



The Daphne Review

Spring 2018

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Sculpture

You're becoming more of a blunt,
angular form of a person.
You were used to having soft edges
blended in by smudges of pastel
and water colour paints that filled the entirety
of your visage.
You didn't like being soft.
It was the untruest you've ever been to
the nature residing within you.
You like being sharp and honestly quite difficult to look at because
it's the jagged edges and curling corners that make them
want to fix you. Doesn't it drive them insane?
You weren't made for this world.
The perfect people don't want to see the undeniable
beauty of your rough elegance.
Fiend of friction,
don't let them sand your edges away.
Please, stay as you are
'cause the world needs more art.

Adam, the Elephant, and Eve, the Bear



ruins, crowds, the struggle

great//
disappointed daily
wish there were peace and quiet
but ruins not yet discovered

crowds ruin it for you//
you are the crowd

everyone is there worth seeing
exorbitant marvels off the beaten path

yet the bloody struggle//
plays out in the hills
demanding better pay,
safer working conditions

rednecks killed battling modern
liberal//
organizers
Tea Party
revolving door
America's elite

we are on the coasts
feeling invisible //
disposable //
power

the scoffing sound comes
from miles away

you say we're out of touch
living out here
but
every country has a few undiscovered treasures
more rugged

far less crowded

is where you'll find them

among the undiscovered ruins

A Special Kind of Tree

My name is Felicity Jones, I'm sixteen years old, and up until three months ago I'd have said that I was just like any other regular teenager. I could still say that now, of course. Only then I'd be lying.

Let me take you back three months, to an unusually hot summer's day. The day that everything changed.

August 24th, 2017:

"I don't want to go, and I never did want to go in the first place!" Mum sighed, shaking her head "Felicity, you are going and that is final. You've not helped out in the community once this whole summer."

"I'll do something else, then."

"Like what?"

"I'll do..." There was a silence, during which I desperately attempted to conjure up something else I could do, some other time, to help the community. Sadly, I failed in this attempt.

"Well, I'm waiting..." Mum crossed her arms.

"Fine! I'll do it."

An hour later, I was stood in the park, armed with a shovel and gardening gloves, ready to start the community garden project. My job was to dig up a strip of ground where we were going to plant more flowers. The task was monotonous, yet simple, and before long I'd made my way right to the edge of the park, far from the rest of the volunteers. This was approximately two minutes before my whole life changed.

Shovel, turn the soil, repeat. Shovel, turn the soil, repeat. Shovel -. I didn't turn the soil this time. I didn't repeat. I'd noticed something lurking underneath the surface -something hard. Using the shovel to scrape away the surrounding soil, I realised that the hard object was a box. A rectangular, relatively large, copper box. Now, I'd read stories about time-capsules full of ancient artefacts from the past, so it was with great excitement that I knelt on the grass, not caring if I stained my favourite jeans, and scrambled to retrieve the box with my hands. It wasn't a particularly arduous task - the box wasn't buried deep in the soil- and before I knew it, I was holding the box, which was heavier than expected, in my mud-covered hands. Unable to contain my excitement, I prised the lid open with my nails, expecting to see relics of a previous life, memories of a different time. A note, written in red ink, initially came to my attention. I unfurled it quickly and began to read.

"Firstly, you must not tell anyone that you have found this."

I must have read that at least ten times, my heart thudding. *Why* couldn't I tell anyone? It didn't make any sense. Yet somehow, I complied without complaint.

Grasping the box with shaking hands, I shoved it in my rucksack, and began to walk. And I just kept going, striding purposefully away from the park, until the other volunteers were nothing but blurred blobs on the horizon.

Instinctively, I knew that those instructions, scrawled delicately on that tattered shred of paper, that they were important. The box wasn't some joke made by bored kids in the village.

No. There was more to it than that. My inquisitive mind ached to explore the contents of the box, to delve into this mystery that had been handed to me in red italics. But I had to keep walking, forcing myself to be patient, until I was sure that I was somewhere I would not be interrupted. I knew I had to be alone. Pacing down the winding village roads, a chill running down my spine and a damp sweat on my palms, I dodged the cluster of houses where I lived, hurried past the village hall, darting glances around suspiciously, weirdly paranoid that I was being watched. My feet quickening, I continued on, the lanes getting narrower and more overgrown, with flimsy nettles lurching out at me menacingly; the summer flowers vibrant and colourful, yet on the brink of death.

At long last I reached the woods, a wave of nostalgia sweeping over me as I recognised the remains of my childhood. As kids, we used to play in the woods all the time, building dens, playing hide and seek, paddling in the stream. As teens, it stood neglected; nobody came here anymore. I knew it was the perfect place to avoid being found.

Shivering with anticipation, I sat down on an old tree stump, swinging the rucksack off my shoulders. I had a sudden vision that it was all a dream, that I'd open the rucksack to find nothing but an old pair of gardening gloves; the box, with its mysterious contents, simply a figment of my imagination. But it wasn't. It was still there, rustic and dull, although when shone on by the summer sun, it sparkled like an antique treasure.

Alongside the first note, there was a photograph, faded in the corners yet full of life; girls twirling in poodle skirts, the boys by their sides with quiffed hair and pointy shoes. For a second, the world around me paused; I was in the photograph, listening to Elvis Presley, dancing the jive and the twist, my own flouncy skirt whirling around my legs. I wondered whether the box belonged to one of the teens in the photo; dancing, laughing, singing, the epiphany of youth. It made me all the more intrigued, and I vowed to myself that I would solve this mystery, whatever it took.

Underneath the photo lay a handful of relics: a cinema ticket, a bubble gum wrapper, an old watch. Lastly, there was a small, rusty key, attached to another note, written in the same, sprawling red ink.

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*"There's time to find me,
Although you must be fast.
For when the season ends,
The time will be past."*

Tracing the red swirls with my finger, I strained my brain, trying to make myself understand. I kept hoping that there'd be some sort of "Eureka!" moment, and suddenly, I would realise the hidden meaning behind the riddle, and I could go about solving the mystery. But I couldn't. There was no "Eureka!" moment. What season did it mean? How fast did I have to be? Sighing, I turned the note over. Another riddle.

*"From where you found this,
Retrace your tracks.
Back through the village,
To the railroad tracks"*

I sat in silence, repeating the riddles over and over in my head. I understood the second one -whoever had scribbled this note wanted me to go to the railroad tracks. But why? And why was there such a hurry? I debated going over to the railroad tracks straight away – I knew where they were, and it wasn't *that* long a walk from the woods. But as much as I wanted to, common sense stood in the way. The railroad tracks *were* quite far away, and they *were* quite deserted. I didn't think it particularly wise to go alone, but I knew my discovery had to be kept a secret, I was quite sure of that.

Half an hour later, I was walking to the railroad tracks with Hanna, my best friend. I'd decided to ask her along for moral support.

"Why are we going again?" Hanna asked with a confused frown.

"My mum just wants me to have a look for her watch – she thinks she might have lost it there." I improvised hastily.

"When was the last time your mum went to the railroad tracks?" Hanna looked at me incredulously.

"What? – Oh, she goes walking around there sometimes."

There was a brief pause "Hasn't got time to look for it herself." I added quickly, before Hanna could pick any more holes in my story. (I've never been any good at lying.) Hanna sighed, "Okay then."

Verity Cartwright

My search for answers seemed almost as doomed for Hanna's search for my mum's watch. We'd been there for a good few hours, scouring the tracks and its bleak surroundings. My heart felt heavy; maybe I hadn't understood the riddle after all, or maybe it really had been a stupid joke all along.

"Fliss, I don't think we're going to find it." Hanna said, aimlessly tracing her shoe on the ground.

"No, I don't either." I replied gloomily "We might as well go back."

Hanna looked positively ecstatic "Good idea!" I had one, last, desperate look around – and then stopped in my tracks.

"Wait a sec, Han." I took a breath, buying time to compose another lie. I pointed to a little wooden bench on the side of the tracks "My mum said she lost it after she stopped for a break on the bench."

Hanna looked at me blankly "So?"

"So, could you possibly check there? I'll just go a little further up the way she walks. Last place, I promise."

Hanna shook her head "Fine, if you really think it might be there."

"Thanks, Han. I'll just be up here." I said surreptitiously, walking away from the tracks a little. Something had caught my eye. A rectangular, relatively large, copper post-box. It reminded me of the secret hidden in my rucksack.

Nonchalantly sidling over to it, pretending to be scanning the ground for the non-existent watch, I felt in my pocket, where I'd put the key. Turning my back to Hanna, I scanned the box for a keyhole, and upon finding one, tentatively attempted to put my key in. "Click!"

I gasped with joy as the door swung open, revealing an empty vault except for a fragment of paper, filled with that familiar red writing.

"The door to look for,

Not far it will be.

It's in the village,

A special kind of tree."

"Fliss?" Grabbing the riddle and snapping the box shut, I whipped around quickly. "I couldn't find anything at the bench." Hanna sighed, walking over to me. "Did you have any luck?"

"No. But it doesn't matter -let's just go home!"

Hanna looked puzzled at my sudden change in mood, but she didn't argue, and we began the walk home together, in higher spirits than on the walk there. We walked in silence for a while; my mind was completely focused on the riddles, I was desperate to solve them, but I couldn't work them out.

Verity Cartwright

"Han?"

"Yep" Hanna replied, trailing her hand through the long grass on the roadside.

"Are there any special trees here in the village?"

At Hanna's confused face I quickly added "Geography homework." I felt uneasy about how naturally I had come out with another lie.

Hanna was quiet for a moment, thinking. "Quite a lot, actually. There's the hazel tree, the cherry tree, the maple tree, the juniper tree, the-"

"Wow - I didn't know you knew so many!" I cut in, with faked happiness. I thought there might have been just one special tree, and my mood quickly darkened when I realised that I'd have to go around all the trees in the village to try to find the 'special' one, without even knowing what to look for.

Hanna laughed "I'm not sure I did either!"

After thanking Hanna for helping me, and guiltily accepting my mum's praise for my day spent helping the community, I retreated to my room. Sitting down by my desk, I opened the box again, thoughtfully playing with the mementos in my hand. I looked at the bubble gum wrapper dubiously. It seemed so meaningless, a piece of rubbish. I couldn't imagine any significance it could have. I fiddled with the wrapper moodily, looking at the tiny writing, the waxy paper, the miniature bunches of cherries drawn on the sides. *Wait.*

I flashed back in my mind to walking home with Hanna *"the hazel tree, the cherry tree, the maple tree, the juniper tree"*

"The cherry tree" I said aloud, feeling like I'd finally had a 'Eureka!' moment. *"The cherry tree..."* Quickly, I laid all three of the riddles out on my desk and read them again, my stomach fluttering.

*"There's time to find me,
Although you must be fast.
For when the season ends,
The time will be past."*

*"From where you found this,
Retrace your tracks.
Back through the village,
To the railroad tracks"*

*"The door to look for,
Not far it will be.
It's in the village,
A special kind of tree."*

Verity Cartwright

I understood the last two now – I'd found what was hidden at the railroad tracks, and I presumed that the special tree was the cherry tree in the park. But I still couldn't understand the first riddle - what season did it mean? If it meant the summer season, then why would time run out after summer had ended?

In a sudden flash of inspiration, I opened my phone and searched "How long are cherries in season for?"

The results popped up on my screen in an instant "*The best time to harvest cherries is mid-July, but they stay in season until the end of August*"

I jolted in shock. If my guesses were correct, then I had approximately a week to solve this entire mystery before time ran out and the cherries on the tree died.

I dreamt a lot that night, about the photograph and the riddles and the cherry tree. In my dream I was running to the cherry tree, gasping for breath. It seemed like I was running for a lifetime, my feet stamping furiously on the ground, bitter tears splashing down my cheeks. When I got to the park, all the cherries were dead.

I was glad to wake up.

I awoke with a determined motivation; I was going to solve this mystery. There was no question about it. Becoming more and more adept in the nature of lying, my mum was easily fooled when I told her I was going out with Hanna; I left home early in the morning, the box and the riddles carefully placed in the rucksack on my back. I was going to the cherry tree.

Much to my relief, the cherries weren't dead; they were plump and rosy, the morning sun giving them a golden glow. Surveying the tree critically, I looked for some kind of door, or portal, or anything that looked considerably out of the ordinary. At first glance, I couldn't find anything; the tree was not unusual in the slightest, and the cherries were like any others, glistening in the sun. One cherry in particular was shining brilliantly, the sun casting a ray of golden glitter upon it. Reaching out, I pulled that cherry off the tree, expecting its glow to diminish once it was out of the sun's beam. Only it didn't. It continued to gleam radiantly, perhaps even more so than before. Curiously, I held the cherry gingerly in my hand, unsure of what to do. I can't explain why I did what I did next, simply because the motives are unknown to even myself, but the important thing is that I did it, I ate the golden cherry, and the world as I knew it disappeared into a blur of black and white.

Coming to with a start, I attempted to work out my surroundings. I was still stood right by the cherry tree, although it appeared much smaller than I'd remembered. I was still in the park, although instead of being empty it was filled with people. Something wasn't right.

"You alright, dolly?" asked a teen boy, wearing brown jeans and a cheeky smile.

Verity Cartwright

"I think so." I replied carefully "But my name isn't Dolly." He looked at me strangely "I didn't say it was. You try'na be a big tickle?"

"I don't know what that means." Are you new here?"

He shook his head, laughing. "No, my family's been here since before the Great War. I could've asked you the same question."

I felt dazed "What's your name?"

"Mike. Short for Michael. What's yours?"

"Felicity."

"Righto" Mike smiled. "Guess you are new here, or a bit of a goof. Either way, I'll clue you."

I didn't reply, the whole situation felt too surreal to comprehend. I nodded vaguely as Mike explained, with enthusiasm, about the teens in the village, from the 'greasers', who were clearly unpopular, to the 'socs', who seemed to be at the top of the teenage social hierarchy. It was only when he began mentioning a 'bash' that was happening in the village hall, that I began to take interest.

"Will the girls be wearing poodle skirts and the boys have quiffs and pointy shoes?" I asked him curiously.

"Well yeah, but you won't be a freem, don't worry."

I looked at Mike "What's a freem?"

He laughed "Someone who doesn't fit in. I said you weren't a freem, for the record."

"Thanks. When does the dance start?"

Mike looked at his watch. "Now! Come on, I'll show you the way."

The village hall, as I'd known it, where I'd spent countless birthday parties and town fairs, had been transformed back to the setting of the photograph from the box I'd found. Staring, wide-eyed, the realisation finally dawned on me. *I really had travelled back in time.*

"You coming to dance, dolly?" Mike grinned, coming up to me.

"Think I'll just watch for now, thanks." I replied.

Mike nodded and ran off to join his friends. Music blasted through the speakers whilst they danced energetically, laughing.

Across the hall, I saw an old man, sitting forlornly on a chair. Feeling inclined to speak to him, I approached him nervously.

He surveyed me for a moment. "Did you find it?" I stared at him, startled. *He couldn't mean...*

"The box." He began again, "Did you find it?"

"Yes." I whispered, "Is it yours?"

"Yes." He replied, "Take a seat, and let me explain."

I sat, I listened, I cried. The old man, who I learnt was called Wilf, told me the story of his life, and then, the story of his death. He told me that we were sat in the scene of his photograph, and that the photograph was taken at a dance which was the first time he had met his wife. They'd been childhood sweethearts, married

young, and lived in our little village all of their lives. He'd left the box when he was dying of cancer, as a way to ensure that he could leave a message for his wife, and tell her that he was okay, that he was waiting for her on the other side.

"I had to leave those riddles, you see." Wilf said, his eyes glistening with hopeful tears "I had to make sure that the person who travelled back in time would be bright enough to figure out what was going on."

"You did it all very cleverly, definitely." I told him, smiling. "I'm so glad I found your box."

"So, you'll give the photo to Brenda?"

"Of course. And the cinema ticket?"

Wilf smiled sadly "We used to go there all of the time. Give her the bubble gum wrapper too – it was her favourite, back in the day."

I nodded. "And what about the watch?"

Wilf smiled again. "Now, the watch is for you, Felicity. To thank you for doing all of this for me."

"Wilf, I couldn't take-"

"No, I want you to." Wilf persisted. "Be conscious of the time, Felicity. Life goes so fast, it flies past in the blink of an eye. Remember that."

"I will, Wilf. Of course I will." I said, reaching for the watch and strapping it onto my wrist. The village hall faded away into a blur of colour, the blasting music drifted away into nothingness, and I felt a wave of peace wash over me. Opening my eyes cautiously, I was comforted by familiar surroundings. The park was quiet again, and the cherry tree stood majestically, fully grown, the ruby-red cherries glinting as the sunlight hit them.

24th November 2017:

So, now you know why I'd be lying if I said I was an ordinary teenager. I haven't told anybody else about what happened last summer, and I don't intend to. I don't think anybody would believe me – I know I wouldn't, if it hadn't happened to me.

Except for Brenda, of course. I ran to her house to tell her everything as soon as I got back, and I go there a few times a week now. She tells me stories about the old discos they used to have, about the films in the cinema she used to love. Today we went to the park together, wrapped up in coats and scarves, and watched as the delicate white flakes fluttered in the air.

The cherry tree stood in solitude, dejected and forlorn. Its emancipated branches looked like arms, reaching out desperately, yearning for something they missed. I closed my eyes, imagining the perfect ruby cherries, twinkling in the sun, that had been there three months ago. And I smiled, because I knew that when summer came again, so would the cherries, and the tree would restore its former glory, standing in pride, sparkling and shimmering. Full of life.

Fabric Flower



New Smoke

Her punk sunglasses make her stand out.
Eyes aren't seen,
But it seems like they shine so bright.

She blows out the candle,
While the smoke enters the atmosphere,
And in through her nose,
It fills her body with something new.

A new identity,
That will blow the world by storm.
It's the new identity,
Evolving with the new world.

our ashes and maggots

I think at some point
we are all dead.

Our eyes go sour
resembling that
of dead carp
and the bass
will drop lower
than our IQ's
and credit balances.

Some poor bloke
will have to cut open
our pretty faces
and sew our arms up
with string
and prayers;
may they rest in peace
(or pieces).

And they'll lay
our coffin with
pretty flowers,
and pretty clothes;
without ever having
said *sorry* to our
grandparents
or that cashier
down the street.

[And people will wonder:
where did they go wrong?]

But the flesh rots anyways;
it does not understand anything
less.

The Huntress

Hiding in the shadows from her prey,
waiting for it to fall astray.
Watching it from day to night,
ready for the vicious fight.

With her tail bobbing side to side
coming out from of her hide,
pupils dilated and glaring,
for she is preparing.

Crouching to her pouncing stance,
to holding an intense glance;
She smiles a wicked grin
preparing for a great win.

The grass jumps out of the way.
It's just another average day.
Where she jumps and soars,
and just like before,

the huntress loses,
because fate refuses,
to let her win her infinite war,
of finding what she is looking for.

FALSE

Listening to the tick-tock of the clock,
There's a big black lock
On the door of the rock above her heart
Spacing its valley, for a knock knock knock.
Compact and close, the ears feel the pain
Of beats going in vain
For ground has its rain and
The veins of other tourists have found their respective lanes.
Inside the rhythmic contraction lies
The sorrow and flattened grief
And it demands to specifically brief
There's starvation for deep sea of relief.
Created world inside the nakedness
Of artificial reality and they got to check
The deck of lies
Inside their neck, ah!
Would it possible to make it any complex?
And the soul within the raindrops
Knows the false world inside the shops
Being sold for emotions in the market
And filling gallons of jealous sobs.

Where I Belong

Homs, Syria, May 6th, 2011

"Boom! Boom!" My eyes snapped open. The room was dark, though early morning sunlight streamed through cracks in my old wooden blinds, and the thick, bitter smell of fire floated throughout the air.

"Boom! Crackle!"

I jolted up in my cot, heart thumping hard in my chest. What was going on? Wiping my eyes, bleary from sleep, my feet fell to the wooden floor and I tiptoed to the closest window, careful not to wake my older sister in the bed next to mine. As I peered through the glass, I faced a scene I never could have imagined seeing with my own two eyes.

Outside that thin window, the world was falling apart. Fire soaring into the air, buildings crumbling in defeat, and children and adults, their faces black with soot, yelling and screaming words of anger, fear, and hate. I covered my mouth with a trembling hand. What had happened to my country? Was this just one crazy nightmare? My eyes began to blur, and my whole body started to shake .

"Ummah!" I yelled. No longer did I care about waking my sister. Suddenly, I was running through the dimly lit corridors into my mother's room.

When I walked in, I saw my mother standing by the window, her hands together for a prayer and her knees on the ground.

"Ummah..." I started, but before another word could escape my parched lips, a second bang sounded and more buildings crumbled into tiny pieces. "What is happening?"

My mother looked back at me. Her loose black hair was placed in a bun, her brow was furrowed, and dark circles underlined her eyes. She looked older than the last time I saw her.

"Ummah, please. I need to know," I pleaded and my mother inhaled and stood up from her prayer position on the floor, struggling for the perfect words.

"Our country is at war," Ummah gave in.

"War?" I asked in disbelief and Ummah nodded gently. "But our country was fine yesterday. Where's Abee? Wasn't he on duty?"

Ummah bowed her head. "He was patrolling one of the buildings when it..." Her voice broke, and she burst into fresh tears. When she controlled herself again, she finished. "We must leave the country for America in a couple days time. It is too dangerous here. Your father's sister lives in California; we will stay with her." I froze, cold blood coursing through my veins.

"I'm sorry, Amira." Ummah held out her hand, and I did the only thing I had left in my power to do.

I grasped it. And I held on tight.

San Francisco, California, December 9th, 2011

"Brrring!" I wearily open my eyes and am met with the glare of bright lights and the sound of crinkling paper and a ticking clock. My stomach sinks as I face the inevitable facts: I had the same dream I have been having for the past week, and I fell asleep in class. Again.

"Okay everyone, that concludes our lesson for the day." A tall man with short blond hair (Mr. Conrad as American students call him) paces around the room. "For homework, I want everyone to finish the worksheet we started in class today." He pauses to look me straight in the eye, and I slide back down in my seat, beads of sweat popping up along on my hairline. "Amira, please stay after. I need to have a word with you."

"Lazy Muslim," one of the girls, Charlotte, hisses to me across the seats, and she and her group of friends laugh. "Falling asleep in class. Honestly, you should go home to Syria," she continues and then cocks her head slightly to the side, as if remembering something. "Oh that's right! You don't have a home there anymore, do you?" Then she flashes me a fake smile before standing up and walking out of the room, a confident hop in her step. I touch the baby blue floral hijab covering my hair, and I think about my ruined house back in Syria and my shiny new American school ID. Sadness and confusion overwhelms my mind.

Gathering my books in a pile, I begrudgingly walk over to the front desk where my teacher awaits, and take a seat in an empty chair.

"Amira," Mr. Conrad begins, taking off his glasses to rub his eyes. "I'm concerned about you. I know you've only been in America for three weeks."

Mr. Conrad grows silent, and leans forward closer to me. "I also know what you saw in Syria was horrible -- I can't even imagine."

I play with the ribbon bracelet wrapped around my wrist, Charlotte's words echoing in my brain. "Lazy Muslim," she said. "Go home."

"I want you to take this." He digs through his desk drawer and pulls out a paper. It's wrinkled and covered with English letters. "It's for a counseling group that meets every Monday, starting today. It's in the room to the right. You would benefit from it. Do you understand?"

I think of my Aunt's words the night before the first day of American school.

"Always take new opportunities," she told my sister and me as we sat together on the soft plush couch in her living room minutes before bedtime. "It will help you meet new friends. It will help you fit in and become American." I remember wanting to ask her so many questions. What if I don't want to be an American yet? What if I'm not ready to move on?

"Amira, what do you say?" Mr. Conrad asks again, impatient for my answer. I look down at the paper in my hands and force my mouth to move.

"Okay, sir," I finally say and start to pick up my books.

.

"Amira?" He purses his lips and examines me closely, as if I am some puzzle he can't figure out. "I've never told you how sorry I am."

I nod my head, but no words can come out. I am a clam, stuck in my shell, not able to peek my head out. Feeling a mixture of embarrassment, fear, sadness, and confusion, I am caught between two worlds, alive, but floating with no solid ground beneath my feet.

The rest of the day seems to fly by, and counseling comes faster than I expected. When the dismissal bell rings, I gather all my supplies and make my way to the classroom Mr. Conrad told me about. The hallways are busy, yet I arrive at the room just in time. When I open the door, a cool, refreshing burst of air hits me, and brightly colored posters with bold words on kindness and responsibility catch my eye. I exhale. It's peaceful, unlike the chaotic Junior High hallways.

As I start to enter, I glimpse a smiling lady, with pearl white teeth and curly red hair, standing up from her seat.

"Hello!" the lady walks towards where I stand by the doorway. "I'm Mrs. Fall. You must be Amira. Take a seat anywhere you want." I nod and do as she instructs.

"Here is our last person!" Mrs. Fall beams. My heart leaps in relief, and I swivel around to see who she is talking about. At first, I don't recognize her, but then I see it: that hop in her step, and my eyes widen.

"Hi," Charlotte says. "Is this group counseling?"

Mrs. Fall nods and motions her to the seat next to me. "Meet Amira." Charlotte opens her mouth part way, beginning say hello, and then she sees my face, and her mouth snaps shut.

"I can't be here. I've got to..." she utters, but Mrs. Fall interrupts her.

"Let's introduce ourselves. Shall we? Amira, you go first."

Unsure, I begin with the introduction my mother taught me. "I'm Amira from Syria."

"Describe Syria for us."

I hesitate. This is not part of my mother's template. "There were many explosions?"

"How did seeing your country like that make you feel?" Mrs. Fall questions.

I think about how I ran to my mother's room, screaming, when I first saw the fire. I think about my mother telling me my father died. "Scared and sad. My father was in one of the buildings when it exploded." I look down at my sweaty hands clasped together. "He died."

I notice Charlotte looking down at her hands too, at a loss for words.

"Now, Charlotte. Why don't you go?" Mrs. Fall asks.

"Um, I'm Charlotte." Mrs. Fall motions her to go on. "I lost my little sister last year."

"Thank you, Charlotte. Thank you, Amira. Now, let's move on to another exercise."

The session continues like that for thirty minutes, but I can't stop thinking about Charlotte's sister. How can she be so mean on the outside and so hurt and so vulnerable on the inside? When the clock's long hand is just short of six, we both get up and head to the door.

"You go first," I say, and Charlotte rolls her eyes.

"You're being nice now? Don't think we're friends because we're both in counseling."

When she sees Mrs. Fall isn't looking, she grips my shoulders tight and shoves me forward into the hall. Tears spring to my eyes, but I wipe them away. I can't let her see me cry. I can't let her see me cry...

"See you tomorrow, Muslim," she whispers, as if Muslim is a contagious disease she doesn't want to get. Then she walks away, leaving me shaking and wishing this hard, dirt splattered ground could swallow me whole.

The bright Californian sun has appeared in the sky, and the calming sounds of blue jays and mockingbirds chirping in the trees have commenced by the time I hear my mother's voice the next morning.

"Amira! It's time to get up!" I hear. Still tired, I pull the covers up over my head. "Amira! Come on, you have school," she continues. "Get up!"

"I can't," I murmur into my pillow, my voice muted. "I don't want to."

Ummah pulls down the cover and sits on the side of the bed.

"What is going on? This complaining is not like you, ibnaty!" I shift around in the old, creaky bed. "Did something happen at school yesterday?" Ummah puts a hand on my shoulder, and I flinch at the touch. "You can tell me."

I nod my head, but no words come out.

Ummah sticks up her index finger, telling me to wait, and then bursts out of the room. Seconds later, she comes back in, cupping something in her hands.

"I've been thinking about giving you this for a while now, but with my hectic new job and unpacking, I never got around to it."

Ummah unclasps her hands, and a gold lion figurine appears.

"It's your father's lucky charm. It gave him strength and courage, and he brought it in every day of work, except for his last day on the job." My mother pauses. "I want you to have it. He was always talking about giving it to you when he passed. You were his strong one, his 'asad. I know it is hard to move on after what happened, but I want you to know that your father and I will always be on your side. By moving on, you are not leaving your father or Syria behind. You know that, right?"

"I know, Ummah," I respond, and Abee's smiling face appears in my head. The only time I had actually seen him smile that hard was when he got promoted in his police work. He came home, lifted me up, and twirled me around in circles, like I was a princess. Running my finger along that smooth figurine in my hands, I feel like that princess again,

and I can't stop myself from breaking out into a smile. "It's perfect, Ummah." It truly was.

"Thank you."

She nods. "I hope that this will help you with whatever's on your mind. Your father also used to say that people aren't always as they seem. He was always looking at people in the bright light."

That's when the inspiration hits me. Before she can say anything else, I'm throwing on a hijab, a shirt, some pants, and my backpack, shouting goodbye, and running out the door into the brisk California morning, armed with an idea, but most importantly, all the confidence I'll ever need to execute it!

The day goes by fast, and before I know it, it's lunchtime and I'm walking into the cafeteria and surveying the crowd of students for Charlotte. I notice she's sitting alone while her friends buy their lunch. I use my minutes wisely and head to her table.

"Hello," I greet her, smiling, and she groans, mid bite with her peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Purple jelly oozes down her finger.

"I thought I made it clear I wanted you out of my way," she warns, but I just keep smiling and slide into the seat next to hers.

"I wanted you to know how sorry I am about your loss. I want you to keep this until life gets better for you at home. When it does, give it back to me." I take a deep breath and reach in my pocket to pull out the lion figurine. "It's my father's lucky charm. It gave him strength and courage to be a policeman in Syria."

Charlotte's face crinkles. "Why are you being nice to me?"

I pause to think about my mother's words. "My father said to always look at people in the bright light. I know you're not bad, Charlotte. I know you're struggling with a loss, like I am."

Tears gather in Charlotte's eyes as she takes the charm. "This is the kindest thing a person has ever done for me. I don't deserve it. I called you names..."

I shake my head. "I've been through much worse," I say, and she smiles; it's almost imperceivable, but it's genuine. Then, she hesitates. "My sister would call this charm booful."

"Really?" I blurt, and Charlotte nods her head.

Suddenly, she's telling me about her sister's missing front teeth, and no longer do I feel like a clam, trapped in the past. No longer do I feel floating between two worlds. Instead, I look over at Charlotte, admiring the charm in her hands, and think of my mother and father supporting me and Mrs. Fall helping me move on, and I know although life is not and probably will never be perfect in America, for the time being, I'm right where I belong.

Twilight



At a Café

Although I am not at the cafe I am describing right now; I can imagine what it is like. I walk slowly into the cafe, clutching my phone, wallet, and a yellow smiley bag, staring at the endless rows of cupcakes, cakes, lollipops, and other sweets they have on display. I get absorbed into this world of sweets; a world coated with powdered sugar and its sky adorned with rainbows of icings. I feel like I am walking in one of my childhood dreams. I stumble across a beautiful mint chocolate cupcake, my favorite. The dollop of green frosting that sits on top looks so moist I can practically taste it from where I stand. From a distance, I feel a cold breeze. A breeze so cool that it draws me to its source, a cup of ice-cold lemonade. I can feel the freshness coming out from the lemonade, tempting me to drink it. Full of wonder, I look around at all the sweets and drinks and quickly reach for my wallet. I order a mint chocolate cupcake and a cup of lemonade at the counter. The worker tells me the price of my order, and I open my wallet to pay. For a brief moment, the bills in the pockets of my wallet seem hesitant to get out, to expose themselves to the outside world again. However, I'm hypnotized by the cupcake and lemonade in front of me, so I forcefully draw the money out of my wallet and hand them over to the worker. Meanwhile, I find a seat at a long table, and I lay down all my belongings on the chair next to me. There are only a couple of people on the same table, giving me some privacy. I take a look at the table. It is a wooden one with many brown spots on it. I find a big spot with a swirling oval pattern. I trace it with my finger and count four rings circling the center. The sides of the table are smooth but uneven and rugged. Just then, the same worker who got my order calls my number, and I push out my chair and skip to the counter. Carrying my tray, I sit back down where I have left my yellow smiley bag and take a sip of the lemonade. The lemonade tastes sour but refreshing. The taste brings me back to the time when I visited San Francisco with my family. It was one hot summer, so hot that I could feel the sun beating on my skin even when I was sitting in a room with air conditioning. I remember swimming under the scorching sun every day with my parents, from the light of the day until the beautiful Californian sunset. I used to drink lemonade every time I got thirsty after swimming for hours. They were sour but refreshing, just like the one I am drinking right now, except this one is a little sweeter. Carefully storing the memory, I go back to staring at the table as I sip my lemonade through the thin black straw. I find many thin lines going across the long table. Some lines go as far from one end to the other. Some lines go halfway and are interrupted by small oval spots. I pick up my plastic fork and dig it into my cupcake. As the black plastic fork goes through the cake, a portion of it breaks off and leaves some crumbs behind. The mint icing spreads in my mouth and mixes with the freshly baked, soft chocolate bread. To quench my thirst, I drink the lemonade again. As all of this is happening, many familiar tunes play in the

Jimin Lee

cafe. I hum along to some of them, and I hear other people doing the same too. The songs prevail the workers' barking orders and other peoples' conversations. Listening to these songs remind me of the time when I went to a concert where these artists performed these songs live. I remember the fireworks that accompanied the music blasting out of the large speakers. I remember the enthusiastic, never-ceasing chants, which rang throughout the stadium in harmony with the singers on stage. As I hum, I grab a magazine on the table and flip through the pages. I open the green cover with a close up of a celebrity and flip through. The pages are waxy and shiny, making my vision dizzy. One page has a beautiful panoramic view of Hawaii. I walk on the soft sand and look around. The waves crash onto my feet, and little shells tickle my toes. The sky is blue, but it gradually turns into a strange yet stunning mixture of red, blue, orange, and pink as the sun sets on the horizon. I walk around for a while, and I eventually come out of the world. Drinking my lemonade, which now tastes like almost nothing but melted ice with a little drop of lemon, I turn around to observe the shelves behind me. On the shelves, I see albums of my favorite artists. The shelves are so colorful and soothing to look at. The albums go along with the pastel pink and white tone of the cafe. The slurping of my lemonade finally detracts my focus from these shelves, and I put down the glass cup back on my tray along with the finished plate. I take out a napkin from the stack on the table and dab at the corner of my mouth. I then bring the tray back to the counter, and I head outside the cafe, down the escalator. At least that is the way I remember it.

Tayla Barnes

Tayla is sixteen years old and in the eleventh grade at Abilene High School. She has lived in Texas her whole life. She also loves running and playing with her two dogs.

Verity Cartwright

Verity is a 16 year old writer from Cumbria, England, who attends William Howard School in Brampton. Verity has always been an avid reader and writer, however her contribution published here is the first short story she has written. When she isn't writing, Verity loves to dance, or to watch TV shows drinking hot chocolate. (Her favourite show is Stranger Things!)

Haemaru Chung

A writer, violinist, photographer and athlete, Haemaru is currently a junior at a high school in New York City. His stories and poems have been recognized by the National Scholastic Art and Writing Awards, Rider University Annual High School Writing Contest, Jack London Foundation Fiction Writing Contest, William Faulkner Wisdom Creative Writing Competition, among others. Other works have been published in many literary magazines, including *The Round*, *Louisville Review*, *The Interlochen Review* and *The Apprentice Writer*.

Neena Dzur

Neena Dzur is an 8th grade student at Maumee Valley Country Day School. She is an avid reader and a master storyteller, as well as an active member of both book club and creativity club. Her writing has been recognized numerous times during the annual *New York Times* summer reading contest.

Vincent Gomez

Vincent Gomez is a 14-year-old boy that was born in New York. He moved to Miami at the age of eight and auditioned to Miami Arts Charter and got accepted in the middle of 6th grade. He's been in the Creative Writing program ever since

Laiba Khan

I am currently a high school student in Canada. I had the opportunity to study philosophy at Harvard University in the summer term of 2017. Through the medium that is poetry, I hope to explore ideas of the modern world and examine mechanisms of human thought.

Yuchan Kim

Yuchan Kim is a 17-year old attending Korea International School Jeju. His interest in design began at an early age with a fascination with car design. He is currently practicing painting and drawing in hopes to major in studio arts. His other hobbies include listening to music and fashion.

Jimin Lee

Alice Lee is currently in her sophomore year at Seoul International School in Seoul, South Korea. She enjoys playing the flute and listening to music on her phone during her spare time. She looks forward to a writing or oratory career in the future.

Jennifer Meng

Jen Meng is a high school student from Ontario, Canada. Author of several short stories and poems (most of which are private), she loves orange juice, books, and wandering just a bit too much.

Our Contributors

Simran Sareen

Simran is 15 years old and attended high school in India. She has been writing for more than half a decade and likes to explore the themes of the human experience ranging from stress and anxiety to depression and grief.

Becky Wolfson

Becky is a rising high school senior in Maryland, where she has lived her entire life. Her writing has been recognized by *VerbalEzye Press*, the Scholastic Writing Awards, as well as various other publications. She enjoys swimming and spending time with family and friends.

Albert Zhang

About Albert Zhang: Albert Zhang is Head Editor for The Westminster Schools *Bi-Line*, the school newspaper and oversees as Sports Section Editor as well. He is also Co-Editor-in-Chief of *Evolutions* Magazine, The Westminster Schools' annual creative writing magazine. Albert attended *The Kenyon Review* workshop, was a SCAD Silver Scholar, and has been published in *Celebrating Art Magazine* and exhibited at Atlanta's High Museum, Capitol Building, and National Fair.

The Daphne Review



Founded in 2015, *The Daphne Review* is an arts and literature magazine that features exceptional work by today's high school-aged artists. We accept original written submissions of any format (essay, interview, poem, short plays) and artistic submissions in any media on a rolling basis throughout the year. Share with us what you can create, and we may share it with the world.

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For more information about *The Daphne Review*, including the submission guidelines and process, please visit:

www.thedaphnereview.org

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