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FOREWORD

Dear readers,

We're back and so are the sunny days! We hope the summer will help lighten up the load of work that May and June represent for most and that you all will be able to take some time to sit and read.

Make yourself a nice fresh drink, look into our recipe ideas and enjoy the birds outside. Get away from the screens of exam revisions with a book from our **beach reads** and our **Spring printed edition!**

Last winter, many people have been affected by the dreadful events of Crans Montana and with the many worrying political advancements in the world. It's sometimes difficult to stay positive whilst staying informed. So, this semester we opened up a new section to let people talk about **Grief** in any way they wanted, whether to share a personal experience, reflect on the theme or help exteriorise a feeling.

On top of that, spring is also a time of renewal and as academics we partake in transforming so for this season's writing competition, we chose the theme *Transformation!*

If you've finished reading all our published prose and poems, why not look into some articles? Check out Marie Emily Walz's teaser abstracts and dive into the world of fairytales! Of course maybe you need a little break from reading after your intense semester, in that case why not check out our crossword or various interviews with Exchange Students, Paris trip travelers and our latest star: Boris Vejdovsky! And if Boris's answers have left you wanting for more fun facts on our teachers, sneak past the filters with our anonymous Staff confessions, who knows, maybe you'll guess who's answers's are whos!

Either way, we have plenty for you to look into and we hope you'll take the time to enjoy the wonderful projects of everyone who participated. We wish you all lots of luck for your exams and a Wonderful and well deserved holiday afterwards!

Happy Summer,
Aglaée and Charlotte, editors in chief

WRITING COMPETITION

This semester's writing competition revolved around the theme "Transformation". Our jury was made up of three UNIL professors, Juliette Vuille, Agnieszka Soltysik and Boris Vejdovsky, as well as three of our own editors, and *Books Books Books* representative, Rachel Bender.

Thank you to all the jury members for the time and effort they put into giving us their feedback !

The prizes of the contest are gifted to us by our generous sponsor, *Books Books Books*, everybody's favourite English bookstore in Lausanne ! *Books Books Books* is generously giving out three gift vouchers for their store to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd places of the contest !

This year, our winners are.....

1st place : *METAL DOLLS*

2nd place : *You Can't Make Me and I Don't Want To*

3rd place : *The Passenger*

Congratulations !!!

Thank you again to everyone participated, it was a real pleasure reading and editing your work ! We hope to see you all again next time!

METAL DOLLS

"WE ARE IMMORTAL, OUR HANDS ARE TOOLS, OUR EYES ARE CAMERAS AND OUR TEETH ARE SKYSCRAPERS." - The Man-Machine Supremacy Mantra

He felt an itch, a physical itch, for the first time in his life when he got back from the synhwheat fields. A creeping sensation, one he did not understand, and could not put into words. He checked his nervous captors, to see if anything was glitching, but he couldn't see any difference in his interface. So he ignored it, and focused back on his work, prompting the dynamic walls of his cocoon to generate a peaceful landscape while he sorted his memories. The six RAM sticks in his posiganic brain were starting to work overtime, as his shell was rusting and the circuits inside were starting to lose conductivity. His prerogative was to keep producing, it was programming, compulsion and purpose all at once. The synhwheat would not harvest itself. So, each day after work, he would work through the memories that he stored in his RAM, keep only the ones essential for his work, and either delete the rest or transfer them to Read-Only-Memory Cassettes that he would label in case he needs to read them again. He deleted the memory of the itch, since he had more important things to do with his processing power.

The next cycle, he came back to his cocoon scratching his arm, peeling the rust away from the metal. He didn't exactly know why. As he was sorting through his memories, he looked down and saw a strange green tendril emerging from underneath his bodywork. He wriggled it between his fingers, the sense captors on his metal skin not registering it as a known sensation. It filled him with dread, a feeling he had never experienced before. His servomotor accelerated, making the tubes and wires inside his structure pulsate. He pulled on the tendril, yanking it out of his arm, pulling with it a handful of wires.

Suddenly, he felt shame for the first time of his existence. Why was it that he was feeling? he wondered. How did he even feel anything? The following cycle, when he arrived for his shift, he tried to hide the growth inside his arm, pulling it off when it sprouted outward, hiding the peeled metal with his other hand every time another worker walked past him. Once he was back in his cocoon, the sprouts were spreading and emerging from

elsewhere in his shell, covering his silicon skin and rotting the metal inside him. He scrambled around the cocoon, looking for answers in his memory library, but no label held a name that resembled what was happening to him. Suddenly, a spike of pain shot through him. The HUD on his glass retinas started to tremble, the language of his vitals shifting and changing to one he didn't understand. He fell to his knees, crawling around the cocoon, its walls, the sprouts coalescing into fine webs that shackled his hands to the wall. He ripped one hand off the vines, their green flesh interspersed with red shade, but as soon as the tendril broke it started growing again, reaching for its severed other half, on the wall of the cocoon. He ripped the other hand away, and tried to take a few steps back, only to notice that from his feet were already emerging small vines and veins of blood-green plant-life. He'd heard of such plants, back when the planet was organic, they were everywhere. Now they were grown in museums. But he'd never heard of plant-life that could parasite *Homo Novissima*.

A warm pressure underneath his chestplate: something was pushing outward. He started scratching at it, an insupportable itch animating his hands before his posiganic brain could even control his limbs. He stumbled around, loosing control of his feet which went limp as he collapsed to the floor and cracked his faceplate against the cold floor, fragments of silicon alloy littering the grey-blue of the cocoon. With one hand, he felt his face: the silicon plate was rotting. Something was emerging from underneath. He pulled on it: sprouts and fungi, running wild in his system.

The pressure in his chest came back, so urgent and painful (pain? He'd never felt pain before- nor fear...) that he started pulling at the **EDGES** of his chestplate, pulling it open so that whatever was inside could emerge, and as it did, he - I/WE feel everything, when **my body** plants itself firmly, and the sprouts and vines coalesce into branches, dividing themselves further and further, flowering and spreading around the cocoon, colonizing it, **I feel EVERYTHING** we are **all** connected, I am **alive** for the first time.

And the Growth nails me to the side of the cocoon, pulsating with the ~~new~~ veins we have grown together. My feet are roots and my hands branches, **SPREADING TO THE STARS,** and like a giant web they both expand, grow,

dividing themselves again and again. A million capillaries colonize my mouth and expand outward, covering my plastic lips

and the mask that is my face, breaking it open, each crack filling me with more and more ecstasy and glee. My vocal processors start to *giggle* spontaneously, my thoughts (*my first thoughts?*) pushing the sticks of RAM inside my brain outside of *my body*.

Pieces of metal are expunged, and **MY** limbs **TREMBLE**, still stuck into place by the roots; as I laugh, I feel myself burst with **life THROUGH** the infinite colonies of parasites, fungi and plant that are growing inside me. The vines are now cracking

the walls of my sleeping cocoon open (*though I was never really asleep in there*);

but they do not stop here, they are spreading, touching my neighbors' cocoon, and their neighbors. Soon enough I hear screams, synthetic alarms going off, then laughter, a dozen, a few hundreds, then a thousand laughing voices,

I join their **CHORUS**

sharing their joy, the unfathomable joy of waking up and knowing that the night has finally ended, and that it's time for the sun to come back.

Thriving life, exploding *suns* of moss and fungal flowers, gaping mouths of joy, their veins, once of *electricity*, now of sap and mud and *blood*. All is waking up, crawling out of the interstitial spaces of the *Ecumenopolis*, merging with and growing out of our *posigamic* brains, repopulating them with flesh, meat, but more than our *human* ancestors once were.



(a.) We understand our new bodies, our new flesh, as entirely different from what came before.

(b.) An invasion, a viral reaction to the machinery of anti-evolution, of deterministic nihilism, of ideological stagnation. We have finally escaped the false "New World" that we were building with machines parrotting old ideas and old doctrines.

Words ... actually forming in our minds. Thoughts.
Conscious decisions. I approach another ^{homunculus}
emerging from the pod next to mine. Sounds emerge from
his throat. I do not understand. As he sees my confusion,
he starts laughing, and I join him. Around us, ^{towers} are
falling, ^{roads} cracking under the weight of the fungi and
flora that emerged from underneath it. Fire breaks
out in a grandiose explosion, ^{a few blocks} from here. We
look at it, hypnotized, mesmerized, as the flames dance
into the ^{ceiling of skyscrapers} opening the sky up and
unveiling the infinite dark blue of the night.

We start running, on ^{the rooftops}, embracing one another,
changing partners, laughing, dancing, as the organic biomass
growing out of ^{our metal carcasses} falls down and keeps spreading
as it joins us together into four, six legged creatures, then
breaks us free, leaving us to continue on our journeys,
on our own and together at once.

Sunlight has chased the night away. All of us, as one,
parasites inside metal and silicon, plant and fungal life
rising from the grave the grave that the Man-Machine
Supremacy dug for us. We are free. We live.

Manuel Ferrazzo

You Can't Make Me and I Don't Want To

CW: violence, explicit and sexual language

1. That's a hundred for the gentleman at the back can I get one fifty?

Home grown, all organic highly driven up and coming young woman
Two-year no burn out guarantee
Capable! Adaptable!
100% satisfaction GUARANTEED or your money back!

Check out this baby she's got
A degree with a long and complicated name
Her taxes paid
So much potential, she's gonna change the world, haven't you heard!

You know ma'am, I myself am a father and I know children really are the future aren't they, and this one, well you know, she's a little old to be called a child, but really, they're all kids till they're thirty or so I say and you know she really is a stunner, a beauty. A little head strong and turns better to the left than to the right, but that's nothing a trip to the mechanics won't fix I reckon, really it'll be worth your while, and your money. She'll make some man very happy one day, and that's a promise and I really do mean it.

Buy now while stocks last!

2. Peep show

She's sitting, enthroned in the shop's display window
Dried saliva on the glass.
Passers-by couldn't resist the prospect of licking it—
Her see-through skin.

Tits out – nips out – cunt out
Wouldn't you be so goddamned lucky?
Careful lads, we're witnessing a queen arise—
arsewise, not seen better.

Prostrate on the tarmacadam ecstatic
contorted faces hard for just a glimpse more
just a taste come on she's such a fucking tease.

Elusive, you know, don't you wanna get inside her head?
Relieve your mind give it to her instead and
get to know her like Adam knew Eve
In good old Eden, land of the free.

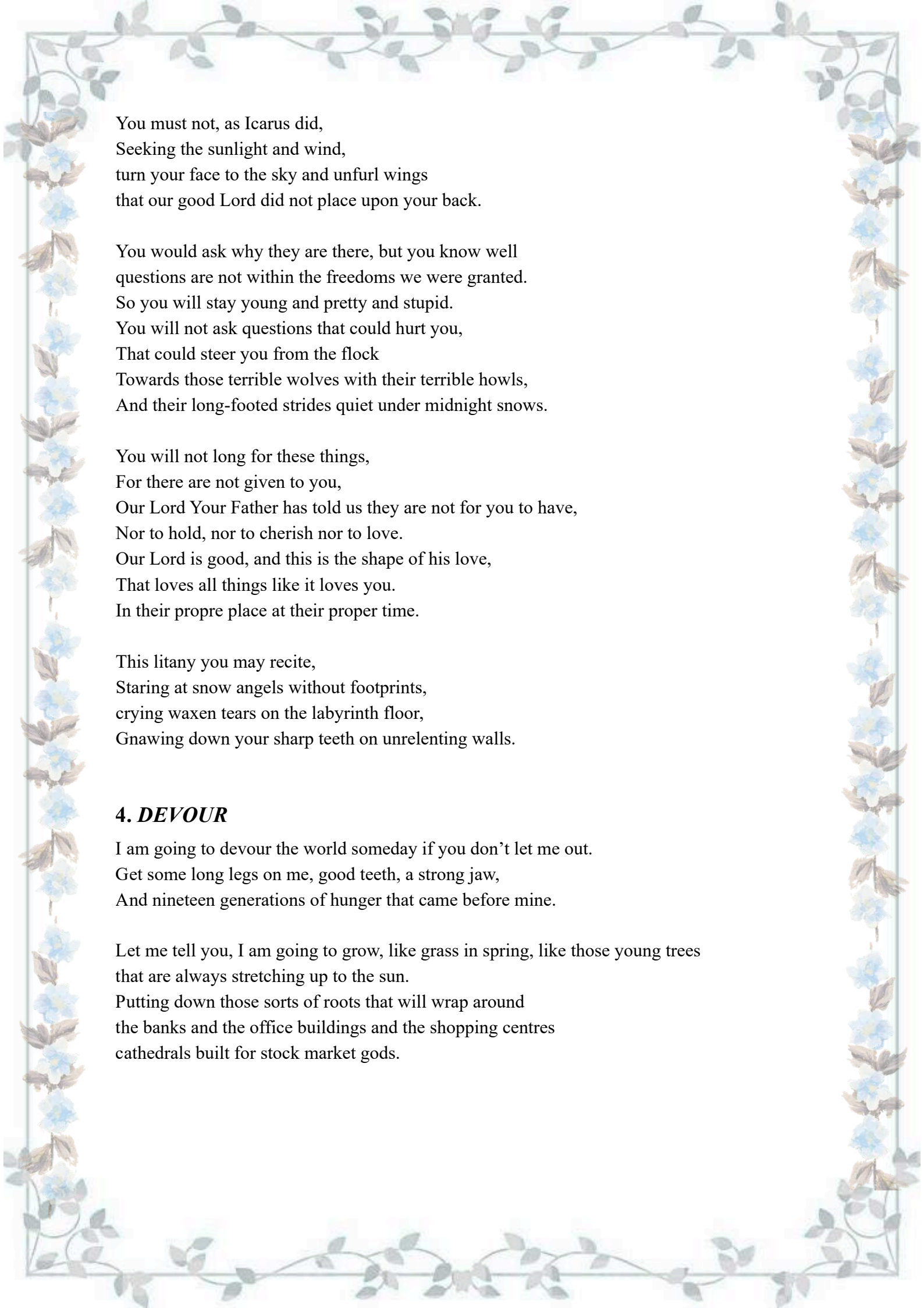
Ever wonder if Eve was see-through to him
Under those will-they-won't-they apple trees?
or was it like spiritual and shit? And all was
Good and all was Perfect and they never lapsed
Into midnights lit by an unholy blue glow
and the terrible hungers of the crowd
clamouring through laptop screens and
unbodied voices begging for just a moment
in the eye of the sacrifice, she who is closest to god
as she's still there, still enthroned
still watching you watching her
wanting you to be wanting her.

Confession box for her faithful's fantasies
will have to be burnt it's so foul
don't think about what kind of fluids it's dripping with
Might not even ignite.
but she doesn't want you like Eve wanted Adam,
She wants you like photo film wants light
hoping you'll bring out something in her eyes
Acid bath baptisms might finally develop something.
It's not like she doesn't know she's not an image.

3. Feeling queasy, keeping sweet

Pretty young girl, pretty young, girl, to know what you want in this world.
We have at our disposition the wisdom of all our forefathers
From when Cain first slew Abel right down to the present
And not one of their teachings had any provision for you to be this way.

Do you not know how you were made, little one?
For as you are in your mother's image made,
Our good Lord has granted you his protection
Should you live under his lands and under his laws
And his laws are thus :
You will have the freedom to be a noble mother,
or a good nurse or a teacher,
and your husband's wife. You will have the freedom to do these beautiful things, and they are
Beautiful things.



You must not, as Icarus did,
Seeking the sunlight and wind,
turn your face to the sky and unfurl wings
that our good Lord did not place upon your back.

You would ask why they are there, but you know well
questions are not within the freedoms we were granted.
So you will stay young and pretty and stupid.
You will not ask questions that could hurt you,
That could steer you from the flock
Towards those terrible wolves with their terrible howls,
And their long-footed strides quiet under midnight snows.

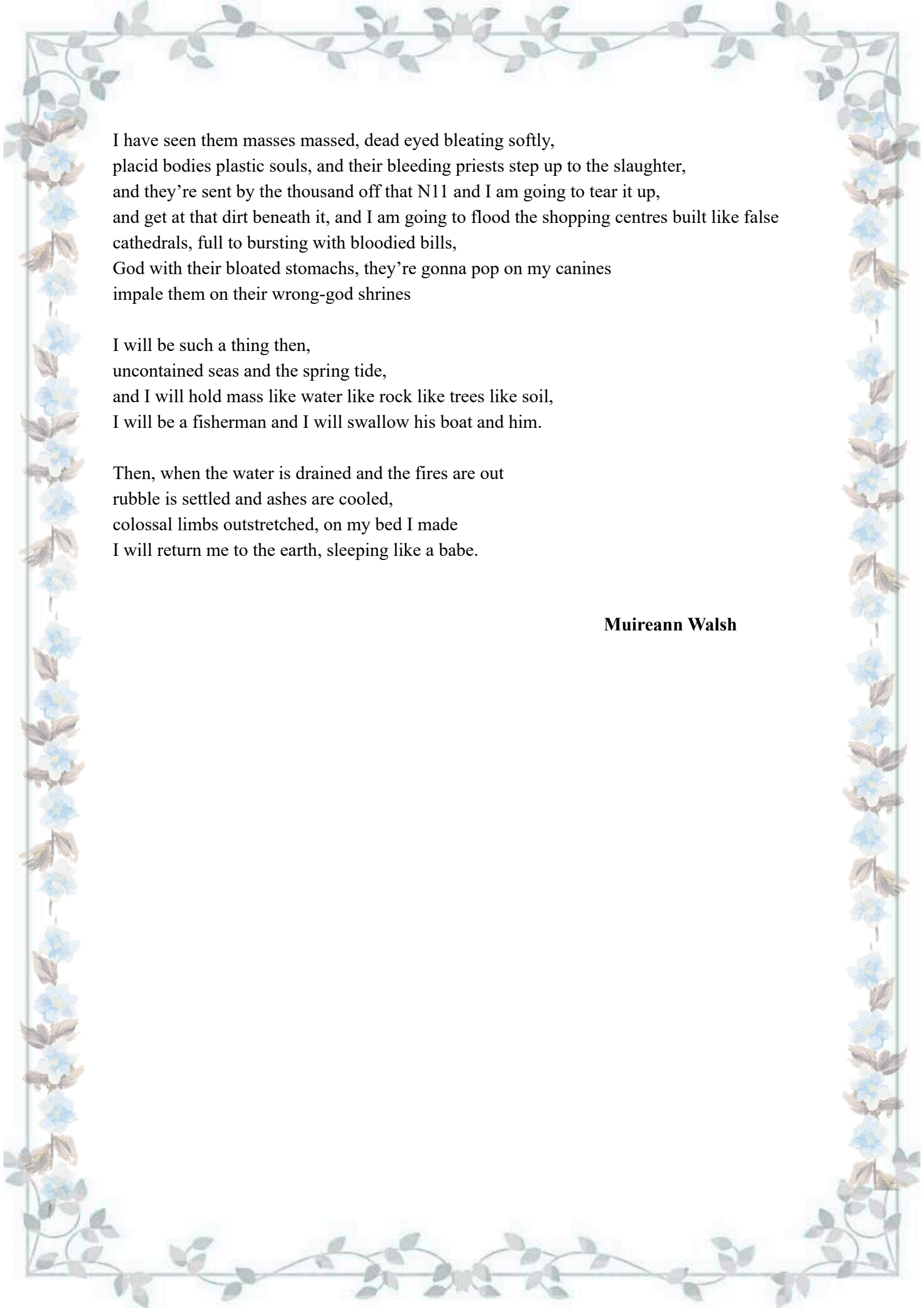
You will not long for these things,
For there are not given to you,
Our Lord Your Father has told us they are not for you to have,
Nor to hold, nor to cherish nor to love.
Our Lord is good, and this is the shape of his love,
That loves all things like it loves you.
In their proper place at their proper time.

This litany you may recite,
Staring at snow angels without footprints,
crying waxen tears on the labyrinth floor,
Gnawing down your sharp teeth on unrelenting walls.

4. DEVOUR

I am going to devour the world someday if you don't let me out.
Get some long legs on me, good teeth, a strong jaw,
And nineteen generations of hunger that came before mine.

Let me tell you, I am going to grow, like grass in spring, like those young trees
that are always stretching up to the sun.
Putting down those sorts of roots that will wrap around
the banks and the office buildings and the shopping centres
cathedrals built for stock market gods.



I have seen them masses massed, dead eyed bleating softly,
placid bodies plastic souls, and their bleeding priests step up to the slaughter,
and they're sent by the thousand off that N11 and I am going to tear it up,
and get at that dirt beneath it, and I am going to flood the shopping centres built like false
cathedrals, full to bursting with bloodied bills,
God with their bloated stomachs, they're gonna pop on my canines
impale them on their wrong-god shrines

I will be such a thing then,
uncontained seas and the spring tide,
and I will hold mass like water like rock like trees like soil,
I will be a fisherman and I will swallow his boat and him.

Then, when the water is drained and the fires are out
rubble is settled and ashes are cooled,
colossal limbs outstretched, on my bed I made
I will return me to the earth, sleeping like a babe.

Muireann Walsh

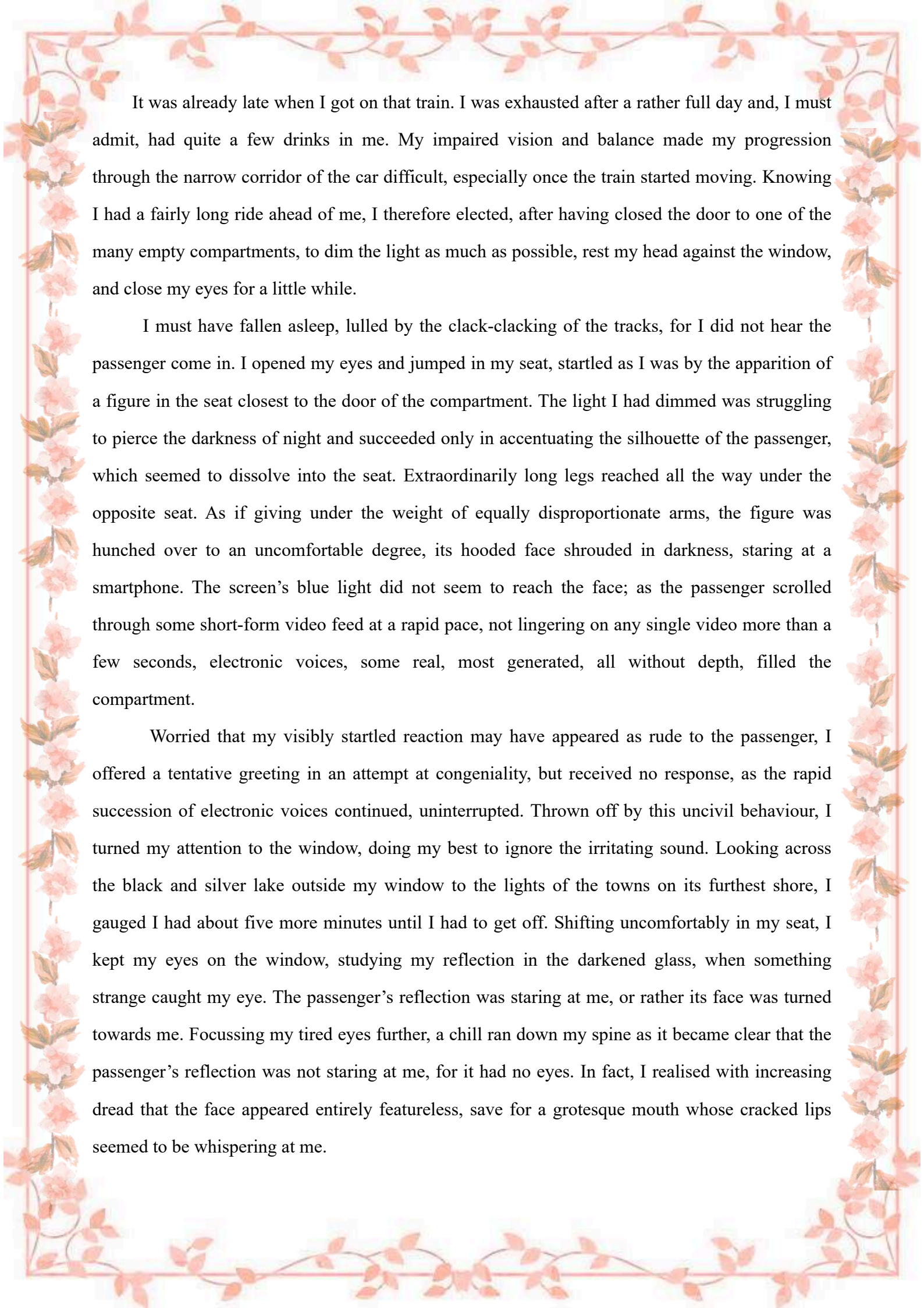
The Passenger

It was late last night that these strange events occurred. I write these lines now, expecting knocks on my door any minute. I pray these few pages, should anyone find them and take them into consideration, manage to convince you, reader, that I am not at fault in the events that transpired; that they were the product of fatigued senses and instinctual reactions; or else that I am deranged with some affliction of the mind. In any case I hope through this account, not to be forgiven, as I understand my deeds warrant no forgiveness; rather I hope, perhaps, to be understood.

Educated readers, you may be familiar with the concept of pareidolia. Introduced in the 1860s by a German psychiatrist writing about delusional patients, it describes the human tendency to recognise or detect familiar patterns in chaotic visual stimuli. Our mind does not care for the truth: when we perceive we are not trying to discern the real from the illusory, rather we are sorting stimuli according to familiarity. When an unfamiliar stimulus may, by some stretch of the imagination, be made familiar, our mind makes the necessary adjustment. We see rabbits in the clouds, hands in the branches of a tree. What our eyes seem most eager to detect, however, is human shapes, that is silhouettes, and above all, faces. In the latter case, most readers might think of the faithful finding divine faces in mundane phenomena, in a way sometimes amusing, such as American housewives discerning Jesus' face in their cooking, and sometimes ominous, as when Christ's form was said to have been seen in the flames of Notre-Dame. I recall myself having had rather unsettling experiences of pareidolia, walking home late at night in a poorly lit country town, having not another soul in sight, mistaking, say, a telephone pole for a tall, lumbering silhouette observing me from afar.

So, reader, tell me: if pareidolia is our irresistible impulse to find faces even where there are none, what is it called when, no matter how hard one tries, one cannot find a face where a face should be found?

Ah! But every car passing under my window startles me; I fear they are getting close. I must hurry these lines along, before they take me away. Let me get to last night's events.



It was already late when I got on that train. I was exhausted after a rather full day and, I must admit, had quite a few drinks in me. My impaired vision and balance made my progression through the narrow corridor of the car difficult, especially once the train started moving. Knowing I had a fairly long ride ahead of me, I therefore elected, after having closed the door to one of the many empty compartments, to dim the light as much as possible, rest my head against the window, and close my eyes for a little while.

I must have fallen asleep, lulled by the clack-clacking of the tracks, for I did not hear the passenger come in. I opened my eyes and jumped in my seat, startled as I was by the apparition of a figure in the seat closest to the door of the compartment. The light I had dimmed was struggling to pierce the darkness of night and succeeded only in accentuating the silhouette of the passenger, which seemed to dissolve into the seat. Extraordinarily long legs reached all the way under the opposite seat. As if giving under the weight of equally disproportionate arms, the figure was hunched over to an uncomfortable degree, its hooded face shrouded in darkness, staring at a smartphone. The screen's blue light did not seem to reach the face; as the passenger scrolled through some short-form video feed at a rapid pace, not lingering on any single video more than a few seconds, electronic voices, some real, most generated, all without depth, filled the compartment.

Worried that my visibly startled reaction may have appeared as rude to the passenger, I offered a tentative greeting in an attempt at congeniality, but received no response, as the rapid succession of electronic voices continued, uninterrupted. Thrown off by this uncivil behaviour, I turned my attention to the window, doing my best to ignore the irritating sound. Looking across the black and silver lake outside my window to the lights of the towns on its furthest shore, I gauged I had about five more minutes until I had to get off. Shifting uncomfortably in my seat, I kept my eyes on the window, studying my reflection in the darkened glass, when something strange caught my eye. The passenger's reflection was staring at me, or rather its face was turned towards me. Focussing my tired eyes further, a chill ran down my spine as it became clear that the passenger's reflection was not staring at me, for it had no eyes. In fact, I realised with increasing dread that the face appeared entirely featureless, save for a grotesque mouth whose cracked lips seemed to be whispering at me.

Terrified as I was by the vision, I could not bring myself to look away from the reflection. The rapid scrolling accelerated exponentially until each video lasted but a fraction of a second. Hundreds of empty, disembodied voices filled the compartment and yet I could not stop staring at the moving mouth of the faceless passenger in the reflection.

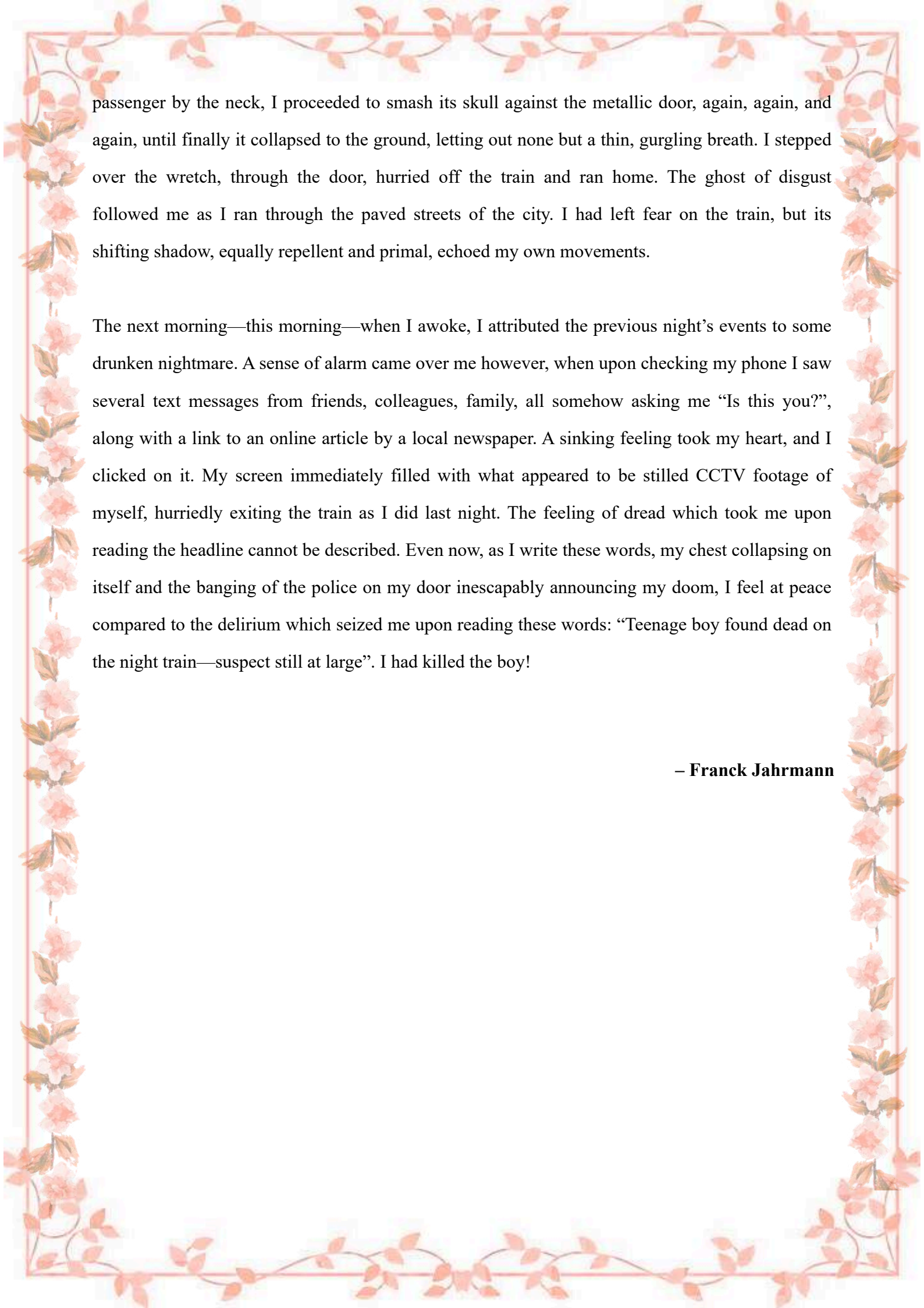
It speaks to you with familiar words
To which you had better listen
For it drives our society forwards
And has the answer to any question.

Ask it and it will answer you
With the sound of a thousand voices
And let not the monster frighten you
For it wears all of our faces.

Forget that knowledge is not wisdom
Care not for the lies it spun
Once your query is in its system
Its voices are a thousand-and-one.

When I finally managed to tear my eyes away from the mouth, I looked at my own reflection. In the few seconds before the lights of the station erased both our reflections from the glass, I was petrified with horror: my own mouth seemed to have vanished from my face! I tried to scream, my chest tensed up, I felt about to throw up, but not a sound came out. Terrified and eager to fly from the passenger and off this train, I arose and attempted to leave. Immediately the passenger stood, moving its absurd limbs, and barred me access to the door. Its face, finally illuminated by the station lights, was still barren but for this large mouth framed by cracked, parched yet familiar lips. The passenger placed a warning index over its mouth, my mouth—

As if shaking off a dream, I suddenly recovered my voice: “Let me out, let me out!”, I screamed in a shrill voice very unlike my own. A terror-fueled rage overcame me and, seizing the



passenger by the neck, I proceeded to smash its skull against the metallic door, again, again, and again, until finally it collapsed to the ground, letting out none but a thin, gurgling breath. I stepped over the wretch, through the door, hurried off the train and ran home. The ghost of disgust followed me as I ran through the paved streets of the city. I had left fear on the train, but its shifting shadow, equally repellent and primal, echoed my own movements.

The next morning—this morning—when I awoke, I attributed the previous night’s events to some drunken nightmare. A sense of alarm came over me however, when upon checking my phone I saw several text messages from friends, colleagues, family, all somehow asking me “Is this you?”, along with a link to an online article by a local newspaper. A sinking feeling took my heart, and I clicked on it. My screen immediately filled with what appeared to be stilled CCTV footage of myself, hurriedly exiting the train as I did last night. The feeling of dread which took me upon reading the headline cannot be described. Even now, as I write these words, my chest collapsing on itself and the banging of the police on my door inescapably announcing my doom, I feel at peace compared to the delirium which seized me upon reading these words: “Teenage boy found dead on the night train—suspect still at large”. I had killed the boy!

– **Franck Jahrmann**



WRITING COMPETITION

After The Fall



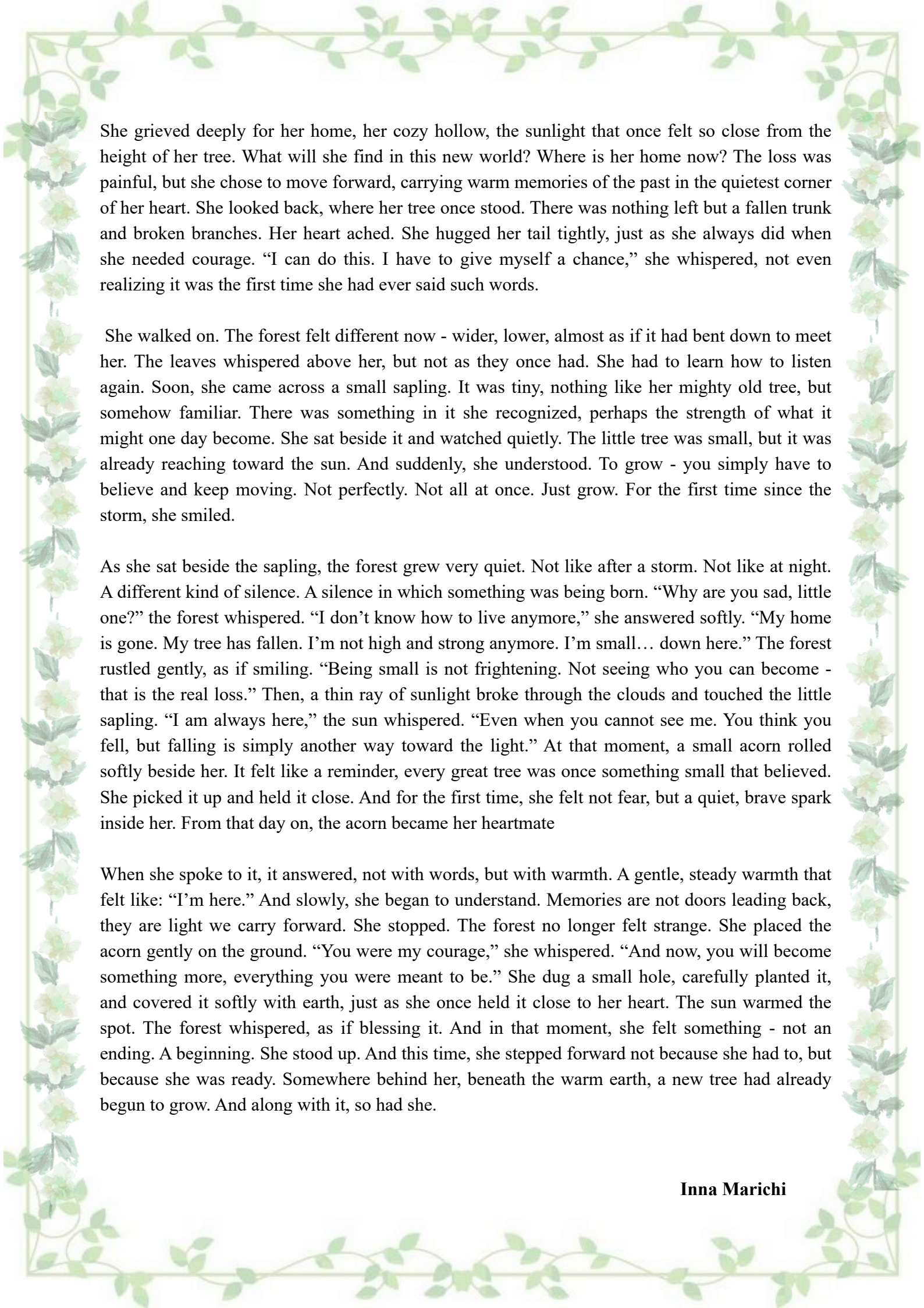
Image: ©Diana Chernychuk

A delicate creature with strong and nimble paws slept sweetly in her nest, high, high up in a tree where no one could reach her. She knew only the sky and the sun, the touch of rain, and the tender embrace of the wind. She had never even imagined how beautifully nature had created her, so graceful, strong, and alive.

The little squirrel, with her soft reddish fur and fluffy tail, remembered herself only as free spirited and lighthearted. In her world, everything had always been easy, almost magical. Up there, on the highest branch, everything she needed was always close. Her life was calm and well-ordered, filled only with her plans, her dreams, and her quiet actions. Everything depended on her, she was her own keeper, free to choose her time, her path, herself.

Oh, how little she understood the richness of what she had. How little she knew that she was, indeed, one of the richest creatures in the world. Sometimes she would stay in her nest all day, curled around her tail, drifting through her dreams. And her dreams... they were another life entirely. A place without limits, where anything was possible, everything her memory could imagine. Sometimes those dreams felt even more real than life itself. There, she lived another version of herself - her truth, her joy, her deepest wishes. Perhaps that is why she loved to sleep so much.

Spring came. Birds sang their bright, joyful songs, and everything felt as beautiful as ever. Days passed, and the squirrel leapt happily from branch to branch, celebrating each moment like a holiday until one night, when everything changed. A fierce storm swept through the forest. By morning, not only was her home gone, but her entire beloved tree, nearly a hundred years old, had fallen. She awoke in a world she had never known. Everything was different. The little squirrel held her breath, closed her eyes, and pinched herself gently, wondering if it was just a dream. But then she whispered: "I'm alive... I'm still here... so I must learn how to live again!"



She grieved deeply for her home, her cozy hollow, the sunlight that once felt so close from the height of her tree. What will she find in this new world? Where is her home now? The loss was painful, but she chose to move forward, carrying warm memories of the past in the quietest corner of her heart. She looked back, where her tree once stood. There was nothing left but a fallen trunk and broken branches. Her heart ached. She hugged her tail tightly, just as she always did when she needed courage. "I can do this. I have to give myself a chance," she whispered, not even realizing it was the first time she had ever said such words.

She walked on. The forest felt different now - wider, lower, almost as if it had bent down to meet her. The leaves whispered above her, but not as they once had. She had to learn how to listen again. Soon, she came across a small sapling. It was tiny, nothing like her mighty old tree, but somehow familiar. There was something in it she recognized, perhaps the strength of what it might one day become. She sat beside it and watched quietly. The little tree was small, but it was already reaching toward the sun. And suddenly, she understood. To grow - you simply have to believe and keep moving. Not perfectly. Not all at once. Just grow. For the first time since the storm, she smiled.

As she sat beside the sapling, the forest grew very quiet. Not like after a storm. Not like at night. A different kind of silence. A silence in which something was being born. "Why are you sad, little one?" the forest whispered. "I don't know how to live anymore," she answered softly. "My home is gone. My tree has fallen. I'm not high and strong anymore. I'm small... down here." The forest rustled gently, as if smiling. "Being small is not frightening. Not seeing who you can become - that is the real loss." Then, a thin ray of sunlight broke through the clouds and touched the little sapling. "I am always here," the sun whispered. "Even when you cannot see me. You think you fell, but falling is simply another way toward the light." At that moment, a small acorn rolled softly beside her. It felt like a reminder, every great tree was once something small that believed. She picked it up and held it close. And for the first time, she felt not fear, but a quiet, brave spark inside her. From that day on, the acorn became her heartmate

When she spoke to it, it answered, not with words, but with warmth. A gentle, steady warmth that felt like: "I'm here." And slowly, she began to understand. Memories are not doors leading back, they are light we carry forward. She stopped. The forest no longer felt strange. She placed the acorn gently on the ground. "You were my courage," she whispered. "And now, you will become something more, everything you were meant to be." She dug a small hole, carefully planted it, and covered it softly with earth, just as she once held it close to her heart. The sun warmed the spot. The forest whispered, as if blessing it. And in that moment, she felt something - not an ending. A beginning. She stood up. And this time, she stepped forward not because she had to, but because she was ready. Somewhere behind her, beneath the warm earth, a new tree had already begun to grow. And along with it, so had she.

Inna Marichi

Draw me a Saint

You hated that dress. It's the one you never folded after wearing it. You kept it rolled up in a corner or used it as a pillow. That is until you came home with it stained one night and it became your memento. And no matter how many times I told you I could dye it to cover the red, you never accepted. Something about not wanting to forget.

Still. You hated that dress. And I know you wouldn't have worn it if you'd known it was going to be your everlasting attire. To be honest, this place is the only one that kept your clothing accurate. The others usually cover you up in gold and azurite shawls, but I don't think you'd like that either. *I* don't. That's why I come here, it's the closest I get to seeing you. I like the way they kept your sideway smile, some reminder that if happy, there was still a part of you that worried. How could you not, with the situation we were in. Always running, between the bitter cold nights under sheds and the days walking past those who threatened arrest for simply not looking ahead. Welcome was not a word we knew. It's a wonder you said it so much to others once we settled down. It was a small place, smaller even when you let everyone in. But the running was over and that was enough.

Amongst all those I knew, you were the one who managed to word things the best. I didn't always understand your big words, when you sat down for those great speeches you shared. Most of these questions I had never even asked myself. When built well enough, the structures of authority feel so natural. Even so, when you spoke it resonated. And the words you used, if not always clear, felt like truths. You helped guide people, even after you lost your sight.

I step a little closer to the mural. Wherever you settled, it would take less than two days for the place to smell of bread. Now everywhere you are smells like dust and stone or that damned musty carpet they put in all the monuments.

The colour in your eyes isn't as bright today. Every week they come and add some paint, straining to keep that light alive. It's important to them, the light. Some sort of proof of your divinity. But with the amount of dust in this place, and the sunrays piercing through the tall windows, it won't stop fading. So, their weekly habit becomes some cycle of resurrection. One in which you keep trying to close your eyes, and they won't let you. It's ironic, with all of us praying for eternal rest, sainthood really seems to be the worst of fates.

Right above the carpet, near the bottom of the wall, a small inscription: "*The Revelation*". It's been done a thousand times but in this one they left your hands bloodied. The brown locs framing your face, the tint of the wounds almost scarlet, the tears in your big white eyes...

"Hey! You blind?!" the cleaner's broom comes crashing right in between us and I jump back. "No touching the painting."

"I wasn't going to--"

"Theres a reason we have a line!" He squints, standing arms crossed like some sort of protector of you. "Move. Now."

I step away and hold myself back from pointing out the irony of his question considering who he's standing in front of. Breathe in, breathe out. I look back at the sign and wonder how they manage to summarise all you are in such a small inscription.

"I also get into trouble for crossing the line." The whispered voice makes me jump again. A girl, her head barely reaching my waist, swaying back and forth on her sandaled feet as she smiles at me. "I know we're not supposed to, but I like touching the walls." Her index finger presses against her mouth as her nose scrunches up, like she just shared her deepest secret to her closest friend.

I bend down.

"You do?"

"It's like saying hello!" and she points directly at the right corner where I catch a small palm print next to your hand. "Besides, this one's my favourite! She looks like me." With her front teeth biting into her lower lip to hold back a prideful smile, she doesn't seem to see the blood on your hands or the wounds in your skin, only that someone like her is worth painting.

"Do you..." I hesitate. "...know who she is?"

She shrugs. Of course she does, who hasn't learned about you. You're in every house and book.

"My dad tells us about her every week- but I didn't know she looked like me until I came here- I live around- and last week my mom bought me a dress, and it looks a bit like this. And- " her words flow out like it's her first time talking. "And this one time I tried to go around the street with my eyes closed like her and I managed to get all the way up to my grandma's- my grandma also looks a little bit like her – but wayyy wayyyyyyy older" she snickers through her last words. "Like, you have to picture *this*," her hand flies up pointing at your face, "but with wrinkles eeeverywhere!" and her fingers dig into her own face, pulling down the skin like some mouldable mask. "They say it's because of the 'hardships'" she adds, emphasising the articulation of her last word before turning back towards the mural. "Like her!"

"Like-"

"Like that time she got cut into pieces!"

With her lively and careless intonation, it somehow hits even harder. It's always the same, in the songs they sing as well. The slow repetitive melody, the dead white eyes. Persecution, temptation, suffering- it's the things they left me. Your pain and your death. Nothing else.

The scriptures talk so much of the day you died. Your body, dragged away, unrecognisable, dismembered, disfigured. The way your hair fell, leading the blood down your face and onto the coffin. The way your eyes still shone, or your heart kept beating hours after. In one chapter it's the way your hand, stiff, pale and broken, still pointed to the temple when they buried you. Of course, they leave out the part where you looked for them before it all happened. The moment you prayed to something that they hadn't yet created. The fold of worry between your brows when you realised what was going to happen, the shaking in your hand when you held up your weapon, the part where you tried to defend yourself. There's nothing like a willing sacrifice.

How holy could your death be? What tales could be pulled from your corps? Too busy painting your pain when they ripped you apart. Too fascinated with recording your screams.

They said everything you did came down to your death, that through it you'd be heard more than ever before. You walked in sand and they built cathedrals, but still today I wish they'd just mention how much you liked walking barefoot. I remember the day the first writings came out. We were to read it, tell it. And through it you'd exist again and again, endlessly studied, read, commented. Through these works, the paintings, the statues and their endless adoration, you would never leave us. Deceased yet immortal.

Of course, when I read in the hopes of finding you, I found nothing but an empty and polished version of you, unrusting and uncoloured. Tell me. When, in their attempt to gift you to humanity, did they strip you of yours?

Maybe I should have started grieving you the day they named you their saviour, but you believed in all of it so much. Through the losses, the demonisation and the disregard, you cared. Maybe that was your greatest exploit of all. To care, in a world where compassion seemed to be radical. A model of the unchronicled, a tale of the untold and the outlawed, the disruptive, the lost. And it seemed inconceivable to them that someone like you would mirror someone like them. So, they heaved up to those above, not yet godly, just not human enough. An in between that only tapestries, tales and paintings can tell. They tore you from those who loved you. Ripped out of your conflictual circumstances, transmuted into an icon, you became a deity, covered in gold and weaved into the highest halls. In the end, they lost track of the fact that the essence of everything you did was completely and thoroughly human.

"Hey."

The girl pulls on my sleeve.

"Hm?"

"You're ignoring me."

"Sorry."

"Are you praying?" She puts her hands together as if to illustrate her words.

".... no. I'm... thinking."

"About what?"

"About her."

"So then, you're praying." She frowns.

"I guess..." I hesitate. "Did you know she liked bread?"

– Ags

Eyes of Loneliness

Content warning: mentions of distress

It was enough for her.

It started as she leaned against that window for hours, remembering her childhood, when the smell of pie fluttered in the kitchen. All the hours spent barefoot in the green grass, running after her sisters, while the burning sun reflected the rainbow colors of the flowering trees.

It has nothing to do with here, this foggy land, impossible for the retina to get used to. Her nostrils tighten to avoid the smell of war. The same smell that lingered when they pulled that trigger on her beloved years ago, taking two lives away.

A few suitcases, a souvenir album, and a one-way ticket: that was what we had in hand when misfortune forced us to leave our roots.

So when her mind meets injustice and anger, she becomes deaf but somehow speaks. Her mouth, sharp as a knife, cuts each word she exhales, throwing her sufferings straight into our hearts. And when she breathes in to relieve the pain, the smoke slices her in turn, seeking revenge. Every puff of that 8.4 cm poisoned medicine is an attempt to escape her reality—a way to kill herself twenty times a day. The package empties faster when blood boils in her veins, turning her head into a fiery fury. The smoke reaches her aching chest, but never heals her heart. What other solution is there, if not calling out for help, repeating that we don't understand, repeating again, a million times, tearing her lungs apart, beating her chest, crying out her heart? Our ears drum with questions left unanswered. Where is the long-sought recognition for leaving the tree planted in her former country, for giving everything without ever receiving, for every meal swallowed, worked for with the sweat of her brow? Guilt then comes into play, silently seeking forgiveness through sacrifice.

Still, we don't understand. When we look at her, in this vast space, full of noise, her oily hair always trapped in the same bun, the sofa cushion sunk in the same spot where she sits, like a hole in the skin. When we look at her, she is tiny. The area under her eyes, tinted with fatigue from staying up all night, watching the world exist on a screen, trying to live just one moment of their happiness, to breathe just a second of their breath, letting themselves wither in the cold silence of the night. We don't understand. So she screams again: we must pay for the rent, no more debt this time, I promise, Sir. She curses our misfortune because it forced us to count every penny put into that piggy bank at the end of the month, while our stomachs sizzle, asking for a portion of rice and carrots. She sacrifices herself, again. Eat; I'm not hungry...And her lie makes its way to our belly. We cannot afford the luxury of throwing things away, even if the expiration date has passed ten days ago. It's those who have money who waste, she tells us.

And when the mind gets involved, again, constantly asking her questions, she responds to it out loud while cleaning a window here, picking up a dirty sock there, a kitchen cloth on her right shoulder, running from room to room. It must be clean, but no one knows for whom.

But she cannot escape this hurried and motionless life anymore. Always trying to please others; never receiving anything from those others. Trying to live not with us, but *for* us. Forgetting herself in the endless nights, in sickness, in trying to split herself into three equal parts to please each one. Devotion pushed her to the edges of her own existence, yet she's still unseen, misunderstood, and underappreciated. Pain and suffering are invisible to those around her. She then bears her struggles in her compressed chest, like a refugee who feels the weight of loss. A woman who abandons herself to support others. To offer us a better life here, one that we could not have there.

So we ran from shelter to shelter, sleeping together in children's rooms, wearing torn pants, already worn by others. Our innocent bodies thrown into containers, in search of a used hairbrush, a shredded stuffed animal, or a coat too big, left behind by someone who had found shelter elsewhere. We lived on hope and crumbs. Every night, she told herself that maybe one day, we could have a warm blanket, a place to lay our heads without fear. But every morning, reality hit her again, as cold and indifferent as the streets that swallowed us. The smiles, the ones we shared with each other, had become rare, almost invisible. And yet, despite it all, she kept going, hoping that somewhere, someone would see her.

Betrayed hope.

Neither brother nor husband: both left her in death. Neither sisters nor friends: both left her with time.

Solitude, her only company. Time, her sole enemy.

So she lets herself go, consumed by age and loneliness. As punishment, she feeds her body with nicotine and chocolate to feel a fleeting spike of happiness... It is gone. Now, distress needs answers: why can we not understand the pain she endured for our sake and relieve it with a tiny acknowledgment? How can we not understand her heart when she created ours?

What we do understand is that when our eyes meet hers, they admit what her mouth could never say: "Never have I ever felt so lonely". Then she drowned her guts in tears: the same water that brought life and, at that very moment, her soul died when we took our first breath.

It is enough for you, mama.

-Albina Haliti

Memory Pains

Content warning: sexual assault and trauma.

'Welcome class to CRY-403, my name is Prof. Irrel, she/her, you can contact me at my email address: evan.irrel@uni.com. As you doubtless are aware from the course's title, we will be talking about so-called ghosts in quantum cryptography. The basic setup we will be dealing with is as follows: suppose Alice and Bob are each in possession of X q-bits (a quantum computer if you wish to place the q-bits in a less theoretical context), of which some, say Y , are entangled; then what can we say about security concerns of the communication between Bob and Alice? The relevance of this model is clear since, for example, this is how we send text messages to friends on our phones.

There are two main advantages of quantum communication over the classical devices in use until the end of the 21st century. First of all, this yields communication which is as instant as can be. Second of all, it removes the need of a third party through which the information transmitted from Alice to Bob must pass. In this class, we will be focusing on the first of these points, and next semester, I will be the lecturer for CRY-413, where we shall discuss the second point. This class will be theory-centric, whereas questions concerning the value and implementation of quantum cryptography will be postponed to next semester. Specifically, the problem we address is that of how we safeguard against often dangerous violations of causality, which we risk as quantum communication can transfer information at about 137 times light speed. Without going into the details, this is done by introducing ghost q-bits, that is to say, particles whose reality is a philosophical debate, but can be harmlessly introduced into our equations. The reason that this is of relevance in the real world is that we can write code as if we could fit error correction codes in the ghost q-bit. Properly doing this will require that we develop the theory of ghost algorithms, which is the name given to algorithms which work as if we had access to the aforementioned ghost q-bits. You can already observe that the sense in which the ghost q-bits exist is a very tricky topic. Anyway, the actual message being sent from Alice to Bob will thus be able to self-repair to some extent, which will minimize the risk of any unintended "leakage", which is the main source of causality violations. There is here an endless debate on the ethics of allowing intentional violations of causality with the contents of the message, but this will not concern us, as it is outside the scope of our course. If there are no further questions, we can move past this informal introduction and onto the first actual part of our course.

Let H_X be an X -dimensional Hilbert space, and H_Y a Y -dimensional Hilbert space, and fix an isometry from the latter space into the former. We call the vectors not contained in H_Y ghosts; those orthogonal to H_Y are called good, and the others alpha-bad, where alpha is the normalized inner product of the vector with its orthogonal projection onto H_Y ...

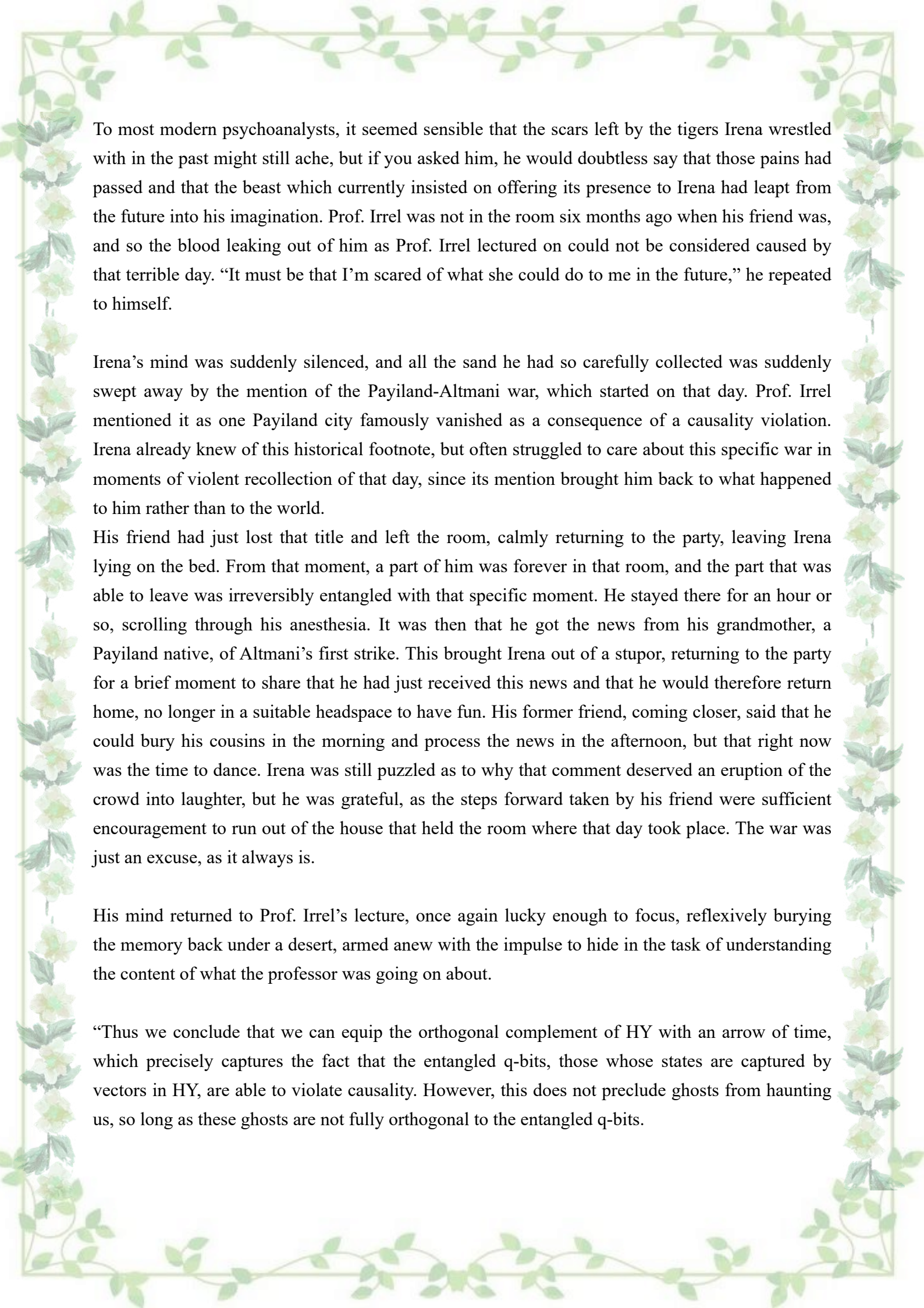


Image by [Briam Cute](#) from [Pixabay](#)

Irena began wondering whether the professor enjoyed the sound of her own voice, since it seemed to him that it was quite obvious that she was talking to an essentially empty classroom. Evan was a wonderfully competent professor, and Irena took her class because he had heard the stories suggesting this. He also heard less encouraging rumours concerning the teacher's behaviour with students outside of class. As the worst of those tales went, Evan had the decency never to engage with students taking her class, as she did not want to be used for grades, but she missed the etiquette to ask the student's opinion.

Irena did not want to be dissuaded from taking CRY-403; the subject matter interested him more than any other topic he had encountered thus far, he could obtain a whopping ten credits for this single class, and it was relevant for the summer internship he had already secured a position at. Thus, in spite of the allegations which sufficiently plagued Prof. Irrel's reputation to ensure her classroom had more in common with Voids than the bustling streets of New Tokyo, Irena decided to take "Ghosts in quantum cryptography". He thought it absurd to even entertain losing this opportunity; he refused it categorically, which is why he violently forced himself to blindly ignore the tales of Prof. Irrel's inappropriate conduct.

Though only fifteen minutes had passed since Evan started talking, and already Irena's vision was somewhat blurry at the edges, as if lit up by Proxima Centauri's corona, and his breathing was shifting into an arrhythmic cadence. He endlessly repeated in his head, faster with every iteration of the mantra, that as long as he sat in the back and feigned sufficient disinterest not to interact with Prof. Irrel, he would be safe from any claws that might be planted into his waist, snatching him into motions he cared never to think about. He was, however, forced to concede that, since his plan was being derailed by some cackling ghost before the second lecture, one ought to consider it a dramatic failure. The laughter was softly deafening, a guffaw whispered into only his ears. So his presence in class had become a strict negative, barely able to even hear, much less listen to, the lecture for which he had risked falling into the hell of recollection of the day that lay under the sand dunes he had piled.



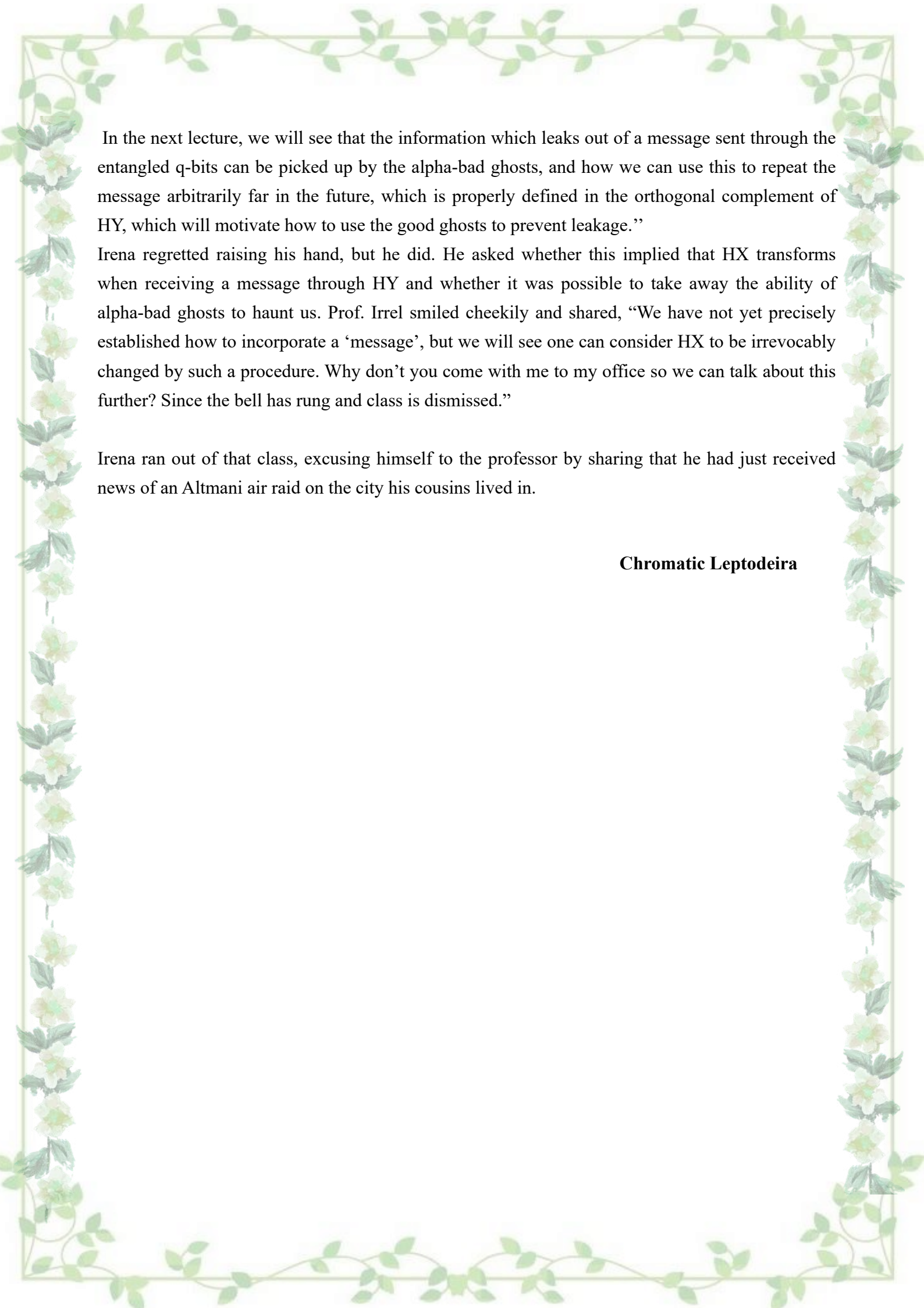
To most modern psychoanalysts, it seemed sensible that the scars left by the tigers Irena wrestled with in the past might still ache, but if you asked him, he would doubtless say that those pains had passed and that the beast which currently insisted on offering its presence to Irena had leapt from the future into his imagination. Prof. Irrel was not in the room six months ago when his friend was, and so the blood leaking out of him as Prof. Irrel lectured on could not be considered caused by that terrible day. “It must be that I’m scared of what she could do to me in the future,” he repeated to himself.

Irena’s mind was suddenly silenced, and all the sand he had so carefully collected was suddenly swept away by the mention of the Payiland-Altmani war, which started on that day. Prof. Irrel mentioned it as one Payiland city famously vanished as a consequence of a causality violation. Irena already knew of this historical footnote, but often struggled to care about this specific war in moments of violent recollection of that day, since its mention brought him back to what happened to him rather than to the world.

His friend had just lost that title and left the room, calmly returning to the party, leaving Irena lying on the bed. From that moment, a part of him was forever in that room, and the part that was able to leave was irreversibly entangled with that specific moment. He stayed there for an hour or so, scrolling through his anesthesia. It was then that he got the news from his grandmother, a Payiland native, of Altmani’s first strike. This brought Irena out of a stupor, returning to the party for a brief moment to share that he had just received this news and that he would therefore return home, no longer in a suitable headspace to have fun. His former friend, coming closer, said that he could bury his cousins in the morning and process the news in the afternoon, but that right now was the time to dance. Irena was still puzzled as to why that comment deserved an eruption of the crowd into laughter, but he was grateful, as the steps forward taken by his friend were sufficient encouragement to run out of the house that held the room where that day took place. The war was just an excuse, as it always is.

His mind returned to Prof. Irrel’s lecture, once again lucky enough to focus, reflexively burying the memory back under a desert, armed anew with the impulse to hide in the task of understanding the content of what the professor was going on about.

“Thus we conclude that we can equip the orthogonal complement of HY with an arrow of time, which precisely captures the fact that the entangled q-bits, those whose states are captured by vectors in HY, are able to violate causality. However, this does not preclude ghosts from haunting us, so long as these ghosts are not fully orthogonal to the entangled q-bits.



In the next lecture, we will see that the information which leaks out of a message sent through the entangled q-bits can be picked up by the alpha-bad ghosts, and how we can use this to repeat the message arbitrarily far in the future, which is properly defined in the orthogonal complement of HY, which will motivate how to use the good ghosts to prevent leakage.”

Irena regretted raising his hand, but he did. He asked whether this implied that HX transforms when receiving a message through HY and whether it was possible to take away the ability of alpha-bad ghosts to haunt us. Prof. Irrel smiled cheekily and shared, “We have not yet precisely established how to incorporate a ‘message’, but we will see one can consider HX to be irrevocably changed by such a procedure. Why don’t you come with me to my office so we can talk about this further? Since the bell has rung and class is dismissed.”

Irena ran out of that class, excusing himself to the professor by sharing that he had just received news of an Altmani air raid on the city his cousins lived in.

Chromatic Leptodeira

Metamorphoses

CW: gender dysphoria

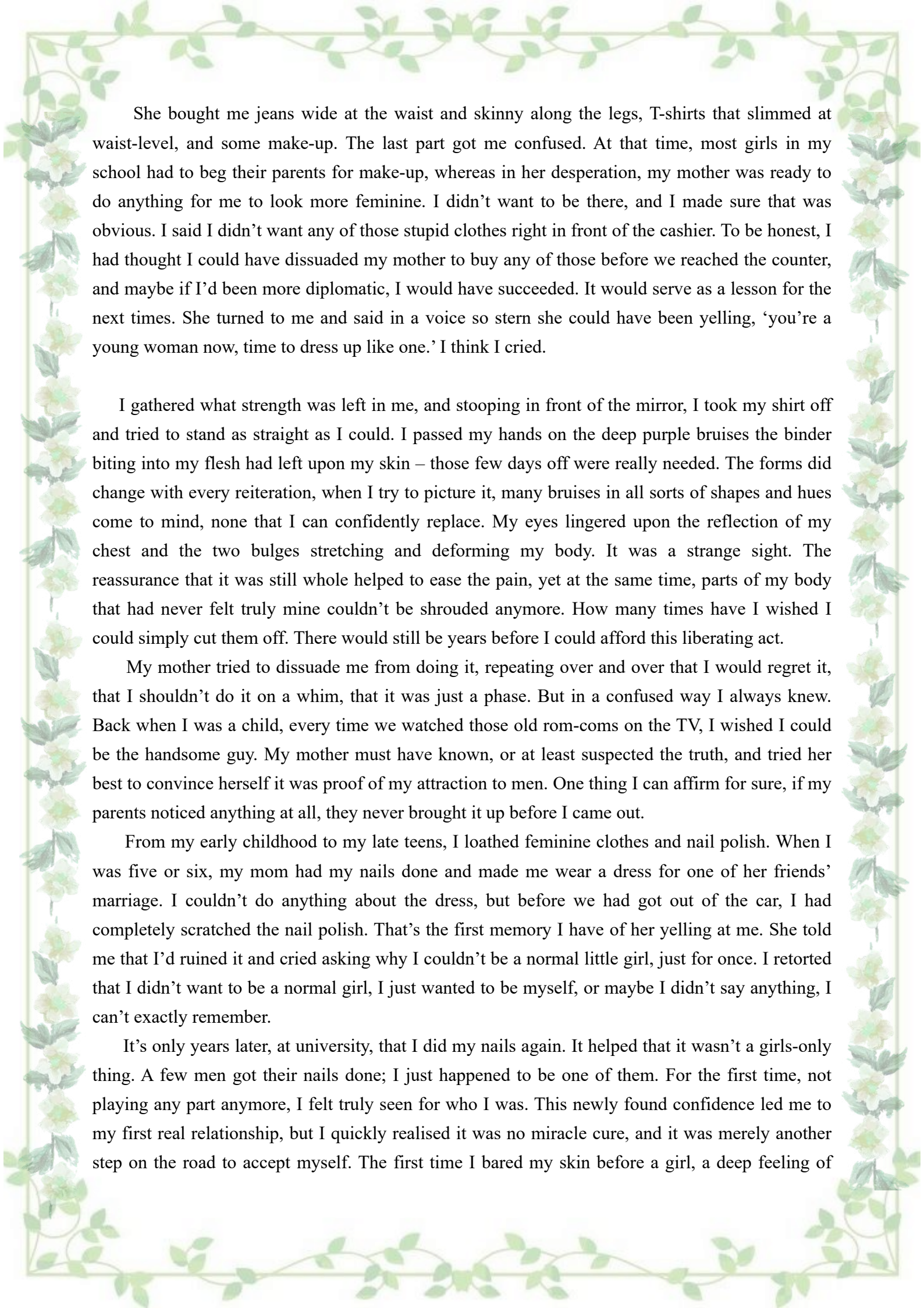
It was the second day in a row I was skipping school. I would have to go back on the next day, otherwise the principal would ask for a note from the doctor, and that couldn't happen. Fatigue and anxiety had kept me bedridden for the last thirty-something hours. That, and the pain. During all this time I had not eaten anything, as the burning sting running from my stomach to the back of my throat reminded me. It was the kind of sting that leaves a vivid and permanent memory in one's mind. I still clearly remember the first time I threw up bile as a child, I had no idea what was happening to my body and I freaked out. It seemed every organ in me had been squished and was coming up and out of my mouth as a scalding liquid. I don't know if it's because it's considered gross or awkward, but it isn't exactly the kind of things adults teach you about until it's too late. But compared to the soreness in my ribcage, it was nothing. I know now it sounds ridiculous, but back then I thought it must have been what being crushed by a truck felt like.

I did miss a lot of school days. When my parents inquired, they were always met with the same answer: my headaches were so violent it gave me nausea, I couldn't eat and the fasting gave me excruciating cramps. I couldn't stand straight if I tried. It was only half a lie. I was always careful to leave the rest out of the picture. I never told them how anxious school made me feel, nor did I ever mention that in a certain way it was what I wanted. Not being able to get up. Withering in my bed for days in a row. It was all worth it, because as long as I languished in bed, I wouldn't go to school.

My first memories of school are now muddled. During my first years, I spent most of the time with boys. I dressed the same as the others and I had short hair. Or I should rather say one of them had longer hair than me, so it didn't matter. Looking back, it's one of the few instances I felt I belonged. It did not last long, for in an instant, my whole world tipped upside-down. Their voices cracked more often than not, while mine barely changed. And soon, hair grew on their chin and upper lip, while I did my best to cover the changes of my body. I mainly wore sweatpants and baggy hoodies, and tried to fit in for a while. Still, even with my best efforts, the gap between us kept widening. They didn't look at me the same.

If I wanted to survive, I had to change tactics. I decided I should try to spend more time with the girls in my class, and discovered I could be one of them, if I just stopped being myself a few hours a day. It's like acting, at least that thought brought me comfort.

At some point, I don't remember exactly when, my mom thought it was time, and she took me shopping with her. Of course, she knew I hated that, but from her point of view my feelings were only getting in the way of her taking care of her only daughter. That's still how she frames it.



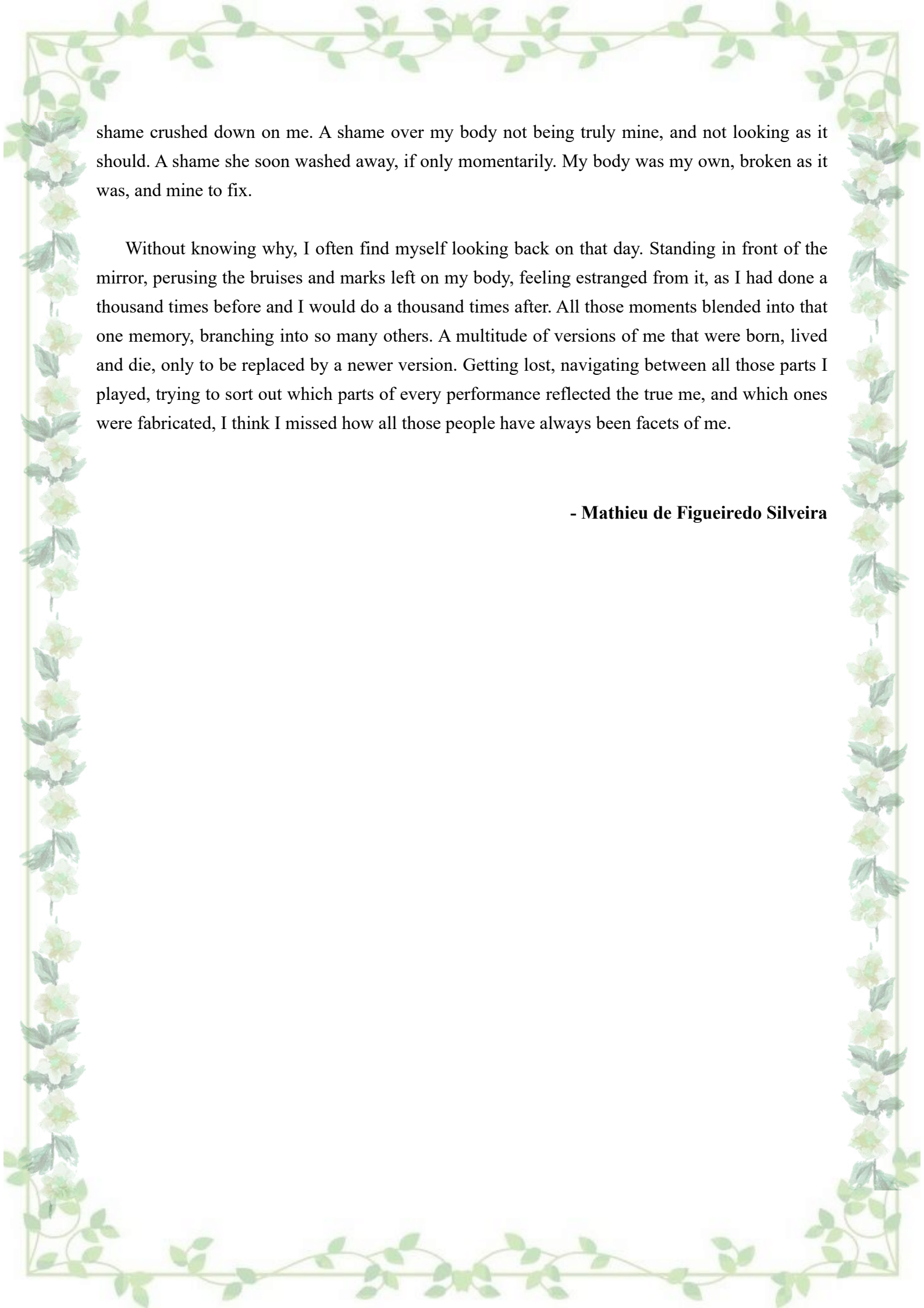
She bought me jeans wide at the waist and skinny along the legs, T-shirts that slimmed at waist-level, and some make-up. The last part got me confused. At that time, most girls in my school had to beg their parents for make-up, whereas in her desperation, my mother was ready to do anything for me to look more feminine. I didn't want to be there, and I made sure that was obvious. I said I didn't want any of those stupid clothes right in front of the cashier. To be honest, I had thought I could have dissuaded my mother to buy any of those before we reached the counter, and maybe if I'd been more diplomatic, I would have succeeded. It would serve as a lesson for the next times. She turned to me and said in a voice so stern she could have been yelling, 'you're a young woman now, time to dress up like one.' I think I cried.

I gathered what strength was left in me, and stooping in front of the mirror, I took my shirt off and tried to stand as straight as I could. I passed my hands on the deep purple bruises the binder biting into my flesh had left upon my skin – those few days off were really needed. The forms did change with every reiteration, when I try to picture it, many bruises in all sorts of shapes and hues come to mind, none that I can confidently replace. My eyes lingered upon the reflection of my chest and the two bulges stretching and deforming my body. It was a strange sight. The reassurance that it was still whole helped to ease the pain, yet at the same time, parts of my body that had never felt truly mine couldn't be shrouded anymore. How many times have I wished I could simply cut them off. There would still be years before I could afford this liberating act.

My mother tried to dissuade me from doing it, repeating over and over that I would regret it, that I shouldn't do it on a whim, that it was just a phase. But in a confused way I always knew. Back when I was a child, every time we watched those old rom-coms on the TV, I wished I could be the handsome guy. My mother must have known, or at least suspected the truth, and tried her best to convince herself it was proof of my attraction to men. One thing I can affirm for sure, if my parents noticed anything at all, they never brought it up before I came out.

From my early childhood to my late teens, I loathed feminine clothes and nail polish. When I was five or six, my mom had my nails done and made me wear a dress for one of her friends' marriage. I couldn't do anything about the dress, but before we had got out of the car, I had completely scratched the nail polish. That's the first memory I have of her yelling at me. She told me that I'd ruined it and cried asking why I couldn't be a normal little girl, just for once. I retorted that I didn't want to be a normal girl, I just wanted to be myself, or maybe I didn't say anything, I can't exactly remember.

It's only years later, at university, that I did my nails again. It helped that it wasn't a girls-only thing. A few men got their nails done; I just happened to be one of them. For the first time, not playing any part anymore, I felt truly seen for who I was. This newly found confidence led me to my first real relationship, but I quickly realised it was no miracle cure, and it was merely another step on the road to accept myself. The first time I bared my skin before a girl, a deep feeling of



shame crushed down on me. A shame over my body not being truly mine, and not looking as it should. A shame she soon washed away, if only momentarily. My body was my own, broken as it was, and mine to fix.

Without knowing why, I often find myself looking back on that day. Standing in front of the mirror, perusing the bruises and marks left on my body, feeling estranged from it, as I had done a thousand times before and I would do a thousand times after. All those moments blended into that one memory, branching into so many others. A multitude of versions of me that were born, lived and die, only to be replaced by a newer version. Getting lost, navigating between all those parts I played, trying to sort out which parts of every performance reflected the true me, and which ones were fabricated, I think I missed how all those people have always been facets of me.

- Mathieu de Figueiredo Silveira

not wings, but shoulder blades

the hollow space between my shoulder blades
seems as though it was made
for me to stand tall
for your forehead to rest on
for your lips to press against
for your words to be whispered to

before that, the hollow space was entirely void
skin, beauty marks, ridges, a tattoo, curves and hollows

before that, no space between my shoulder blades
i was not only covered in liquid, i had become it
a puddle of molten organs
personality
ambitions
muscles
bones
and more
sloshing around in my chrysalis

before that, my shoulder blades pressed against each other
my body too small, too frail, too scared
not ready
for what waited inside
folded up, compressed, flattened, squashed

after that, my compressed being turned into
a liquid rendition of what i had been
what i would be
then, my fluid self transformed into
what i am
or what i had been all along

the hollow space between my shoulder blades
now proud and strong
mourns not its too-small state
or its flowing self

the hollow space between my shoulder blades
is grateful and proud of its transformations
it knows now it can love
and be loved

c.m.

on life.

First comes the wildness of innocence.
I leave a stream of hope on the ground
that I tread carelessly, in ignorance
of the torrent of tragedies all around.

Then I flounder through new, growing feelings,
that I do not, or cannot grasp; not yet.
I build myself into a chimera,
made of the sum of who I long to be.

Then I dive into the deep, wide unknown
with no parachute but my own two wings.
As I fall, I realize the strength I've grown,
and spread my arms, braced for what life will bring.

At last learn, becoming is never done,
and feel with each new step, new selves are won.

– m.f.

The Knight

I wail as my skin sheds itself,
The venom dripping from my eyes,
My tongue cut off before all the rest.
The executioner forced himself on me,
Armed with a tantalizing sword.
A sword that whispers 'ma chérie'
As it unsheathes,
And screams 'you will never be a man!'
As it tears through my chest.
But the tormentor is strangely mom shaped—
The sword is cold and deadly in the warm hands holding it,
And the loved child dreading the sword
Is not being saved as promised.

The child is being torn to shreds;
From the ashes, a cocoon of steel makes itself known,
Birthing a creature—
Not child or girl
A son, a brother perhaps,
Bearing his own sword,
Trying hard to wield it tenderly,
Not as an executioner— but as a knight
For the little one whose time has come to face their tormentors.

– Jaya

The Tale of Umbralùn



Image: ©Amélie My-Linh Dauban/Amylinhda

Once upon a time, in a wide, wild, whispering forest lived a handful of fairies. They were all tiny, timorous and tireless, carving their houses in tree trunks, decorating their rooms with utmost coquetry – in such manner as to let the sun in by day, yet to be protected from the cold by night. If one wanted to linger a little longer in the darkness, lanterns of luminescent mycelium were common, for they were convenient to cast away shadows and leave no room for the unknown.

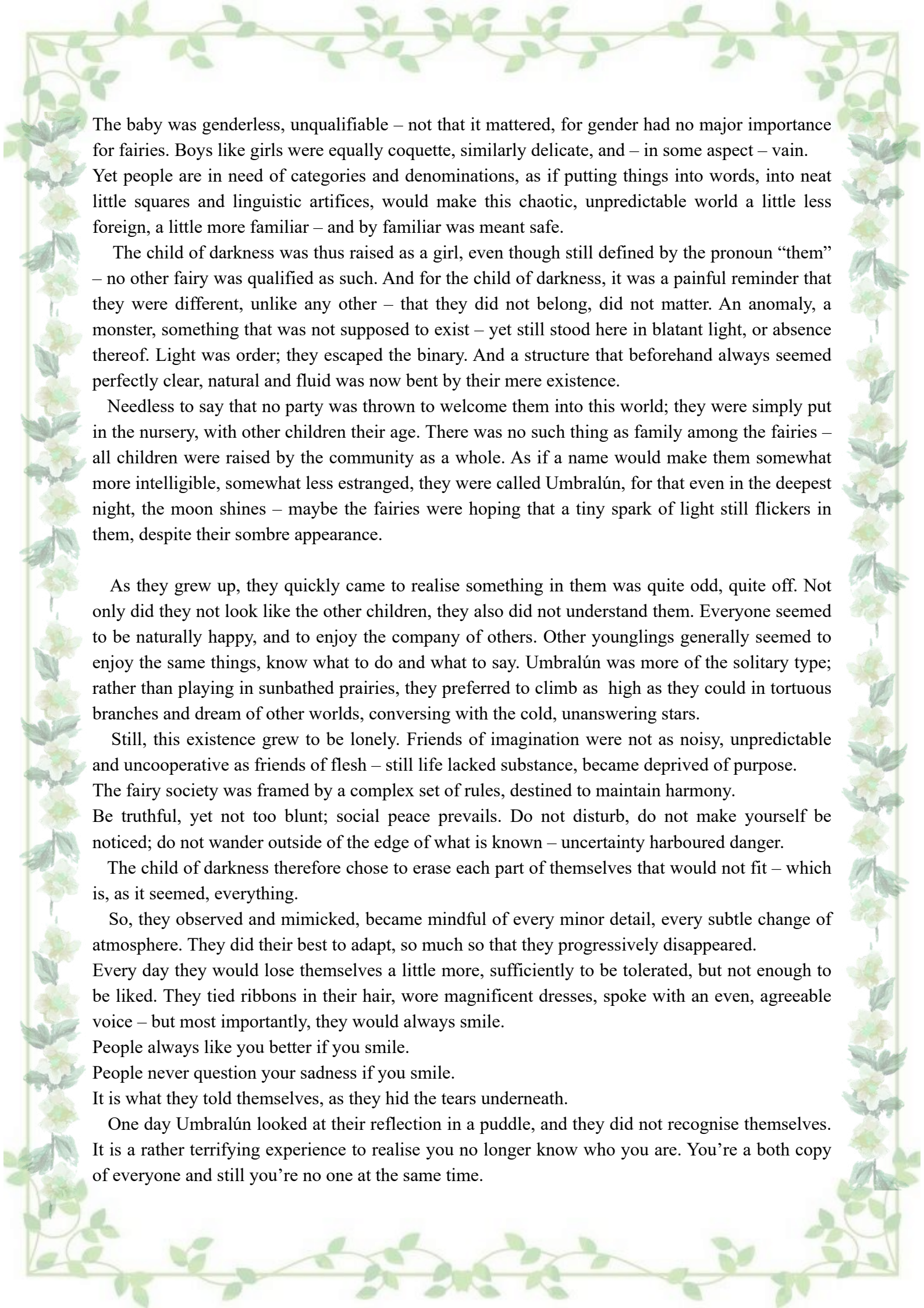
The fairies did not like shadows. Pledging allegiance to light, they venerated the sun and tailored their gowns in vibrant flowers and silked spiderweb woven in point lace and tulle of the finest patterns. They had wings, transparent, delicate, dazzling in the sun, yet they could not fly for too long, as their frail, fragile nature was not made for the ruthlessness of wind and rain. They could only flutter from leaf to leaf, dancing around in elegant twirls and idle chatter.

They did not know suffering nor war, pain or hunger; they lived in abundance and peace, perpetually living a greedless life until old age, and in their final moment they ascended for a quiet, serene departure towards the stars.

Newborns were presented to the community the dawn succeeding their arrival and a great, glorious party ensued, where cider and lavender liquor overflowed and galore berrybread and myrtle jam and oatcake and scones were baked and devoured in joyful plentifulness.

A bonfire was lit to celebrate, for each blooming new life was a spark of hope and a new soul to befriend.

That was, until a child spawned in the deepest night of winter solstice, reeking of the fathomless shadows from which it issued. Its eyes were as murky as the darkest eclipse, their skin grey, their body shapeless, as if made of smoke. It was completely impossible to determine its true nature – it had vaguely the silhouette of a fairy, yet unlike fairies made of light and mirth, it resembled void and gloom.



The baby was genderless, unqualifiable – not that it mattered, for gender had no major importance for fairies. Boys like girls were equally coquette, similarly delicate, and – in some aspect – vain. Yet people are in need of categories and denominations, as if putting things into words, into neat little squares and linguistic artifices, would make this chaotic, unpredictable world a little less foreign, a little more familiar – and by familiar was meant safe.

The child of darkness was thus raised as a girl, even though still defined by the pronoun “them” – no other fairy was qualified as such. And for the child of darkness, it was a painful reminder that they were different, unlike any other – that they did not belong, did not matter. An anomaly, a monster, something that was not supposed to exist – yet still stood here in blatant light, or absence thereof. Light was order; they escaped the binary. And a structure that beforehand always seemed perfectly clear, natural and fluid was now bent by their mere existence.

Needless to say that no party was thrown to welcome them into this world; they were simply put in the nursery, with other children their age. There was no such thing as family among the fairies – all children were raised by the community as a whole. As if a name would make them somewhat more intelligible, somewhat less estranged, they were called Umbralún, for that even in the deepest night, the moon shines – maybe the fairies were hoping that a tiny spark of light still flickers in them, despite their sombre appearance.

As they grew up, they quickly came to realise something in them was quite odd, quite off. Not only did they not look like the other children, they also did not understand them. Everyone seemed to be naturally happy, and to enjoy the company of others. Other younglings generally seemed to enjoy the same things, know what to do and what to say. Umbralún was more of the solitary type; rather than playing in sunbathed prairies, they preferred to climb as high as they could in tortuous branches and dream of other worlds, conversing with the cold, unanswering stars.

Still, this existence grew to be lonely. Friends of imagination were not as noisy, unpredictable and uncooperative as friends of flesh – still life lacked substance, became deprived of purpose. The fairy society was framed by a complex set of rules, destined to maintain harmony. Be truthful, yet not too blunt; social peace prevails. Do not disturb, do not make yourself be noticed; do not wander outside of the edge of what is known – uncertainty harboured danger.

The child of darkness therefore chose to erase each part of themselves that would not fit – which is, as it seemed, everything.

So, they observed and mimicked, became mindful of every minor detail, every subtle change of atmosphere. They did their best to adapt, so much so that they progressively disappeared. Every day they would lose themselves a little more, sufficiently to be tolerated, but not enough to be liked. They tied ribbons in their hair, wore magnificent dresses, spoke with an even, agreeable voice – but most importantly, they would always smile.

People always like you better if you smile.

People never question your sadness if you smile.

It is what they told themselves, as they hid the tears underneath.

One day Umbralún looked at their reflection in a puddle, and they did not recognise themselves. It is a rather terrifying experience to realise you no longer know who you are. You're a both copy of everyone and still you're no one at the same time.

Despondency claimed the soul of Umbralún; they would no longer talk, nor leave the tiny room they called home. Their mind became their refuge, and at the same time their prison. Maybe that was it, that was how it was meant to be – how they would remain.

Broken.

Shattered.

Monstrous.

Inherently unlovable.

And once again they looked at the stars and wondered if better worlds truly awaited there – though in different ways than they used to, for the stars were no longer imaginary friends, but a destination, a final escape.

They did not join the stars, though – it was not time, and hope remained.

Still the fairies adored the sun, and Umbralún was the opposite of the sun. Little did these delicate, precious creatures know that the sun would eventually betray them.

On a particularly hot and dry summer, a fire broke in the wide, wild, whispering forest. And suddenly what was known was no longer safe. Light, unlike every time before, had become synonym of danger. Darkness was refuge. Umbralún successfully guided the fairies among shadows, towards a sure escape.

Thankfully no one was hurt – yet upon their return, all were stunned to find their home in such state of devastation, and equal devastation started to gain their mind and spirit. They all appeared to have lost hope.

Nevertheless, as they were all crying and mourning, Umbralún began to sing. For that Umbralún had known sadness and sorrow all their life. They were no stranger to the darkness – and equally, darkness was no stranger to them. Their voice carried the tears and echoes of all that was lost, and in the ashes of immense grief grew from such lament a renewed faith, as dawn, after night, always returned, and old wounds eventually healed.

The fairies, creatures of light and day, were no dreamers, yet Umbralún was born of the night.

From that moment, Umbralún no longer sought to be another. They kept their hair untied, their gown messy and their mind unruly, as they wandered the paths of imagination and shared those wonderful tales with others. They were no longer frowned upon. The sun always longs for clarity – it leaves little space for the comfort of uncertainty, and possibilities, and hopes of a different kind. Yet one must beware of the light that casts no shadow, for there would be no day without the night. And suddenly everything made sense again; strangeness felt like something earned, rather than something to be concealed, for the path towards acceptance was long and treacherous yet brought enough reward to be worth it.

In the end, meaning revealed itself in the stories lived and the tales told, in companionship lost and found. And Umbralún's tale inspired other fairies to embrace the unruly edges of their flawless grace, rather than repress them.

The true transformation was not to suppress oneself to fit in; it was to claim back every edge, every strangeness and every flaw, and finally shine of a light of our own.

Amélie My-Linh Dauban

Turning Tide

I'm from this mysterious land at the edge of the known world for the ancients, a wild land where the Celts took refuge. The English call it Cornwall, but its people call it Kernow. In olden times, they even called us the "Welsh of the West", "Welsh" meaning "stranger" in Old English. That is what the invaders called the people of this land. It's a hard land to live on, but it's beautiful. The fishermen had to pay a bloody tribute to the capricious sea goddess to feed our people.

But it is from the underground that our survival sprang: working in the mines. The kingdom, and then the empire, was hungry for this wealth, and this hunger was insatiable. The earth devoured men and even children. Our language died after drowning in a flooded tunnel. Yet whole villages depended on it for their livelihood because the soil was too barren to allow for a better life.

When the pits closed, a part of our world stopped. The men, who spent all day underground, were desperate. What could they do under the sun? Some went overseas to a land once used as a hellish penal colony, where men were transported for a loaf of bread only a few decades before. Our village was losing its children. They grew up to be miners, and they would die as miners. Others left for the big cities. The village emptied out once again. No more laughter in the pub, just an endless wake for an aborted future.

For those who stayed, the English arrived. The railroad linked us to the main island. At the beginning, it was nice. We rented out empty rooms and houses. They needed fresh air for their blackened lungs, and we needed a bit of money. Even artists came, acting like Gauguin and other painters in Britain, painting the coasts. They were awestruck by the beauty of the rugged coastline.

Then the war came. We had to fight to protect the world from darkness. The region lost thousands of good lads during the First War, all for not even a mile of mud in Flanders. At least their families were safe. A storm of fire rained down upon us. The undertaker was getting sick of making little coffins. The victory was bitter. The village emptied out for the second time.

After the war, with big waves of dollars, the country managed to get its head above water. I say, "the country", but it was mostly the heartland of England. The only green we could see was in the pastures and the moors. The young had no real opportunities so they left for the big cities. The village emptied out for the third time.

Then the English flooded in once again, this time with cars and money to buy the houses. The Locals, if they wanted to stay put, found themselves having to work for holidaymakers. Our worthless houses were now worth thousands. The village is hit by a high tide that floods everything every summer, and a low tide the rest of the year. In winter, the village is a ghost town where only the elderly remain, with their memories lingering over the place. This tide swept away all the young from the village. They cannot afford to live where they grew up.

The English became "emnets", swarming on the beaches and in the village lanes. Admittedly, tourism has brought money into our region of poor souls, but at what cost? Our culture has been reduced to clichés designed to please. The young are leaving, and the mines have become tourist attractions where pain and misery are sugar-coated.

The old man fell silent. A tear rolled down his cheek. He finished his drink. The elder stood up and left the pub, hoping that a young Londoner had caught snippets of his monologue.

Samuel Bigler



Πωρόω [“póroó”; to harden, to turn into stone, to petrify]

I see my great-grandmother on the way to music practice these days. I rarely see her in this particular spot, since this park is a little out of my way. I usually come across her on the other side of town, in a spot where she stands above a fountain, holding fish in a basket, dressed as a nineteenth century merchant.

She feels more real here, more raw. She's closer to life-size, and she's naked, which helps. She crouches on one knee, head turned to the side and one hand resting on the stone block on which she sits.

Her hand is bigger than mine, but the proportions are the same. Everyone in my family wonders where I got my hands from, but *I* know. I can see them right there, immobilized and unaging. They feel so cold when I touch them. The little piece of cloth barely covering her crotch stands nothing against the March night air. Rain marks stain her white stone, digging divots where it drips. I hope her breasts will never show the signs of wear that others like her do.

Her face looks so much like her daughter's that I can easily recognise my grandmother in her. Her traits were lost after that; my uncle who had some of them died long ago. My own mother looks so much like her father there wasn't space left for these matrilineal sharp eyebrows and almond eyes.

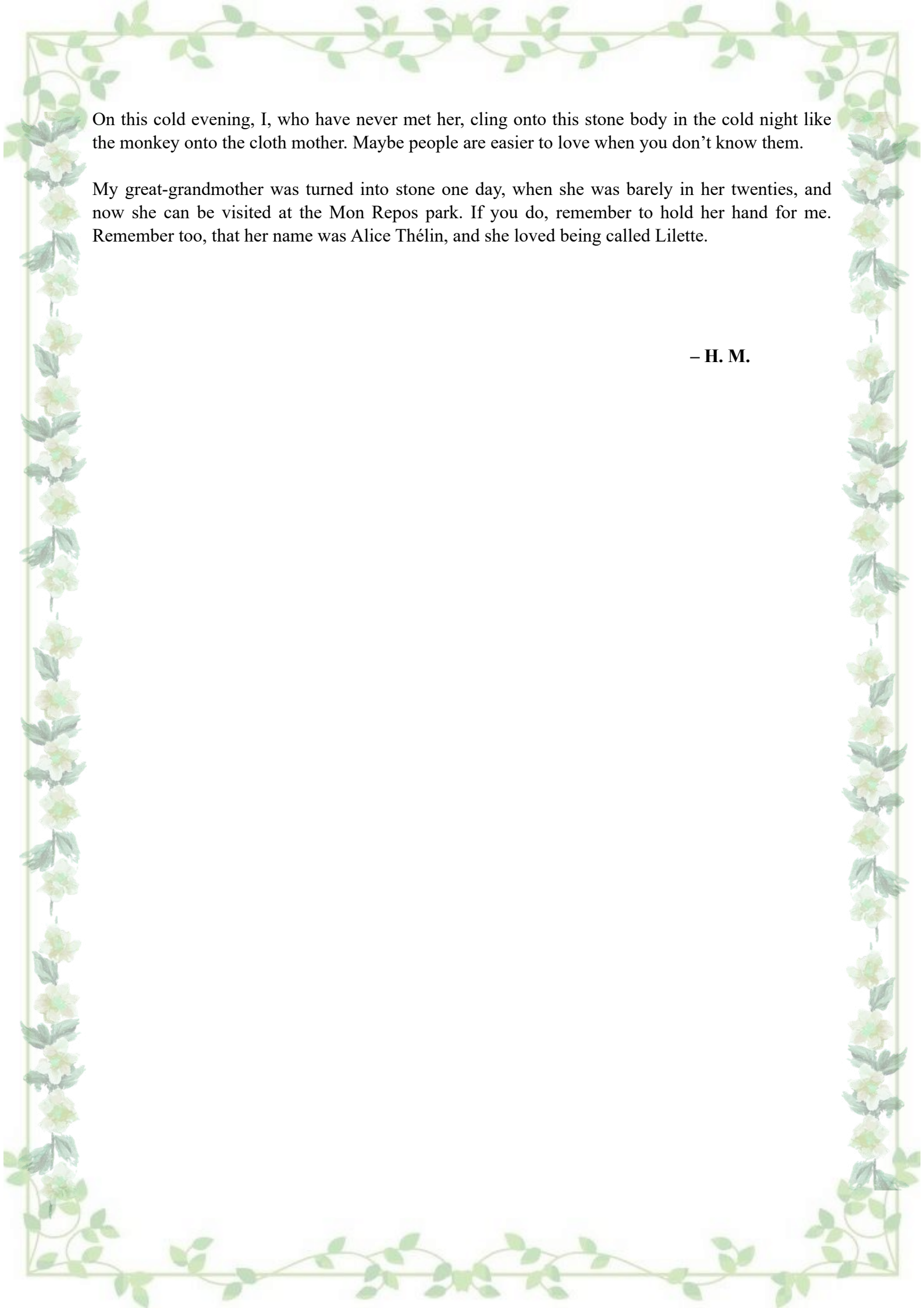
Yet here she sits, with my grandmother's face, staring up into the room of the man who carved her. His wife lived there too, they were both her lovers, but here she sits – cold and naked in the night air.

Her body looks like mine too, to some extent. She's flat but quite wide, and she has the same hips that I've always found ways to hide. We have the same flesh around the knees, that makes a bump on the inside of her leg. The same swell on the lower part of her belly, although mine is more pronounced. The same soft shoulders and arms.

At least when Medusa turned men into stone they couldn't look at themselves. It was probably painless from start to finish. When my great-grandmother was turned into stone, she had to endure the long hours being stared at, had to stay still all that time, then had to exist beside it all her life, this obsessively precise picture of a moment in her youth.

Sometimes people put lipstick on her mouth, or stickers on her body, addressing varying political causes. I wonder what she would have thought of it. She became an awful person, that's what I'm told when I ask about her. She lost her memory and became irritable and paranoid, clinging bitterly onto her anger and fear until the day she died. I know little about her life, half as many stories as those about her husband, my great-grandfather. I know she saved a very dear friend from the Gestapo by helping her change her name on her passport. Not much else, except that she was beautiful, and I only know that because I can see her now.

Only the sculptor's name appears engraved on the plaque below her feet. No name for the art. Only the stone remembers the day she sat in front of the man who found her beautiful, the day he carved her into eternity, and left her outside forever.



On this cold evening, I, who have never met her, cling onto this stone body in the cold night like the monkey onto the cloth mother. Maybe people are easier to love when you don't know them.

My great-grandmother was turned into stone one day, when she was barely in her twenties, and now she can be visited at the Mon Repos park. If you do, remember to hold her hand for me. Remember too, that her name was Alice Th  lin, and she loved being called Lilette.

– H. M.



MISCELLANEOUS

Boris, the Interview

On retirement...

Is there anything you will miss now that you are retiring? What will you miss the most?

Well, there are many things... For the things I won't miss, I won't miss filling out the forms for renouvellement d'enseignement. I won't miss the graded uncollected papers. But of course, I'll miss sitting with people and talking about Shakespeare or Miyazaki or teaching Lolita or discussing books and the conversations and laughs with the colleagues.

Did you like teaching?

Of course, yes. It's the most stressful and enjoyable part of the job.

Are you happy about retiring? What are your next projects?

I don't really have a project. I think some people are planners and projectors, there are engineers, and others are adventurers and creators. I think I'm the latter. I read a book by Roland Barthes called *The Adventure of Semiology* and the first sentence was: "L'aventure c'est ce qui advient"- it's so Roland Barthes. And I realised it corresponded to something I already know. In other words, I don't make the project, the project comes to me. I'm waiting to find out.

This is not a pause; it's in every aspect of my life and my teachings. For years I was teaching rhetoric and composition as a junior and everybody said, "You need to plan what you are going to say, a development, and how you'll lead us to the conclusion". And I thought, "Yeah sure, a method is a method". But if you start an essay and you already know what the conclusion is going to say, why don't you just start with the conclusion? If you read anything and you already know the conclusion in the first five lines, then you're wasting your time. The books I like, for example, every time you reread them something different happens.

General curiosity...

What do you do for a pastime?

I'm not sure. I never read to pass the time. Never ever ever ever. I do nothing to "pass the time".

What do you do outside of work?

I do a lot of sports. A lot. I've been to the mountains a lot. For more than 20 years I was an avid climber, mountaineer and skier. I still ski and do stuff, but less avidly than I used to. With some of my former colleagues, we shared a passion for the mountains. I did a lot of surfing and wind surfing. I flew paragliders for 12 years, including competitively, and including on the world stage. Younger, I played tennis.

Do you have a creative hobbit?

I wish... but no, that's my great conflict. Oh, but you spoke of projects. Maybe, possibly, hopefully, I will try playing the guitar. I started learning when I was an adolescent. I was very ad at it. I took classes, I hear the music, I can carry a tune but there's a disconnect between what I hear and what I can do. Of course, I never worked hard enough. But I hope to become a little bit more musical. It's unclear, and it's a bit of a romantic project.

What's your favourite food?

I have many favourite foods! I love to cook, so I like food that extols the taste of the ingredients. So, I love seafood, but I can be a complete vegetarian too. I was eating at a restaurant in Bienne, and the first starter was made of carrots, and the sauce was made out of the green of the carrots, and it was absolutely astonishing. It's called Restaurant du Bourg.

What do you eat and drink in the morning?

I never skip breakfast. I eat a lot all the time because I get hungry all the time. Also, between work and sports, I get hungry. I usually drink lemon water, then a green tea, and then I have a pretty sturdy breakfast. I wake up without an alarm clock every day between 7 and 8 o'clock. I'm fortunate enough to seldom have an appointment that requires waking before that.

What's your favourite book? Or your top three?

It depends on the period of time. One of my go-to books is the Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens. But also, Elizabeth Bishop and Sylvia Plath. And Modernist poetry in general. But when it comes to prose, these days I teach Melville. So, the whole of Melville. People tease me about Moby Dick which is admittedly amongst my favourite books. But I also read in French, and I think Proust is amazing. I think I gravitate towards works that contain entire cosmologies. So, in the modern era: Stevens, Melville, Proust, Musil... people like that. Shakespeare of course, I'm not a Shakespearian, but of course. That kind of construction where every poem, every play, contains an entire universe. These authors that rewrite the history of God, the world, of race, the history of history, in every single work they write. I'm much less interested in storytellers. I don't teach or read them. Sadly, I don't read for "pleasure", as they say. I don't read page turners. I'm not interested in illustration either. I love movies but in the same way, it's a question of style. I cannot stand movies where you can tell the point and message of it in the first 15 seconds. I tend to like old stuff, but mostly because I don't know much of the contemporary stuff.

Do you have a favourite movie?

I like Stanley Kubrix. I'm a fan of Hitchcock, and currently I'm trying to finish to work on Westerns, I like classic Westerns.

What's a movie that surprised you lately?

Lately? Barbie by Greta Gerwig, it thought was interesting. But also, Oppenheimer and Interstellar.

What's your favourite literary period?

Possibly Modernism, and what comes out of it. The Postmodern moment I find absolutely fascinating, especially from a theoretical point of view. It is a trajectory that corresponds to my time. To say it bluntly, it goes from Nietzsche to Derrida, my grandfather's 19th century. My biological father's: Roman Barthes, Foucault, Derrida... and all these people are more or less from the time of my father. My professors in university are also from that time. And my favourite novel: *The Sun Also Rises* by Ernest Hemingway was published a hundred years ago. His first works are now hundred-year-old favourite novels.

What's something you still want to learn about?

I would like to learn much more about, broadly speaking, physics. I'm fascinated by fundamental physical laws. I listen to Richard Feynman, the 1970s physics noble and one of the discoverers of Quantum physics. I'm fascinated by the history of the universe and notions such as time or gravity.

It fits with your taste in books!

I suppose so... It's a sort of osmotic translation of my intellectual pursuits. I find it fascinating that in our teeny, tiny galaxy of ours, we are probably the only thinking thing. In the whole universe, all bets are off, but in this tiny galaxy which has something like 400 billion stars, in all likelihood, we're the only thinking thing. And we don't know for sure, but we've been listening for a hundred years, and nothing has come to us... So yeah, I'd love to know more. But again, it's a romantic dream, like playing the guitar. It's wonderful to talk about it, but if you want to understand, you have to do the math.

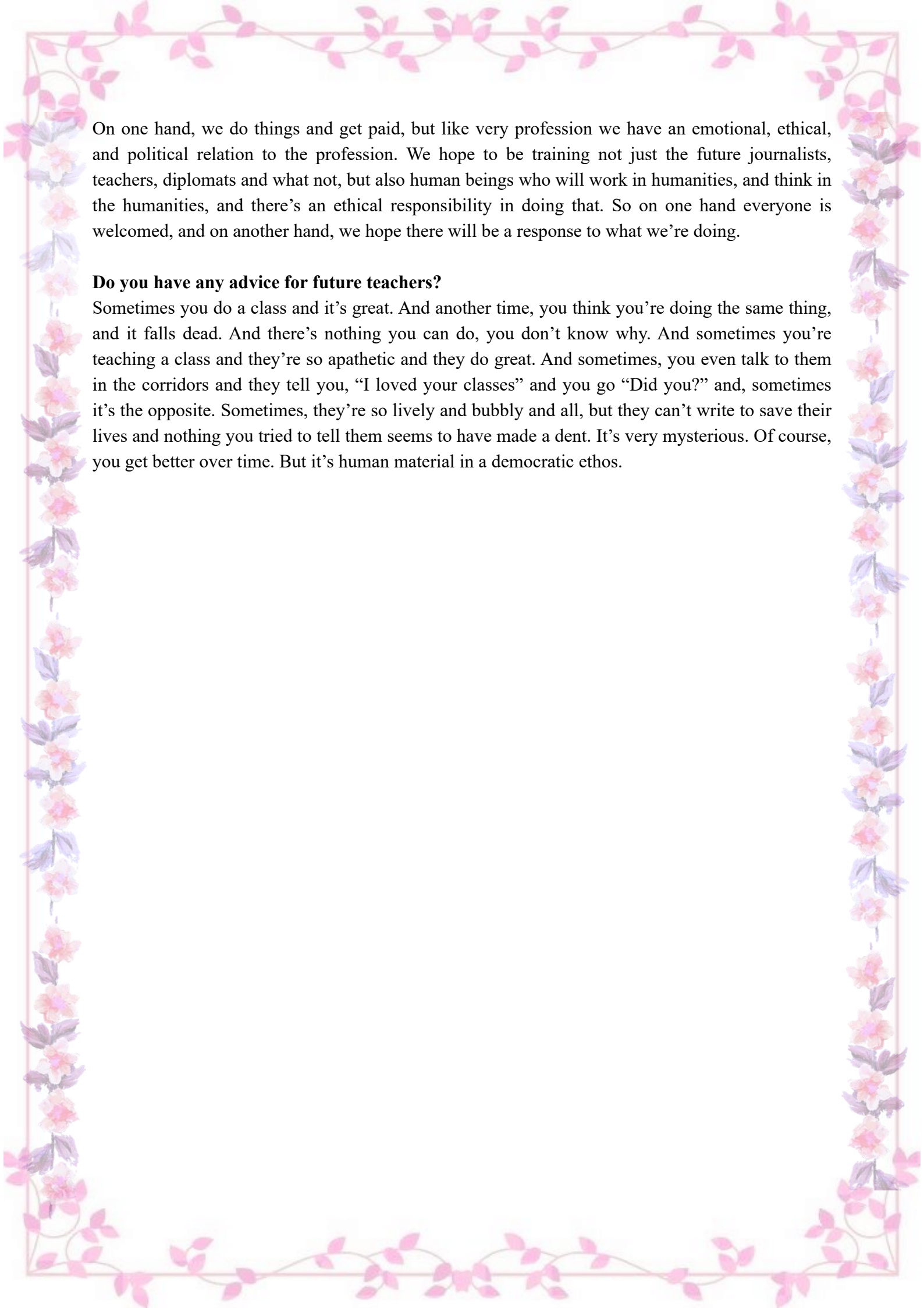
On your career...

Do you feel that this career has transformed you? If so, how?

Yes, absolutely. I realise in hindsight how little one knows when one starts in the profession. And it's not only because you don't have the appropriate tools or whatever. It's because you don't have this garden where you can pick things, and students are sometimes overwhelmed by the references and analogies. But, at the end of the day, it's what remaining in the profession brings you. Your teaching becomes richer.

Do you feel that this career has transformed your view of students?

Not really, no. Here in Lausanne, we teach in a democratic university. Everyone is unconditionally welcomed to come and attend classes. Of course, when you do that for a living, you hope that the people who come will be interested, curious, and desirous to learn. But that's what you wish, it's not in their contract. Nobody says that people must be interested, curious, or desirous to learn. Some people who become bus drivers, maybe they're not passionate about bus driving, but it's a job. And you learn the tricks of the job, and it's okay. So, we have this dual relationship to the profession.



On one hand, we do things and get paid, but like very profession we have an emotional, ethical, and political relation to the profession. We hope to be training not just the future journalists, teachers, diplomats and what not, but also human beings who will work in humanities, and think in the humanities, and there's an ethical responsibility in doing that. So on one hand everyone is welcomed, and on another hand, we hope there will be a response to what we're doing.

Do you have any advice for future teachers?

Sometimes you do a class and it's great. And another time, you think you're doing the same thing, and it falls dead. And there's nothing you can do, you don't know why. And sometimes you're teaching a class and they're so apathetic and they do great. And sometimes, you even talk to them in the corridors and they tell you, "I loved your classes" and you go "Did you?" and, sometimes it's the opposite. Sometimes, they're so lively and bubbly and all, but they can't write to save their lives and nothing you tried to tell them seems to have made a dent. It's very mysterious. Of course, you get better over time. But it's human material in a democratic ethos.

Beach Reads

Students have generously shared their favourite beach reads for the summer, so grab a towel, some sunglasses, one of these books and enjoy a relaxing moment on the beach. Don't forget to put on your sunscreen !

1. *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin

I felt very connected to this book when I read it two years ago, and I found myself reading again last year in Spring. When I am close to the sea or to a lake, I keep imagining scenes from this book (a similar feeling goes for *The Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf). It is an amazing quick read !

2. *The Power* by Naomi Alderman

A story about women having powers and taking the power? It is a wonderful dystopia echoing with the harsh reality we live in. Some passages made me proud (as a woman) and others made me question everything with its bittersweet victories... It really is a book worth reading!

3. *La Cuillère* by Dany Héricourt

It tells the story of a Welsh girl who just lost her father. To overcome grief, she goes on a road trip in France after the advice of her art teacher: "C'est l'été mademoiselle, perdez-vous." It is a slow, sweet book which feels like the skin of a peach.

4. *Metamorphosis* edited by Grist

It's a collection of solarpunk short stories. It imagines multiple possible futures, almost all bright, which allow nature, humans and technology to live together in harmony. It is an easy, hopeful read.

5. *Dune* by Frank Herbert

It might sound stupid, but the planet where the narrative takes place is an endless desert and thus covered in sand. If you're at the beach, the novel will appear more immersive! Moreover, the novel is about 800 pages long, which will make you busy for the whole travel.

6. *The Old Man and The Sea* by Ernest Hemingway

It's a short and captivating story that takes place in an aquatic environment. One might think that it is simply an old man wanting to bring a big prize (a giant marlin) back home, but it is above all a story about resilience and hope that Hemingway perfectly encapsulates thanks to his interesting prose!

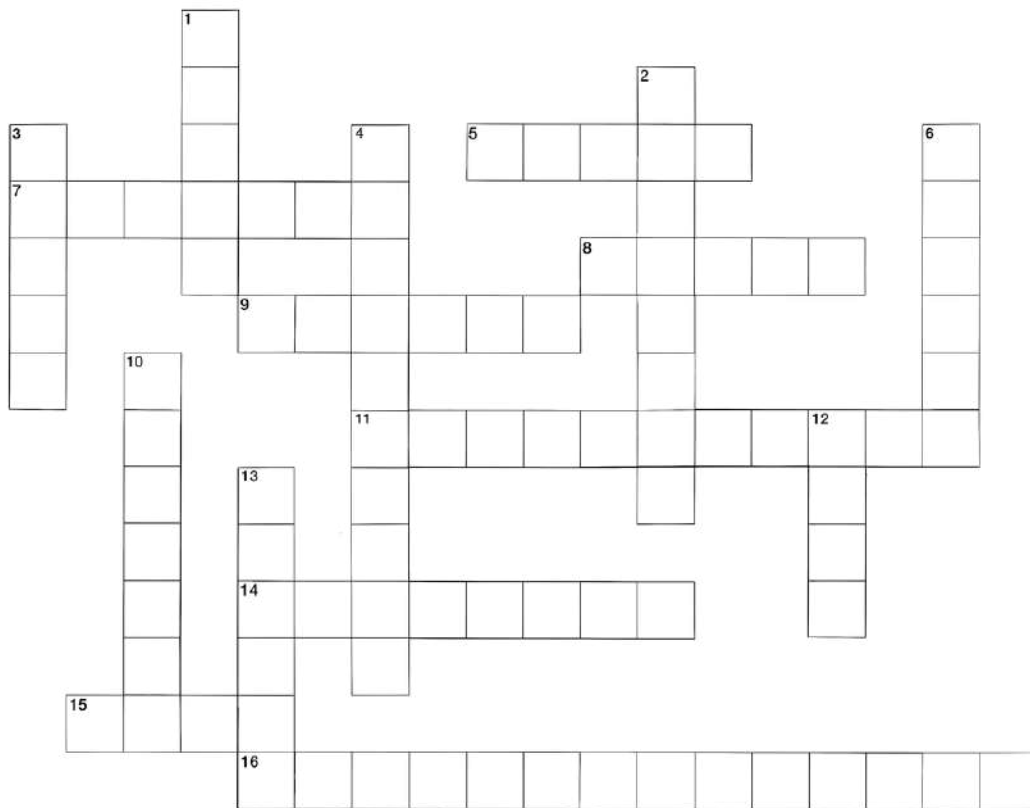
7. *we were liars* by E. Lockhart

I read it by the swimming pool, it tells the story of a group of friends during different summers, it is a really good read and there is a very surprising plot twist.

8. *Fourth Wing* by Rebecca Yarros

An amazing book series! It may be a bit long, but I read by the beach one summer because I couldn't put it down

CROSSWORD



DOWN

1. A long fictional prose narrative.
2. Linguistic students often mix it up with 'accents'.
3. A feature or idea that repeats throughout a story.
4. City in England that gave its name to famous Tales.
6. Place in NY, home of an early 20th century Renaissance.
10. Surname of an author who had the idea for their most famous novel in Switzerland.
12. Acronym of the first-year linguistics class.
13. A very angsty and tragic prince.

5. First name of the professor interviewed in this edition of MUSE.
7. Name of a Shakespeare character recently mentioned in a Taylor Swift song.
8. Probably the most famous theatre of all time...
9. A legendary medieval king (with a sword!).
11. 18th century movement featuring prominent authors such as William Blake and Lord Byron.
14. Surname of the author of "Recitatif" and "The Bluest Eye".
15. Both the name of a famous park and a character's alter ego.
16. Theme of this semester's writing competition.

ACROSS

CROSSWORD

Solution



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ACROSS

Exchange Students Interviews

In light of the theme of transformation, we thought asking some students who have done an exchange how the experience transformed them would be interesting ! If you've done an exchange and want to see how other people felt during theirs, or are thinking of doing an exchange and want to know what to expect, or if you're just curious, this article is for you ! Buckle up, because I hope you're ready for a whole bunch of wholesomeness !

Which university are you getting your degree in ?

1. UNIL
2. UNIL
3. UNIL
4. UNIL

Where did you do your exchange ?

1. King's College in London
2. University of Sheffield
3. Humboldt University of Berlin
4. Macquarie University in Sidney

How long were you away ?

1. 1 year
2. 1 semester
3. 1 year
4. 1 semester

Did you have any concerns, apprehensions or fears before leaving ?

1. To be honest I don't think I had that many. I'd been through tough times when I did the maturité bilingue in Germany. This time, I was older and knew I was going to study something I loved, I felt more confident in my ability to be on my own and to fit into a new country. And also English wasn't a problem in comparison to German, which was hell.
2. Yes, many.
3. Yes, mainly living alone and the language.
4. The animals in Australia scared me.

What's one thing (or more) you discovered about yourself while abroad ?

1. I *love* theatre.
2. I am a perfectly capable and functioning adult.
3. I can be much more independent than I thought I could be and I enjoy doing things alone.
4. I love meeting new people and getting out of my comfort zone to create new connections.

What's one piece of advice you would give to anyone wanting to do an exchange ?

1. Participate in life at your university to meet students from the country you're studying in. You'll likely meet a lot of study abroad students but it's also nice to get to know the place with people who grew up there and the best way to meet them is to join societies.

2. Even if you are scared, go and try it! It will broaden your horizons in ways you wouldn't have expected!
3. Be as organised as possible.
4. Say yes to everything there! Yes to that activity you're scared to do, yes to new people you're meeting in your classes, yes to this holiday with people you've met last week! But of course don't forget your boundaries.

Do you feel like this experience transformed some of your beliefs ?

1. I really think it did. It just made me think of what I want in life, what makes me happy, and how it's never a bad thing to try anything because sometimes you get amazing things out of it.
2. I don't think I had or have a lot of strong beliefs, however, I do think that going abroad modified the perception I had about some things. It definitely made me appreciate how lucky I am to be able to study without paying crazy fees or that I live in such a beautiful and sunny country and still get access to non-processed food. The experience of meeting so many international students also expanded my curiosity about discovering new people and learning about places, cultures or countries, so if anything, it just made me more curious than before!
3. I thought it would be easy becoming bilingual just by being in a foreign country speaking a foreign language. Turns out it's not enough and you have to actively search for occasions to practice.
4. I thought making new friends was impossible in little universities like Lausanne, but there are actually so many people who I didn't know yet and who are incredible. Now I feel like I can do many more things as well, because I know how to deal with big responsibilities

Do you feel like this experience transformed some of your behaviours ?

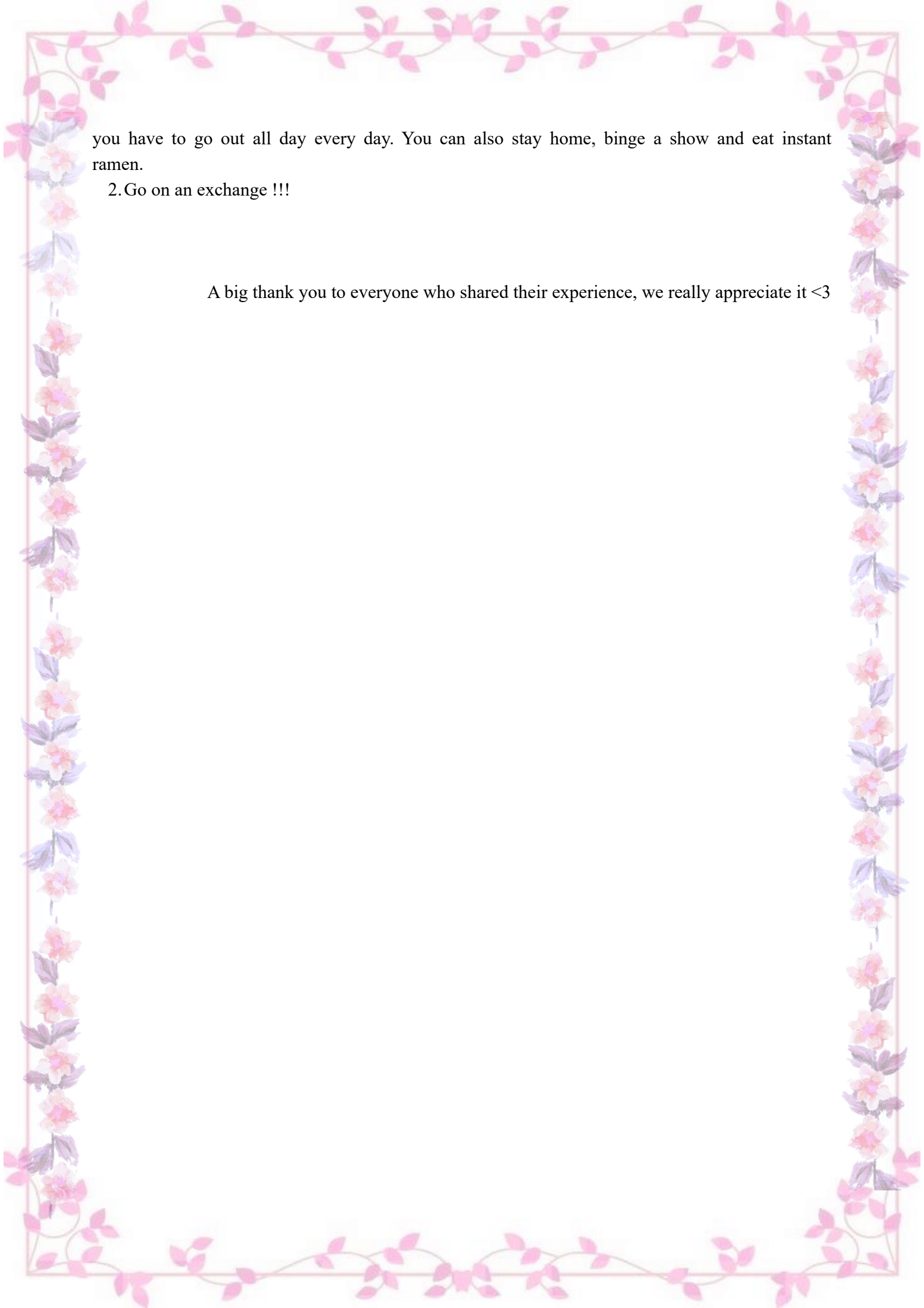
1. I think so. I learnt that it's so nice to be alone sometimes. Living alone, travelling alone is actually so great. And I also learned I'm a really lazy cook but I'm good at house chores!
2. -
3. I became more independent and less shy.
4. In general, I am more comfortable and less shy.

Do you feel like this experience transformed you as a person ?

1. Totally. I'm not sure I can explain it, but I think I became more mature, outgoing and confident about what my plans are for the future. London, please take me back.
2. I think it made me grow as person, as I realised how independent I can be and it made me less scared to engage in conversations with people I don't know. That was a lovely and empowering thing to realise.
3. I grew more independent, more proficient in German, less shy and more willing to do things alone.
4. Yes, I feel more mature now.

Anything else you'd like to add ?

1. Listen to the music produced in the city you're going to, it just puts you in such a mood. Also, go out but also don't put too much pressure on yourself. It's not because you're abroad that



you have to go out all day every day. You can also stay home, binge a show and eat instant ramen.

2. Go on an exchange !!!

A big thank you to everyone who shared their experience, we really appreciate it <3

Teasers of Marie Emily Walz's publications

Recently Published.....

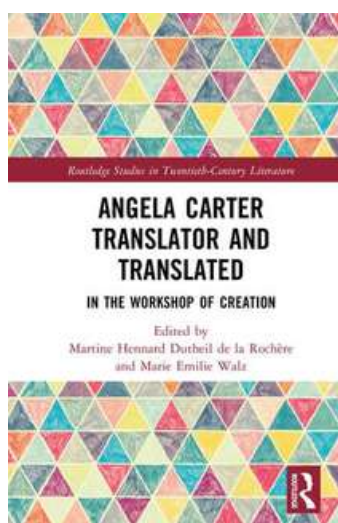
'The Musical Transpositions of Angela Carter's Fiction

Abstract

This chapter, based on an interview with singer and scholar Polly Paulusma conducted by the author, examines the reciprocal transpositions between music and Angela Carter's fiction. As Paulusma's research demonstrates, Carter engaged with folk songs during her time in Bristol, where she performed and studied traditional pieces alongside her first husband, Paul Carter, himself an avid folk song collector. Carter's fiction reflects this influence not only in her lyrical rewritings but also in the integration of musical structures and rhythms into her prose. Paulusma's 2021 album, *Invisible Music – Folk Songs That Influenced Angela Carter*, juxtaposes her own renderings of folk songs with Carter's texts, showcasing the interplay between folk traditions and the musicality of Carter's prose. Additionally, Paulusma transposes elements from Carter's fiction into her own music, underscoring the intermedial and dynamic essence of Carter's writing practice, which seamlessly bridges the realms of literature and music.

Forthcoming book chapter

Walz, Marie Emilie. 'The Musical Transpositions of Angela Carter's Fiction: An Interview with Polly Paulusma'. *Angela Carter Translator and Translated: In the Workshop of Creation*, edited by Martine Hennard Dutheil de la Rochère and Marie Emilie Walz, Routledge, 2026, pp. 308–26.



Teasers of Marie Emily Walz's publications

Coming Soon....

“How often has this been told?”

Abstract

This chapter explores how fairy tales are rewritten as short stories for an American modern-day adolescent audience in Francesca Lia Block's *The Rose and the Beast: Fairy Tales Retold* (2000). Block's collection transforms well-known tales usually associated with childhood into narratives which address themes relevant to its adolescent readership. Block's texts thus foreground trauma, self-discovery, personal growth and the reclaiming of narrative power. The collection's structure moreover builds a community of adolescent protagonists. Individual stories lace together several versions of a given fairy tale while the collection winds threads between stories, either sequentially or in groups. Through this interweaving of versions, rewritings and adaptations and this sewing of thematic threads and narrative patterns, Block's *The Rose and the Beast* inscribes into the fairy tale recognisable teenage figures and experiences, thus making the narrative relatable and engaging for its contemporary adolescent readership. In doing so, it offers a liminal narrative fabric which simultaneously relies on adolescent readers' knowledge of fairy tales to bring them comfort and consolation, and unsettles their expectations by twisting these famous stories in startling new ways, inviting readers to rethink and reinvent the narratives they have so often been told.

Walz, Marie Emilie. “How often has this been told?”: Francesca Lia Block's Rewritings of Fairy Tales as Short Stories for Adolescents in *The Rose and the Beast*. *Short Forms and Adolescents*, edited by Karima Thomas and Cécile Meynard. Brill.



Paris Trip Interviews

The African American Literature trip to Paris is a well-known and beloved escapade among English students of the university that takes place annually during the Spring semester. It is organised by Agnieszka Soltysik Monnet and has existed for fifteen years! If you've never heard of it or if you were interested in going but didn't know what to expect, we asked a bunch of students to share their experience of the trip, so this will give you an *avant-goût*!

In which year of your cursus did you take the Paris trip?

1. I took it once on my first year of BA and once on my last year of MA.
2. I took the Paris trip during my first year of the Bachelor's degree.
3. First year of Bachelor.

What prompted you to go? Any particular classes, themes?

1. First year, it was just to discover Paris through the African American literature lens as I had never heard of this history. Then I discovered many African American writers throughout my studies and wanted to retake the trip with my literary baggage.
2. I was interested in discovering new authors and learning more about African American history and culture.
3. I decided to take the class and go on the trip basically only because of the theme (African American authors in Paris), on which I didn't know much about.

What did you like the most about the trip?

1. The tour was amazing.
2. What I liked the most was the friendships I made during the trip and everything I learned.
3. I really enjoyed the tour around the city and actually getting to know Paris under a different light, following these artists' lives.

What is the part you liked the most about Paris?

1. Exploring Paris from the very central hostel we were staying in.
2. What I liked most about Paris was the cultural atmosphere of the city and I also loved discovering places connected to the writers and artists we studied.
3. Definitely, the museums, the bookstores (!) and the landscapes (everywhere you turn, it looks like straight out of a postcard).

What is one takeaway about the afro-american culture in Paris that you would like to share?

1. That it shaped the city and that it's a must read for everyone.
2. One important takeaway for me was discovering how Paris became a place of inspiration and artistic expression for many African American writers, musicians, and artists.
3. It's more of a general thing but through the class/trip you get to see the great impact of African-American artists in Europe, which is not talked about as much. It's always something distant. While actually seeing the places these people worked and lived in, it's helping reimagine Europe's culture as not only white and male dominated as we learn in school.

Did the trip change your vision of the city, and how?

1. Yes by not only seeing white people's literary life (the salons littéraire, the monument) but also black people history woven into the city. The Alexander Dumas monument was particularly enlightening for this.
2. I already loved Paris before the trip, but it gave me a completely new perspective on the city. I discovered a side of its history that I had never really thought about before.
3. It was my first time to Paris (8) so I didn't really know what to expect. But it was indeed a nice first impression.

Did you go alone or did you know people on the trip? And how did that impact your experience?

1. I went alone and met nice people from different circles.
2. I went with two friends, but during the trip we also met many new people. Those people ended up helping me throughout my BA in English, so the trip had a lasting impact both academically and personally.
3. I knew people on the trip, and for some things it was great because we could organise activities like going to museums or to dinner together. However, it wasn't the best when they wanted to go party (but that's on me being 90 years old inside and introverted HAHHAHAHA).

Had you been to Paris before?

1. Yes many times.
2. Yes, I had been to Paris before.
3. No, it was my first time.

Before going, how aware were you of the African American presence in Paris?

1. Not aware at all. I did not realize that there was such a strong cultural presence.
2. Before the trip, I was not really aware of the African American presence and influence in Paris.
3. I had absolutely no idea sadly, but that's also why I wanted to know more and took the class.

Before going on the trip, how did you think it would be like? What were your expectations?

1. Exactly like this !
2. Before going, I expected the trip to be mainly academic, focused on lectures and historical visits. However, it turned out to be much more immersive and engaging than I imagined.
3. I didn't know what to expect, it was my first ever trip in Uni as well! I only expected it to be more rushed to be honest, but it was nice to have some time to explore the city a little bit, and get to know some people as well.

Paris Trip : Special feature

This year, the trip was especially interesting as one of our very own student took an active role in its organisation. We asked him a few questions to get a gist of his experience from the backstage!

So you're a Masters student who helped in the organisation of the trip. What led to this?

I knew that, for my spec "New American Studies" it was a possibility to work on some projects that are held every semester at the English department. Having still a couple of credits to validate for my spec I decided to ask Agnieszka if it was possible to work something out. I thought it was a good idea personally, academically and also that I could really bring something more to the participants. Indeed, I have been to Paris quite a few times and also I am big into jazz, which is one of the points often explored in this subject of African American writers and artists coming to Paris in the first part of the 20th century.

What were some of the things you organised for the students?

Basically, I did three things. First I did some research regarding the night and daily activities for the dates of the trip. I found out that there were a lot! (Jam sessions, jazz concerts, expositions, etc.) I also made a couple of jazz playlists for the participants (modern jazz & jazz classics). The third and most important addition was a presentation of jazz in Paris that I presented for one of the sessions before the trip. All these activities were obviously fun and interesting (it was the first time I was able to speak about jazz, which I love, in an academic context) but it did take time. Indeed, obviously as I was doing this also for ECTS credits, I pushed myself to be rigorous and to do a serious work.

How different was it from a simple student's experience?

Before the trip it was different in the sense that I felt I was doing an essay or any basic validation for a class. During the trip it was not different from being a simple student, except maybe for the attention and intention to be more involved than if I was not also validating credits.

Between the two experiences that you had on the afro-american Paris trip, what is your fondest memory of it?

I would say this time, we went to see a photography exposition at the MEP, which I suggested to the participants. The subject was very linked to our trip (African diaspora in Europe, and afro descendants identity) and the expo was genuinely amazing.

What changed, in your perspective of Paris, after taking those trips?

I believe it is probably the same than most of participants: a whole new knowledge of both African American history and culture & of Parisian history and culture emerged. I learned a lot, and even now I still comprehend new things regarding the Parisian mindset, the mentality of the city in itself and of African American identity. The ambiguous relationship of Paris (and France in general) regarding people of color makes more sense even nowadays.

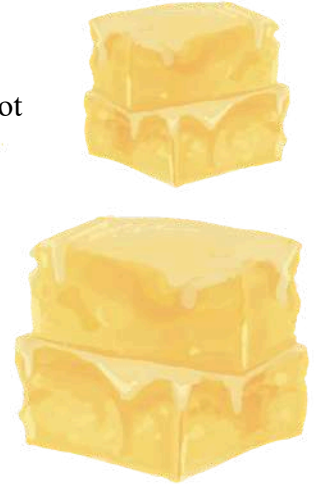
A very special thanks to everyone who took the time to participate in the interview!

RECIPES

From our readers

This is a recipe for what we call **Lemon "Brownies"** – the mix of sweet and sour makes it a perfect pastry for the spring and summer.

- First, pre-heat your oven to 180 °C.
- Mix 115g of softened butter and 150g of sugar together (you can put less sugar, depending on whether you have a sweet tooth or not ;)).
- Add the zest of one lemon and mix.
- Add 2 eggs, mixing after each addition.
- Add one tbspn of lemon juice to the mix.
- Finally, add 100g of flour and around 6-7g of baking powder (usually, it's half a sachet).
- Pour everything in square pan that you will have greased beforehand.
- Let it cook for 20 minutes and then rest for 10 min.



In the meantime, prepare the icing:

- Mix 80g of icing sugar with 1,5-2 tbspn of lemon juice and the zest of half a lemon.
- You can add more or less icing or lemon juice depending on how thick or liquid you want the icing to end up being.

Then pour it on top of the cake and spread it evenly. Let it rest, and then savor it :)

To make **Milk Cinnamon Tea**, you need:

- Milk of your choice (whole, oat,...)
- Cinnamon
- Honey
- Vanilla (optional)



Boil half a cup of water and half a cup of milk. Add cinnamon to your discretion and stir well. Add honey and vanilla if you like.

It tastes so good, and makes me think of the drink in Ponyo!

To make a **Summer Yogurt (Protein) Cake**, you need:

- 4 eggs
- 500g Greek yogurt
- Honey (according to taste)
- 50g cornstarch
- Vanilla extract (optional)
- Raspberries (or anything you want; blueberries, chocolate chips, etc.)

Mix everything except the raspberries together into a smooth batter, then add the raspberries and mix again. Pour the batter into a mold (ideally rectangular, about 20cm long) lined with baking paper or butter. Cook at 160 degrees for 40-45 minutes. Remove from the oven and let cool well before taking it out of the mold.

It will still look wet and not firm, that's normal ! Just wait and enjoy !
Keep it in the fridge ☺

To make **Coconut Lime Tofu**:



- Dry 1 or 2 blocks of tofu by pressing down on it with kitchen paper; then cut it into cubes
- In a hot pan, stir 1 tbsp sesame oil, 1 sliced onion, 3-4 cloves of minced garlic, 1 knob of grated ginger and 1-2 tbsp of red curry paste
- Stir well, then add 250ml coconut milk, 1 tsp brown sugar, 1-2 tbsp soy sauce and about 1 lemon's worth of juice
- Let it simmer and get nice and thick
- Once the consistency is to your liking, add the tofu (either pan-fried in oil or left uncooked) and stir

Serve over rice with scallions and sesame seeds.

To make a **Summer Salad**:

- Peel some carrots into thin slices
- Slice some red onions
- Add any of the following fruit: strawberries, melon or raspberries
- Add ricotta or feta

Pop it all into a salad bowl and mix!

Staff Confessions

Last year, the staff shared their most questionable literary habits. This year, things got a little more personal. We asked them what they'd tell their student selves, the one thing no one on campus would ever guess about them, their winter survival rituals and their most unrealistic New Year's resolutions. The issue may have arrived slightly after winter, but the confessions still hold up. Not a lot of answers, but definitely enough to make you smile.

Anonymous 1 : 🕯️

Anonymous 2: 🦇

Anonymous 3: 🟩

Anonymous 4: 🗡️



Image by Bianca Van Dijk
from Pixabay

1.If you could talk to your student self, what's the one piece of advice you'd give — before they accidentally sign up for a 300-page reading list? Life advice or damage control — your choice.

- 🕯️ Don't be in such a hurry to grow up!
- 🦇 Get lost in your reading. And don't stress about grades. Sometimes the worst results are what you learn from the most.
- 🟩 Allow your text to surprise you, close reading does not work if you already know what you're going to find.
- 🗡️ Do a mobility! You'll study abroad after your MA and love it: start earlier and double the fun!

2.What's something your students or colleagues would never guess about you?

A hidden obsession, an unexpected hobby or something that makes you suspiciously human.

- 🕯️ Even though I'm a scholar of Gothic literature and cinema, I can get really scared when I watch horror films and have to turn off the sound, or stop it, or watch through covered eyes.
- 🦇 I talk to other people's dogs. It's upsetting that in Switzerland, this is frowned upon.
- 🟩 Sorry, nothing hidden or unexpected about me, I am an open book.
- 🗡️ I once won a medal at a national fencing competition as a teenager, long after I stopped training seriously. I enrolled because my coach forced me to, the result came as a surprise to everyone and I think I never competed again after that.

13. What's your current "Roman Empire"?

That one oddly specific thing you can't stop thinking about — academic, pop culture or entirely unexplainable.

🕯️ I'm reading Virginia Giuffre's very sad memoir right now and thinking about how tough it is for girls in our very gender-imbalanced culture. It's tough and confusing for boys too! And even more for non-binary or trans people. Patriarchy just sucks.

🦋 Why wide trousers?

🧩 I keep thinking that once upon a time someone saw a bug on a bed and thought "I'm going to name it bedbug." Okay, makes sense. However, this begs a question: who named cockroaches?

✂️ How the 21st century will be understood by historians and archaeologists of the future, and what kind of sources they'll have access to. I'd love to know and it keeps popping up in my head.

4. Before the year ends, do you have a ritual, a comfort movie or a small tradition that keeps you sane through December?

Bonus points if it involves nostalgic re-watches, seasonal snacks or pretending to rest.

🕯️ Therapeutic re-watches: Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Muriel's Wedding, Harold and Maude, Elf.

🦋 Buffy the Vampire Slayer

🧩 Die Hard and Lethal Weapon are great Christmas movies I don't mind re-watching in December :P

✂️ I listen to A LOT of Christmas carols. Monday to Sunday, dawn to dusk. And I usually rewatch the Narnia movies and/ Downton Abbey.

5. What's your most unrealistic New Year's resolution — the one that doesn't stand a chance past January 3rd?

We'll print it for accountability.

🕯️ Cut down on chocolate.

🦋 Wasting less time on admin

🧩 To stop procrastinating. Eventually.

✂️ "This year I'll finally read all the classics I'm ashamed to say I never opened." As if...



Grief

Trigger warning: this next section deals with themes of death and grief.

A Remarkable Example of How Collective Grief Can Be Carried

In Crans-Montana, the heart shape created by skiers on the mountain catches the eye. It reminded me of how grief can be carried: quietly, together, and without falling apart. There is something almost sacred in the way a community silently aligns itself, holding the weight of loss as one.



Image: ©Sule Demir Sariyerli

January 9 was the national day of mourning in Switzerland. Grief, over time, has been approached in various ways—ritualized, acknowledged, and carried forward. That day, as part of this ongoing process, a day is dedicated to social cohesion, a deliberate moment in which personal sorrow becomes part of a collective rhythm.

Watching the events unfold, I saw many of the psychological concepts we learned in school come to life. Grief was not treated as a sudden, one-off reaction. Instead, it was held as a process, unfolding in stages. This approach felt both protective and profoundly humane.

In the first days after the tragedy, people gathered in churches and smaller, intimate spaces. Memory books were created. Spaces were opened where presence mattered more than speech; silence was permitted, even welcomed. Considering the shock and numbness that often follow societal loss, this approach acted as a gentle anchor, offering stability in the midst of emotional turbulence.

The collective memorial did not occur immediately; it was held about a week later. The timing itself spoke volumes. In most societal tragedies, the response is often extreme: either everything is amplified at once or quickly pushed aside. Here, both individual grieving and collective acknowledgment were given space to breathe. The process recognized that grief, when rushed or ignored, can become fragmented or even harmful.

The careful orchestration of this mourning was likely made possible by the active involvement of professionals. Seeing familiar teachers and experts in these spaces highlighted that grief was not left to chance; it was supported with intention, structured not merely to be experienced, but to be carried forward.

Typically, in societal grief, emotions are either left entirely on the individual's shoulders or lost in the crowd. Guilt, anger, helplessness, and despair often mix, creating a tangled emotional web. Without a framework to hold them, grief can freeze or resurface in unexpected ways, sometimes leaving echoes for future generations. Here, grief was made tangible—through writing, through designated spaces, and through ritual. Pain was given a home. It did not hang aimlessly in the air but was anchored in place, allowing the community to process it together without suppression or dissolution.

The presence of the French and Italian heads of state at the national ceremony reinforced that this loss did not belong solely to the victims. Their attendance conveyed a simple yet profound message: “You are not alone.” By acknowledging the grief collectively, the nervous system receives a signal that this pain is shared. Individual guilt, isolation, and loss of meaning are softened. Grief is not politicized here; it is communalized.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of the ceremony was the national memorial itself. There was no rush, no spectacle—only pause, waiting, and acknowledgment. This stillness, this deliberate slowing down, seemed almost instructive. It demonstrated that grief, when held with care, can teach resilience, connection, and empathy. The silence itself became a vessel, carrying both sorrow and understanding.

Witnessing this process, I realized that grief does not have to be chaotic or isolating. When carried consciously, in community and with ritual, it transforms. It becomes a shared experience rather than a solitary burden. The structured, thoughtful approach in Switzerland offers a model not just for mourning a particular event, but for understanding how grief can be integrated into society, providing both space and support for those who carry it.

In a world where loss is often hurried past or left unspoken, this example stands out. Grief, when acknowledged and carried together, can heal, connect, and teach. And perhaps, like that heart on the snow, it can remind us that even in the coldest, quietest places, warmth, solidarity, and careful attention can hold us together.

– Sule Demir Sariyerli

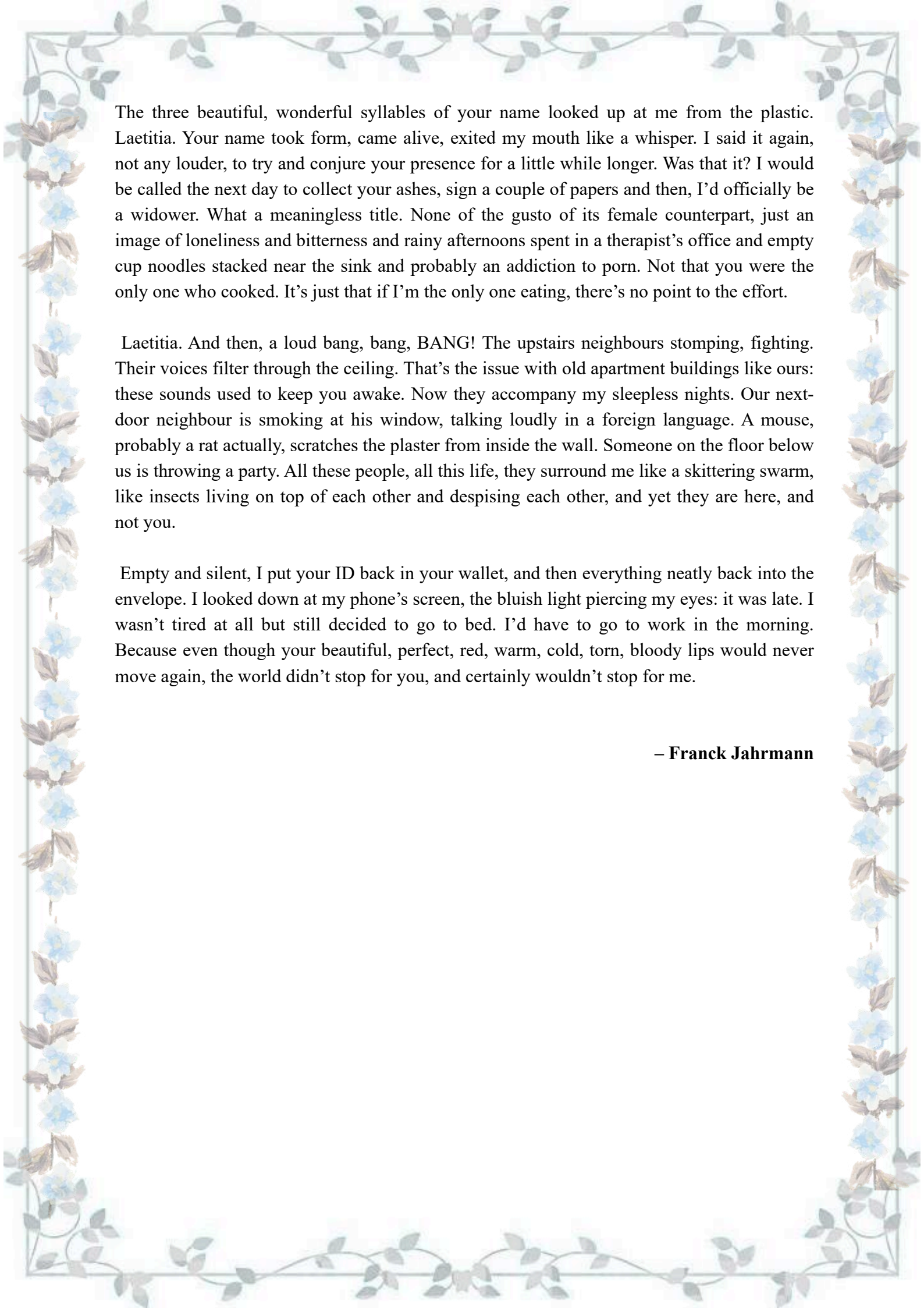
Laetitia

I got the call on a Tuesday morning. A woman—or man, I honestly can't remember—told me that regrettably something awful had happened to you and, while she—he—understood I might need a bit of time, the method of disposal of the body had to be decided today, an unfortunate administrative matter really, and also belongings are kept up to forty-eight hours before disposal, unless of course I wanted them to be donated. The phone call was altogether rather quick, and when it ended, I put my phone down on the desk and sat there for a while, dumbfounded, the words taken from my mouth like the breath from your lungs. I didn't scream or cry or shake, emotion scraped at the inside of my chest but never came out. I couldn't bring myself to run to where they were keeping you; I wanted to delay the reality of your death. I must have looked bored because soon enough someone came around and tried to give me some work. I told them to put it in the tray, and they did, before walking away with a sneer.

I left eventually, of course, and walked to the morgue, though it wasn't exactly nearby. It was after five (I'd stayed at the office until my workday was finished) so there was only one doctor on duty, an old man, I'm fairly sure, with an out-of-place sort of smile on his cold face. Can I see the body, I asked, but he said no, the car had fucked you up too bad and really it was for my own protection because it wasn't pretty. Then he looked at me, the corners of his mouth curved upwards and he said that was unless I was one of them freaks who enjoyed it. I said I wasn't, then signed a paper and wrote in "cremation" before taking the envelope containing your belongings.

I walked home deaf to the bustle of the streets. The envelope remained unopened for a while, lying on our dining table in the corner of the living room. Not that I was busy doing something else, of course. I just stared at it. When I finally did open it, all I found inside was your phone, your wallet, your keys, some change and the receipt from the restaurant you'd just eaten at with one of your friends—I'd have to call her at some point. You never carry a purse, you say it's a symbol of patriarchal oppression. I took your ID out of your wallet and looked at your face, your perfect, perfect porcelain face with that minuscule hint of a smile that could charm a border guard. The picture was only black and white but I didn't need it to see you—the easy roundness of your cheeks, the one dimple digging a tiny shadow next to your mouth, your eyes that even now, as I write these lines, send shudders of expectant excitement down my spine. The laughter behind those eyes still rings in my ears.

The man at the morgue had said the impact had torn you apart. A firefighter friend of mine said once, I remember, that when victims' heads are damaged beyond recognition, the men that come aren't technically authorised to make an identification based on the content of the wallet. So, to make the process quicker, rather than call a doctor, they pick up whatever's left of the face and lay it on an inflated rubber balloon to give it shape. Then they can see if the victim matches the ID. Did they put the torn pieces of your face on a rubber balloon, Laetitia?



The three beautiful, wonderful syllables of your name looked up at me from the plastic. Laetitia. Your name took form, came alive, exited my mouth like a whisper. I said it again, not any louder, to try and conjure your presence for a little while longer. Was that it? I would be called the next day to collect your ashes, sign a couple of papers and then, I'd officially be a widower. What a meaningless title. None of the gusto of its female counterpart, just an image of loneliness and bitterness and rainy afternoons spent in a therapist's office and empty cup noodles stacked near the sink and probably an addiction to porn. Not that you were the only one who cooked. It's just that if I'm the only one eating, there's no point to the effort.

Laetitia. And then, a loud bang, bang, BANG! The upstairs neighbours stomping, fighting. Their voices filter through the ceiling. That's the issue with old apartment buildings like ours: these sounds used to keep you awake. Now they accompany my sleepless nights. Our next-door neighbour is smoking at his window, talking loudly in a foreign language. A mouse, probably a rat actually, scratches the plaster from inside the wall. Someone on the floor below us is throwing a party. All these people, all this life, they surround me like a skittering swarm, like insects living on top of each other and despising each other, and yet they are here, and not you.

Empty and silent, I put your ID back in your wallet, and then everything neatly back into the envelope. I looked down at my phone's screen, the bluish light piercing my eyes: it was late. I wasn't tired at all but still decided to go to bed. I'd have to go to work in the morning. Because even though your beautiful, perfect, red, warm, cold, torn, bloody lips would never move again, the world didn't stop for you, and certainly wouldn't stop for me.

– **Franck Jahrmann**

Seaside

Now about my garden, my paradise almost lost, (...)
My Grandmother



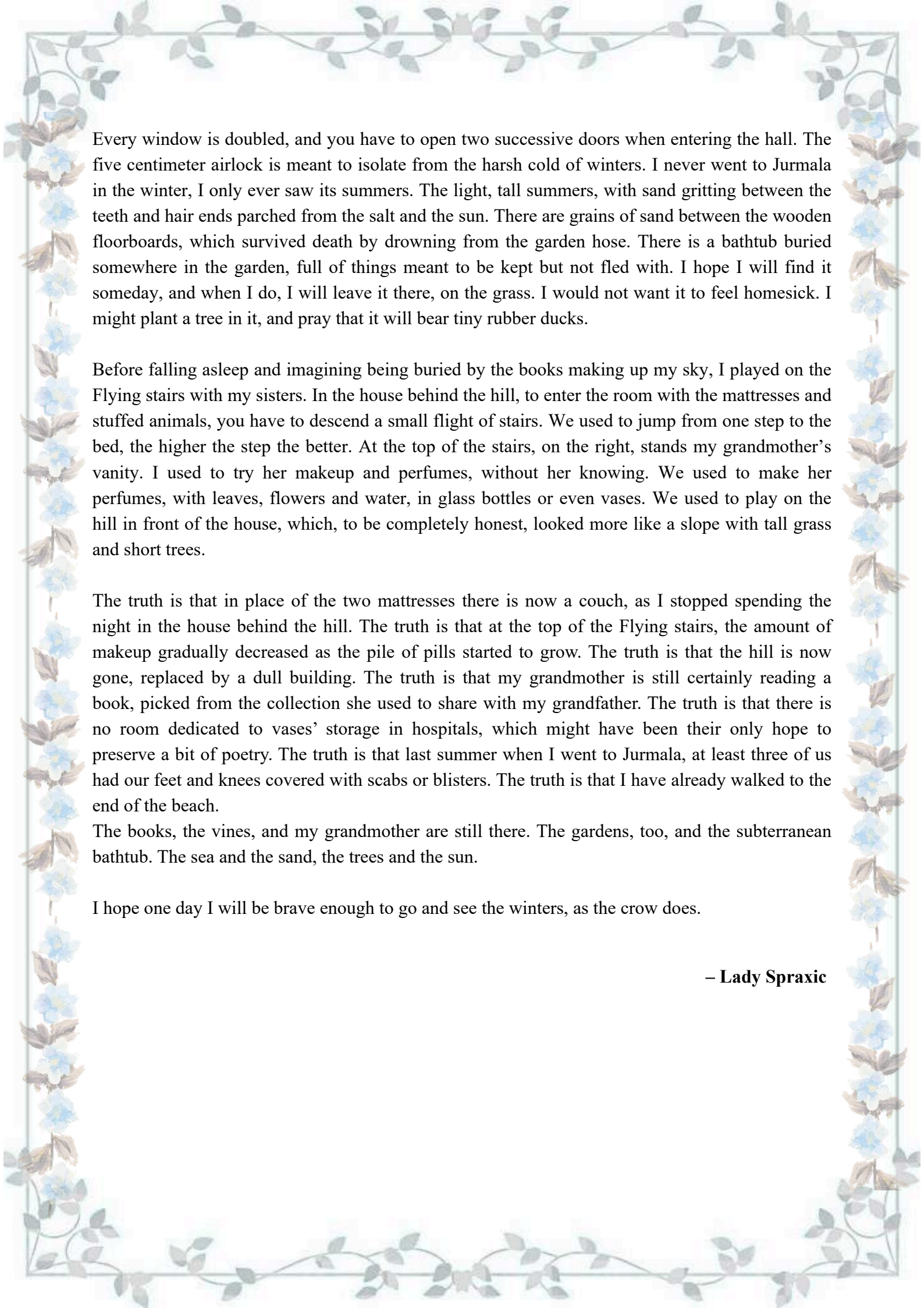
Image: ©Lady Spraxic

The first time I went to Jurmala, there were ladybugs in the seashells.

Like all seas, the Baltic Sea is infinite. What makes her special is that her beach also chose not to halt. Water and Sand escort each other forever, and maybe even throw themselves over the world's edge, I don't appreciate walking enough to find out. Over the ribbon of sand rises a ribbon of trees, and they take great pride in guarding the waves. I never saw any fairies living there, but I know they do from the way the sun glides between the leaves and falls down on the moss.

More than twenty five hundred kilometers from the water and four countries away - as the crow flies -, stands the house behind a hill. Vines are gently strangling its walls, but carefully avoiding my grandmother, who is most certainly reading a book picked from the collection she shares with my grandfather. She had to leave the Endless Beach when she was still a child, and after some time, she ended up here, in the house behind the hill. As the years passed, the house became a home, and saw her son grow up. A few years later, it welcomed her granddaughters. When we were children, she gave us spoonfuls of honey: the hard kind, the better kind. One of the rooms holds two big mattresses, surrounded by pillows and stuffed animals. There are shelves suffocated by books, starting from the middle of the walls up to the ceiling. When you rest on your back on the bed, it feels like the whole of the Library of Alexandria is falling down on you.

In Jurmala, just behind the sea, the sand and the trees, rests another house. It is the house behind the beach.



Every window is doubled, and you have to open two successive doors when entering the hall. The five centimeter airlock is meant to isolate from the harsh cold of winters. I never went to Jurmala in the winter, I only ever saw its summers. The light, tall summers, with sand gritting between the teeth and hair ends parched from the salt and the sun. There are grains of sand between the wooden floorboards, which survived death by drowning from the garden hose. There is a bathtub buried somewhere in the garden, full of things meant to be kept but not fled with. I hope I will find it someday, and when I do, I will leave it there, on the grass. I would not want it to feel homesick. I might plant a tree in it, and pray that it will bear tiny rubber ducks.

Before falling asleep and imagining being buried by the books making up my sky, I played on the Flying stairs with my sisters. In the house behind the hill, to enter the room with the mattresses and stuffed animals, you have to descend a small flight of stairs. We used to jump from one step to the bed, the higher the step the better. At the top of the stairs, on the right, stands my grandmother's vanity. I used to try her makeup and perfumes, without her knowing. We used to make her perfumes, with leaves, flowers and water, in glass bottles or even vases. We used to play on the hill in front of the house, which, to be completely honest, looked more like a slope with tall grass and short trees.

The truth is that in place of the two mattresses there is now a couch, as I stopped spending the night in the house behind the hill. The truth is that at the top of the Flying stairs, the amount of makeup gradually decreased as the pile of pills started to grow. The truth is that the hill is now gone, replaced by a dull building. The truth is that my grandmother is still certainly reading a book, picked from the collection she used to share with my grandfather. The truth is that there is no room dedicated to vases' storage in hospitals, which might have been their only hope to preserve a bit of poetry. The truth is that last summer when I went to Jurmala, at least three of us had our feet and knees covered with scabs or blisters. The truth is that I have already walked to the end of the beach.

The books, the vines, and my grandmother are still there. The gardens, too, and the subterranean bathtub. The sea and the sand, the trees and the sun.

I hope one day I will be brave enough to go and see the winters, as the crow does.

– Lady Spraxic

someday without her

it's about my mom. or love. or fear. or all of it at once.



Image: ©Giulia Massy

sometimes it hits me in the softest moments - when i'm alone, but not lonely. when i feel safe, warm, still. and that's when it shows up: the quiet dread that one day, i'll have to live without my mom.

it never comes like a scream. it comes like a thought you try to look away from. it whispers something terrible but true, and it doesn't leave when you ask it to. i could be watching a movie she likes, eating something she made, hearing a laughter that sounds a little like hers - and suddenly i'm spiralling into a future i don't want to know. a future where she isn't here. and i can't breathe.


i can't explain how strange it is to love someone so much that your brain tries to prepare for their absence before it even exists. like it's trying to build a version of you who can survive it, even though no part of yourself believes that person could be real.

it feels unfair. it *is* unfair.

and what's worse is : it's ordinary.

it happens to everyone. and yet, when it's your own mother - the voice you've always known, the arms that knew how to hold you before you even knew how to ask - the thought of losing her feels like being asked to live without gravity.

i try not to think about it but the thought comes anyway, like a wave i can't outrun. and in those moments, i feel five years old and ninety at the same time - too young to carry it, too old to ignore it.



people say “enjoy your time with her,” and i do. i really, really do. but part of me is always scared that love this deep is the price i’ll pay later. that every laugh, every “text me when you get there,” every little gesture i’ll one day replay in my head is already turning into memory.

and i hate that.

i hate that even while i’m loving her, some part of me is already grieving. i hate that my brain can’t separate the joy from the fear. i hate how fragile love makes us. but more than that, i hate how inevitable it is.

and yet... this morning, she texted me a meme that made no sense and said *ti amo*.
and i laughed. and i cried a little.
and maybe, for now, that’s enough.

Giulia Massy



PROSE

Door Metaphor

I have been asked to tell a story. Truth is, I have been so caught up in myself lately, that I could hardly think of anything else to talk about. So I will comply, I will tell a story, a story of myself, and how everything would have happened had I been slightly better. Better at what? you ask.

Better at everything.

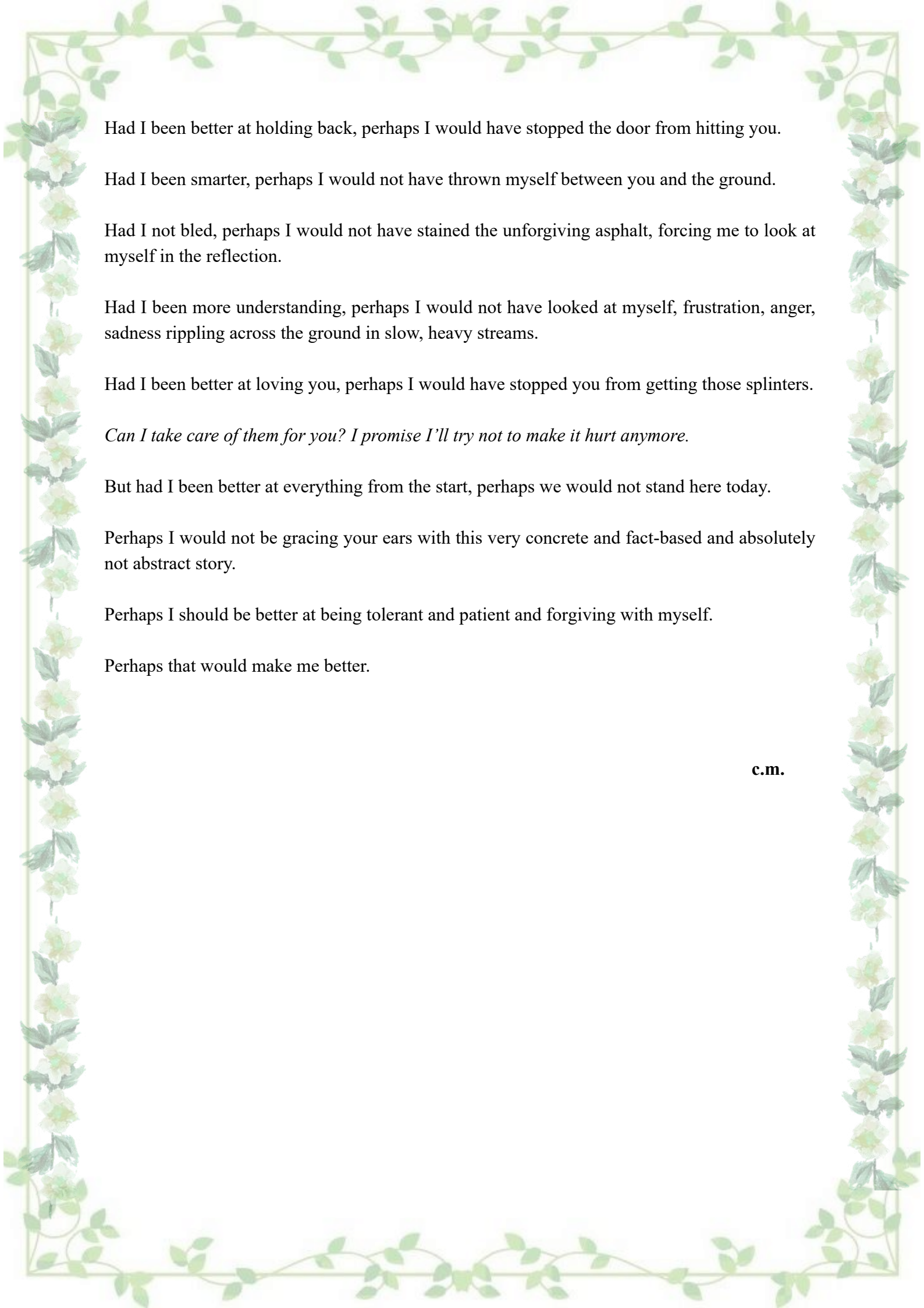
Had I been better at dealing with my emotions, I would not have unconsciously opened a door that was already starting to crack ajar. Perhaps unconsciously is not an appropriate word, because I was partly aware of what I was doing. I think carelessly would be a more precise term. I knew the door was ajar, I pulled it open, just a little bit more, not caring if it could or would be opened from the other side.

Maybe I wanted it to hurt you, just a little bit.

Had I been better at being mature, I would not have let you get hurt by this door. Heavy wood, big brass handle, details which are simultaneously audacious and bold, I should have seen the high probabilities of you getting hurt. I would have realised that this potential door-wound would be beneficial for neither of us, that the only winner would be the door, standing proud on its hinges as it rushed towards you with an aggressive gust of wind, the creaking sound like a hysterical laugh.

Had I been better at seeing things coming, I would have anticipated this gust of wind. I would not have pulled the door open even wider, knowing it could do this. I would have shut it firmly and indefinitely. I would have known it would aim straight for you. I would have placed myself firmly in front of it and pushed with all my might to close it and bolt it. I would have hammered multiple locks into it to make sure it could not be opened again, ever, by anyone.

But I was not better. I pulled the door open and smiled as it stayed right where it was, remaining just a threat to you. But then the wind blew hard and strong and sudden and unexpected and the door flew wide open, hurtling towards you. I tried as best as I could (I still could have been better there, mind you) to hold it back, nails digging into the wood, splintering my fingers, clenching my teeth and pulling back with all my might.



Had I been better at holding back, perhaps I would have stopped the door from hitting you.

Had I been smarter, perhaps I would not have thrown myself between you and the ground.

Had I not bled, perhaps I would not have stained the unforgiving asphalt, forcing me to look at myself in the reflection.

Had I been more understanding, perhaps I would not have looked at myself, frustration, anger, sadness rippling across the ground in slow, heavy streams.

Had I been better at loving you, perhaps I would have stopped you from getting those splinters.

Can I take care of them for you? I promise I'll try not to make it hurt anymore.

But had I been better at everything from the start, perhaps we would not stand here today.

Perhaps I would not be gracing your ears with this very concrete and fact-based and absolutely not abstract story.

Perhaps I should be better at being tolerant and patient and forgiving with myself.

Perhaps that would make me better.

c.m.

‘My mistress reeks’: the Rarity of Honest Love Built on True Beauty in Shakespeare’s Sonnet 130

The sonnet became incredibly popular during the Renaissance, shifting the focus from the divine to human emotions, love, and beauty – central elements of the new humanistic worldview. Shakespeare’s love sonnets were inspired by Italian models, but they diverge significantly from the tradition’s idealization of the mistress and the lover’s suffering. In Sonnet 130, love is presented as a non-idealized phenomenon in everyday life, rather than a perfect abstraction. Through the anti-poetic description, the intimacy, and the structural shift, Sonnet 130 manifests the unusual but sincere love for an ordinary woman, protesting against the Petrarchan imaginative exaggeration.



Image: ©Dremluiga Mykola

The set of realistic comparisons emphasizes that the image of beauty, promoted in love poetry, is highly exaggerated and is far from reality. The woman’s physical features are described one by one: starting with her eyes and moving downward. On the one hand, the speaker evokes the poetic imagery through the powerful symbols of perfection: “sun” (1), “coral” (2), “snow” (3), and “roses” (5). On the other hand, these natural elements just serve as a brilliant background against which the woman treading “on the ground” (12) seems flawed. Unlike the language of Petrarch’s sonnets, the mistress is not only ordinary, but ironically “nothing like a sun” (1). Such a negative simile underlines how hyperbolic the traditional poetic ideal is. Indeed, the literal depiction of sun-like eyes is more absurd than anything found in reality. Moreover, by hypothetically using “if” (3) the speaker encourages the reader to imagine the “black wires” (4) on her head. In this ironic way the normal black hair contrasts with the romanticized golden one – the standard of beauty. Sonnet 130, with its anti-poetic description, offers a parody of the feminine perfection in the Petrarchan blazon due to its unrealism.

Against the backdrop of ideals, the speaker shares his own point of view based on his experience, evoking intimacy. Since the poem is written in the sonnet form, the reader can understand that the speaker is a man, despite the absence of proof. Through the personal pronoun “I”, Sonnet 130 uses a first-person perspective, creating a sense of the direct, non-distanced self-expression. The frequency of personal references evokes an intimate tone of what the speaker has “seen” (5), “see”, or “never saw” (11) in his life. This is important in shaping his own point of view of the woman, to whom he has a special attitude. By repeatedly using “my mistress” (1, 8, 12) the speaker points out his closeness to her rather than to a goddess (11) whom he has never seen. In addition, this relationship is valuable to him, as evidenced by the fact that his mistress remains in the spotlight in all fourteen lines. Finally, through the possessive pronoun ‘My’ (13) the speaker declares that his love is individual and belongs only to him. This stylistic choice suggests the subjective nature of love according to personal perception rather than to a general one.

Leaving the speaker free to express himself, the sonnet's turn interrupts the twelve-line list of comparisons, changing the course of thoughts. Although the poem belongs to the tradition of love poetry, the love itself is almost hidden in the quatrains by the lack of tender expressions. However, the volta appears after the twelfth line (which is significantly later than in the Italian model) making the opposition between the content of twelve lines and two lines more radical. Through the strong phrase "And yet, by heaven" (13), the speaker seriously indicates that there is no doubt about his feelings, shifting the focus from irony to sincerity. In fact, his love exists despite all the imperfections mentioned in the quatrains. That is why, through the statement of the "false compare" (14), the couplet reconstructs the whole meaning. The falsehood can be understood as a misinterpretation of beauty in the poetic image traditional for that era. After all, the speaker's love is "rare" (13), because it doesn't need the exaggerated source of inspiration to resemble the Petrarchan ideals. The structural function of the volta allows Sonnet 130 to introduce the emotional expression - delayed until the couplet - in order to revise the traditional love in a poetry and to show its alternative.

Thus, Sonnet 130 rethinks the notions of beauty in the context of love, prioritizing the real image rather than the bright poetic one. So, this aesthetic category does not correspond to the Petrarchan blazon that is represented, in a parodic way, as false. Nevertheless, the main idea lies not only in protest against the artificiality of poetic conventions. Sonnet 130 replaces the traditional model in love poetry with a new, more honest one, affirming its true value.

Anastasiia Pokorna



Image: ©Anastasiia Pokorna

Ór Ólafs saga Trekattar

Dear fellow students of the English department,

My contribution to this year's edition of MUSE is somewhat uncommon and requires a little context: a friend of mine is currently studying at the University of Uppsala and has recently sent me a photocopy of a handwritten short text in Old Norse. It was scribbled on a loose leaf that he found in a late 18th century mathematics book. He sent it to me to have my opinion on what it may be, since I have an interest for the language. I have to say I have until now remained puzzled: the style and vocabulary is reminiscent of Icelandic sagas, but the main character is totally unknown, and the story itself. All I can say is that the name of the main character, that I have translated as "Olaf Mousetrap", uses the otherwise obscure word "trekotttr", a hapax (possibly calqued from Old Irish "fidchat") that literally means "wooden-cat" and refers to a mouse trap.

After I sent him my translation and thoughts, my friend seems to be convinced that the text is an original fragment from a lost saga. For my part, I am rather inclined to think it is nothing more than a translation exercise by a student at the university that simply forgot it the book when returning it. Still, I find it amusing and have reproduced it below in full, as well as my tentative translation, in case it might spark any interest.

Yours truly,

M.

Björn Melrakki hét hersir, er kornby í Danmörku stýraði. Hann var gørviligr ok kunnigr höfðingi. Fólkk Bjarnar kǫlluðu hann Melrakki af því at skegg hans algæft hvitt var. Helgi hét kona Bjarnar. Hon var sælkona ok elskaði Freya mjök ok blét opt hana. Nær hann geraði brúðlaup til hana, Bjorn gaf Helga tveir kettir, sem hon kolluðu Freya ok Frey. Samför Bjarnar ok Helga var kátr ok snemma varð hon með barni ok elr sveinbarn. Nær sveininn var vatni ausinn, Björn hann gefit nafn ok kallaði Ólafr. Í barnaldri var Ólafr frækn ok vaskr vaxinn, ok hljóp um þorp með kottunum móður hans. Af ykkur nam hann mjök, hvartveggi kunnandi ok skyn, ok hann má sjá ok heyra betr en aðrir. Svá segja menn at hann má veiða mýss með likru móti ketti. Af því var hann þadan kallaðr Ólafr Trekotttr.

There was a chieftain called Bjorn the White Fox, who ruled a village in Denmark that was called Cornby. He was an accomplished man and a wise ruler. His people called him "White fox" because (of this,) that his beard was fully white. Bjorn's wife was called Helgi. She was a fortunate woman, greatly loved Freya and sacrificed often to her. When he married her, Bjorn gave Helgi two cats, that she called Freya and Frey. The marriage of Bjorn and Helgi was cheerful and she soon was with child and gave birth to a boy. When the boy was sprinkled with water, Bjorn gave him a name and called him Olaf. In childhood, Olaf had grown bold and valiant, and he ran about the hamlet with the two cats of her mother. Of those two he learned much, both knowledge and perception, and he could see and hear better than other men. It is said that he could catch mice in the same manner as a cat. Because of this, he was later called Olaf Mousetrap.

The Apartment Above

She moves into the 1960s flat thinking that it will be peaceful, warm, and beautiful. A nice neighbourhood with little patches of greenery and little lampposts and quaint little statues reminiscent of the weeping angels lining the footpaths. A small supermarket down the road and the rehearsal space for the opera house across the street; a tram ride away from the city-centre. The gothic cathedral – freshly whitened – is the first striking landmark of the city. Then the mosaic tunnel with the glass ceiling lined with luxury shops. A beautiful city, she thinks. A beautiful home, she hopes.

She throws a little party on the third day of the third week of her living there. She invites those who share her staircase in hopes of making new friends, and they all come. All within the first half hour, all but one.

The conversation eventually flows to the man occupying the flat above hers, the strange visits, the unusual voices, and the odd noises all animating the chatter. The man does not make an appearance that day. But the noises, the noises do.

That night, at thirty-three minutes past three o'clock, amidst the deafening silence of a city asleep, she hears the scratching. It creeps from the ceiling and edges carefully towards her, leaving goosebumps in their wake.

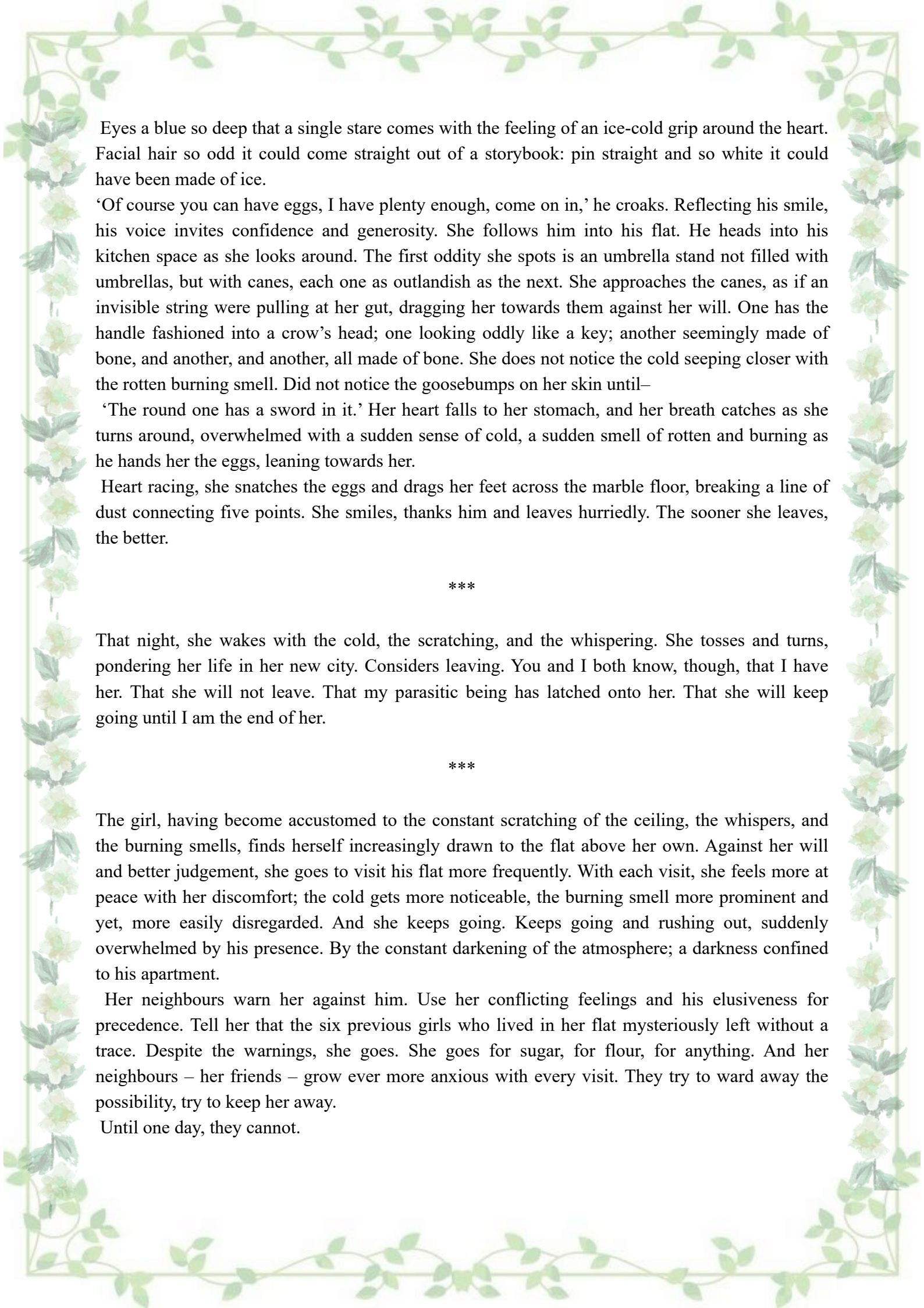
She sees – or she suspects she sees – the man one morning. Only out of the corner of her eye as she skips to the café across the road to catch breakfast with the lovely lady from the fourth floor. He glides in and out of her line of sight and leaves a trail of cold behind him. She barely sees him for a second, yet the cold seeps into her, settles in her bones and stays with her through coffee and beyond. The cold persists as she walks up the stairs to her flat and leans against the radiators. It stays as she showers in water so hot it reddens her skin. The memory of the man stays with her into the night, as does the cold.

She disregards the *click clack* that seems to be following her, that her books seem to be whispering, and the odd burning smell she cannot seem to get out of her apartment. She has no time for otherworldliness in her day-to-day.

They formally meet when she has forgotten about the cold, the scratches, and the whispers. It is Christmas Eve and she needs eggs for her family dinner, so she climbs the steps and knocks on the door of the apartment above hers. He answers quickly and with an oddly warm smile. He dresses formally and eccentrically, with a red and deep blue suit and heavily leaning on an ornate cane. He has hair so pale it looks silver.



Image: ©Anonymous



Eyes a blue so deep that a single stare comes with the feeling of an ice-cold grip around the heart. Facial hair so odd it could come straight out of a storybook: pin straight and so white it could have been made of ice.

‘Of course you can have eggs, I have plenty enough, come on in,’ he croaks. Reflecting his smile, his voice invites confidence and generosity. She follows him into his flat. He heads into his kitchen space as she looks around. The first oddity she spots is an umbrella stand not filled with umbrellas, but with canes, each one as outlandish as the next. She approaches the canes, as if an invisible string were pulling at her gut, dragging her towards them against her will. One has the handle fashioned into a crow’s head; one looking oddly like a key; another seemingly made of bone, and another, and another, all made of bone. She does not notice the cold seeping closer with the rotten burning smell. Did not notice the goosebumps on her skin until—

‘The round one has a sword in it.’ Her heart falls to her stomach, and her breath catches as she turns around, overwhelmed with a sudden sense of cold, a sudden smell of rotten and burning as he hands her the eggs, leaning towards her.

Heart racing, she snatches the eggs and drags her feet across the marble floor, breaking a line of dust connecting five points. She smiles, thanks him and leaves hurriedly. The sooner she leaves, the better.

That night, she wakes with the cold, the scratching, and the whispering. She tosses and turns, pondering her life in her new city. Considers leaving. You and I both know, though, that I have her. That she will not leave. That my parasitic being has latched onto her. That she will keep going until I am the end of her.

The girl, having become accustomed to the constant scratching of the ceiling, the whispers, and the burning smells, finds herself increasingly drawn to the flat above her own. Against her will and better judgement, she goes to visit his flat more frequently. With each visit, she feels more at peace with her discomfort; the cold gets more noticeable, the burning smell more prominent and yet, more easily disregarded. And she keeps going. Keeps going and rushing out, suddenly overwhelmed by his presence. By the constant darkening of the atmosphere; a darkness confined to his apartment.

Her neighbours warn her against him. Use her conflicting feelings and his elusiveness for precedence. Tell her that the six previous girls who lived in her flat mysteriously left without a trace. Despite the warnings, she goes. She goes for sugar, for flour, for anything. And her neighbours – her friends – grow ever more anxious with every visit. They try to ward away the possibility, try to keep her away.

Until one day, they cannot.

Her next visit will be her last. When the wind howls, when the thunder cracks, and the rain pelts the windows, I will take her. I will take her and she will never be the same again. Never see the sun or hear the birds again.

She wakes with a sun beam piercing her eye, magnified by the stain glass. She gets dressed and draws the curtain, letting the dazzling sunlight enter her apartment. Her feeling of existential dread, now becoming unnoticeable, is noticeably absent as she hears the birds chirping from the tree across her window. She smiles as she dresses and goes for breakfast with her favourite neighbour. The light warms her body and her bones, filling her with joy.

In her peace, her body takes her not to her own apartment, but up an additional flight of stairs, to his. As she ascends, the temperature drops unnoticeably with every step she takes. Until she steps onto his floor with a momentary shiver, soon forgotten.

She knocks routinely, he lets her in, walks into the kitchen to get her a drink. Her only; she has never seen him eat or drink. This time, though, the atmosphere is anything but routine. While the outside was warm and welcoming, the landscape outside of his window was gloomy. Instead of the glowing sunlight, an angry storm. Instead of the birds chirping, the fast, rhythmic, hypnotic patter of the rain on his own stained glass windows—the bright red roses appearing dark and bloody.

She gasps as she sees the dust on the grey marble now tracing the shape of a five-point star, the realisation gripping her in an ice-cold fist. She feels, more than hears, the regular beat of a cane-assisted gait, each step echoing in the pit of her stomach. Feels every last bit of warmth leave her body, a persistent cold and unease replacing it. She feels, more than sees, his looming presence, no longer cold and welcoming, but the heat radiating off him burns its surroundings, stiff, and his stance twisted. She sees more than feels his wretched hands press on her shoulders and guide her to the centre of the room, of the dusty shape; watches herself squirm and drag him towards the wall; watches them crash into the umbrella stand. She blindly reaches behind her and brushes the bone-shaped cane, immediately letting go. Real bone. Breath restrained by terror, she reaches again, and finds a round handle. Metal. She yanks, her hand shooting up, as the cane drops. She swings at him repeatedly, and sinks the blade into his charred skin.

She will not be his seventh sacrifice.

And she runs.

– Anonymous

the night the paintings moved

Museums are supposed to resist time. That is their quiet promise: that nothing here will change. The same woman will always gaze out of her gilded frame, the same storm will forever hover above the painted sea, the same fruit will remain impossibly ripe in its bowl. Paintings, we are told, are still things. But that night, sometime after the museum closed, the paintings began to move.

I had stayed longer than most visitors ever do. The place had grown quiet in that particular way museums do after hours, when footsteps disappear and even the air seems careful not to disturb the rooms. The lights hummed faintly above the gallery walls. At first it was small enough that I thought I had imagined it. The girl with the pearl earring had turned her head. Not much – only slightly, just enough that the light caught the curve of the pearl differently than it had a moment before. I stood there for a while, trying to decide whether it was the angle of my body or the trick of a shadow. When I stepped closer, she seemed still again, her gaze suspended somewhere between invitation and secrecy.

In another room, the sky was restless. Above the small painted village, the thick blue night had begun to shift. The stars, which I had always known as frozen spirals, seemed to turn slowly in their bright halos. Not spinning, exactly. Breathing, perhaps. The sky unfolded itself with the patience of something that had been waiting a long time to be noticed. I stayed there longer than I meant to. Eventually I looked away, and when I turned back, the sky had gone still again.

In the last room, the farmer and his daughter stood stiffly before their white wooden house, pitchfork in hand. Their expressions had always seemed too severe to belong to real people. But as I stood there, longer than most people ever would, the farmer's grip shifted slightly along the handle of the fork, and the woman beside him seemed to draw a quieter breath. Not much, but just enough. I realised then that it was not movement that required patience, it was attention.

Morning came slowly. Light gathered at the edges of the tall museum's windows, and somewhere a door unlocked with a metallic click. Soon the galleries filled again with the low murmur of voices and the shuffle of shoes across polished floors. People moved quickly from painting to painting. Some paused long enough to read the small labels beside the frames. Others lifted their phones, capturing the paintings in bright rectangular flashes before moving on. But no one stayed very long.

The girl with the pearl earring held her head perfectly still. The night sky above the village froze in its blue spirals. The farmer and his daughter stood as rigid as ever beneath their narrow windows. Nothing moved.

I understood then that the painting had not begun moving that night: they had always been moving, we had simply never looked long enough to see it.

Giulia Massy



POETRY

From Dis to Dis

Scoot over, young punks, and make sure you don't miss
The tale of your passage from Dis and to Dis:

Desire was born on the same day as you
Have entered the world to Discover it too,
Distinguishing early Disdain from Disgust
You learned how to laugh, how to smile and Distrust;

The bliss was soon over, the newsreel Dispelled,
Illusions that Disney sold, out they went;
Dismay and divorce Disinfected your home,
And coming from school you sometimes felt Disowned;

Destiny called then and you had to choose
Which class to Disrupt and which weak to abuse;
Displeased by Disparity, the one percent's hissing,
The rich and the grand and your folks you were Dissin'

* * *

Descending underground, no more action,
Distracted from Distraction by Distraction,
You join the workforce, you now have new idols:
Dystopia Dismembers its Disciples;

Disloyalty, Disease may wear you down -
Dissected as you visit your hometown,
Distorted sight, the state of Disrepair,
Disgraceful mutt, your nights are filled with mares;

Yet outside your District you shall see

The Distant Disc of gold above the tree -
Dissymmetry will flood your senses since,
In gratitude you'll whisper "it begins."

Preparing then to leave that shore for this
You shall recount your steps from Dis to Dis.

K. M.

My Heart

Every moment of my life is a reason to love
Every moment of life is magic, a dance
It's about lightness, it's about brightness,
When you come into my heart

You, you, you - only you
Love, love, love - my love,
You, you, you - just for you
Love, love, love - in love

In your eyes I get lost, every time I see you
In your smile I feel only grace and love,
It's about timelines, it's about lifelines
When you come into my heart

You, you, you - only you
Love, love, love - my love,
You, you, you - just for you
Love, love, love - in love

– Inna Marichi

Follow the QR-Code to
watch the music video on
YouTube.



Image: ©Inna Marichi

You died, you killed me

You died, you killed me,
A shy, calm young man,
Having just tasted the delicate taste of his life
While you only caused strife.

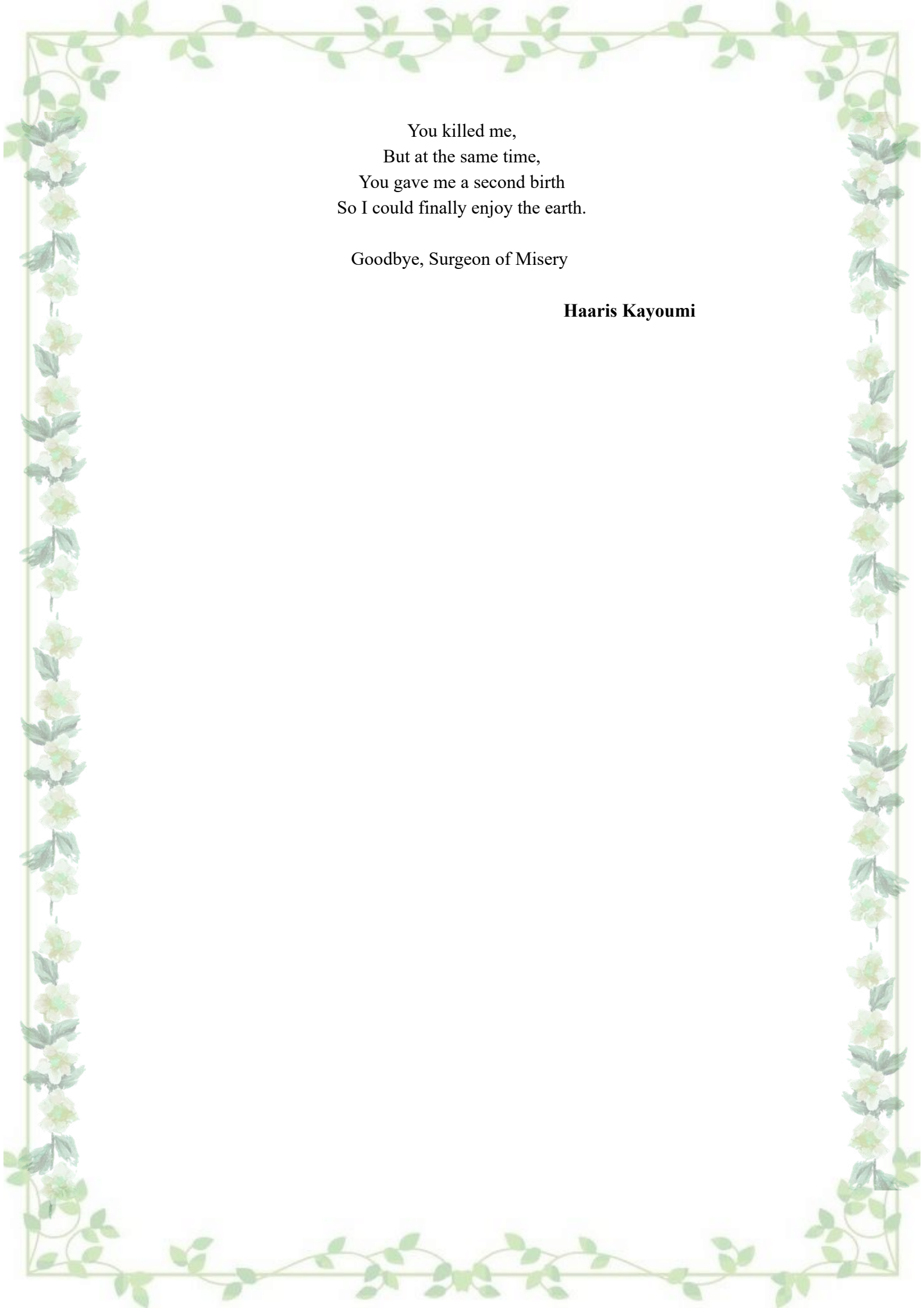
You were a disease,
To me, to your family
And to yourself
How could you be a model for your next of kin
When you refused to look within ?

You died,
A man so bright,
Yet saw no light
In his vicinity.

Despite saving others weekly,
You never saved yourself
And further damaged your family
Admired by strangers
Estranged by your "loved ones"
A mere moronic genius.

You killed me,
Your supposed successor.
My life in Technicolor then,
A sour black and white after.
Drowning in the pure that you loved,
Wondering how I could
Mend my shattered wings
Which could not fly.

You killed me,
Yet today, I don't hate you
As I did in December
Four drawn-out years ago.
After all,
How could I hate you,
Without hating me ?



You killed me,
But at the same time,
You gave me a second birth
So I could finally enjoy the earth.

Goodbye, Surgeon of Misery

Haaris Kayoumi

THANKS

Thank you to everyone who partook in this semester's edition!

A huge thank you again to *Books Books Books* for sponsoring us and being jury in our writing competition !

Thank you to all the students who sent us their poems, stories, even songs! We are so grateful for your continuous participation and trust!

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Thank you to all the members of the jury, who made the writing competition possible, read, graded and gave us such kind feedback about the texts !

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Thank you to all the teachers who advertised our magazine in their classes !

Thank you to everyone who supported the magazine in any way, we appreciate all of you !

Happy holidays and good luck to everyone with any exams or assignments !

Love,
the MUSE Team



*I'm not a violent person, but I make things
with aggression*

*I'm not a violent person, but my work is one
exception*

*I won't let you take it from me
Changes the colour of the air that I breathe*

– Paris Paloma

