophie. She put the radio in her lamp and crossed her arms around it. It was like she was trying to hug him. He was talking about saving her like a chore. The trust put a smile on her face after a long time.

I am glad that I can do something for you. After a little pause, she continues, Is it possible? Can I get there?

We already did this couple of times, but the problem is, this is the first time we reach a dystopic reality. That is why we try to find a different way. We usually teach the things we know and let them find a way to travel between realities. However, we cannot teach you, even you learned it, you do not have the source or enough time.

I can do whatever you want.

I know Sophie. Now, I have to go, but I will come again, hopefully with a solution. Put the radio next to your ear and try to sleep. I would wake you up, do not worry. Good night Sophie.

Good night, Gloks.

Do not worry. These the words that Sophie needs to hear. There were a lot of things she should think about, but the feeling of safety or hope makes everything unimportant for her. She just wanted to believe that this is the end of her troubles. With this peaceful idea, she falls asleep.

Sophie. Are you awake? She opened her eyes immediately and took the device upon her mouth that has a huge smile.

Yes, I just woke up. She said with an excited voice.

Good morning. Your voice sounds better, and I am going to make it greater. We have found a way, Sophie.

She gasped at what she heard. Her heart began to beat as if it was going to be displaced from her chest. Before she said anything, Gloks continued to talk.

You cannot come here, but we can come to you. However, you need to build a device. It is not going to be easy, but I know you can. I am going to help you.

What? How can I build something? I have no idea about the things that you told me?

Do not worry, you are not going to build a spaceship. I am going to explain to you in an easy way. You remember the straight line, while we are traveling through that line, we have to know where we should stop, and the device that you are going to build would show us the way and place.

Can you understand me?

Yes. Okay, I am going to try. Tell me what you need.

That is my girl. You should write down the things that I told you right now. She opened her notebook and got ready to write.

I am going to tell you the things you need, and there should be no problem because there will be no high technological items. First, you will need some components to make the system work. You will need a big satellite and a power unit. You can get the power unit by taking the battery of a car. When you get these components, you should find the radio line of the building. You are on the roof, and the electrical box of the cables should be there. The line would be in that box, you can look at the symbols on it and find the right cable. And finally, you have to use your walkie-talkie to create the passage. Is there anything that you cannot handle among these?

I am not sure if I can open a car and dismantle a battery.

It is not that hard, Sophie. The battery is the biggest part of the car, so you can easily find it, and you would just have to cut a couple of cables. Then, with a bit of bit strength, you will have a battery.

Okay, I can do that. What am I going to after this?

First, find these items, then I am going to teach how to become an engineer.

I always thought I would be a good teacher, but the engineer is okay too.

When you get here, you can be whatever you want, Sophie.

Do you promise? There was a short silence, but Gloks answered it with confidence

I promise. Just focus on finding those tools. I'll take care of everything else. I am going to reach you in two hours. Is it enough for you?

Yes, I will try my best.

Great. It is a date then. See you, Sophie.

See you, Gloks.

A huge smile was covering her face. Everything has become so real now. There were not just words but actions. She got up with excitement and put her bag on her shoulder. Her eyes scanned the shattered city to decide which direction to go. On her left, there were a couple of cars, but the road was totally demolished. Even though she can reach there, it might be unable to carry the battery from there. So, she turned her right and started going down from the building. Her mind was not only occupied with the idea of surviving but also she was thinking about Gloks. He was so nice towards her, but it was not surprising he was trying to help her. But what if there is more? She started talking to herself, which was not the first time. “Really, Sophie? Are you really thinking this right now? But his voice is so charming. I wonder how he looks like? Tall? Maybe blonde like her?” She started to smile without realizing it, but when she saw the first car, all of those thoughts moved away from her mind. Her job was more important than her feelings, but there was a huge shop sign above the car, and it was impossible to remove it. She headed towards the next car because she could open the hood of this one. Even though the lid was stuck, she forcefully opened it with the metal rod she found. There was that big piece in front of him. As Gloks said, it was attached to the car with a few cables and began to dismantle them. The piece was very heavy, but she managed to dislodge it. It would not make sense to carry the battery with her, so the antenna search began by putting it on the side of the road. It would not be difficult to find this part, but the real challenge was to find an unrushed antenna. She remembered that her father was placing the antenna in the camp in a high place. So she had to look at the top of the buildings. The problem was that the tops of the buildings were scattered on the road she was walking on now. She continued searching for half an hour, lifting large and small stones, but all the antennas she found were out of use. On the way back, she saw an antenna standing firmly at the top of a half-destroyed building. It would be very difficult to get to the top of the building because the stones were not stable, but she had to try. She began to climb up, paying attention to every step she took. Several times the stones under her feet slipped, but she didn’t care. She was out of breath when she came to the antenna, but it was worth it. It was not difficult to dislodge it because the concrete

underneath was already dispersed. She descended the roads he had taken with the same care and, taking the battery she had put on the roadside, started walking towards the top of her own building. When she got there, she looked at the clock on her wrist, and in fifteen minutes, Gloks would be in touch. She was exhausted but had to find the cable in the electrical box. It was true what Gloks said, and there was an antenna symbol on one of the cables. She sat next to the radio and waited to hear Gloks' voice. She looked at the items she had collected. She had no idea what to do. She was getting nervous. Gloks said to himself all that he could tell and heard the radio crackling that made her happy.

Sophie, are you there?

Yes, I am here Gloks.

Great. Are you okay? Did you find everything?

Yes, I found it, but to be honest, I have no idea what I am going to do with these.

“Do not worry I am going to explain to you.” She opened her notebook again and started to write. “So, let's start to create our passage. Firstly, you should open your walkie talkie and you should take the component out, which looks like a crystal. When you take the crystal out, you can see some settings on it. You should its settings to 2 THz. You are going to see the letters Hz just change the number, it is not necessary to know what it is. Then, you should link batteries and the crystal with a cable. After that, you should connect the crystal to radio line of the building. Finally, you should face the satellite towards the North Star. When you do these steps, we will be able to create a passage to your location.”

If I open the walkie-talkie, how can I speak with you?

That is a problem, Sophie, we cannot communicate anymore. I believe our plan would work out, but there is a chance that something goes wrong and... I cannot come there. This is something you have to decide.

She was not waiting for something like that. How can she decided? What if she ever can hear Gloks' voice again? Can something go wrong? What thing?

What do you mean? Is this thing not safe?

Sophie we are talking about reality travel. It can be dangerous.

But you were so sure about this. You said this thing has worked before.

Yes, we did this before, but not like this, Sophie.

Dangerous? Can you get hurt? The silence was like a sharp knife that cut her heart into pieces.

No. I am just saying the device may not work. But we really should not think about this just focus on yourself right now. His voice was the only thing that she knew about him, and she heard him when he promised her. This time it was not like that. She knew that he was lying. The silence was too long because she had nothing to say because of the shock.

Okay, I am going, to be honest. I may get hurt. But this something I accept it, I want to save you, and I will do it.

What can happen? Her voice was cracked because she was trying not to cry.

I really do not want to tell lies to you. Please do not think about these.

Tell me Gloks. She closes her eyes and tries to imagine him like he was in front of her.

I may be stuck between the reality lines. Do you remember I told you we should know where to stop, if the device cannot create a sign for me, I might not be able to... stop...ever.

So, you are saying... you can be dragged into emptiness for forever. Gloks did not reply to this. She felt that her all hope moved away from her heart. Putting somebody else in danger was something that she cannot accept, and it was Gloks, the person who made her smile after years, give her hope, save her from desperation. Gloks took her away from these thoughts by asking;

What time is it there? She realized for the first time that their timeline is different.

Evening, 9 o'clock.

Okay. You have one hour, Sophie, so it would be night for both of us. I am going to get ready for the travel and wait for you. If you want to be saved, start to build the device, and when the clock strikes, a 10 activate it. I will try to communicate with you, if I won't get an answer, I would understand that you build the device. She did not answer it, so Gloks continued to talk. "Look I know it is a hard decision but I already decided about my part, I want to save you, just build the device so I can reach you. Please"

Why Gloks? Why are you doing this? You do not know me. You do not have to do this. I do not want you to do this.

I do not need a reason, so neither do you. I just want to reach you, and I will. Trust me, Sophie. Please just think about yourself and decide it. She knew that this might be the last time that they are talking.

- Thank you, Gloks. I do not know what I will do, but thank you for being a company for a short time in this empty world. I will never forget you.

I would not let you forget me, Sophie, and I will be your company in my world. When we come back here, I am going to take you on a date. First, we are going to dinner at Nyxasandra's restaurant. You are going to love

the view of Kytepatrio's.

What is that?

We build them just for fun. They are like robots that have very long arms and one huge hand.

Like octopus?

I do not have any idea what octopus is, but if you are talking about Kyte's, I will freak out. Are octopus' animals? Did you ever see one of them?

Yes, they have very long tentacles and live in the sea. Why?

In my word, they were extinct years ago. I cannot believe you have see them. You are going to tell me everything about them, promise me?

She said, "Promise," while giggling in her excited voice.

Finally, I heard your laugh. She could not answer it because her heart was beating so hard and her face turned into red.

Gloks continued to talk,

I have to go and get ready for travel now. Please decide to build it and let me reach you. Promise I will be okay. I hope I can see you.

See you Gloks. Goodbye.

Tons of thoughts were passing through her head at the same time. The fate of two people was now in her hands. It could not be said that she cared much for herself, but that hope of being saved once gave peace to her heart, and now she could not get rid of it. The idea of putting Gloks in danger made her even worse dispersed than the city that she is looking at. But he had promised. He had done whatever he said until now, he would do it again. She took the radio that had recently connected her to life in

her hands and looked. She had to try. For the first time in her life, she had to believe in something completely. She managed to split the radio into two with the stone she took from the side, removed the crystal piece that Gloks had mentioned, and the place where he would set it was revealed. She adjusted it by turning that little button and separated the ends of the wires, then wrapped them around the crystal piece she had removed. She placed the other end of the cable into the battery's inlet and combined the cable inside the electric box with the crystal. She had to look at her notes all the time because she had no idea what she was doing. Finally, she completed the device by connecting the battery with the antenna's cables. The whole process took almost fifty-five minutes. Finding the north star was the best thing she could do in this job because she always finds her way by following it. It was last five minutes. It would be great to be able to talk to Gloks right now. With excitement, her hands, holding the antenna, began to tremble. She wondered how she looked but then started worrying if something terrible happened. She stared at the watch on her wrist, the last thirty seconds left. When the time was up, she started to look around. There was nothing, no movement, no sound. The weakness took up her body, but she forced herself not to move. The loudest voice she had heard in her life began to echo in this empty world. She jumped out of fear and fell to the floor. When she opened her eyes, she saw a tiny ball slowly descending from the sky. The size of the ball was the size of the thumb, but it started to grow slowly when it landed on the ground. Sophie, who was shocked, could only watch what was happening, holding her breath. When the ball stopped growing, it was at least ten times bigger than its initial size. There were strange sounds all over the place, and suddenly one side of the ball slid open. Gloks had terrible nausea, but right now, he didn't care. He slowly started to get out of the vehicle. He could not see outside from inside the vehicle because they had to reduce the size of everything to neims * with sfole* technology to travel. He had trouble keeping his balance when his foot landed, but when he turned, he saw her. She was staring at him with fearful eyes. She was just as he had imagined, blonde, short, with big eyes. He slowly moved towards Sophie and held out her hand, and lifted her off the ground. Not even remembering the last time she touched a human,

Sophie felt her hands melting in the heat of hands. Without even realizing it, she wrapped her arms around Gloks' neck.

Hello Sophie.

Neims : Milligrams

Sfole Technology: Nano technology