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Introduction

Tolstoy said that there are two types of stories: a person goes on a journey and a stranger comes to town. They are actually the same stories but from two different points of view. In the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language, this assessment of what makes a story is especially relevant because the EFL classroom contains both perspectives: that of the EFL teacher (the person going on a journey) and those of her students (who is this stranger in our classroom?)

Inspired by NaNoWriMo, National November Writer's Month, a near-insane marathon-like writing venture, where Americans try to write a whole novel in a month, Kate Mulvey at the University of Pristina, and I at the University of Prizren, decided to challenge our students to write a short story in English in a month.

Given that most students had never written a story before, let alone in English, this was a daunting task. We decided that for the first month we would go over basic story structure elements such as character and plot development, showing vs. telling, setting, tone, and finding a voice. We engaged in creative writing prompts, watched TED talks on creativity, and read some short stories in order to warm up. We played Shostokovich for them in order to find some rhythm to their stories, as well as challenged them to write their own six-word story, inspired by Hemingway's famous one: "Baby shoes. For Sale. Never worn." Eventually though, it was time to start that one-month of writing at least a page a day.

For that month, they did all the work, and at the end, admittedly, I dreaded having to edit 20-30 grammatically incorrect pages per student. What I hadn't anticipated was that it was a wonderful learning exercise in that the mistakes they made, they tended to repeat, and so it became easier to hone in on any bad habits they were making in English and therefore be able to correct them. The confidence and fluency that the whole process brought out in them was monumental.

But even more what we hadn't anticipated was what happened when we finally sat down to read their stories. We were blown away. I have taught creative writing to university students in the U.S. and most of my American student stories have been about zombies or vampires, but these stories were about significant life themes, themes such as what does it mean to grow up in the ruins of an old city, how to choose between becoming a Muslim or a Christian, the nature of forgiveness, and what it means to live in a community, despite its difficulties, that is still intact. Their stories helped us to understand Kosovo at a level we never would have otherwise. It revived our faith in the power of literature and its power to be able to get beneath an outsider's surface observations. We learned about the dire consequences of adding water to the milk you are going to serve a guest, and about what it means to "follow the flame of desire or the flame of external demand." We learned about the consequences of corruption and the wisdom of the Quran. We were able to laugh out loud at a serial killer. We witnessed the incredibly well-articulated anxiety of modern text message dating, as well as learned about childhood

nostalgia and the deep Kosovar love for the village. And I learned that my favorite line in the whole book, when a boy visiting his uncle steps inside and yells, “Does anybody want any guest here?” is actually a common Kosovar expression.

Ivo Andric, the former Yugoslavian author, writes about how the towns in the Balkans are filled with stories, but how certain villages believe that one of their stories is worth three of anyone else’s, and thus are loath to give them away to strangers. Kate and I feel honored that our students were willing to share their stories with us; we have grown from them.

Kate Mulvey and Christina Nichol

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Love

by Bahrije Arifaj

I was sad that Sunday night, when I saw him for the first time. It seemed that the whole world's gloom had found its station to me. Everything around me was so black and I was so tired for some reason.

"Fjolla!" I heard a voice from the back, when I was out on a walk without any reason. It was my friend Edi.

"What happened to you?" he asked. When I say anything, he said again, "Why are you so upset?"

"Why? Very interesting question," I said.

"Come on, do you want to drink a coffee with us?" he asked.

"With you. You are with someone else?" I asked.

"Yes, I am with a friend," he answered.

I accepted to go with them even though I was in a bad mood.

"I am Ardit," the other one said. He was very handsome, with brown eyes and a beautiful smile.

"Sorry, do you have an exam? Is that why you are upset?" was the next question.

"All life is an exam," I answered.

"Very interesting thought," he said. We continued talking with each other, without interruption, and we forgot our friend.

"It seems it is better for me to go?" Edi said, while laughing at us, but we felt bad because of that. This was the first, and since then I realized that something deep in my heart was pierced. I was happy

that night. I never thought that I would meet him again, especially at 6: 30 in the morning the next day. I was very surprised and happy also, both at the same time.

“Fjolla!” he shouted. Again, a voice from behind me, and I was left without words and voice. He was very handsome; he was wearing a green T-shirt and blue jeans.

“What are you doing here?” I asked with a smile in the face, feeling a bit confused.

“I am waiting the bus,” he said.

“So we are going to travel together,” I said.

“YES, with pleasure,” he answered. The word ‘pleasure’ I did not hear at all because I was in another world.

We entered the bus and we sat together. Deep in my heart I now knew that I would meet him again. He was so amazing the last night. Every time that I looked in his eyes, my heart started to beat fast. But I did not know why. I whispered to myself, “Is he the right boy? Is he the prince, or is my heart lying?” “So, where are you going?” I asked.

“I am going at school, in gymnasium here in the city,” he answered.

“Me too. I am in the gymnasium in first year.”

“Really? But where have you been? I have never seen you there.”

“I am a hidden person that appears only to special persons. So I think you are the lucky one.” We both smiled.

On the bus he also said me, “I could not sleep last night because of you. I like you very much,” and immediately blushed.

“Me too,” said I.

Well, here is where we expressed the sympathy toward each other.

When we arrived at school, we greeted each other goodbye. In my ear he said, “I hope to see you again.”

“Me too,” I said.

In the schoolyard, my friends were waiting for me. Yllka and Dona had seen me with Ardit. They asked me about him “Who is that guy?”

“He is just a boy who I met yesterday.”

After we finished school, we accidentally met again in the same place that we separated, and together we went to the bus station. While we were walking, we talked and talked, and unfortunately, we missed the bus. So we had no other choice than go home by walking. The road was so far but having each other near, it seemed very short. During that time we expressed the feelings that we had for each other. We started telling each other stories about ourselves, about our childhood. He is the only boy in the house and he has two sisters, and when I told him that for me it’s same, because I am the only girl in the house and I have two brothers, he was very surprised. He started to tell me about everything, about his hobbies. He loved football. He wanted one day to be a famous football player, but it was very hard to follow his dreams because he had to take care about his family. He loves the color green. His favorite singer is Bryan Adams, and that is mine too. Day after day, we understood that we have so many common things but there was one thing we did not have as the same. Our families are completely different. My family is rich and very educated. My father has a company and my mother

is a lawyer. Two brothers are in college. I am the only girl, and they want the best for me. They want me to finish school and to be lawyer like my mom. But I wanted to be a dancer. I am happy and free when I dance. I go into another world when I dance. For my parents, this profession didn't have any good benefits. It was a waste of time. And I had to follow their advice, even if I didn't like it.

Ardit lived in another world, with his parents and his sisters. He was the only boy in the house and he had to take care about his family. He was in school but he also worked because his family needed money. His family had too many problems. Only his father and he worked. Her sister has a heart disease, and all family had to care about her. They were trying to save money to send her for an operation that costs so much. He also had dreams and hopes that one day the life of his will be better. He loves football and when he has time always goes to play with his friends. He was a really good player and had much chance to go on. He also played in school when they had football tournaments. But he knew that it was very hard to follow one's dreams. So we were two young people with a lot of hope in life. Both of us had dreams, which in one way were prohibited.

We exchanged numbers. When we arrived at our destination, we didn't want to separate from each other. But we had to. So he left me in my neighborhood, near my house.

"It was the best day of my life," he said. "It was mine too, I spent great time with you," I said.

When we said goodbye, he kissed me on my cheek and he went home to his house too.

I immediately went to my house. My family was waiting for lunch, but I was not hungry so I went to my bedroom, and took out my diary and wrote about that day.

“Dear Diary. Today is 27th of March. It was a very beautiful day because I met the boy of my dreams. His name is Ardit. He is 18 years. He lives here in the city P..... It is not a long period of time knowing him, but I think he is the great boy.”

The next days we did the same. We went to school together. We finished school and again went home together. This was becoming bigger day after day.

One day, my friends started to ask me more about Ardit because I was always with him and I did not tell them anything about that.

“Why don’t you tell us what is happening with the two of you?” Yllka asked.

“Are you in relationship?” asked Dona.

“No, we aren’t official yet,” I answered. “And please stop asking me about Ardit, and let’s start learning.” But after that I started thinking. So we aren’t in a relationship. He didn’t ask me to be his girlfriend. Is this because he doesn’t love me?

After we finished school, again we met each other in the same place. Along the way we were talking and talking and so we arrived at our neighborhood. I told him that my friends asked me if we are in relationship?

“So, how did you answer?” he asked.

“I said it was not official yet.”

“Oh, it’s not official?” he asked and at that moment he took out a necklace and put it on my neck and sat in his knees and asked me, “Do you want to be my girlfriend?” And my answer was, “Yes!!! “

“You talked to me at the right time because I have planned for a long time this thing, how to ask you to be my girlfriend. He kissed me and we became official in relationship.

These kind of meetings happened every day. He always wrote messages to me, like this, “I love you darling. I miss you very much.” He always called me ‘Angel.’ I was his angel. And he was mine.

We understood that all we needed in our lives was each other. We had become very strong together. When we were together, we forgot all the problems that we had. I think we are born to be together. I am very thankful to God that He gave me a chance to meet Ardit and to know him. He made me happy.

Everything went well; our relationship had no problem that time. But I was afraid how my parents would understand him. But we were so hidden and we had to be careful about our dates and meetings.

Yllka one day came to my house. We spent a great time together, and we were talking about Ardit and about school, about everything. And I told her that my parents don’t know about him and if they knew they were not going to let me be with him. So we had dinner with my family and we were all together. And at that moment Yllka asked me, “Ardit is a great boy, isn’t he?” and we all turned to her and looked at her. We were all surprised and nervous.

Then my father nervously asked me, “Who is Ardit?”

“He is my friend. He is our friend,” I said.

At that moment we stood up and I went to my bedroom with Yllka. I shouted at her because she hadn’t needed to tell my father about anything. “Why did you ask me in that moment about Ardit, Yllka? Do you want me to break up with him and to be unhappy?” I asked.

“No, No, it isn’t my intention.”

“Yes it is,” I said. “Please go from my house and don’t talk to me. You aren’t my friend any more!”

When she left, my parents came to my bedroom and asked me again about him. “Who is he? Do you have anything to do with him?”

“No, no. It’s only a guy that helped me with some homework. He is my friend.”

“Ok, but you know that you are not allowed to meet guys in your school because they are poor and aren’t up to our standard. You should finish school and to marry with a boy who is like us. For example, Edi. He is in university now. He is the son of the governor. He is the chance of your life.”

“No, I don’t want him, or anyone else. I am focused on learning and nothing else. Please leave me alone.”

I started crying. I didn’t know that my friend could make this situation. I was so desperate. At that moment, Ardit called me. When he heard me he asked me what had happened to me. I told him and he was sad, of course, but he started to make me laugh. “I will never leave you. You cannot marry with anyone else. You are

my angel!” and then I cooled off.

Everything went well and the same for a period of time. Our life went as before. It was the end of the first year and for him the end of second year. We had to study hard to get maximal grades. Our first anniversary was coming up. Every talk that we made during that time was about our anniversary. We planned to go for dinner in a great restaurant. I bought him a watch and I wrote down in it the date that we met and “I love you.” I was so organized about this anniversary. And I think he was too.

But then something happened one school day, when, as usual, I had been with was Ardit. We didn’t go home together because that day he had to be early for work. So I came home alone. When I arrived home my father and mother were waiting for me. They immediately gave me a letter to read. In that letter was written everything. “Fjolla has a boyfriend. Ardit is her boyfriend. They have been together for a year. He lives near you, you know that guy that works in a poor restaurant. He has a poor family. I think I had to tell you. Bye!” I read that in front of them. I told them that it was a lie. “Ardit is my friend and I don’t have anything to do with him. But it was very hard to convince them.

I called Ardit on the phone and I told him. We both were interested to know who sent the letter.

Ardit said, “I think it is Yllka, because of that day.”

“No, no I don’t think that she did,” I said. “We aren’t talking, but she isn’t that bad. We were best

friends and I don't think she could do that to me, but I am going to discover who did."

Every thing happened that week. I was troubled. I was scared and upset at the same time. What would happen if my father really understood the truth? I didn't go out with Ardit for one week, just to lose my father's suspicions. But we didn't stop talking together. Ardit consoled me with his sweet words, and his sweet voice.

Our anniversary came. It was Friday. I woke up in 6: 00 in the morning to get ready for school. When I looked at the phone Ardit has sent me a text message. The message was

"Happy anniversary, baby. You are my angel. You are my breath. You are my first love and only. I didn't know that falling in love was so very good. I didn't think that one person could change my life. I never believed in love because of all the stories that my friends had with girls and other things, but now I believe in true love. You are my true love. I don't imagine my life without you. We spent a year together. Hope to be together all the life."

When I read it, I felt very good and happy. With joy on my face, I got ready for school. I made my hair curly because he likes it very much that way and I wore that dress that he first saw me in.

He was waiting me in the road. He also wore the same clothes of a year before. I was happy when I saw. He kissed me and said, "You look so beautiful today. Your eyes are shining a little more today, I think."

We both smiled. We arrived at school. I had only 4 hours and he 3, I think. So we had to leave the school early today and to prepare for the night. During the

lesson, I wrote him a letter.

“Ardit, you are the love of my life. You are the best thing that happened to me. You are my guide angel that protects me. I love the way you look at me, your eyes so bright. I love the way you kiss me, your lips so soft and smooth. I love the way you make me so happy. And the ways you show you care. I love the way you say “ I LOVE YOU” and the way you are always there. I love that you are with me and glad that you are mine. Happy first anniversary! I hope to be together all my life.”

When we finished school we started walking. First, we went to the park. Hand in hand, and so happy, we were like two angels that are flying and who are not in this world. We weren't thinking about anything else, just about each other, and about our love. We started talking about marriage, how our marriage could be, even if it was still so far from happening, but we were imagining it.

We talked about children. He would love to have twins: two boys. I would love twins too, but a boy and a girl. It really was a great day, that started good and was continuing good, but we didn't know how it was going to end.

When we had arrived home, I had told my parents that I was going out with my friend Dona that night because she had invited me. I called Dona on the phone and asked her, “When my parent call you on the phone or ask anything about this night, you should tell them that I am with you.” She said, “Ok, don't worry about that.” But that night Yllka was at Dona's house. They were together, so Yllka understood that I was going out with Ardit. She went to

my house and called me, but I wasn't there. My parents said that I was with Dona in the city. And she answered, "But I was with Dona all the time. She is at her home alone."

What?" they shouted. "Where is she? Who is she with? I don't believe that our girl lied to us."

So my parents went to the city and looked about for me. They found me in the restaurant. We were smiling and for a moment our smile stopped. My father entered the restaurant very angrily, shouted at me and Ardit and grabbed me.

I started crying. So he sent me home, and took my phone and everything. When I went to school he sent me with his car and waited for me. I was locked in the house.

Ardit tried to contact me, but he couldn't. I was sad. The best days of my life had become the worst. Everything went wrong. My parents were angry. They thought that Ardit was a bad guy, only because of money. But Ardit is everything to me. They don't know that I can't live without him.

Ardit had told his family about me and they accepted me. So why can't my family accept Ardit and my decision?

Day after day I always cried. Sometimes he sent me letters through Dona. He wanted explanations for what was happening. He wanted to know if we were going to be together, or if our relationship was over. When I saw the letter, tears flowed down. I had no choice: to be with my family or with Ardit. Everything was going on my mind. I don't want to lose my family but not Ardit too. Life is very difficult. Sometimes you

have to make a very tough decision. Every day I thought in my mind “Everything was great. What happened? Who did that me? Who doesn’t want to see us together? If I told my parents, it would be easier. Maybe they would understand me.”

So I checked and asked Dona and Yllka, but also my father, who had sent that letter. My father told me that it was Yllka. When I went to talk with her, she admitted it. When I asked why she said, “I always liked Ardit and I was jealous about you two. But I am sorry about that. I really was such an idiot. I didn’t think about.”

“You were my friend, and you did that to me. I hate you. I believed in you so much,” I said to her. So I was left without a friend, without my love, and in one way without my family.

Ardit, after one month, sent me a letter. “Fjolla, I love you. I can’t live without you. Please meet me after school. I want to tell you something.”

The next day, I went secretly and met him. He said that he missed me. And had a purpose. “I would love to come to your family and to talk with you parents. I think they will notice that I love you, and if they don’t let us again to be together, you will come to live with me. OK?”

I accepted.

On Wednesday night, when the doorbell rang, my father went to see who it was. He saw him. Ardit pleaded for him to be let him inside, and my father let him. They sat together and Ardit started talking. “Maybe I am a poor guy, or I don’t have a great house and expensive car but I have a heart. And my heart beats just

for her. I swear that I will protect her and make her happy because I love your daughter with all of my spirit. She is my only one. I didn't ever love anyone else. She is my first and only true love. I think that you care about your girl's happiness, so your daughter is happy only with me."

I said to them too, "You locked me inside, but you can't lock my heart. My heart loves him and only him. I don't care about the money, about the house, about anything, only him. I want only Ardit. He is the right guy. I know you want the best for me, so Ardit is my best. If you want to know Ardit you will see that he is a great guy, who loves his family, his job, and is very talented and an educated person. So, Mom and Dad, I love Ardit and no one else. Please let us to be together because I will be the happiest person in the world."

My mother and Father, when they listened to us, they cried and hugged us. "If you are happy, we are happy too. So you can be together for all your life. We wish you all the best "

I couldn't believe that. I was the happiest person in the world.

Again, things went good as they were before, but now better.

One year had gone. On our second anniversary, Ardit proposed to me.

It was a very romantic night. The place was filled with roses and candles and all around. It was the best day of my life.

I said, "Yes, with all of my life."

His life has changed because my father helped his sister. And also hired him in his company. My father made Ardit his manager. Everything went well.

I finished school and went to university and also I enrolled in the school to become a dancer. Everything was complete.

We stay engaged for three years and then we married. We live in another city now, in New York. I became an English teacher and also a talented dancer who gives lessons to children. Ardit works in a company but also followed his dream to become a football player. He won some cups. So every dream has been realized. We live together happily and love continues to increase every day. And we're hoping one day for two babies: "Twins."

The crash of the shooting stars

By Miranda Beqiraj

How it could happen like this? In such a big universe, unlimited planets, comets, stars ...I wonder how such small things like two shooting stars can crash into each other! In such an enormous universe there must be a reason for this. They found each other through countless other heavenly bodies thousands of times larger. From joy they found each other, and they became faster and powerful. From such an encounter they melted and became one. These two small shooting stars have passed a long way; they deal with so many challenges. They were confronted with larger heavenly bodies than them but they avoided them. Then there were terrible black holes that wanted to swallow them, but their brightness and fire hit their darkness. The sun also wanted to burn them and feed itself, but their staggering speed and their coldness saved them and kept them alive for thousands years. There must be a reason for that crash! Was there any attraction between them? Or was it a matter of gravity? However, since their merger something unique is being formed. We do not know the future of it; maybe a paradise can be built.

Spring. 1st of April: the day of lies. It is a kind of superstition in our country to lie to each other all over this day. Of course it is in the form of a joke. I hope it is just a superstition; otherwise the whole following event would be a lie.

They planned a meeting exactly on the 1st of April at a shopping center near her house. He was called Med. He was a blond man with brown curly hair. He was a handsome man; his eyes were like the color of a clear sky and shiny. He looked

good; he was medium in height and weight, though his shoulders were a little wide. On the other side of the table in front of him stood a beautiful young woman. Her name was Mia. She was neither brunette nor blond; her hair was dark brown and long, while her eyes were like the green color in spring season. She was a very simple girl.

Med and Mia were meeting for the first time. They did not know very much about each other. However, they already were set and had coffee. They talked as two ordinary people. Med was more talkative than Mia; she was more silent, and her voice was a little low since it was in her nature. The first thing that Mia noticed was his way of talking. He seemed a man with high confidence. He talked about his hobbies, his work, and his claims. On the other hand, Mia was contrary to this aspect, even though she had her desires, hobbies, and goals.

Exactly those characteristics—her simpleness, her slow way of talking, even more her incomparable beautifulness—all those woven together, made him curious. She also liked him. After that they met several times until they decided to be together: if it was written for their whole life.

They met in a restaurant called “Environment.” It was evening, a cloudy and breezy weather was outside. Inside the restaurant was warm, and serenity gripped that environment almost as if those two were the only ones there. Maybe that was the most important day in their lives, especially the moment when Med asked Mia if she thought that they could keep going on. Somehow, he asked Mia if she liked him. “Yes, I think we can,” said she. A love glance permeated their faces. Now they started to feel more close to each other. Mia was always a cheerful girl; her face was in glee almost all the time. Two hours after they emerged from the restaurant, it had begun to rain slowly.

Med noticed that she has cooled, so he shaded her with his jacket and wanted to give it to her, but she refused. Then he did not ask her any more and covered her shoulders with his arm. She felt something that she had never felt before, warmth that she had not sensed before. It was the first glance of love.

Some people believe in love in first meeting, but Med and Mia did not. They believed in themselves and in their feelings, even though they did not know very much about each other. After a few months, Med and Mia decided to become betrothed. Med thought that his girlfriend was special and she deserved a special gift. He sent her to a very magnificent place. There was a source of water; it was entirely a natural place and glamorous. It was known as a place of peace. It was September, a sunny day. Mia was looking beautiful as never before. She wore a dark and short dress, entirely in netting, and made her brown hair a little curly. She looked stunning, obviously, because she had a handsome man on her side. They sat in the yard of a restaurant near the water source where they had dinner. Some high trees covered almost the entire yard of the restaurant, which updated the air in that scalding July. That day something weird happened, the sun issued its rays only toward them, and tore that shadow and gave a little light.

“If you would see your beauty in my eyes you would be amazed. You are so perfect,” said Med, looking at her tranquilly.

“These trees and this river are giving the green color to my eyes, while the shine is coming from the sun rays and your presence,” she replied, smiling softly. After they finished the dinner, they went to the source of the river. It was a majestic landscape, fabulous. It was one of the wonders of the world. After a few minutes of walking they arrived at the source and

they stopped in a corner of the bridge. They looked each other deep in the eyes for a moment, then he took a ring from a box; he took her left hand, put the ring on her finger, and whispered something in her ear and kissed her cheek, which made Mia fly. Then she took the ring and put it on his finger also. Some tourists there applauded them and one of them photographed them. Med knew how to make his fiancée happy. People choose different ways to celebrate such events, everyone in their own way. Some with their family, some with friends, and some never do. They just get married. Med thought to do something different and good; not just formally but something that would be unforgettable for them.

2

However, after that everything was back to normal. Med and Mia continued their lives as before.

Med was living with his family, his parents and his little brother in a small city called P.

He was working in a health institution as a chemist. Med was a man full of ambitions. He was a hard alpinist; he had climbed almost all the highest mountains of his country, as well as some of the highest mountains of the Balkans. This was the way he thought to take away bad habits. He liked to challenge himself. Mia was living with her parents, her sisters and her only brother. She lived in the same city near Med. She was a student. When she was young she dreamed to be a painter, but for so many reasons she could not make her dream come true. Then she chose to study something else instead of art. She continued painting just for pleasure. It was one of the ways to express her feelings. Mia was a simple girl, everyone knew her as a quiet and good girl, but no one knew her inside. She was full of

ambitions and dreams. But she thought it was waste of time telling others about her dreams. Anyway, they could not understand. Her dream was to travel all around the world to see all the natural miracles; she was amazed by the brilliance of creation of the world, even though she knew very little about it. She wanted to release her spirit from such a great wish. But over time she realized that the miracle was inside her, in her family, exactly in that small place where she was living. She only needed time to realize that miracles were everywhere. She just had to look for those, and know their values.

It was a wonder how two strangers could become so important to each other. Of course, there must be a reason! Before they met it was different, they thought only about themselves, and their own wishes. But things changed from the moment they met, although it maybe was not noticed from outside. How such feelings could conquer the whole mind and spirit? I wonder, but I should not. That was not a new occurrence in human kind; it happened to all people before, but this was something unique and very sincere. Even though Med and Mia didn't know very much about each other—there were only eight months since they had met—those two had so many things that related to each other. They had common ideas, aims and wishes. Their characters fit together perfectly. They chose trust and patience to lead their path toward eternity, if it would be written.

Time passed. Since Med was working part-time, and Mia was free of studies due to summer holidays, they met often, and spent time together. They preferred talks and walks in nature more than everything else. They talked about different topics from the most usual and general things of life to the most personal. As we

mentioned, Med was a very talkative man, maybe so he seemed to Mia. One day while they were walking along the “white river,” she spoke to him about a book that she had read. Then she continued, “I liked the first part mostly. It talked about a boy named Narcissus. That boy was fascinated by his beauty. Everyday he went next to a river and saw himself in the mirror of the river. I do not know how, but one day Narcissus died. The sorrow gripped the river, because in the eyes of Narcissus it saw itself. Beside that river grew a flower which was named Narcissus.” She told him only this part of the story. Then she did not continue anymore. Med did not understand what she wanted him to say. Maybe he did not pay enough attention to her.

3

Anyhow, Med started to tell her about his favorite book and she was listening to him with attention. “I have read a book which talks about two detectives. Those detectives were sent from England for a secret mission to the Middle East, in one of the Arabian places. These two detectives had no good previous impressions about this place, especially of the people there. One of these detectives was masked as an Arabian orphan. An imam took him and cared for him as if he were his boy. That boy who was pretending to be an orphan lived among Muslims. He grew to know more closely their ideology and traditions for several years. After he finished his mission, he came back to England and he converted to

Islam. Because he saw the truth there with his eyes,” completed Med.

“Well people should not prejudge before you know things. And I think it is not fair to present ourselves by religion,” said Mia

After a few hours together Mia turned home. She was happy, even though her face did not show her inside usually. She was a kind of girl who did not want to show others if she was happy or sad because she would not bother the others if she had any problem; she could deal everything by herself. Or, if she was happy, she kept the happiness for herself also. But, however much she tried to hide these emotions inside her, she could not hide those from the people who lived with her for more than twenty years. Family was the most priceless thing to Mia; her home was like a paradise in earth to her. She felt a little afraid to begin a new life, leave this happiness and deal with new things, which she did not feel ready for. She was not a girl who had less self- confidence as people might have thought. Contrarily, she was so aware of things she might do well or not. Maybe Mia wanted to just be honest with herself.

It was a warm evening spring. Med and Mia, were lying on some chairs and looking at the clear sky, those countless stars which looked like glittering silk and the magnificent moon that supplemented that view.

“Oh honey, I do not know what to say except I love you. I sometimes wonder with my feelings, it is something that never happened to me, but what is this? Is this love? Do other people love this way?” said she, looking him in the eyes and smiling softly.

“My beauty, I read about it in books. I saw it in movies. There love is perfect. It is totally different when you really feel it. For the whole these years of my life no girl made me feel and think this way. Do you know how you attracted me?” asked him.

“No, how would I know?”- replied Mia

“You are the simplest and sincerest girl I have ever met. You have those attributes that I thought there are not existing any longer,” said Med

“Don’t joke!” replied she, laughing.

“You are so beautiful,” said he.

“I am beautiful because you are making me happy,” said Mia.

“You were so from the first moment I saw you,” said he.

“It depends on you now. If you make me happy I will be beautiful. If my beauty will disappear it will be your fault,” said Mia, laughing.

“I promise you that I will always keep you beautiful,” replied Med.

4

Med was a special man. There was not another like him. He was so gentle. He cared about tiny things. He did not have to make her fall in love because he did not have to pretend. He simply waited for the right girl, the one who grabbed him and stirred his tranquility.

(Med sent this letter to his girlfriend)

“You are in every cell of mine. Your smile talks with all the

languages of the world. I was looking for you and I want to know forever and understand your silence. You are my time itself which I enjoy...you are the one for whom I have waited for many years.

I am scared to think of the eternal with you. I droop when I think that maybe I could not fill your world with my love I have for you. You deserve more than this more and more...

I feel you beyond every distance. I want to diminish it just to be with you, there where the reality is the most beautiful thing more than everything else. You give me warmth in the coldest moments. I want you near forever. I want to see your eyes while you open and close them; those eyes, which attract me deeply. Honey, I do not need time, or another moment to say I love you.

People have different thoughts about love. For me it is the state of knowing everything about that person you love and to have the desire to be near with her more than anyone else. It is trust to tell her everything related to you even those things we may be shy or may seem worthless. Love is the suitable feeling, which makes me feel safe. More than this it is a continual travel toward a beautiful mystery."

For Mia

(Next day, during a phone conversation)

"Where are you my lovely poet?" said Mia.

"Here I am, my beautiful Lady," replied Med.

"Oh, I envy you. Where do you find these words of a poet?" asked she.

"You are my inspiration, my Lady. Honey, I am going to propose you a beautiful song by K.

Rogers, ‘Lady’, listen to it carefully. He is going to tell you all that I want to say to you this evening,” said Med
“I am going to listen to it now,” said she.

(She put the earphones in her ears, wrote the name of singer, then she wrote the title with lyrics, and started read)

5

*‘Lady, I’m your knight in shining armor and I love you,
You made me what I am, and I am yours.
My love, there’s so many ways I want to say I love you
Let me hold you in my arms forever more.
I’m so lost in your love
And oh, we belong together, won’t you believe in my song?
Lady, for so many years I thought I’d never find you,
You have come into my life and made me whole.
Forever, let me wake to see you each and every morning.
Let me hear you whisper softly in my ear.
In my eyes I see no one else but you
There’s no other love like our love
And yes, I always want you near me.
I’ve waited you for so long
Lady, your love’s the only I need and beside me where I want
you to be.
Cause, my love, there’s something I want you to know
You’re the love of my life you’re my Lady’*

Hearing this song made her think his voice, and the words there were his words.

“Have you ever sung this song to any other girl? said she, (she was joking).

“I have proposed to many of them, but you are the only one who I dedicate these words,” replied Med

This was one of the ways they talked to each other. They found the most poetic words to express their inner side.

Although everything seemed perfect, Mia felt confused at first. Her feelings were mixed. Mad was not quiet inside also. Many thoughts walked in their minds, especially in Med’s mind were many thousands of thoughts. He wanted to know everything related to her, especially her past. The thing that upset him the most was cheating. They talked so openly to each other and they were always sincere, but it was not enough for him. On the other hand, Mia believed in everything he said without doubt. She thought if a man wants sincerity he must be sincere; there is no other way of creating that good relationship that they talked about almost all the time.

Suddenly, maybe without any reason, a wave of uncertainty came between them. It was nothing to doubt in. That doubt had no base; it was just a prejudice in Med’s mind. Maybe he thought too much, such as his prejudices made him believe everything that was creating in his mind, even though it was nothing to worry about.

One of the bad sides of Mia was her over-silent character. She did not talk enough about herself. Maybe it was in her character, or she did not have such experiences that have to be told. She did not like people who talk all the time about tiny and unimportant things and tell those details like, 'I went home, I put down the bag, then I washed my hands and then I set down to eat...', these kind of people made her laugh. However, Med did not know about such characteristics that Mia had. He thought that she was a mysterious girl and she was hiding something from him.

6

Mia knew what was happening. She knew what Med wanted, but she did not have anything more to do except be silent. She had already said everything that had to be said. Med would enter in her brain and thoughts if it were possible. Maybe Med was right, because Mia was a difficult person to understand at first. On the other hand, she could not become another person or to pretend. It was a complicated situation. None of them wanted to hurt each other, much less themselves. Mia thought that Med was right sometimes, because they became the most important persons in life to each other and they must knew each other deeply. However, she thought there was no way to express her inside except to wait and let time show who she was. 'Words are poor to show that feeling,' thought she.

Med was confused. He could not believe that such a good person with such virtues could exist in that dim time when people felt good doing the right thing and felt good doing the wrong one. Maybe he was right

because good and evil were so close to each other that it became difficult to identify which one was which. Those were the days when kindness and sincerity was considered naive and foolish. However, although Mia felt in a very bad mood about this situation, she was mature enough to deal with this situation in an easy way. Neither Med, nor Mia was at fault. Mad wanted the best for himself, Mia also. Meanwhile she trusted him and his love because she thought if love really existed there must not be otherwise, and if it really existed there must be a little trust between them.

So then what had happened was nothing more than confusion and just a bad illusion. After that everything was back to normal.

(A phone conversation)

“Hello Narcissus, how are you?” asked Mia.

“Fine my lady. How are you?” replied Med.

“Good,” said she

“What does narcissus mean, honey?” asked he.

“I have told you, but you forgot,” said she.

“Tell me one more time,” said he

“Better find out by yourself,” replied she, laughing.

(After a few minutes)

“Oh honey I am not a narcissus, it is bad being so,” said he.

“Yes you are a little, but it is not bad,” said she (smiling).

“Well everyone has a kind of ego, it is genetic in human kind, but do not think I am a narcissus. I have enough self confidence and I know what I want, and I always want to achieve all my goals,” said he.

“So you are narcissus?” said she.

“Maybe I look like narcissus, philosopher, or a poet, but crazily in love with you?” said Med.

“You are lying. You are such a good poet and I really envy it. I would like to be a poetess, to feel you those words that have stuck in the throat and I can not spit out,” said she (happily)

“Beauty, don’t worry. Now I can understand your silence, just looking into your beautiful eyes,” said Med.

The Meaning of This Life

By Saranda Beqiraj

Near to the sea was a pleasant home in city called D_. Near that home was a church. Close to that church lived a small family: just a husband and a woman. They were poor but happy. Year after year that happy couple become older and older without getting a chance to have a single child of their own. As the years passed, they longed for a child, but did not succeed as they hoped and were certain that the rest of their life would pass alone and they eventually became disappointed and depressed.

It was December, 1985, when that woman, hopeless woman, gave birth to a child. This was a miracle because they were old parents. But that was what happened there. It was a boy. That baby was like any baby, but he looked to them so cute and so special; he looked to them the sweetest boy they had ever seen. That's because he belonged to them and no one else. They were so thankful to their God for such a present.

During the days, things had taken a happy turn. They, for the first time in their lives saw a good future for themselves. How beautiful and how wonderful everything seemed then. They decided to call him Unejs, a name they always dreamed about for their son if he would ever be born. Only God knew how happy they were since they became with a child. This was a big change for them. But this happiness didn't last for very long, when one beautiful day, in one of those moments,

funny moments, while playing with his son, the husband died. He died from a heart attack. He was a healthy man. He especially was feeling perfectly good those days. But he actually died.

Unejs was just two, but he was a kind condolence for his mother. So the only escape for her was taking care for her baby to make her sorrow more painless about her husband.

Since her husband went away she dealt with her life alone. The life was difficult because she was just a woman and above all she was poor. But then, life and the experiences of it taught her how to deal with her life, how to solve her problems. Even though she never studied, her husband left behind a great knowledge about writing styles. So, she became an essayist and wrote about the actual problems in her town.

In spite of the difficulties of life in her life, she was always a strong lady. She knew how to handle situations such as poverty, misery, anguish, and hardships.

As a person, she was good. Regarding her believing she was strong in that aspect, but day by day she begun having some doubts. All of that came from a conversation with an anonymous person who told her that the bible was not a reliable book because it changes so many times. "It has too many versions," said this person. "You can't rely on it so it is considered that it must have been made by man." She didn't pay too much attention to this, but that was enough to bring her doubts about her beliefs. That unknown person told her that if you try to be a good person in your lifetime it is important to believe in real things in order not to lose all the work of this life. Who that person was who told those

things to her is not important, but it is important that that person made her reflect on what she believed. Since then she had a task: seeking for the truth because she didn't know what to believe in anymore. That was a secret that she would keep with her until death. It came into her mind to write a diary, a kind of diary, in which she would write about her experiences. Above all, the aim of it would be focusing more on something much greater than an experience in order to be more intelligible than anything else. Since she gained so much experience in writing, she became a great essayist, and remarkable, where she could cover her family needs easier than ever. She had a task before her—if we can call it a task—she wanted to rely on things that she could trust in, and not something that had no value.

Writing a diary made her a good researcher. She was surrounded by doubts, but she always knew to have a ray of hope. She knew she would find the truth sooner or later.

She did all of that just for the sake of God, because she knew that in such a big universe exists someone who protects, heals, and tests her. She knew all of that, it means she was aware of it, but the point was, she wanted to know which religion offered her the truth, which religion had an answer for every question, for every doubt and issue she had. That was what she was thinking about all the time, where she was actually in suspense.

She knew that the road she would take was a long way and laborious, but her aim was pure. She did it only for her God and herself. She never wanted to offend someone or any religion. No, that was not her aim. Her intentions weren't bad. "There is no place for

misunderstanding,” she thought. She wanted to clear her mind before she began; writing and thinking that that will take time. She thought it would last for years. But that was not as she predicted. Everything that she realized was found out, in just a few months. That’s because the truth was always before her eyes, but she never saw it.

‘Now is the time’ she thought. She had one more reason why to write in the diary. The reason was her son. She just wanted to put her thoughts her truly thoughts, on paper, just to show her son the reality of life, and then to pass it to him, if he began to take it for granted. She did think on it well, because her son would live in a time where it was difficult to differ right from wrong. When everything was confused, the diary would be a kind of salvation for him. This would save him from many possible mistakes he would make if his mind wouldn’t be ever clear.

2.

She was an old lady, but she was still strong enough to work with much effort as any one with such a big aim. She never predicted how long the diary would last. But, fortunately it didn’t last for too long. Only three years. For the whole three years she acted like a crazy scientist trying for a solution, but actually everything was worth it. Because she did something rare that a woman can do. That’s because she planned it at a time when she would pass away from this world. Above all, she let her child in its brother’s care after her death. She ended it just in time. She told her son all that she had to say to him. After that year she was done with writing. That year was

the last year of her life. Then she died peacefully and calm. She died grateful and respected. Her death was natural.

Thirteen years later

Since his mother died, Unejs abandoned his hometown and left everything there. He then lived at uncle's home at Monaco, which was a small town and beautiful one. They were a rich family. His uncle was a businessman; he earned a lot of money in a year. He, by nature, was always lovable and good, but he was also the kind of man who doesn't pay a lot of attention to little things. It means that he cared about his family and his nephew but he never tried to give them education with much effort since he was so involved with his business. He never had time to talk to them about their issues, their problems, or whatever. The whole life he devoted to business. No one can't blame him for that because they were living in modern times. After all, the whole family was just like that; they all had a dynamic life there.

The family consisted of five persons; he and his wife and two little children and Unejs. Unejs, after he lost his parents, after some years of poverty, had begun a new life, in a new country, with new people. Grew up in a family where nothing was lacking, he had everything that a child could ever want. Then he became an adolescent and again he had everything he wanted.

That kind of life gave him knowledge, a great knowledge in an extensive way. He was smart. But most of the time he passed alone; surrounded only by books, by its protagonists, by his heroes. He learnt stories that made him believe that the human race is superior. They

can do everything by themselves. He began to believe in evolution and so on.

He was just nineteen, still young in the balance of things; too young for his acts as to give value and strength to the things that are heavy to carry. He felt himself to be a smart one, and at some point he became conceited and an egoist. He also became ungrateful somehow to his uncle.

But his uncle was a patient man. He was patient with him. And he never told him anything that would make him feel bad and that would make the situation worse. Above all, he wanted to complete his duty, just as his sister wished. He wanted to be fair with him for the sister's sake. That indicated that his uncle, above all, was honest.

Maybe the lack of parents or too much discipline made Unejs a little bit arrogant. Whatever caused it, he became careless about his actions. Yet his uncle continued to show patience with him. All of this support, backing and reservations toward him indicate that they were good people who felt compassion for him, for he who didn't have any of his close family left. Despite this, they knew he would change very soon; otherwise, they would initiate measures to improve his behavior.

3.

Being nineteen years old, in such sensitive age, in such place, there could not have been otherwise but that. It means that boys like Unejs were typical there.

The uncle's children were yet small. He couldn't know if even his children would become as others who

are ungrateful such as this one. His uncle just observed continuously every action of his nephew each time if given a chance, without his knowledge. He saw his disorderly life and thought to himself “What am I doing?” He thought that if he couldn’t care about this little boy how would he care about two others? He guessed that he hadn’t managed to deal with that boy well, because it was difficult, especially in this time. He simply could not understand how a child that has everything he needs could be so ungrateful; he addressed it not only to his nephew, but to everyone who misbehaved. He could not find a single answer for it. But he was certain that Unejs would change. He was right. He would change. His changing would come gradually. He would understand that the world was not turning only around him. He would understand that he was not the only child who lost his parents in order to justify its behaviors. He would understand that he was responsible for his acts. Above all, he would understand that he came into this world with a mission, an important one. Which mission would give him meaning for his life?

After all, he was a man, just a man, who made mistakes, human mistakes. It is important that that man will change and will repent for, his acts and will never repeat again those mistakes he used to. The good is that repentance always accepts as long as it is not exaggerated. That was what happened with Unejs, he who wouldn’t change ever his manner of life if his mother hadn’t thought well about her future’s son and his education. Only a mother can do that. She knew that her son would be alone after she went forever from this world. And she knew that no one would care about him

as she would by herself, despite the effort of her brother. So she thought what could be that thing that would teach him step by step, and patiently, how to behave, to give him hope when he is hopeless, to show him the right way before the wrong ones. And above all, to feel her presence even when she wouldn't be there, when her son needed her the most. So she thought a diary would perfectly work. She was right because after she ended her writing, her life ended just few days after that.

It was late the night when Unejs came back. As usual, everyone was sleeping. But that night his uncle was waiting for him to come. It was about 01:00 o'clock when he came; he tried to make no noise. He walked through the salon to go upstairs. The lights went off. He didn't notice his uncle was behind him. He exclaimed to death when he saw him suddenly. It was something unusual for him. He did not speak a word at that moment because he knew that his uncle was angry with him, and not just only that but for all his misbehaving. His uncle turned the lights on, quietly, sat on the chesterfield, and just looked him straight in his eyes, with angry eyes. Unejs was standing motionless, quite fascinated. Then his uncle asked him to sit beside him. Unejs set beside him, with his head reduced. They didn't talk for a moment. The deep breathe of him broke the peace of grimness, then Unejs said, "Please, don't be cross with me because I'm late. I am big enough now to care for myself. Everyone my age is just like me. I mean this is a normal thing."

"Is it normal?"

"Yes I...it is."

“Please, don’t justify yourself. It doesn’t mean what others do you should either do, you should do the right ones, always,” his uncle said.

“Absolutely, you’re right. I am not doing what others do. I’m doing what is normal to do.”

“And what ‘is normal’ according to you?”

“For instance, it is normal staying a little late with friends.”

“What else?”

“Going out whenever you want, drinking a little.” He said it just to provoke his uncle. Then he denied it immediately in order for his uncle not to lose his patience. “No, I’m joking I rarely drink, just on occasions.”

“What else?” his uncle asked curiously.

“Oh now you’re putting me in a bad position, should I tell you everything in detail?”

“Come on, tell me, go ahead.”

“Ok, but then don’t judge me for that, for example chasi....chasingafter.....girls. You know? I know you will misunderstand me now. Look it is nothing serious, we just play with each other, and it is not as you think.”

“Love games, eh? You little boy, you’re still immature. You don’t understand some things.”

“I knew it; I knew that you would not understand me. How should I bear into your mind that nothing is as you think it is?” Unejs said.

Then his uncle added, “I wish it was like you said, otherwise...”

“What otherwise, what if it is nothing as I said. If I lie to you, you’re gonna kill me, or what?”

“Look at me, just look straight in my eyes, what you see? Don’t you see yourself? No, you don’t. And do you know why? Once, in my youth, I used to be like you, exactly like you: insensitive, proud-spirited, ungrateful, mean, selfish, such things. But now here I am completely different. You know how I came to this point or how I managed to change? Guess it! I did it by myself. I realized that’s not how it works in life. I realized that life is much better than that. And I can change my philosophy. I mean the manner of it. You know, being a bad person draws behind me the anger of my parents, my friends and God. Nothing brought me peace till I decided to change my self. That’s when my happiness started. Above all, I could feel calm. That is what I loved more: tranquility, serenity, being in a great mood. Nothing else was more important than that. I mean it was a great achievement. Since I managed to change myself, everyone can do it, because I was a difficult man. Now that I am talking to you, you recall my background, my youth. I would like to turn back time and fix everything. Maybe I talked too much, but I felt I needed to, in order for you to take lessons. You have that chance that I missed a long time ago. You have the chance to change in time before it is too late, and...”

5

He stopped his uncle while talking. He looked in a bad mood and disappointed with himself. After some short moments of a break, he cried nervously, “Am I so bad? Why did you never speak to me since you were so angry with me? Maybe I am wrong but you were indifferent with me. I always wanted you to talk with me

but sometimes it seems to me that maybe I was an accessory for you.”

“So you’re putting the entire fault on me? You’re blaming me, aren’t you?”

“I don’t know how we came in this situation, I will try to change. At least I will try. But with one condition: be more open with me. Yes, you’re my uncle, and I have consideration for you.” He said all of this with a low voice, a hopeless voice.

Pause

“You know what? I have something for you,” his uncle said with a pleasant voice. He took a little book in his hands. The book looked superannuated, as an ancient book. That gave him pleasure because he was very bookish. He was anxious for it, without knowing what was in it. Above all, the way his uncle carried the book, made it look more special. His uncle wanted his curiosity to last more. Then finally he said, “How carefully I hid this book from you because you were a monster of books. That is not the entire reason, but it is a part of it.”

“What is it?”

“It is a kind of diary that your mother dedicates to you. She asked me to give it to you in a proper time like this. She requested that from me since I was her brother, the closest one to believe in such a last will. I accepted it with pleasure. She asked me to care for you, to give education to you, and to protect you from yourself more than from the others. But lately I realize I did fail in those aspects. Thus, I guess now is the time. Take this book. Read with diligence.”

Unejs took the book with enthusiasm and said; “All that time you hid it from me. You really are a good secret keeper.”

After awhile his uncle added, “Let me share with you a little secret. When your mother handed me the diary I asked her what it was. Then she replied to me, “It is nothing. I just want to be sure my son will live with himself and others in peace. That is all it is about.’ Since then I was curious about it but it never came into my mind to read it until now. Lately I need peace more than anything else. So I read the diary. I know it is not fair but I don’t repent for it. I learned a lot from it. I hope you will do so too. Thus you have to read it and to understand it, and hopefully to learn from it. Believe me it is a book that it worth reading.”

Unejs didn’t speak a word. He never was as quiet as that night. They wished each other good night and went to sleep. The night was long for him. He was confused. As he slumbered a little he saw a dream. He saw a man in a mist. He knew him as his father, even though he couldn’t see him. He was running with hastiness as he was asking something perseveringly. Then that man disappeared into the mist and never back again.

That dream didn’t wake him up. He slept well as any one in that age; nothing derailed his sleep until the morning had come.

He woke up still vague. Then he came into a good mood when he remembered that he had something great to do. He took the book from the drawer and started reading the first page.

In the first viewing he noticed a remarkable handwriting; also he noticed the great order of it. He looked through the pages, glancing at them for a while, amazed. Then he started reading for real:

My Life, My Experience; How I See the World.

FRIDAY – my little son, I start writing in this book with you as my inspiration. You are just six years old. You are lovely. The way you look, your eyes, hazel eyes, remind me of your father. You also have his hair. You're cute.

This day is important to me. I choose this day on purpose. I will write to you to show you my experience in life, which is more than just experience. It's more about understanding than anything else. Otherwise, I wouldn't take the trouble to write to you if I didn't have something to say.

As you maybe will see, this is not completely a diary, but it is a kind of one. Maybe I never had everything I want. I was never as wealthy as I needed. I never had a home in which nothing lacked. But I had you, your father, and the sea. Nothing else was important then, because all of you were my fortune. Once I asked myself, "Is that all I need?" The answer was, yes. I lied to myself. I always lied to myself. You know why, because I was naïve.

I always wanted something and my requests never stopped. I always wanted some more. I guess for all my life I was a skin-deep person until now. And now I'm

different. It is not on account that I become wealthy that I changed, even though I did become wealthy. I changed because I decided to change. I'm different because today I understand more. I changed my point of view. Now I know what it is worth. Thus, that is the reason why I want to write to you, to show you why and how I changed my points of view. I will write about the way I see the world, from my point of view. What is the world for me? Does it have sense? Such questions I will answer step by step.

SATURDAY – when this book will be in your hands, you'll be quite mature and grown enough to understand me. If I am not there when you grow up I would say these words: I want to be correct with you. I don't want to press on you to believe me. Everything is up to you. Even though my wish is for you to believe me, for I don't tell lies here.

Anyway, I just want to accomplish my duty as a mother. The only difference with me and other mothers is that I choose this way. Which is maybe the most weird way that a mother can do for a child, but that is what I did; I choose this way to give education to you. Maybe it will never work or you will never read this for any reason. However, as I said before, you're my son, I feel responsible for you.

SUNDAY – Today I want to talk about me and your father, how we met each other. The way we met was unpredictable. We were from those kinds of couples who were made for each other. Our relationship was built from love, understanding and clemency. Your

father made me believe in a real love; something that I always doubted. Now I believe that real love exists, even though it is rare. The sign of real love is when you never stop loving that person regardless of his vices.

That is the person who makes things for you that no one else does with such delight and pleasure, when you love that person and you don't know why. That is what we call love, pure love, built from warmth, kindness, virtue and fairness. If you will ever meet this kind of love, know that that is special. Don't lose it. Keep it safe. And know that you are a lucky one. My advice for you is to wait for that prized person. Don't experience. It is only a matter of time and it is also matters from you how much it pertains to you. That's it.

WEDNESDAY - I was talking about love between husband and wife and I admit it that it is a special love. That's right. There are so many kinds of love that are as real as love between the two people I mentioned before. When I was pregnant with you I wasn't aware how much I loved you until I gave birth to you. That moment I forgot about your father and you became my entire preoccupation. Yet every time I saw your father, I loved him the same. You did not replace him and he did not replace you. You became a very important part of my life. It became an unbroken relation. Then I realized that people have big hearts and they can love so many people at the same time, each of them differently, but they love, anyway.

FRIDAY - As I said before that people can carry so much love, real love. Besides this exists another love, which is the strongest among all kinds of love. Indeed, though the others can be real and pure, this is the truest and purest love that ever existed. This kind of love is love for God, indeed, which I realized too late, even though there it is never too late as long as you're still alive.

Though I was a happy woman for all my life, I had a feeling that I was not that fulfilled. I mean my heart seemed as if it had a big empty space. I never knew how to explain with words that feeling, nor do I know now. This is because this is such a deep feeling that you can't explain with words. But now I don't have a reason for that, to explain that feeling, for I don't feel that way anymore. That is important. Honestly, to kill that feeling of emptiness, I have spent the most of my life. Fortunately, it was worth it, everything on it is worth it. You know why? Because now I am completely different. This is because now I am fulfilled and my heart doesn't have that kind of constriction.

Now I know that I have a mission as a human being. A great mission, a mission that is difficult to execute, but it is very possible. This mission is offered to the trust of the heavens, earth, and the mountains but they declined, because they fear it, but man bears it. I said that it is a difficult mission. I admit it. But on the other it is possible because man is created for that mission, the whole body structure and mind, only for that, which is to worship God.

Thus, God made us reasonable and let us free to choose our way. Though there are so many ways to

worship God, but there is only one condition, which is to believe in him sincerely. To believe in him who created everything, who is the only one and to Him we always return.

AFTER TEN DAYS – I saw a man dying. This happened one week ago. It was terrible.

This is the second time I saw someone dying. It is sad. That enervated me and dispirited me. But then I thought that howsoever painful, death is normal. All of us are going to die, sooner or later. But still it is painful, especially when you see it, and if it is the one you know it is more sorrowful.

On the other hand, I am grateful to God that we die one day, and we don't know when it will come. Howsoever death is painful, I am happy I will die one day. This is because life is full of trials and challenges. We all the time are tested. And this doesn't comfort me.

Despite trials and challenges of this life, I am happy. Even though those trials and challenges make our life harder they make us stronger and more resourceful. And I am happy also because now I found the truth, I know the truth. I know my mission as a human being. And that is very important to me. I know why we have been made. A question that I gave my entire life for. Just for an answer. Above all, I was rewarded.

SATURDAY – Today since it is Saturday, our neighbors, most of them devoted believers in

Christianity, are going to pray in church, the church that is close to our home.

For now I am staying out on the balcony and just observing them. One of my friends is calling me to accompany her as usual. But I said, “No” to her. “Because I don’t have time,” I added. Then, in amazement, she replied to me, “But you always find time for that.” I just hushed and didn’t say a word to her. She just moved her head and kept going her way. She is my closest friend and I didn’t do it for any bad purpose. I merely didn’t know what to say to her. But if she is my friend she will understand me, won’t she?

THREE MONTHS LATER – I feel a little tired these days. But I guess it is nothing serious. I just don’t sleep very much lately. This is because maybe I am very happy. I feel fulfilled, and then I am sleepless. I don’t know exactly know from where all of this happiness comes. Maybe I know but I won’t tell you. I won’t tell you because you will not understand me, anyway. You are just a boy, but that’s not the reason why you won’t understand me. Who knows, maybe one day you will be in my position, just like me. In this dose of happiness, you will understand me. But yet you won’t get a chance to tell the way you feel to anyone because they won’t understand you, only if they feel just like you. That is the way to understand this, only in this way, there is no other way.

After all, why do I have to try to explain and justify it to you, when it doesn’t matter? But then I get back to these words and try to clarify to you and give you explanations and try to be reasonable with you. This is

because my happiness isn't enough if you aren't happy too. You may wonder how I manage to be that happy in my old age. Even I wonder. But that is the point. When you find the meaning of this life; that is all it's about. Maybe nothing is as we want but when you choose to be happy that doesn't prevent your happiness. You know, I have found something that is stable, truthful, absolute, eternal, reasonable, and free. That is what makes me happy. These are the sources. That is believing in something much greater than everything else, something to which you always return. Uhh...I forgot, just another thing. I converted...

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ONE YEAR LATER

The sun came out. It was warm and pleasant. This looked like a wonderful day. The sun lay on the mountains, which made them look even more beautiful. The sky was clear, cloudless. Everywhere felt like a kind of noise, a noise that makes your life looks easier. Everything in that landscape seemed in the right place. Everything looked amazed. And all of this beautifulness was priceless and offered for free. This was an ad for happiness. Just an ad. The other part was foremost.

Unejs was sitting on a wooden chair outside. He, for the first time of his life, saw the charm and beauty that nature offered. He only just observed and realized. We can say that the nature is the same, the things are as

same as they used to be, but the only difference was that Unejs was different.

He was different somehow. That was a good sign. That also shows that people can change if they decide to. There is hope for humanity, for those who want to change for the better. Maybe the things weren't as great as he would have wished them to be. But he, after all, is just a man, a man who keeps living his hopes, he who learned something important and vital, he who his life is a test, a test in which everyone tested and no one can get rid of.

Unejs is yet young; he just started his life. That's where the tests start for him. His journey before him has many trials and challenges. His life may not be easy with all that testing. But after all, that is the point, unless you're not going to be tested it wouldn't be any evidence for who you are and what have you done for your entire life. Unejs seems happy, but he is not aware how difficult is to accomplish his mission as a human being. Anyway, even if it is difficult, it is something very possible because man despite his heaviness is created to worship only God. That's what is the meaning of this life. But yet, for Unejs it is only the beginning. Testing goes on...

Pursuit of Happiness

by Fjolla Blakaj

Alan is an eighteen year old boy; the year that follows he finishes high school.

He is a handsome boy, with hazel eyes and dark hair. He lives in the world that is of his own, which is different from the boring normal one. He is known to others as a withdrawn boy, who prefers standing alone most of the time. He often ignores other people, not talking with them, even if it is to his own benefit.

He expects to finish high school as soon as possible, feeling fed up with all those discoveries, numbers, science and history, which he finds useless. In his dreams of being rich, school is excluded. He finds school a waste of time.

Living in a undisturbed village, far from the city, Alan lives with his parents, honorable people who are engaged doing work (honorable work) in order to maintain their children, Alan and Elda. Elda is the little girl, the beloved and adored one, a beautiful girl with golden hair and blue eyes, and with sweet cheeks with dimples. Elda fills Alan's life with love, she is so different from the withdrawn boy. The little girl is the most valuable person into his life, that one person that fills up his heart with the purest love- the love of a child. Calling her an angel that tranquilizes his spirit, by only gazing at that beautiful face, he feels relieved. Elda likes the tales that her brother tells her, and usually after dinner they go to Elda's room, where while telling her tales, Elda often

falls asleep against Alan's chest. "How blessed I am to have you, my priceless sister", says Alan, and puts his sister in her bed, after kissing her on the forehead. After leaving, he goes directly to his own room. The walls are filled with different posters, like those of expensive cars, famous cities of the world, also photos of some famous rockers, because being a rocker was one of his dreams as a child. Surrounded by darkness, just like he likes his room, he rarely turns lights on.

Sitting near the window and making plans for the future, thinking of how he could be rich and successful, and how he could find happiness in this "cold world" - as he calls it, was his usual way of spending the evening. What comes to his mind most of the times is a house for his parents, a good life for him, and to fulfill every desire of his little sister.

Worried, his Mom visits her lovely boy several times at night. "Why you still awake," she asks. "You seem as if you own all the world's problems. There's no need to worry. Me and your father are taking care of everything. You should just sleep and wake in the morning to go to school". Here with a woeful voice, without controlling himself, he shouts at his Mom, without a specific reason. He tells her that he has made a decision, that he wants to quit school. "I need money!"

"In order to get money, you should work hard and finish your studies, after this all the good things will come to you step by step," says his Mom, trying to be persuasive. Silence prevails! His Mom leaves the room, starts to worry about Alan's stupid idea.

The next morning Mom decides to tell others about the stupid idea of her son. While talking, where Mom comes to a point saying that he does not want to go to school, Dad interrupts making it clear that he is wrong. "I do not even try to think how you came to this conclusion, but I do not even care" says Dad. He says those words in order to convince him not to do this kind of mistake, even though inside he was wounded. "It is your decision. You are not a child anymore, but if you leave school you will be engaged in work and you will endure all the hardships that I endured when I was your age," continues Dad, trying to convince him, but in vain.

Here Alan points out that here is also a bright side, his lower motivation for learning can be replaced with a higher motivation to do something else. "I do not need to pass through your path dad. I am sure that I will work less and get more" says Alan. He starts expanding his idea, and how a friend of his, who is a powerful man, and owns many companies, has many people employed actually made an offer to him. "It is an advantage for me to work in capital. I even have some experience. I am too qualified to do other work, so here I go. It is my chance. I should embrace it. My dearest friend is giving this chance because we have known each other for years. He believes in my capacity to work. He knows that if I try I will achieve success, because I am a hard worker. I believe him too," says Alan.

Full of doubts and with a heavy heart Dad asks him about what he is going to deal with, knowing the company mentioned. Dad is pretty sure that this will be just too stressful for his son, and if this happens he will get down, stress will overcome him, in particular

situations when he cannot manage some duties. "I will be working in my own office, my friend promised me", continues Alan.

There are not many things left to discuss. Alan made a decision. His parents agreed with him, just for one reason, to see him pleased and to see him working and not just spending his days in vain, like the days before. Alan's intention is also to make his parents proud, and when they accept his idea, he is finally filled with hope, and feels a little relieved. He is not going to attend boring classes, but will work in an office.

Ed is Alan's friend, a powerful man who owns some of his father's company. He has a strong and rough personality and is known as a dangerous man. Ed is 24 years old. Alan and Ed met in high school, not because Ed was a student, but he was boyfriend of Ana a girl who skips classes and only talks to rich people. She just wants fame and expensive things, shopping and cars. Ana is a close friend of Alan.

The next day he goes to the capital, very enthusiastic about the new job. It's his first day in the company, as Alan arrives, he stops and thinks, "what a huge company, I should be blessed to be part of this one". As he enters the company, the staff gives him a warm welcome and Ed personally too. "Welcome, my dear friend, it will be a pleasure to work with you" says Ed, and shows a room to Alan, a room from which he could look out at all the capital through the window. "This is your office" says Ed. Alan just stares, is shocked by so much kindness. Another offer comes from Ed; he asks his friend if he wants to live in the capital in one of his apartments, in order not to travel every morning. So these days comes

to an end, by returning homes. Alan thinks of accepting the offer to live in the capital, but also is afraid of what his parents will say.

Elda was waiting for him outside in the garden. Seeing him, she runs and holds his hand; together they enter the house. Mom is washing the dishes and Dad is drinking coffee in the kitchen. Alan starts to tell them about how his first day at work was spent. How amazed he looks, with a smile on his face, tells about the warm reception of Ed, "Ed is so kind, he also wants me to live in the capital in order not to travel every morning", says Alan. His parents are shocked; they do not want to see their boy living in the capital, surrounded by powerful and experienced people, who are prepared for everything. Their boy is just too young.

"But why go and live there, do you know what will happen in our house? Emptiness! Who will tell tales to Elda, who will protect her?" says Mom.

"I am not a kid anymore, both of you should just accept the fact that next month I am turning 19, I can maintain and protect myself from different and dangerous people or situations", says Alan. Elda starts crying "Take me with you", those words affect him. He tells to her that he will visit her every weekend, and sometimes will take her to the capital and visit many parks, wipes her tears and hugs her. "You will be so happy my dear", says Alan.

Dad listens! He is quieter than ever. "When do you plan to leave", he asks his son. "As soon as possible, probably next week", responds Alan.

"Do not forget to visit us, because you will see and understand that there is no place like home, even though

now you may think so. I should accept that you are not a kid anymore, you know your responsibilities now, and even if you do not you will learn to face them" explains Dad.

Thus Alan starts to get ready; there are only few days for him in the village. In his room he thinks, his feelings are mixed, at the same time feels sad for leaving, feels fear for the future and wonders if he will be capable to endure all the hardships that he may face. After all he decides to sleep and maybe next morning to wake up with hopes and not regrets.

The next morning Alan wakes up filled with confidence, spends time getting ready, because the morning that follows he will be in the capital, living with different people in different circumstances.

"Here are your clothes, and everything I thought you will need" says mom handing a bag to him.

"I always hated goodbyes, It could be better to leave by night, and not to face this occasion, to see your troubled and sad faces", says Alan.

Alan embraces his parents and leaves. Mom tries not to cry but tears come down. The house is not going to be the same anymore, it looks that even the walls are getting darker, and it feels colder, a place full of emptiness. Also Alan feels lost, solitary, but he continues his journey to the capital.

There follows a new chapter in his life, now he has to get up earlier and get prepared for work. He tends to be responsible and takes all those evidences, checks them carefully and finally hands them to Ed at the end of the day, so his duty is not too hard.

He continues in the same rhythm for two months, in weekends goes in village, spends time talking to his parents and sister about his experiences. There also comes the day when Alan gets his first salary. He feels extremely happy, his eyes shine from happiness. Feels like he is fulfilling the promise toward his parents, and decides the greater part of his salary to hand to them. His parents are filled with joy, not for the money but for their son, seeing him happy.

On the other hand Ed appreciates Alan's work during those months, but after a short time Ed's behavior starts to change, even though Alan does not notice this immediately.

One night comes an invitation, of going to a party. Ed tells Alan that he should go out and have fun.

"I do not like parties, I guess that there I do not have fun, maybe it sounds ridiculous but whatever, I do not find something fun or even interesting at parties" responds Alan.

"How can this be? We will have drinks, music, and very beautiful girls, how could you refuse?" continues Ed, convincing Alan to go with him.

As they arrive, and enter the club, all the scenes of that place were strange for Alan, that view with terribly drunk people lying on the floor shocks him.

"All those that your eye sees are under my patronage", explains Ed. Alan never knew about Ed's other business, but the party goes on. Everybody is high. Alan smokes his cigarette, but refuses to drink. But Ed insists and here they go, drinking all night, Alan starts to feel weak, he even doesn't recognize what is happening around him anymore, falls on the floor, and knows nothing until the

next morning when he wakes up in his apartment, having no idea how he arrived there.

The next day he cannot even go to work, and he is afraid that Ed will be mad at him. In the evening, he goes to the club to meet Ed and to apologize. "My friend what are you saying, nothing happened. Just relax". Alan is thankful and wants to leave. Ed says "Where are you going? Tonight is a special night. We are celebrating another success of my business. You should not miss this opportunity".

Ed is pleased when Alan accompanies him to those parties because he gradually wants to find a new job for him. That night Ed talks with Alan. "Look we are friends; we know each other very well. Both of us always looked after money. You see you are working in my company. You gain some money but it is insufficient. You have your own car to pay for. Look at me. I own all this. You can join me by helping me. It is nothing dangerous. No one will know. It will be our deal".

Now Alan starts to realize his father's word that when he said to take care because there you have to deal with different people. Alan realizes that Ed is not as honorable man as he thought. "I know that you will accept Alan, I know you. It is nothing. You just be selling drugs. No one says to use them for yourself", continues Ed. Alan leaves, goes to his apartment. Sadness! He is desperate and thinks "You are a stupid person Alan. What did you think? Did you think that somebody will want you to work honorably work for them? You quit school. You are ignorant. Everyone will

only try to benefit from you. Stupidity fits me perfectly", Alan continues his monologue.

The next morning he wakes up healthy, feeling more confident because he decided finally not to be a partner with Ed. He also decided to resign from the company. He goes right into the office to announce his intentions to Ed. "I never knew that your desire for getting money could go so far that you are able to do anything for it. I actually lost all my respect for you, I do not want to mess with your kind of people. I resign" says Alan to Ed. Ed smiling says, "I knew that you will pay me back in this way, but do not worry you are not capable enough to be part of our business, that's why you are leaving". Alan at first wants to beat him. He wants to tell the police about Ed's illegal businesses, but he does not speak up, he just wants to leave and go back to his village, to his home, surrounded by honest people.

He returns home without warning his parents. A moment of surprise catches them. Alan does not let them speak any word. "I am back. You were right, Dad. There is no place like home and I regret every single word I said that offended you. You told me what the best was for me. I apologize!" says Alan with tears on his face. Then he tells his story. His parents hug him and tell him that not all the people in the world are the same, and say they are blessed to have such an honorable boy.

Here Alan realizes that money does not buy happiness, and that the true happiness is to be with his family. He also decided to continue to go to school now as a grown up, and experienced man.

Go for It

by Gresa Bujupaj

The flame of internal desire or the flame of external demand... which one should I embrace?

“Ria! Come, come and dance with me...let us be part of your sister’s joy!”

Rani’s wedding is full of colors, bright and gleaming. They’re beautiful, but they aren’t the colors that make up my dreams. What burns in me is the power of my hands and the visions of my mind. Even though it is the reverse of what I am expected to want, I have to see this through.

I have made up my mind. I am going to talk with my parents after Rani’s wedding. It will require a lot of courage for me to take this step, but even more for my family to let me have my way.

Listening to these sweet melodies that make everyone here dance with joy, and seeing my sister’s contented face, causes my heart to beat faster with bliss.

Being united in holy matrimony was Rani’s lifetime wish. Having someone by her side who loved her, supported her, and cared for her, on whom she could always rely, remained a deeply-held aspiration—not only for Rani but for my whole family. Until today.

And there she is now: dressed in the most beautiful sari I have seen, holding hands with her husband as they promise each other eternal love. She looks like the most blessed girl in Mumbai.

I am very happy for her, truly I am, but this is not what I desire and plan for myself. My dreams reach far

beyond the borders that my family sets. I yearn for something that completes me, something that none can grant me but I alone have to attain.

“Oh, Ria, for God’s sake, what are you doing here alone in the corner? Don’t you see that the guests will be leaving soon? Come and dance with the other girls. Maybe one of the handsome boys of the Kapoor family will notice you and you will be fortunate enough to share the same fate as your sister.”

I am coming, Mama, but I am not dancing for any of the Kapoors. I am just doing it for my own pleasure and for Rani.

The beating of the drums and the melody of the music has gradually quieted. The guests are leaving one after another and the time has come for our family to offer salaams to Rani and her husband and wish them perpetual happiness.

Although I know Rani is pleased to start a new life—one which she herself she chose, after all—I can see on Rani’s face an expression of insecurity which she is trying to hide behind her smile.

Ever since infancy we were closely bound to one another. Despite our differences, we shared our secrets, disguised our quarrels, and, most importantly, we always supported each other.

However, she had chosen her destiny, and it is now time for me to choose mine, to pursue the dreams that I have never had the courage to proclaim.

Seeing the cheerful faces of my family members and knowing how my announcement will break their hearts makes me tremble inside.

“Nani, Papa, Mama, there is something that I need you to know and that has been struggling inside of me for a long time. God has blessed me with a flair for combining imagination with colors to make magic with my hands. And I want to become proficient in my field of art. I have been chosen to study art in France...”

My determination shakes everyone. The objections are just as I already imagined them. Nothing is unexpected. I have always been aware of my family’s conservatism. It is forbidden for a Muslim girl to study alone, outside the borders of India. According to my family—especially according to Nani, my grandmother—only boys have the right to study, to have a profession and work. A girl should marry as early as possible, become a wise and thoughtful wife and mother and care about her children and husband. And now my family considers me sinful for even thinking of this idea.

Although I had never imagined it, Mama is the only person from whom I do not hear reproaches. She remains nearly silent during the whole dispute, supporting neither me nor Papa and Nani.

Sitting now in my room, gazing through the window at the very first leaves of autumn losing life as they split from the branches, encourages my imagination and inspires me to take out the sketchbooks and paints from behind the wardrobe where they lie concealed, hidden from my two little brothers who like to play with them.

Every single line, every touch of color of everything I’ve painted, both these works of art and so many others, which I have long since sold, has so much life and dedication in it. But all that is in vain. What use

is life and dedication to me since my hands are bound by my family's dictates and I am restricted in my pleasure by the will of others? Tearing these pages up may help me to come to grips with the idea that following my desires and becoming an artist is and will always remain a dream.

"Stop, Ria, what are you doing? Do you really give up so fast?"

"Mama, Ma...I am just..."

"I know what you are doing. But believe me, destroying the works to which you have dedicated so many years is not a solution. There are always other ways.

"I cannot say that I am happy about your objective, but you are twenty and I cannot interfere. I would have liked to see you well settled like your sister, but I cannot stay idle and do nothing to support you because after all you are my daughter and I know very well that nothing else can make you happy. I have my own savings, which can help you buy the ticket to France and I am aware that you have also some money set aside from selling your paintings. That is the only assistance I can offer to you."

I cannot believe my ears. Finally there is someone who has compassion for my deepest dream. All I have to do now is arrange the ticket.

October ninth is the date upon which I will take the first step of this long-anticipated journey.

Even though sometimes I think I could fly from happiness, I try to conceal it. Papa and Nani are not contented at all; they hardly talk to me, and they have made it clear that I will not receive any kind of support

from them, neither moral nor financial. But there is nothing they can do. I am not a child anymore.

The days pass so fast, and suddenly I find myself at the airport accompanied by all the people who love me and are dear to me, who have come to greet and wish me luck in my wayfaring. Everyone except Papa and Nani.

My desire to succeed at my dreams is strong, but I know it will not be easy. And it will be made more difficult by how far I will be from those who believe in me.

After so many hours I finally feel the ground under my feet. Paris is exactly how I have imagined it, full of fine, big, picturesque buildings. The attitude and appearance of French people, their costumes and clothing, differ so much from what I am accustomed to seeing in India. But these are not the only things that attract my attention. It is also their behavior with strangers and their unwillingness to help those in need, as recently happened to me in the airport. I don't know if every foreigner is treated here like this; perhaps I am the only one? However, there still exist kind, generous and warm-hearted people who are ready to accept and support me in this unfamiliar place where sometimes I feel like a lost ant.

Before my voyage to Paris I had done some research, trying to find a small flat or even a room to stay, but the prices were so incredibly expensive that sometimes I even thought about giving up. But then I found Nazli's announcement. Nazli is like my sister now. She is three years younger than I, and she and her family come from Turkey. Her family's economical state is quite depressed. Her father is ill and cannot work to

maintain the family, so that is why they rent out this small and not-so-bright room that has become my residence now. Despite all their problems and their poverty, my new family is always cautious and courteous when it comes to me. They try to lead me through the obstacles I encounter.

“Wake up, Ria, today is your big day, you have to be ready in one hour!” exclaimed Nazli from the corridor. I don’t know how I fell asleep. I thought for sure I wouldn’t be able to close my eyes for an instant all night because of the excitement.

Thanks be to God that I have Nazli with me who tries to cheer me up, because this ride to university would seem like a torment to me if I were alone.

“Here we are now. This is place where many artists were born, and you are going to be one of them, my friend!”

Indeed I am overflowing with feelings. I cannot believe I have made it here. I am just steps away my dream.

“I have come for the entrance exam.”

“I am afraid you cannot sit for the exam, young lady,” says the registrar after taking a look at my papers and documents.

I cannot understand it. I have come so close to my purpose and now I am to be prevented by one single person?

“That is not fair; give me just one reason why she cannot sit the exam!” Nazli says.

“Miss, please step out of line. Don’t make me call the guards.”

“I am not moving anywhere until I see that my friend has entered the exam!”

“What is going on here?” says one old but gentle man who comes out from one of the offices. It is one of the professors, and after hearing the quarrel between Nazli and the registrar he allows me to go in and present my skills.

“So, Ria? Speak, girl, for God’s sake!” cries Nazli, who has been waiting outside.

“I am in, they accepted me, Nazli! I will be studying here!”

I cannot believe my fate. Only moments before I was lost and without hope. I was nearly rejected because of a man’s prejudice against my religion and nationality, but now thanks to that noble professor and the aptitude that God has blessed me with I can trust again.

Day after day I am improving in my field. The professors are satisfied with me and even I can notice my progress. But not everything goes as easily as I had imagined in my mind. As I don’t have any support from my family and the money from my savings was only enough to pay only some of the expenses for my first week in France, I am obliged now to sell some of my paintings, and even to make portraits of people in the street whenever I get the chance. Life outside India is not easy, not how I have imagined it.

There are moments that make me doubt and ask myself what am I doing here but then whenever I get in touch with what most gives me joy I gain strength and belief in what I am doing.

Today I have had my first public presentation in front of my colleagues and the topic I discussed was

“Expressing Love through Art.” Even though I was scared to death I managed to deal with it without too much trouble.

“Impressing show, Ria, congratulations,” I hear a voice calling to me as I am walking down the hall afterwards.

“Oh, thank you, Sam,” I reply. It is my classmate Sam who always seems to think of me as very talented and praises me and offers me kind delicate words whenever he has the opportunity. It is maybe because he is half Indian and does not have the same prejudice that others do. However I have to admit that his words make me feel very confident about myself and his company has always made me feel good.

It is interesting how your attitude towards someone can change so rapidly, how someone who was ordinary for you can come to mean so much, how someone can come to occupy such a big place in your heart. I have not been aware of it until now. Day by day without noticing it, I have come closer to Sam. He seems like the most natural, kind and generous person I have ever known. He is the only person who accepts my weaknesses and encourages me to reveal my strengths.

Since the first day Sam and I went out together, many things have changed in my life. It seems like time flies when we are together: several months have passed since we have become a couple. He has become my soul mate, my companion and savior. We spend so much time together that sometimes we even wonder how we could have lived before without each other. What unites us is our passion for art and desire to express out what our minds compose. Being together helps us a lot in our

object of study. We have managed to finish nearly all our exams and projects. He is not as I have imagined him in my dreams—he is much better. His open nature and clear eyes reflect the purity of his soul.

Last night when we met, Sam told me that he had a surprise for me but it was a secret. He gave me a box and asked me to open it after I got home. “Do you like it, my dear?” he asked me on the phone. Of course I did like it. It was the most beautiful sari I had ever seen. “I want you to wear it tomorrow when we go out for dinner,” he said.

“Where are we going?” I inquired.

“That is another surprise,” he said.

As we approached the restaurant I saw a man waiting outside and waving to us.

I have never seen this person before, but he looks kind and gentle. “This is my father, Ria,” said Sam.

“It is an honor for me to meet you, Mr. Khan,” I said, trembling from surprise and emotion. Even in my dreams I could not have imagined this situation. Sam had never told me that he was planning a meeting between me and his father. I had always known that his father was a successful and well-known businessman and that he had his own advertising company. I had thought that months or maybe years would pass before I got the opportunity to meet him, since Sam had told me many times how busy he is.

But it turned out that this appointment was not made by chance. His father was seeking an employee who had ideas about and an affinity for art, someone who would bring freshness to his commercials. Sam had planned this meeting long ago in order to help me. He

knew that my financial situation was not the best, and many times he had tried to give me money or buy things for me (which I did not accept, because I always said I could earn my own money). The only thing that he could do was to speak to his father about me and the talent he thought I have, which might be beneficial for his father's company.

Mr. Khan was very eager to meet me and hear about my talents. At the end of the evening, he told me I could start work the coming week and that I could continue later as a regular employee. My excitement for this offer was incomparable. I could not thank Sam and his father enough for what they had done for me.

Nor was it possible to be sufficiently grateful to God for the good things that He allowed to happen, for the lovely and generous people He put in my way. I cannot describe how blessed I feel right now. Everything is going so well. Never in my life, especially not when I had just arrived in Paris, did I dream of experiencing these wonderful opportunities. I was a simple painter who was forced to sell her works for a living and now I have become a successful personality in the field of advertising and marketing. Mr. Khan's help and his insistence and that he has never doubted my abilities have brought me further than I have expected. From the simple, shy and unknown Ria, I have become the famous Ria who appears on TV and who everybody in the street recognizes. People now stop wherever they see me, asking to take photos. And it is unbelievable how many other job offers I have received in the last months! But regardless of the attractive offers I receive, I will never stop working for Mr. Khan and his company. Sam and

his parents occupy such an important part in my life. They even make me forget sometimes the absence of my family and their lack of interest about my fate or me personally.

The lack of support from my family has not made life easy for me. I only received two calls from my mother during my first week here, and I have not heard anything from them. Even when I wrote to them I got no reply. I really miss all of them, but especially my little brothers. I want to know if they have grown since the last time I have seen them. I want to see Rani and ask her everything that has happened during this time in our lovely Mumbai. I want to be wrapped again in the warm feeling of being with my family, but I know it will take time. My decision to come here, my stubbornness, will not be easy for them to forgive. So I will have to withstand several months without seeing them.

“Ria, there is someone on the other telephone line that wants to talk with you,” said my secretary.

“Pass the line then,” I replied.

“Namaste, Ria” said the voice on the line. It was impossible! How could be this real? It was my mum’s voice. “Ria, I know that we have judged you but we really regret it. Please forgive us. We all are here in France and we want to see you,” she said.

“I will come immediately, just tell me where you are!” I cannot think of anything else even though I don’t understand how things could change so rapidly between us. I am numb; I don’t know what I feel. Is it happiness, yearning or just fear that all this is just a daydream of mine?

My father's eyes were swimming with tears. He was looking at me and I could see he was feeling shame for the way he had behaved. But at the same time I could see how proud he was of my success. As he started to walk towards me I saw how difficult it was for him to break the ice that was frozen for such a long time. "Come here, my precious, and have compassion for your old father," he said, while he could not stop embracing me. I felt like the happiest girl on earth; all that I loved most was now united in one single place.

As time passed I related all the things that had happened to me. My mother was overjoyed to hear that she was going to have another married daughter, and couldn't wait to tell this to my father and to all the family. Sam felt so happy when I told him that my father wanted to meet him and his family according to Indian tradition. More than that, he was happy for me because I could finally be happy and feel like I was all in one place without feeling like my heart was divided as it had been all this time.

By the time all the arrangements for the family meeting were made I was trembling and scared, even if I had nothing to worry about. When the knock on the door came, my head and heart were in agreement, hoping for the best. As I stood by with the plate on hand to give Sam's family the appropriate welcome, my mother came to my side because she had seen my hands shaking. With her presence I felt confident, like I could do everything that would come to me.

At first everything was ordinary, and then Sam's father started to talk about the purpose of this meeting—our engagement.

Sam was trying to hide behind his father but my grandmother was all over him, trying to embarrass him just to see how he would react, but Sam was too wise to get caught in such a trap.

Everything ended in the best way and our marriage day was set just seven weeks from that day, which means that I will have double reasons to be happy and celebrate: because I will live my life with the person whom I most admire and because I will be an official artist. My graduation will take place only two weeks before my marriage.

The time flew past. When I think about my previous days I can hardly believe it. I was all alone and now I have my happiest life, with all the people I love around me and with all my dreams accomplished. I will never forget all those who stood beside me during my darkest days; nothing will ever be enough to show my gratitude to them. Now that I am here holding my diploma I see that I didn't do anything wrong by following my dreams. And I realize that having Sam beside me is a fulfillment of all my desires.

And soon I had my second dream. My marriage day went perfectly, and now we are living together with our united joy for an entire life. Having the chance to fulfill our desires made us want to complete other people's dreams: Nazli's family was in raptures when their home was finished. To see them happy made me even happier than I thought was possible.

I see nothing but joy when I look at my own life. I can only pray for health for everyone who is following their dreams and living their chances, no matter how difficult it will be or how challenging it seems at first.

All that counts is to continue your journey and never give up.

Forgiven

by Mimoza Collaku

He hadn't felt this good in a long time. Actually he was about to wake up from his afternoon nap, but this was so real and unrealistic at the same time. His back pain had vanished and he was able to walk again. No dizziness. No need for the nurse's help. No more painkillers and no more hospitals. This had a whole new meaning. Everything he had been wishing for was now in his hand. It was a true feeling, not just an odd dream you want to wake up from. He was afraid of this sudden change, knowing that the odds of this actually happening were really low. After such a long time without walking, and the joy he felt that it seemed he could walk again, he forgot to look around and see where he was. He was miles away from where he was supposed to be. It was the place he came from and had never had the chance to go back: his dear homeland, the place he left to make his dreams come true. Now here he was back again; this was his opportunity to live the life he has left pending in his heart.

Should I trust these feelings? He wondered. He said surprised from this sudden change in his life.

Is this a long dream or a strange miracle happening?! He continued asking himself while he walked down the streets of his hometown.

Everything looked the same. Years could never leave marks in such a glorious town. Time was flowing and it was not feeling like a dream anymore. The desperation and fear of waking up were going away as

time went by. You could see only excitement and joy in his eyes. He was finally relieved from the smell of the hospital he had actually been living in. Living there made him even sicker every day—trapped in a hospital room and seeing the world from the rain-stained windows. He knew it was a sunny only by seeing the light that came through the dusty curtains that made it look like the ugliest yellow thing ever.

The hospital was a prison cell for a man like him who never stopped working. Work was his way of keeping himself from thinking about his life. Visitors, his friends, came fewer as the time went by. He was glad for it because he didn't want others to see him like that. The accident has changed him in many ways. Physically transformed and emotionally crushed. His dream for a better life has turned into a nightmare. Living far from his family made him nostalgic and melancholic. He never told them what he was going through. He kept making phone calls and writing letters to them. Because he was helping them financially, it was hard to make an excuse for his lack of money.

He had left his country for a better life for him and his family. The situation after the war in Kosova made it impossible for him and other young men to live in their homeland. The point of getting out of there was to make money in the honest way, but not all of them resisted the temptation in such a difficult time. One of them was his best friend. They separated ways as soon as they got out of Kosova. His friend stayed in Europe and he crossed the Atlantic to chase the American dream, leaving behind a part of his soul and promises he made to his family.

Before the accident, he had had a really fast life. Not the life he has dreamed of but something that made him happy. He had graduated in engineering back in his country but he never got to work as an engineer. In America he had been working as a construction worker but he was happy with it. The small apartment where he lived was just a place he slept, not a place he called home. His mind was always on his real home miles away. Memories from there were his real life. There was a letter he read constantly in secret, as if he were embarrassed of it. No matter how often he read it, he never found a solution. He needed to make things better in his heart. The content of the letter made him depressed and sad. He was grieving for something he didn't give much thought to. Years made him realize the mistake. This was the part of him that no one knew.

This new opportunity that was given to him now was a new page in his life. It was something magic without a logic explanation, a one in a million chance for him to make peace with his troubled heart.

"It can't get more real than this," he said full of joy.

For hours he lost sense of time, strolling on the streets of his hometown. It seemed like nothing had changed through years. There were the same stone paths and small houses. Many summers had passed by in his absence, but the same vibe was there. The hot sun was not a problem while he walked under the cool, short, shades of the small houses. He strolled around, confused by the people who were smiling and greeting him. They were all familiar faces, happy to see him again. But he just kept walking without saying a word or making any

gesture. The fear of waking up had gripped his soul; he wanted to get a conclusion before getting up. Walking unconsciously for hours without a clear destination, he saw himself in front of his old house. The green garden in front of it was still alive. This view was as wonderful as he had imagined it in his head those years. Fruit trees had grown full with ripe apples and plums. Flowers were lying everywhere, dried from the hot summer. There were all the signs of a late summer. He ran toward the entrance door, which still made the same cracking noise. As soon as he opened the door he saw his old figure in the mirror. It was pale but beautiful like it used to be. He felt a relief in his heart because he hoped he would see his beloved mother there. He never wanted people to see him in that condition, as he was at the hospital, but now he looked as handsome as always. He had the same dark hair and deep brown eyes but full of joy, happy to be where he belonged.

Now, you are Mali that I used to know, he recalled, happy to see his old handsome self.

To his surprise the house was empty. There was only the furniture covered with white sheets. It had the smell of an empty house. This journey felt real but there wasn't any real person. Everything was mixed in his mind; now he couldn't make sense of the happenings. It was moving too fast for a man that saw the world through a hospital window.

If this is a dream, I want to wake up! he kept wishing.

It is turning into a nightmare, he thought, frightened...aAll my dreams turn into nightmares.

There was a heavy weight in his heart. This reality was concerning him. An occurrence that would include other people would convince him that this was real. His old bedroom was the first place to look in. Time had stopped since he was gone. It looked like a time capsule; nothing had moved even a single inch. His belongings were there as if he was still living there. He even found the letter that he had been reading for years.

Is this the future and the past mixed in one place? He asked himself. Is this a second chance for me? Of course it is. Why would I be here if it has no meaning?

This gave him the idea and the security to find someone he let go of a long time ago. He had to find her, for the sake of the years he spent thinking about her.

Day after day he walked down the streets disorientated and exhausted. This experience was nothing if he didn't live it with someone else. Every day he stopped at a place where he used to meet with his friends. But nobody seemed to go there any longer. He watched people rushing to their everyday jobs and obligations. It seemed like no one noticed his presence anymore. The place he went was a small café along the river where he sat glancing at the town. He admired this town. This chilly night was calming his soul. The greatest surprise encountering his old pal Ben. Such a long time apart and such a miracle because he was at the edge of losing hope. This meeting gave him the dose of hope he needed. There was joy and happiness in their eyes as they hugged each other.

When did you come back? – Mali asked.

A few days ago, it was time to leave everything behind and get back here. –Beni replied. At the end of the day here is where we belong...-he added.

I have never been happier to see you. - Mali admitted. Until now my life here felt like a dream, but you gave it life. Do you feel sometimes like you are dreaming? -he asked Beni as if he hoping to get an explanation for what was happening to him.

At the beginning everything was strange but now everything is back to normal. Sometimes I feel invisible. I thought I would get a warmer welcome. We suffered from the distance, or this land and these people, but no one seems to care about us.- Beni said, disappointed with the cold welcome that was given to him.

It is just us. We expected more that's all. - Mali said even though he wasn't convincing even himself with that.

He told Beni that he had to find Rina, and apologize to her.

I have a blurred vision of her but she has always been here in my mind, every single day.-he confessed. I need her forgiveness. I know I don't have much time to do this. I have to find her. I don't know where she lives or what she became but I need her to end the last chapter of my life. – Mali said, crying for help.

He never was this realistic. It had never before crossed his mind that he was dying. It was a hint of him accepting the reality, although he had always thought that there would be a solution for his condition.

Ben gave him an address, where he had seen Rina a few times and wished him the best of luck.

I hope you have the courage to talk to her. - Ben said knowing what kind of person she was.

Every day Mali stared at that piece of paper as if it was his last ticket to close a painful chapter of his life. He had already gotten tired of staying alone in a house that did not feel like home anymore. Everything around it felt so real, even the cat silhouette that came through the kitchen window during sunny days. But there were no people, no family, nothing. He felt like his heart could not stand this anxiety. He knew that it was coming to an end. Doing a lot of thinking wasn't helping him that much. His state of mind was concerning him, everything seemed to be out of control and blurry. He was disorientated and tired of the nonsense reality he was living in. At last he came up with the decision to give this whole fictive story a real ending. It was time for him to meet Rina, the girl who had made such an impact in his life.

The next morning, waking up had a real purpose. It was a rainy day, and leaves had already started flying in the air. It was clear that autumn had come to get rid of everything summer left behind. After he got dressed in his best outfit he took the old blue umbrella and left the house. It felt like it was going to be the last time he saw it. This weather was showing his inner emotions in the best way. Despite the mixed feelings about what he was going to say, he was really excited that at last he could see her and ask for her forgiveness. It would be such a relief for him.

Rain was falling all over him because the old umbrella could not stand the wild weather. The rain had stopped and he was standing in front of a big yellow

house. This was the house Rina was living in. All kinds of thoughts were crossing his mind. He decided to stand there until she went out, no matter what happened. Hours after hours and days after days he stood there until one day she came out at the right moment. She looked the same as she used to years ago. Her facial expression had not changed; she still had those deep green eyes and a cold, barely-there, smile. It was his moment, the moment to clear this out. This was his only obsession since he had gotten sick. Since then he had time to think about his past and he knew that this unfinished story was keeping him in this weird world. He was smart enough to know that this might not be real but he did not want to believe it. As she went out of the house he ran toward her.

Do you remember me? – he asked, raising his voice loud enough for her to hear, knowing that this wasn't the right sentence to start the conversation, but the right ones flew out of his mind at the moment he saw her.

Don't you think that you are a little too late? – She replied, as sarcastic as she always used to be. What took you so long? – She continued.

He is frozen by this dramatic entrance. She was really angry at him even after those long years.

I came to talk to you. I need to talk to you. - He revealed to her this heavy weight in his heart. I am sorry for not showing up that night. - He continued.

She kept walking even faster. She was running from this odd confrontation, which she never expected to happen.

You loved me. I never meant to hurt you. I am sorry for not loving you the way you deserved me to. –

He apologized from the depth of his heart. It was a big moment for him.

I have forgiven you since the first moment I realized that you were not going to come back. You should forgive yourself for being a coward. You ran without turning your head.— She replied with her eyes glowing from the tears. She looked like the sky that was about to rain. There were expected storms from both Rina and the sky.

Soon after, I realized that I didn't love you, but I hated you for not loving me. This made the grief stronger and unbearable. — She added.

She was always a bit mean but now she was cold-hearted. Manipulating was her thing. She always got what she wanted thanks to her skills. Her parents were murdered during the war and this was the main reason why she became such a cold and selfish person. She was just protecting herself from being hurt. Mali stayed with her to keep her safe and accompanied. His company was misunderstood by her and she wanted more feelings from him. In her cruel reality Mali was the only person who brought light and joy. He had always considered her as a dear friend and nothing more. One day she decided to write down all her feelings toward him in a letter. That letter was the one that got read miles away from her for years. She never got a response, Mali just walked away without saying goodbye.

Just because I was young it doesn't mean I have suffered for you. Why do you always think you are so important? You have your apology accepted. At least one of us can live in peace now. -she finished and tried to get as far as she could from there

Mali felt like he was missing his opportunity. Everything was wrong. He thought that she would make more sense to the situation and understand it. But of course not, she had been living with the silent rejection of the man she loved. Her tone of conversation was her way of punishing him. She had an offended pride to protect. When she got the chance she stopped in the middle of the road in a non-frequented part of the town and asked him:

What went so wrong with your life that you came back?

This question touched his wounds.

It was the ugliest way to let you know about how I felt but I couldn't help it. Everything was moving too fast and you were very young. I was the one that was supposed to show the maturity. – Mali tried to explain himself.

I have forgiven you Mal. There is no need for all this. Soon after you left I realized that you were just a battle that I could never win. I continued loving you and missing you for a long time but I don't regret any moment of my life without you. – She opened her heart to Mali. You are my deepest secret and you should have stayed there... - She thought.

I am sorry for not loving you the way you deserved me to. I loved you in my way with all my heart, but I wasn't in love with you... I need to know that you are fine. – Mali begged her for an answer.

It is very generous of you, this apology will give me an ending too. You are forgiven, although you didn't do anything. - Rina said while her tears struggled not to come out.

I knew you would find the strength to forgive me. You don't know how much it means for me. – He smiled without the guilt that was suffocating him

While finishing his sentence he tried to hug her, but it was too late. He started to hear voices in his head. The pain was back and he could barely move. He was waking up. He had been in a coma for weeks.

It was about time. – he realized.

He woke up in his hospital room which looked even uglier than it used to. Or maybe it looked like that after visiting the most beautiful place for him.

He was still confused and couldn't distinguish what was real. The news that he was getting better didn't surprise him, actually he couldn't hear anything; it was too much for him. He turned toward the window. Out of his hospital window he could see that here, as well, the autumn was not sparing the green nature. Clouds were gathering and preparing an unforgettable storm.

Hanna's Life Story

by Liridona Halimi

It was autumn. The sun came out for a while then disappeared in numerous clouds, carried forward on the wind. Sometimes it rained for a while just to make a noise when dropping on the ground. Everything was gold from the falling of the leaves. It was a wonderful view, but at the same time made you feel lonely. In a corner of an old house were staying two girls, hugging each other with a deep sadness on their faces.

In a small city where people are very rich, selfish and very busy with their lives they don't care about other people's condition or helping them somehow. There is a girl called Hanna. She is 20 years old, with a good physical appearance. She is brunette, tall, with long hair, straight lines and with very beautiful voice even though she talks very slowly. She lives in this city only with her little sister Emma. Their parents died in a car accident two years ago. She finished only high school, so from eighteen she had to take care of her sister and couldn't finish her studies.

Her dream was to study music. She sings everywhere she goes and this talent she inherited from her mother, who had a wonderful voice. But that was only a hobby for her; she didn't want to have that as a profession. She always has sung about her daughters and one of the songs Hanna keeps singing because it reminds her mother and make her feel like she's there, like she's not alone.

Her father had a lot of debts and after his death, people wanted the debts to be paid so Hanna had to sell her house and everything valuable and this is how they ended up in the street. At the beginning they had to find a shelter until Hanna could find a job. It was their neighbor that took them in from the street but, she wasn't in a condition to keep two more people in her house for too long. In the meantime Hanna woke up every day early and walked around the city but it was difficult finding a job there. One day while she was resting on the sidewalk an old man saw her and went close to her. He asked if he could sit with her and began talking. He saw that she wasn't well and asked her what was her problem, and if he could help somehow. He was a very generous man, different from other people there. Hanna was surprised by his behavior and she felt nearness to this person. She told all her problems to him. The old man was affected by her story. He felt sorry about these unlucky girls so he proposed to her to live in his house, because he had a huge house and there is so silent. He lives with only his wife who is older too. They have a son who is living abroad but he didn't come too often and when he did, he stayed just for a while so he wants their house to be more alive.

Hanna cried from this generous gesture and hugged the old man who was called Agron. She couldn't even imagine this. In addition she has no other option and decided to go with them but she's going to take care about them like they are her family to repay what he is doing for them. And so they moved into their house. His wife Drita was a very kind person, also generous like her husband and well educated. She worked as a teacher for

many years and that shows about her behavior toward the girls. They adapted very fast there but, Hanna felt like she had to work. It wasn't easy for her to ask them for money but the couple wanted her to continue her studies. Later the girls can work but, only when they finish their studies. After that, they don't need their money but as a condition they proposed that when they get older, if sometimes they don't feel good or have bad moment like old age, the girls would be there to help them and to give love and attention that they will need. The girls accepted immediately because this was the least they could do.

So, thanks to them, Hanna and her sister continued studying. Emma registered in medical high school and Hanna followed her dream studying music. They began learning and getting prepared because they valued every opportunity in life and wanted Mr. Agron and his wife to be proud of them. At the faculty Hanna couldn't make any friends in the beginning, because the students and professors were discriminatory. They liked students who were from well known families, families from higher class, and for those whose family weren't famous even when students were very talented they just didn't care. But eventually Hanna's voice stole their hearts and got their attention. So by the time passing she made some friends. Not every one of them was so egotistical and she made them change their minds by her personality. Emma didn't have these kinds of problems at her school. Her studies were going very well. Hanna always advises her to work hard and to stay away from problems and people who make them because she was afraid about her being a teenager. Hanna was following her passion and

in every step that she made she always thinks about her mother. Would she be happy with their achievements and how would it be if she was still alive to share it all with her.

Time was going so fast. Hanna is now in the second year and now it is more difficult than the first year because it has other subjects now and other professors. But she knows that she can deal with it again. She has great self confidence. Maybe this is what brought her to where she is now. Some students were saying that this year they are going to have a very difficult professor and just a small number of students can pass in his exam. Hanna is terrified by this notice and she started to train every day in order to impress this professor. The elder couple always said to her that she can do it, to not get stressed, she is very talented that music is a gift from God to her and that she is going to make it. The next day they had classes with this professor and at the same day Hanna is late for the class, so she has to enter after the professor. The professor didn't like this. He took her name and warned her and the class that this shouldn't happen anymore. Then he continued lecturing and practicing with some students. When it came Hanna's turn, she was very concerned and from the stress she started shaking. The professor asked her to calm down and whenever she is ready to start singing. Hanna took a deep breath, closed her eyes, thought about her mom and began slowly by raising the voice. The professor wasn't expecting this. Since she didn't come on time, he thought that she was irresponsible. But hearing her voice he got lost in it. He just couldn't take his eyes off her. She was perfect. He couldn't believe that a second year

student can sing like this. It was clear that she was born with a gift. But even though he had never had this kind of student, he didn't react like he was really feeling. He just said, "good" and called next student. He didn't want to make known that she is good enough but wanted her to concentrate more on her studies, because her future is bright. He feared that if he told her that she was perfect then she was going to leave her studies. Hanna thought that she didn't sing well and she was very worried. She blamed herself and thought that this happened because she was late. She was thinking how to resolve this problem. She didn't give up and kept surprising the professor every time. The professor saw how she was really trying to impress him. He gave her a chance to show her abilities. He chose for her the most difficult song that she had to prepare in seven days. If she prepares well, then the professor is going to pass her without having to take the exam. He was sure that Hana could do it. He believed in her.

All week Hanna practiced a lot, sometimes not sleeping at all. She just stayed in her room and kept singing and singing. When the day came, the professor brought his friend along. His friend was in search of a young talented artist. The professor introduced him to Hanna and her gorgeous voice. But again Hanna wasn't coming. She was late. While she was getting ready to go out, she heard a noise downstairs and rushed to see what happened there. When she got there, she saw Drita on the floor of the kitchen unconscious. She ran to her and tried to wake her. She threw water in her face and neck but she wasn't reacting, so she called the emergency number immediately and after that she tried to reach Mr.

Agron too. He was nearby their house and came running, out of breath to help her wife. Then the ambulance came and took her and went to the hospital. The doctors checked Ms. Drita and after several hours they came out with news that she had a heart attack and maybe she's not going to survive this time. Her heart is very weak, so she should stay at the hospital to control her condition. Mr. Agron is in sorrow from this report. He cried on Hanna's shoulder and thanked her for being there with him. Then he thought that he should call his son to give him this sad news because, maybe this will be the last time that she could see her son. He called him and he couldn't believe what he was hearing. He was sad and said that he is going to come with the first plane. He wishes that could find her mother alive and see her one last time.

Because of this sad incident, Hanna forgot about her audition. It was too late when she remembered about that. She was worried so much about Drita's condition. She knew that health is more important than anything else and she should be there to support them. In the evening while waiting in the hall of the hospital a tall boy, handsome and with a serious attitude in whose face you can see grief was asking a nurse for Drita. She heard him and immediately she understood that he was her son, Enis, and went to him letting him know that she is Hanna, the girl that his parents took to live with them. Enis was so sad he was needing someone to console him and when he saw Hanna's interest about him and his family and that she was sad too, he hugged her without thinking with his strong shoulders. Hanna felt something in that moment. She was shaking, she blushed but felt so

safe in his arms and so she returned the hug to him and both started crying. Then the nurse said that Drita was asking about her son. He entered her room and ran from the door to hug her and kiss her face. He felt so sorry that he couldn't come earlier that it should wait for this to happen before coming and said that he should always be with them and not be so selfish. But his mother comforted him that this wasn't his fault this happened, and that she wanted her son to have a great future. That is why they decided to send him for studies abroad, and that he made them very proud while doing that. While he was holding her hand she told him about the two girls and made him promise that he would take care about them and his father when she wasn't there. Upon saying those words, she died.

The family had a great loss and it took time to pass it but they supported each other all the time like a real family. Every day they were getting closer and closer. Enis began to see Hanna in another way, not as a sister, but he wasn't sure if she felt the same and couldn't find the way to show his love to her. But with time Hanna told him about her feelings too since the first time she saw him. So, they started a love story and Enis decided not to go abroad anymore but to stay with his family that remained. He found a job here and took care about his family.

Emma is in the university now ready to become a doctor. After a time Enis married Hanna and they had a wonderful life together. Hanna also had succeeded in her profession, with the support of Enis and her professor. Her professor understood her condition and allowed her to continue her studies.

When she finished her part he applauded and said to her that a bright future is in front of her. She was asked again her about her name and told other students that she is an example for them and they should learn from her. After the class he wanted to know more about her and he invited her to his office. She went there and after a lot of talking he told her that he has a friend that is in search of new talented artists and if she is interested he would make her very famous for a very little time and that all people will fall in love with her voice but, Hanna even though this was her dream she couldn't decide without discussing with Mr. Agron, whom has been as a father to her. She told the professor that is going to need time to think about this and is not going to rush and she thanked professor for this proposal to her.

When she got home and told them about this proposal, they didn't know what to say to her because this was her dream and they could see in her face that she wanted this to happen but on other side they were worried because she was not mature enough to enter in this kind of life. Fame is good but it has its bad sides, but also she have to finish her studies it has to take just one year left and then she is mature enough and free to do whatever she wants. So Hanna, as a sign of respect, and knowing that they only want what is best for her, decided not to take this opportunity and next day told the professor about her decision. He tried again to make her change her mind but she decided to continue her studies, because she knows that later she is going to have this kind or even more interesting chances in the future. The professor liked her attitude and courage her to continue like this and was

happy to have a student like her. He told her that any time she needed any professional advice he will be there.

Childhood nostalgia

by Donjeta Haziraj

So many hours without sleep in my eyes because my biological clock was not functioning at all. It was not Tuesday as they often say, but the day of the weekend, when the heart rates are rare. I was asking myself: Why is this happening to me? Suddenly I got up and approached the mirror, only to see my eyelids tired and red. I felt that my metabolism was changing. I didn't understand why. I wished I could find at least one reason why my eyes could not sleep. After turning away from the mirror, I saw a gleam of light from the window, and I approached to see what it was. Car movements were endless, going back and forth. It seemed that they had no big problems as I had. I was so tired it was as if I were drunk, falling all over the place, and not sleeping at all. Looking behind me, I saw a frame of one old photo that had fallen on the floor because of the wind that came through the windows. I bowed to capture that frame and I felt a nostalgia come over me. I held my eyes to that photo that I was trying save as one of my childhood memories. I was 6 years old, a little girl with fair brown hair and with brown eyes smiling. Looking at the photo, I started to laugh, not because of the photo, but because of myself, for at that moment I felt like a little girl. I had had a very naive greed for that world without "love."

When I was lying back in bed, I heard the phone ring. Oh! It can be him, I was thinking in my mind! It

had been a really long time without seeing him, without hearing his voice. "Hello! I am!"

I wanted to say, "I love you so much. I love you forever! " And then

the connection dropped and I lost my breath. I approached the mirror and I noticed that I had the same brown eyes, the same of those in the frame that had fallen to the floor, but my face was not smiling anymore.

News on TV showed that somebody killed himself! Darkness fell into my eyes. When somebody mentioned my name (I opened my eyes) and I saw myself in a hospital bed, and the only thing I remember were the words: "I love you forever!"

Abandoned (This story is about children that are in the streets.)

by Donjeta Haziraj

Tonight the rain is falling like showers, which makes the city more menacing, as if the lights of the city have gone out. I was crouched under the shelter so tightly that it seemed as if I was again in the stomach of my mother, within that sun that pervaded my soul. The rain was falling so rapidly it seemed that skyscrapers were crumbling on me, but I wonder, do they know about my concerns? Do they understand the language of the letters? I was eating myself, as we say, like a piece of stale bread; the fault of the pain was all my own. The darkness of the sky was drawing it out. I fell asleep with thoughts like that on my mind, without food and having coldness, the wind was waving at me as those flags do on the roof.

The next day, the sun came out and fell on my face. Sweat was walking along my face like an insect. I woke up and fixed my bed, while looking at the city that looked endless and hopeless like me. With my left hand I brushed my hair that looked like those trees with dense branches, while in my right hand I was clutching some change that was given to me yesterday by one man with a tie on his neck.

Now I continued to ask alms as anyone else would. I walked all around through the city. I sat down to rest under the shade of a tree that seemed to have sprung up since early spring. My legs were hurting me a lot. They looked like a paper seal, ironed by the lash of

the street rocks.

It's all his fault that he never was sated with money, but in the end who is he to give me orders? I felt pain so many times but now I don't have the strength to suffer another torture! But when I'm going to grow up, what he is going to do with me? Is he thinking to sell me, or even kill me? You can expect anything from this heartless person! But among this fear without end, I have also many dreams and a lot of hope. Sometimes I feel nostalgia when the moon appears in the sky. From my house without a roof, my imagination breaks the coffin containing me! I see a world more beautiful, different! Here are some good people. Really...some of them speak to me, and perhaps maybe they love me, who knows? Sometimes they ask me, "What's your name? Where are you from?" What's my name? I do not know. I have no name. I don't even remember if I ever had one because they did not love me. They abandoned me before I even knew them. I wonder what I must have done that they would leave me? Why did they do that to me? I would really have loved them. I would have appreciated them. But they didn't give me a name; they only baptized me with the name "Abandoned." They didn't ask me if I wanted that name or needed the love and warmth of a family.

The Confession!

by Medina Hetemi

I was sitting in the park, when I saw this old lady. I sat beside her. I realized that she was very, very old, but a gentlewoman. I was thinking how I could start to speak to her. I was nervous, and I couldn't understand why!

"Hello dear! Why are you alone?" – she asks.

I was glad she started the conversation, but why exactly that question? "I'm not alone! At least I don't feel alone!" I answered.

"Never do stuff that will endanger your future life for being alone, with no one to talk to or hang out with. It's not worth it!"

"What do you mean?" I was confused!

"I will tell you my story, and then you'll understand what I mean!"



I am a very old woman and I come from a very small country which is not fully developed yet. I usually change my place of living, which obviously means that I move around a lot.

I am a professional serial killer, but I work for nobody! As many other serial killers, I have feelings too, like every other ordinary human being on this planet. And being a serial killer does not mean that you necessarily are or will become a psycho! In fact, I have dementophobia, so I try to keep my mind under control as much as possible.

I remember my primary school, and the very first person I wanted to kill. Her name was Beka Woodstock, and man, was she mean to everybody, especially me. She was literally a bully! What else was I supposed to think when the only reason for not wanting to go to school was Beka's bad behavior towards me, without a single reason!

It all started in the 5th grade, and my first killing act happened in the 7th grade, when I was thirteen. During that time I was reading and appreciating the work of William Blake. He had this poem, which was my favorite one, called "A Poison Tree." It was about the exact same situation I was in. The speaker of the poem held his anger towards his enemy, until the anger and hatred started to grow and become an apple tree. One night the speaker's enemy sneaks into the speaker's garden and eats a shiny apple from the tree, which was poisoned, and dies.

It was clear what I should do to Beka Woodstock. She always used this expression when she encountered me: "You've become like my blood!" She would repeat herself every time she saw me, and she would also pick on me, and poke me! I couldn't understand that expression! She always made it sound very horrific. Words can be something that you can just choose not to take very seriously when they are said to you, but violence was something unacceptable.

Thinking about how to achieve my first killing act was not an easy task to do. It was even harder than most of the school tasks. "The first time should be perfect," I thought to myself. But despite that this plan should be perfect; it also had to make sense to Beka too.

It was late winter of 7th grade. It was cold, cold weather, and sometimes our teacher would send us to the basement of the school to bring extra wood to warm up the classroom.

“Beka, could you please go and get some extra wood for us? It’s your turn today, remember?” Teacher asked Beka!

“Sure, teacher!” she replied.

Beka went outside the classroom. “This is my moment! The time for revenge has finally come!” I was thinking.

I raised my hand to ask the teacher for permission to go to the WC. Whenever we wanted to ask our dear teacher something, we had to raise our hand,

“Yes, Martha?” Teacher said, when she noticed me.

“Could I please go to the lady’s room for a second? I’ll be back in no time!” I asked as politely as I could.

“Sure, Martha, but don’t be too late!” Teacher said, giving me permission.

I went outside the classroom, walked down the school’s long corridors, and down into the basement.

“Well, well!” Beka said. “It’s like my prayers have just been heard! I’m gonna kick your arse. My fun time will start right now! But, first, I want to ask you only one question! Why do you even live? You are totally worthless! Nobody loves you; I bet that even your family is tired of you being around! Haha! Why don’t you get rid of yourself?” She, now, was walking proudly towards me, willing to punch me. I, in the other hand was screaming from the inside, but I wanted to wait still,

so no words were coming out of my mouth. Sometimes, silence explains more than words. Beka came very close! It was close enough for me to fulfill my plan. And that's what I did, before she could punch me or whatever she thought to do to me!

I stabbed her with a knife that I took from home. She started bleeding. Beka fell down to the ground.

"I couldn't commit suicide; because I was too busy planning your death sweetheart!" I whispered in her ear.

I dragged her to an area of the basement which is not very frequently visited! "You've been torturing me Beka, for two years now! I am sorry that I don't have enough time to give you what you exactly deserve. I just can't let you destroy my life anymore!" I was talking, while Beka was still bleeding.

"You like the word blood don't you?" I asked her.

She seemed horrified! Wow! I couldn't believe that I could see Beka so scared of me. This was like a dream come true. Should I leave it with only this? Ohh! What a FEEEEELING! She didn't even have enough energy to scream, which was a good thing, because I didn't want anyone to know about this!

She tried to scream, and constantly opened her mouth. Suddenly, I remembered that I had to go back to class, so the process of killing had to be faster. "You shall die, evil creature!" I announced, my last words to Beka. Her eyes were wide open, and I stabbed her inside her mouth for the last finale. She finally died. And I quickly hid her body behind all the wood, put on clean

clothes, which were identical to the ones I was wearing, took some wood and went back to the classroom!

“Martha? Where’s Beka? I thought I sent her to get the wood!” Teacher was confused.

“Oh, I met her in the corridor. She gave me the wood and asked me to tell you that she had to flee and go home immediately. She said it was an emergency!” claimed I.

“Well, did she at least tell you why!” – Teacher asked, concerned.

“I’m sorry, she didn’t say anything else.” I responded.

I knew I had to get away from this place from the moment I wanted to commit this act! Or should I call it art? I was walking very calmly to the house of my lovely parents. I was questioning myself whether the thing I did was good or bad. If it was a good thing to get rid of somebody who would harm the society, why is it illegal to “get rid” of people like that then? And if it is a bad thing, why the hell do I feel so good, and why do I have this strong feeling that I did a favor to my generation and the next coming generation?

The worst part is that I will leave my parents who love me so damn much and tried to raise me in a good way; they tried to educate me, to give me manners. And this way, the art committing thing, well, this is my kind of way to, in a way, help people. But, I should be careful, and not let anybody suspect anything!

I was sure that the streets that I was walking on right now, I will never walk on them again! So, I took a

last good glance at the place around me. I wanted to remember everything that I was surrounded with.

There were still some mocking birds that were singing and flying from tree to tree. The sky was mostly gray, but it had some spaces of the pure blue color in it, which gave me hope for my unknowing future. The trees were all leafless and covered with snow. I love snow! Some kids were happily going to school, some were returning to their houses.

I entered home, and as usual, I sniffed this irreplaceable smell of my mother's cooking.

I entered the kitchen, and everybody was sitting at the table, ready to eat lunch.

"Just in time," claimed mother.

I knew I was eating my last meal cooked by my biological mother. I was observing every detail of every member of my family; thus this was the last day for me to see them.

The night finally came; everybody was heavily sleeping. I took some needed clothes, some food, and some pictures; mostly of my family members. I closed the doors, and I didn't leave even a single note or anything that would give somebody at least the slightest idea where I would be headed to.

Man, I miss that place.

I started walking, without destination! I walked all night. Most of the street dogs were awake, so I had company all the time. I was not alone, and that was quite important. While I was walking, I was thinking, "Where can I go without being recognized? And I have to change

my name!” I thought to myself. “No, I have to change my whole identity.”

“My name is Mia Lovett, and my family died of a crash car accident, I woke up from a coma, and I don’t know to whom I should speak. Can you please help me ma’am?” I asked in an innocent way.

“Oh, my dear, poor child, please come inside!” offered the old, old lady.

“Here, have some tea and cookies,” allowed the very old lady.

I noticed she lived alone, so I had to make an opportunity for myself to stay here for 3-4 days, until I figured out where else should I go.

The Lady was very nice from the beginning. During my time there, I helped her decorate the garden, I learned how to make an apple pie, and also, and most importantly, I learned how it feels to have a grandmother, since I have never experienced that kind of feeling before in my life.

Unfortunately, I couldn’t stay any longer in this small city. My aim was to leave the country. I wrote a letter to The Lady, thanking her for her hospitality, and hoping that at least we’ll meet again, in one way or another.

I took a bus to the nearest place of the country’s border. I sneaked through the woods and forests to get out of this country somehow.

Finally, after a long, long walk, I saw a man. First, I was a bit afraid that he might notice that

something was wrong. Then, I pulled myself together and I decided to ask him where I was.

“Excuse me sir, can you tell me where the nearest market is?” I finally achieved making that question, hoping that I would not get caught.

“Nie rozumiesz,” replied the man.

“Where the hell might I be? I also didn’t understand a word he said! He sounded damn heavy!” I was thinking.

“Sir, do you speak EEEEEEnglish?” I asked in a very slow way.

“Nie rozumiesz,” again the man said.

Oh my God! Why did I ever think that this was a good fucking idea?! I gave myself another try!

“Engliiiiiish, maaaaaaarket,” I tried very hard to explain!

“Pryzyjśc,” said the man. “Proszę ze mną.” I had no idea what the dude said! He started walking and looked at me. I understood that he wanted me to follow him! I was not feeling very secure. But, then again, what was I going to lose anyway! And if he tried to harm me in some way, I would try to protect myself, and commit another art!

We went to a patrol that was nearby. There was also a market there. I was starting to feel much better.

He entered the market, picked up some food and drinks, paid. He was speaking a very, very difficult language! It was like saying bad words all the time. I was damn confused, and I had no clue of what should I think. Everything now was new to me, and exciting, even if it was bad. But, the thing is that trying new things really leaves you speechless and thoughtless.

While we were sitting there, I was eating like a animal, and the man was just watching me and trying to figure out what is happening. A waiter came to pay the bill of the extra food I had. He was talking to the man! And I started talking in English to myself, out loud.

“Sure, talk in your strange language, very respectful of you!” I said.

“We talkin Polish!” said the waiter.

“Wait, you understand and speak English?” I asked the guy.

“Little,” he replied with shyness.

“That’s great!! Can you tell me where are we?” I was very curious. I understood that I am in Poland, but I wanted to be sure.

“Poland,” said the waiter, feeling somehow proud.

“Krakow, exact!” added the waiter.

“Do you know somebody who understands better English?”

“My cousin! She a girl. She home very near.” He tried to communicate.

“Can I meet her?” I tried to ask very kindly.

“Of course, I call.” He picked up the phone and dialed a number.

He started talking on the phone, probably with his cousin. And I just was amazed by this language! It sounded all the same, and it had too many Zh and SH sounds!

He hung up! Said something to the man who helped me get here and he just said ciao to me, and left.

I waited for one and a half hour! Then, there she was. She looked just a bit older than me!

She and the waiter hugged; talked a bit in their magnificent language, and then she sat by my side!

“Hello,” she greeted me.

“Hi!” I didn’t know what to say to her, where to start.

“My name is Mia Lovett. I was unconscious when I arrived here. I don’t remember how I got here! I just wanted to ask whether you could help me find a place to stay, till I start remembering!” I gave it my best, as a 13 year old girl!

“I’m very sorry for your unfortunate situation, Mia. I cannot accept you immediately without discussing this with my parents! Just give me a minute till I talk with them on the phone!” she explained.

She got up when she dialed the number, smiling at me while saying pardon! I could hear a bit the tone that she was using while talking. First, she started using a very sweet soft tone, then it increased, and I knew they were arguing. And all I could think, when she raised her voice was “Shit, I shall find another solution!”

After, probably, half an hour, she came, looked at me very deeply, like she was trying to figure out who I really was. And she said, “I usually fathom people from first sight, but I just can’t understand you at all.”

I didn’t react. I didn’t say anything. I had a complete poker face!

She continued talking. “My name is Zofia Mniszech. I live with my parents. That was probably obvious since I had to ask them about the issue of yours. I and my family are Jewish. I don’t know if you know anything about that, or if that will be a problem for you. You’re still young, and I don’t know if you ever had any

thoughts about religion. But if you come to us, and want to practice your religion stuff, then we will most probably respect that. I just wanted to introduce myself a little bit, before you decide! You're welcome if you want to come live with us for a while," she claimed.

"I think that I started learning in school a bit about other religions too. I would like to stick with my own religion, if you don't mind," I said.

"Not at all!" she interrupted.

"If that's so then, I would like to come and live with you till I figure something out!" I decided!

She was a citizen of Krakow! We went to the center of the city. While going there with a taxi, I took a glance at the city! It was breathtaking. Amazing! Very different from where I came from!

Zofia's family was damn welcoming. She had a comfortable house. They prepared a delicious dinner, and drinks, and Zofia was translating most of the time! I told her that I wanted to buy an English-Polish dictionary because I wanted to learn this language for the time that I would be here.

"No need to buy anything! How do you think that I learned the English language?" Zofia smiled.

I could see that I found some very good people! I just wanted to write to my parents somehow, and tell them that I was okay!

I spent lots of years living with the Mniszech family. They kind of became my family, and I didn't want to leave.

When I became 18, and Zofia was 22, Lukasz happened to be my first love. He was very sweet and gentle. He was 20 years old, also a Jew.

We used to spend most of the time together. He didn't speak very good English, but now I could speak better Polish! So, we could communicate and understand each other quite well.

Learning Polish is not very easy. But when you live for five years in a house where Polish language is spoken, it becomes easier.

For the five years that I stayed there, I became very close with that family, with the city, with the language and culture!

It was September 1939 when the World War Two began! Nazi Germans occupied Poland, and Krakow was one of the largest cities in Poland, so they created this ghetto for Jews. I and my family were all sent there! They forced us to work. They cut our hair, and they treated us like shit! I could have said that I was not Polish or even Jewish, but this family was there for me when I needed them the most, I was not going to betray them now and never.

For these years that I lived with this Polish family, I completely forgot about hatred and killing. But now that desire was growing even more now that I was a witness to the most terrible treatment of innocent people without a reason.

My Polish parents were quite old. I was afraid that they would be killed, since they were not able enough to work the worthless jobs that the Nazi made us do. In 1940, most of us departed from this ghetto and the city.

I was looking for my Polish parents, but I couldn't find them anywhere!

I saw Lukasz, and he was looking at me like he

was feeling sorry or something!
“What’s the matter Luk!?” I asked him in Polish.
“Mr. and Mrs. Mniszech are...” and he started crying.

“No... No... I don’t believe you! You’re lying!!!
Please tell me that you’re lying.” I cried.

And also, I never saw Zofia again! I just lost sight of her. Not knowing if she was dead or all right!

I was full of hatred! Only if I could find this dictator that started this war, I would get revenge! He was a German asshole; I can’t believe that I’m mentioning his name, Adolf Hitler!

After we were sent to another camp, they killed my whole family, including Lukasz. Can you imagine, shooting your beloved ones in front of you? It was the most awful thing I had ever seen! But, one thing kept me going! I had to kill Hitler!!! He was cruel and the definition of pure evilness. I had to survive and fulfill my goal!

In 1945, Germany lost the war! And I heard Hitler went back to Berlin. I found a way to fly there. I was in Poznan by that time, and Berlin was not too far!

It is said that Adolf Hitler committed suicide. At least that’s what history says.

I went to Berlin, Führerbunker. He was there with his wife, Eva! I entered the bunker, and without any explanation I shot Eva dead! Hitler was speechless!

“How does that feel motherfucker?” I exploded.

Then, without waiting for his answer, I shot the guy right in the head, leaving the gun there, with his own fingerprints. Then, it was all over the news: “Adolf Hitler committed suicide.”

The war was over, and I was once again alone! I didn't know whether I should go back to Poland, stay in Germany, or move someplace else. Moving a lot has become a hobby to me since 1939. I decided to go to France this time!

First, I got a job in Bremen, as a translator. I gathered some money for a while, and finally I fled.

Grenoble is the beautiful place where I lived for a while. There I met a very good guy, a French guy, and fell in love again. I was 27 years old. I started working as a photographer there, and it became my permanent job. It also had to do with shooting people and stuff, so it was quite perfect for me.

Then, during one of those nights, I came home very late from work and I caught Alexis cheating on me!

The innocent lady was baked and had a heck of a body. Alexis started in with the famous phrase, "Babe, this is not what it looks like, let me please explain!" He went on, but he couldn't convince me!

The innocent girl was shocked and she was constantly repeating herself. "I had no idea he was in a relationship already!!" She burst into tears, hit Alexis a bit, with a girlish hit, and ran away by apologizing at me first!

The door smashed close, and I was left alone with him!

I was angrier about him not telling that whore that he was taken than cheating me with her. What was he thinking by acting this way?!

I went to the kitchen to freshen myself with a glass of cold water. He was running after me, trying to

explain, but everything he was saying seemed nonsense to me! I was chilling actually, because when I saw the girl's confusion after she saw me, I immediately understood that he was another of those assholes! I knew that his was another chance for me to be a hero!

I was in that position where I had to think of a quick way to get rid of him! Since, I already was in the kitchen, I was in a place full of useful products!

He looked at me while still talking, and it seemed from his facial expression that he couldn't understand my calmness! I took a spoon, big one! And out of nowhere I interrupted: "I wanted to show you a trick that I learned lately, can I?"

He was confused, but he couldn't say no!

I told him to lie down on his back and put the spoon inside of his mouth, like he was eating something with it! He didn't understand anything! But he did what he was told! He lay down, his eyes closed, the spoon in his mouth, feeling a little scared!

Right before he wanted to say something! I hit the spoon with a hammer very hard! And his jaw went off! Problem solved! I was ready for another journey.

"I feel like an ocean!" the woman said before continuing the story.

It was 1949. I was 30 years old now! I started to feel already that my time was coming to an end for some things. I just wanted to settle somewhere, give up killing, even though it makes me feel real good.

I was in a plane, heading to Australia! I went to Devonport, Tasmania to be more exact! I met a lot of interesting people there, and I heard this interesting story

about this city. In 1929 Father Andrew Edgar Archur killed his whole family, then set fire to their house, and in the end killed himself as well. Nobody explained to me for what reason did he do that, but I'm pretty sure he had a strong one!

When I arrived there I knew I should start the routine by first finding a job, a place to live and good people. My name now was Kristin Black!

I found a job at Lady's restaurant. It was a job I never did before! I was a waitress, and a cook, and a cleaning lady, everything that was needed and required! I thought, I can handle this till I find something else!

At first, everything was okay, the bosses were pleased with my work, but after six month I was starting to see the real deal there! Workers were fired for no good reason; their rights were stepped in and on. Then the same things started to happen to me! One of my bosses kept saying that life's not always fair, and that these non-fair stuff will still happen depending on the boss's mood!

I was angry once again! I was seeing unhappy people working to have something to eat, and our bosses didn't even care or bother to at least act more like a human being when one of us made a mistake!

One night I was working on the last shift and after we closed the restaurant, I and "that boss" were left alone. We were counting the money we made during the day.

"I'm going to the kitchen to shut down the lights," I claimed.

He didn't say a word!

He was a man who judged a lot! And even when he wanted to hire a new worker, he judged by the way

that person dressed, or by the outside-look of that person! It didn't seem fair at all!

I took two iron forks from the kitchen! I was going to teach him a new lesson. He had to learn how to see the world differently!

He was sitting and counting the money. He was turned with his back, and I had a good chance to achieve my purpose! I quickly stabbed one of the forks in his eyeball, and he screamed very hard. Luckily, we were alone! Then, I continued stabbing the other fork in his left eye! I told him to calm down before I did something else! And he did as he was told!

I tied him to a chair. Just so I could have a little chit-chat with him.

"Let's suppose that I am a person who you don't know at all. And you called me for a job interview. Obviously, you can't see how I look like, you can just hear me and my thoughts being spoken from my mouth. Would you accept me?" I asked him.

"Yes, yes I would," he replied fearfully.

"That's because you are scared at the moment! See, what I am trying to teach you is that you can't judge people from what they look like, or what background they have!" I told him.

"Yes, yes you're right!"

"Then, why didn't you act like that from the beginning, tart hand?" I stabbed him with a fork in his right leg.

"Aaaaaaa!" he screamed. "Please stop!" he begged.

"Why? So you can continue with your asshole behavior?"

And that's when I ended him!

Before I fled, I first cleaned the restaurant and threw his cut body at the trash!

So, then I left immediately the country of Australia. It brought me here, to England! Since then, I haven't committed any other murder. See, dear, when you have strong reasons for doing something that seems reasonable for you, you'll do it! But, you'll always have to be careful with what you choose to do! Because you might lose good people, people whose comfort you sometimes need in your life! Sometimes, even if it is a bad habit, you get used to it; in fact, you need to do it. It becomes like a drug! Oh, how I miss killing!"

The old Lady was looking at me in an odd way...

The Journey

by Blerta Hoti

"Turn up the volume of that song dad!" said Ben.

"Well, you only need the light when it's burning low, only miss the sun when it starts to snow, only know you love her when you let her go, and you let her go..."

"Look at that lake mum, how beautiful! What is it called?" asked Ben happily.

"I don't know. I've never been here before. Probably it is named after the village, Mum replied.

"Dad, can we stop here for five minutes, please?" asked Ben.

"No, we have a long way to go," said Dad.

"Please dad, I want to see that lake," insisted Ben.

"Ok, only five minutes, do you hear?" said Dad.

"Yes, 4 minutes and 60 seconds,"-said my brother, Ben.

"Look at the water, Angie! It is so bright, like a crystal. I want to feel it," continued Ben, excited.

"Yes, it is amazing," I said. My brother, always so dynamic, wants to try everything.

"It is so fresh. Why isn't anybody here?" he asked.

"It is too early yet, Ben. People are sleeping," said Mum.

"Wait, I want to take a picture of us and the lake," Ben said. "Three, two, smile! Perfect I love it!"

"We have to go now, come on!" said Dad.

"Ok, bye lake, hope to see you again!" said Ben.

And here comes the night. I love having a car trip during the night. The sky looks like a beautiful picture, and if it weren't for the stars, it would look just like the sea. Everything looks much better at this time; silence brings the peace in me. Now I can think of my life and my goals more clearly. I don't know why, I just get inspired to do that. Also when I see the dark blue sky, I feel like I am closer to God, like he can only hear me. So, I talk to him, and every time I close my eyes, my heart finds its peace.

Life seems so much easier at night. I wonder why that is! Why do I get upset during the day? And when I think of the reasons for that, I get stuck there. Every time I set a goal to myself, I think the world circles around it, and nothing else matters. Then, when I achieve that goal, it doesn't matter that much anymore. Another one replaces it. And when I look backward, at all these small and big goals, they don't seem that important. Just now, I figured out that it shouldn't be like that. Every time I remember my accomplishments, I should feel proud and glad for that. Someone else could never have achieved that, another one didn't have the opportunities I had, and some others just didn't make it.

Whatever. I should have a rest.

"Do you need company dad?" I asked my dad.

"No, it OK. Get some sleep," he said.

"OK, then. Goodnight," I said.

...

"Sea blessed sea, here I come, wait for me!"

"Oh you woke me up, you little capricious boy!"

I yelled to Ben.

"Good, it was time to wake up, he said, the voice whose song had just woken me up.

Another hour in the car. Great! I feel like someone has beaten me. My neck hurts. I can't feel my arm. At least the view is nice. All these high mountains, big stones, flowers, grass, trees and everything looks so amazing. Just when you have nothing else to do but think, think deeply, you understand how magic, how nature and the world is. And all these things come from nature, none of them could be built or created by humans. So, the world was a miracle since its creation. Later on, we, humans, made it more perfect or destroyed it. Sometimes I don't know which of those is the truth.

I am so thirsty. I had a weird dream. My family and I were climbing up some stairs that were for taking us to heaven. And for a moment, we all fell down. Just while I was going through that fear of falling to the ground, that singer voice of my brother woke me up. Well, maybe I should be thankful to him for waking me up from that bad dream. They say if you see yourself in the dream climbing up to something high, it means you are going to achieve something you want. The opposite of that means you are going to fail or lose something you want. But, I don't believe in these superstitious things, created by some old women who didn't have anything else to do, but that.

People say sometimes they are afraid to talk to me, because I'm always that serious type, closed in myself. Those who know me well, know that I'm a friendly person, helpful and funny. I just don't like to have open conversations with everyone I meet. We

shouldn't judge someone by appearance. Anyway, that is just the impression people get. I do that too.

Here is my brother, always laughing, full of happiness. His only problem is being bored, not having interesting things to do. Lucky him. I think he is going to be a very happy man in the future, as he is now. He is always satisfied with his life, loving people and never thinking of bad things. Maybe he asks for less than I do, but he is much more pleased with the results. Even though he is still so young yet, sometimes I look at him and admire his way of living. I'm glad I have him home. When I become desperate or sad, he is the only one that makes me realize that everything is temporary. And it's not that I used to have terrible things in my life, but I made them seem like that.

Ben's future wife will be a very lucky woman.

"Should we change places dad? You are tired of driving. I can do it for a while," I said.

"Well, OK. We will stop there," he said.

Better doing something than nothing. Even to have a holiday, you have to work and get tired. Sometimes I enjoy being alone a lot. But, I cannot imagine if I would take this whole trip alone. I would die from boredom and it would take me double time by driving only by myself.

I should turn off the volume of the radio, because of my dad. He had been driving for a while, and he must be so tired. Ben, that cute little brother of me, is still talking, even though silently. Who knows what magic world is inside his head! Maybe just like in fairytales.

Now the view is more boring. Because of the driving, all I see are cars, roads, curves and a lot of

curves. Still a long time till we get there, Dhermia. Every year a different place, each more beautiful than the other. And again we love our place, Prizren. Everything goes perfect during this time that we are away, but when the 10th day comes, we just start missing our city, even if nobody says that. And what to say about after two weeks? It`s like Monday, when you have to wake up early in the morning to go to school. It is not like we have more things to do in our city, it is unexplained. It completes you and your needs. Simply, that is the city where we were born and the one we belong to. Even when people go to other places to live, with other people, and their lives change, a part of them will always be in the city they have much to say about.

Mum said to me we should stop somewhere to have dinner. So, we did. Here we are, in front of this " Hot pizza" place. I thought it wasn`t a good idea to wake up dad for having dinner, so we finished it fast and got him a pizza to have when he wakes up. Here we go again on the road. Me and mum joined Ben in singing. People need to sing, play, laugh in every age, and maybe we don`t say that, but, we all have a part of a child inside us, which we show only to our closest people. Children are really the angels of the visual world, this world. I just wish sometimes I could again be a child, and this time I would record all of the moments of my childhood. So, every time I would get upset, I would watch them, the times where I cried, laughed, and I would understand that everything that happens is not in our hands. But everything happens for a reason, even to make us stronger or happier. Those are the reasons that life and people change.

15th of July, the hottest July ever. I am glad I am in our car. If I were traveling by bus, I would for sure be sick and mad. Then for the whole holiday I wouldn't get through it. So, in every bad thing is a good one, or just the fact that it could be worse makes it seem better. It is funny how dad can sleep with us singing and moving. I guess that is the result of how tired is he. And he wasn't saying anything at all while he was driving—always looking strong, happy, and never complaining about anything. How holy and powerful is being a parent. So many things they did for me and they will do as long as I live, or all of us live. How peaceful, calm and adorable he looks while sleeping. I know I never say and prove the love I have for them, but I think they really know and feel that just like I do for the love they have for me. If I would say all of these things out loud, for sure people wouldn't say anymore I am "closed in myself." Some things just cannot be described by words, and if we try to do that, they will lose their power and meaning. This is a weird thing. There are times, especially at night, that I regret not telling people how I feel, but then comes the day, the routine. You see, hear everything and you just have to be strong and in order not to be hurt, you just need to let things go. The hardest one is to let people go. So, the pain is smaller when you don't complicate things. In the end, that will happen, anyway.

Ben is still singing. Even when he sleeps, he is noisy. How could he not be? All that energy and freshness during the day cannot be turned off completely in the night. Dad gets mad of him, because of his laziness in learning; he doesn't like books that much.

Maybe that is because they are used to seeing me reading or writing most of the time, and it's a big deal for them not seeing him doing the same thing. He is only laughing, playing, or on the computer all the time. But I really love the way he is. It is not that he doesn't have any goals or something, he just takes only the good side of the things. What is fun being like me, always being unsure of things, of people, and always closing the doors of my heart! In the end, if a disappointment happens, he gets hurt and I get hurt. The difference is that he was enjoying life the whole time and I was suspecting, distrusting and not enjoying for real the happiness and success. So, what is the meaning of working and succeeding?

See, inside I am totally the opposite of that strong, serious and mad girl. When I think of this, I always end up seeing life in a double way. Oppositely of what I said, is the second view. Maybe it is better to pretend and give the impression like I don't care. That way the possibilities of getting hurt and disappointed are smaller. Anyway, this is just the way of being me. I didn't choose it. It is my nature. Life has made me like this.

Here comes the happiness: "The beach!" This is what I call joy. I have to wake up my dad because I don't know the place we are going to stay. We changed places for the last time of this tour. It is 2 p.m., and the streets are full of people. Well, now the ride doesn't seem that hard. It is worth it. As I see, we are going to live somewhere just by the sea, and that is awesome! The sea looks extremely beautiful and I feel relaxed just watching it. People look like small roaches. And here we

are, in front of this cute small cottage. It is adorable. You don't need to have luxury things to be happy. The importance is to love what you have. Every room here smells of seawater, sand, and ice cream. Probably that comes out of the open windows. I love this place. We only have a kitchen, a bathroom, and two bedrooms. As I see, I am going to be in the same room with Ben. This holiday will be fun I guess. Maybe being in the same room with him will change my "stable character."

First of all I am going to sleep. Nothing can take me out of the bed at this moment. All of us will do the same thing, except mum, the one that never sleeps before making sure the family has comfort, clothes, and food. She is our guardian angel. Despite the goals for career or success, my only goal in life is to be like her. I know that is impossible. To be half of her would be perfect.

...

The soft wind with the smell of the sea woke me up. I feel like I am in another world. The bed is not that bad; every bad is comfortable when you are tired. I don't hear any voices. There is nobody home. And one of the best things in this cottage is the free internet network. I think that comes from the bar near our cottage. Ben sent me a message—they are all on the beach in front of our place. Here I go. The brightness of the sand and the sea blinds my eyes. All these happy voices around, give me a smile on my face which I am going to see on my brother's phone, who just took a photo of me, the first one.

I joined my family and I am having the most delicious ice cream of the year. Everything feels so good. People, air, food, the sea and the most precious

thing: family atmosphere. I will join the group of girls that are playing volleyball. I love that sport, especially playing it in the sand. They seem nice people. I think I am going to make some new friends this summer, which I didn't do last year.

We finished the game and now we are going for a swim. Oh, that feeling, like you are having a glass of water after running some kilometers in the desert. Now is time for the second sleep, this time on the beach. Sleeping with noises satisfies me more than sleeping in a silent, dark room.

...

Yes, that does it. But, now that I am awake, I don't think that was a good idea. I forgot to change the side and my whole body hurts. Also the backside of it got sunbathed, the other one snowbathed.

It is almost dark and we are going into the cottage to have some delicious food. This really feels like holiday, but having home with us. I helped my mum prepare the table and that seemed a lifetime. I am so hungry.

Here is the one place where Ben doesn't talk. If you want to keep him silent, just give him some food.

Now is time for washing the dishes. I always end up doing it. I am already done, so after this I am going to take a shower and get ready for the first unforgettable holiday night. Tomorrow, I will go earlier to the beach and tan the rest of my body, so nobody can see me. This place is enchanting, especially during the night. So many things to do for entertainment. This night will be the longest of the holiday. It is amazing seeing the

family all smiling, no stress, no work, just the family time.

It is 3 a.m. and we are entering into cottage. What a long day and we still are full of energy. Time to go to bed. Goodnight kisses and here we are. Me and Ben sharing opinions about the day and this place. Now, I look just like him, laughing, making fun of things, and without worries.

"Too much light in this window. Don't wake me up..."

"Oh my God, what is that?" I said.

"Sorry, it is my alarm," said Ben.

What a thing! He came on holiday and still sets the alarm for waking up. That is for an important thing, of course. Going outside and having fun. This is something he cannot miss. He is not lazy for doing that, despite waking up for school.

Another day. So many things to do, opportunities to have fun, meet new people, relax and so much more than that. None of us is going to forget this summer. And the rest of the year will have enough inspiration and energy for working, studying and so.

...

Time flies when you are enjoying it. And here we are now, packing our things. This is the last night we are going out here, for this summer I hope. Now we are getting ready for another amazing night.

"Angie, you are so beautiful!" said Ben.

"Every 22 years old girl is beautiful, Ben. This is the time when we care the most about our appearance and try too look good," I replied.

"No, you are the most beautiful of all the girls!" he said.

"Well, thanks. You are my brother, so those words go to you too," I said smiling. Those words he said almost brought my tears out, but I tried to keep them inside. I wouldn't like to transform the atmosphere into a sad one. Ben really knows how to make us feel thankful for having him.

This place with its beautifulness now makes me sad. Two weeks seem like 2 days and it is the first time we feel sad for finishing our holiday. Now we have to enjoy the view of the road, palms, and that's it.

Again the same road. People here drive like crazy. We almost had two crashes till now. Ben is silent, curiously. And I am sleepy.

"Watch out Dan, stop!"

...

The sun is freezing me with its shine. All these people around here. I can see their hands and mouths moving, but I cannot hear a sound. It is like I am deaf, but no, I can hear the echo of my own voice, groaning. Why is that man in white running so fast? Who is he? Where is he going? I rub my eyes, my face. I am sweating. I try to fix my hair, take it off my face, but I am not strong enough for that. I have black marks on my body and my leg is bleeding. Why is everybody looking at me? Who are they? I don't belong here, I want to be home. I cannot keep my eyes open anymore. I, I...

"Are you feeling better?" asked an unknown woman in white.

"Yes. Where is my family?" I said.

"Here we are dear," said my mum who was lying beside me.

"Mum, Ben, where is dad?" I asked.

They ended up in tears.

"Dad..., died on the crash honey..." said mum.

...

It is incredible how billions of things are in this world and we don't know how lucky we are. We spend a lifetime running after people, success, money, dreams, and there comes the moment when everything loses its sense.

"Only know you've been high when you're feeling low,

Only hate the road when you're missing home,

Only know you love her when you let her go,

And you let her go..."

Reaching the Childhood Happiness

by Rreze Hoti

That voice was killing him. It was a woman's voice and she was screaming: Help, please help!!! He was running, but he couldn't reach the sound of the voice. He could feel his body sweating. He couldn't find the woman that was screaming. Suddenly, he saw an abyss. He wanted to stop running but he couldn't. So he fell down into it and woke up and found himself in his bed.

—Oh my God, it was horrible!-he wondered. He was glad, he got up. He went to the kitchen, opened the fridge, got a bottle of water and drank it. He felt better. He turned back to his bedroom and got close to the window. He opened the window and watched outside the window and watched the polluted city and all those high buildings.-What a boring place!-he wondered. Suddenly he thinks: Why do I have to stay in here this week?

Those dreams were killing him. He didn't have any work to do that week. He took his baggage and threw some clothes there. He couldn't wait for the morning to come. Jonas couldn't sleep. He decided to go back to his village where he hadn't been for a whole year. He watched an old film and when it was and when it was over he noticed it was 6.00 a.m. He took all his things and went to the station and got on the bus. The bus moved on. He was enjoying the sight from the window and the music that was played in the bus. His village was three hours away from Oslo. The road wasn't too long and soon he saw the wide lake, the high mountains, the beautiful trees, thousands of flowers. This was his, the

place where his heart lived. And there was his house, surrounded by a huge garden, where his mum was planting some flowers. The bus stopped and he ran to his mum. She was happy to see him. They went inside the house together, where he found his father who started to cry of happiness. They had breakfast together and after that they went out to have a walk around the village. They had a long talk. Jonas told them all what he had been through the whole year in shorter lines. He didn't want to tell them about the nightmares that he had last times because he didn't want to make them worry about him. After that, they went to their relatives to visit them. They had a family lunch together. His mum was a professional cook and the lunch was full of special dishes. Then they watched a movie together, eating popcorn. The night came and he went to sleep in his room. Before sleeping, he looked outside the window. - How different! - he thought. He was happy to see the trees full of birds and the garden full of flowers and other plants. He opened the window. What a smell! Jonas stood there not doing anything, but enjoying the nature for a few minutes. After that, he looked around the room. Nothing had changed. The room was so clean, although he wasn't there for a whole year. His mum had cleaned it everyday, looking forward to see her only son again. The books were in the exact place that they used to be before. He went to his bed and laid on it. How comfortable was it! No other bed in the world could be better than that bed. Suddenly, he saw something on the floor and immediately grabbed it. It was a small toy bear, a small thing with a huge value for him. It was a gift from his childhood and only love, Malena. He remembered the

day when she and her family moved to another place in Norway. They were only sixteen. They had fallen in love when they were only nine. Before leaving, Malena had given him that bear, kissed him in his cheek and said: "I will always love you Jonas! And, I promise, I'm going to come back for you!" That time Jonas didn't want to go out from his house at all. He hadn't gone to school for two weeks, until his parents made him do it. When he got 18, he moved to Oslo to study architecture. He became one of the best students there. After he graduated he began to work in a company and since then he couldn't go home as often as he used to. Thinking of all these things, he fell asleep. That night he hadn't any nightmare. The next day, he woke up at eight o'clock in the morning. When he went to the kitchen, the breakfast was ready. He had missed to eat the cheese that was made of the milk taken from the goats of their farm. He ate until he was over fed. Jonas soon put on his clothes and went out to see what was his dad doing. He was watering the plants. Jonas went near him and they had a talk for nearly thirty minutes. Then, Jonas decided to go to see the beautiful lake that they had in their village. He loved to fish so he took his fishing tools with himself. The lake was twenty minutes away from their house. Walking to the lake, during the road he was enjoying listening to the sound of nightingales. He noticed that a new school was built and two new stores were opened. In the village they had also a river. He was surprised to see a new bridge over the river. The old one was build of wood and wasn't stable. Two children had fallen into the river, because of the old bridge, but fortunately they weren't seriously hurt. He passed the bridge and after he

went through some trees, there was the lake. He wanted to cry of happiness. He got closer to the lake and began to prepare the tools for fishing. Suddenly, he heard that voice again! It was the voice of his dreams. But, he was sure it wasn't a dream. He immediately ran in the direction of the voice. And there he saw a woman drowning. She was screaming: "Help, help me, please!" He jumped into the water and began to swim. Soon, he reached the woman. The current of the water was strong, but Jonas's hands were stronger. So he held the woman and brought her to the shore. Both of them were tired. They laid down. After some minutes the woman turned her face to see the man who rescued her. He was crying. "Oh my God. Jonas?" she said! "Malena!" he whispered. They hugged each other. She was as beautiful as she was before. His heart was beating fast and he couldn't breathe. But, it wasn't from the current of the water; it was from the love that he still felt for her. Malena was happy, too. Her eyes were shining. She took his hand, held it and said: "Here I am! I didn't break the promise! I came back for you!" They couldn't say anything else, just got closer and kissed. Then they began to tell each other what they had been through since they parted. Malena had graduated in the Faculty of Arts, but didn't find inspiration in the city she lived. So, she decided to go back to her village where she could develop her talent, hoping to see Jonas again. Jonas also told her about the things he had been through. He left the job that he had in Oslo and he also came back. They got married within a month. They had three children and lived happily forever after.

The Old City

By Ylbere Hoxha

Somewhere is a city, an old city, where people walk on the streets without stopping, day and night. The streets are made of stones, with the same color 'gray,' and the buildings are old, just like the streets. You cannot hear their steps for they walk softly. When I see them I ask myself, why are they walking and walking on the streets, like the word 'life' doesn't exist? Or maybe they are *thinking* something while they are walking, or are they just wasting time? I watch them and I don't understand how they live

It's strange. I always see them in this way when I am not in a good mood, when my mind is confused. And then I think, maybe I should see people in a different way; and yes, fortunately I can do it. I can do it because I choose to. And then it is like a miracle; everything is different; everything has a lighter color than just the color gray.

Yes, the city is old, but beautiful. People are walking on the streets with happy faces. Buildings and streets are old but they shine. Now I can understand why they are walking and walking without stopping. Because they are doing something. They are not just wasting their time; they live pretty well. So, when I open my mind, I hear a lot of noises. When they are sitting for coffee always they meet with each other and spend a lot of time together. I wonder if they are happy, but when you really see them, you understand that yes, they are happy. Their

eyes shine when they talk to someone. You can see the smiles in their faces. It is as if all the world belongs to them. They wear great clothes and they take care for themselves. It looks like they don't have any fears about losing anything.

I think when they get something good, they don't look for something better. They enjoy what they have. All the time they think positively. They make each other understand that they are not alone. They have power. Everyone has a lot of things on their minds. And they share every new inspiration, every new idea that comes into their minds with each other. They connect them and make all of their ideas follow one point. Every day they try to catch their aim and realize it.

When someone calls a friend to go out he/she always has time. They never say, "I am busy, I can not come." Because when you really want, you can find time for anything.

Imagine if you needed someone immediately to talk to, to tell your problems to, and that person said to you, "I am busy, I cannot come." Or if you are happy, something good happened to you, and you want to share it with your best friend.

For these reasons, before you say 'no' to someone, start with yourself. If you were he or she that called you and you said no to them, how would you feel with those words, "I am busy"?

This is the best thing I see in these great people. Now I smile to myself about my thoughts, to see this old city in this way. To see an old city with streets that are made by stones doesn't mean everything is old. People who live in that place are generous; they have big hearts. They

feel young in their minds, like a child who lives or dreams like a cartoon movie; he feels supernatural and tries to do things with ideas that he is living in his imaginary world without fear.

So in this way people live in this old city, it doesn't matter how old they are, they feel young inside every time. They dream a lot and they put a lot of ideas in their minds, study them and make them true. They are creative people. They work with each other with heart, they don't make conditions and they never get angry; they simply enjoy being together.

These kind of people make you feel different. Now I think in a better way. I see life with positivity. The lessons I learn from being positive makes me stronger. And this makes me understand that time is always the best way to change our mind. Each morning we are born again; each morning it is a new beginning.

Life is not a dream, for we wake up every morning to realize everything is in our mind. If yesterday was a bad day, today forgives it, makes away with the past, and we can start to live the future with a new inspiration. Even if people say something bad about your thinking, don't feel bad. Take those words easy because we are all living in the same life. We just have different inspirations, different dreams. Be silent; make life as if people are like music. If you like the music listen. If you don't, turn it off. Try to spend life with what makes you happy.

It always happens like this when you go to live somewhere for the first time. And for me, in the beginning, when I came here it was like this. But now I am learning with it. The city teaches me. I came here a

long time ago with my family. Before, we lived in a big city that is far away from here. It was a new city with skyscrapers, but very noisy and the streets were with big traffic. You could never go with time somewhere because of people and cars. My father couldn't work his job there because he could never be with time in his job and he never had free time to spend with us.

One time it happened that my oldest brother got sick and while my father was taking him to the hospital the traffic stopped and he didn't know what to do. He had to get out the car and to take my brother on foot to the hospital. At that time I was young and I didn't know anything.

My mother said to me that it was hard for her to live there because she could never go out for walking. The air was dirty so she couldn't breathe freely and she always got sick. The doctor said to her that she had to change the place where was she living because of her health. For this reason my parents decided to come here, to this old city, which became a healthy city for my family.

Now I live here with my parents and with my brothers and we are happy here. In my family are five members. I have two brothers. I am the second oldest of my brothers. My father goes to work every day from 8 am to 4 pm. His job is explaining the application forms and documents needed at the Municipal Civil Registration Center. My mother doesn't work. She stays at home and tries to take care of the house and cooks everyday for us. My oldest brother finished the university and now he is working as an assistant physician at the hospital. My youngest brother is in high

school. He is the most beautiful person in our family, and we all love him.

I am 23 years old and I am studying literature. I am very close with my family but most of all with my mother because she is very open-minded about most things. I feel very comfortable if I have something to explain to her. She understands me in everything. My relationship with her is great. All the time when I am free, I enjoy helping her with housekeeping and cooking. She appreciates that. I don't have a sister but my mother plays the role as my sister. She is my everything, like my best friend, or more than that. Even though she is older than me, she can be like my age and in this way we can talk about everything.

In this city I know a lot of girls that relate with their mothers like me. And for this they as proud as I am about my mother and their family in general.

My friends and I are always together. Most of the time I am with Alina. She is friendly with everyone and everyone likes her. She is a beauty. She's 23 like me. Her eyes are brown, dark brown, and she is tall and has long hair. When you see her in the middle of people, you can see the difference that she has with others because of her clothing style.

We have known each other since we were six years old. She is a very kind person and she has a good imagination. She always tells the truth to me. She is a positive person all the time. Even if she is angry she can think positively about the future.

We live in the same building. I can say that we grew up together. Every time I have a problem or a secret that I cannot share with someone else, I go to her

because she is a very talkative girl. We try to understand each other about everything. Most of the time she advises me when I have a problem, and I do the same for her. Our meanings are the same. We're like twins. And maybe for that we support and understand everything that we have and what we want to have.

She is an artist. She can make people laugh. When her family is in a bad mood, she is the one who tries to change the atmosphere. She makes a lot of jokes and she can remember every detail when she was young. Her memory is amazing.

I like her family. They are great people, especially her mother who tries to cook Alina's special food every time that she can. Alina likes pie, she can eat it day and night without any problem, and everyday she eats cake. So her mother is the one who cooks for her, maybe because Alina is the only child that she has. She adores her parents; they try to help her to realize every dream that she has. Her father has a big company. He works very hard to make his company bigger and he said to my friend that in the future he is going to give the company to Alina. So Alina sometimes goes to see her father working, for the purpose of learning from him.

They buy her a book every month. She loves reading, so she is happy that her parents buy her books. She usually reads drama. And her favorite movies are dramatic too. While she is reading, she closes the door and doesn't want anyone to call her. And for that she gets very crusty if anyone knocks on the door.

Usually she reads in her bedroom. The bedroom is great; she has in it a very big shelf with books, and a big piano when she plays when I go to visit her. She

taught me to play the piano. We spend most of the time in her bedroom playing piano and signing.

Her apartment is old too, like every other building in this old city. That makes you think that people inside those buildings are old and passive. It makes you think that their souls are old too. And they stay only inside those buildings; they don't work or they don't go out, as if they don't see the future outside, just staying in their houses and counting their days.

Life is difficult to live with these thoughts. It is like living without breath. You really can see that life in this city does not depend on the view of the city.

They know about others' thoughts when they say to them; "How do you live with all these old things? Because this is everybody's first thought when they see the city. But people who live in this city never complain; they are used to these kinds of questions. The only answer that they give is, "Do not hurry to speak. Do not see the view. Feel the air here, look deeper into our eyes and then speak."

And this is true, because when you try to focus your mind deeply you really can understand that it is different than it looks at first. People here in this old city are very happy. I know this because I am part of these people now.

For me everything is colorful. We live in peace all together; we are connected and also we take care of each other. I have my family here and I live with them. Our apartment is old but with great people who live there. We celebrate every night and the reason for this is that we spend the day perfectly without any problems, which is most important for our life. I would like to

change the history of my city, to make others know our real life. I discuss this fact everyday with my friends and we try to find a solution for this. This is not just mine and my friends conversation, but everybody's. And our parents were like us, and they tried to make a better story for visitors who come into our city. How can you tell the real story of a city, one that is not based on history, but on something deeper that no one can see?

They say that it doesn't work because they tried this many times. People are again the same with their thinking. They cannot change their thoughts until they come to live here. Only if they live here can they understand that this city is the best place that they ever saw. I have a lot of friends. I always share my ideas with them; we talk about everything. Usually we like to talk about books that we read because most of us are readers. We simply enjoy when we tell what we read.

One of my friends is a writer. So sometimes he wants us to give him any advice on his writing and we try to help him. He is writing a book now. It is called, "My City." He is writing about our city and he is including every detail. We are hoping that this book is going to be great and that readers will like it. And with this we think we are going to change the meaning of our city. This place is going to be very popular; maybe a lot of visitors are going to come here.

My friend who is writing the book is a big dreamer. He wants more than anything to be a famous writer. He said to us, "I am going to write a novel, which will include our friendships and our names in it." He believes a lot in himself; everything that he thinks he realizes. He tries to encourage us to realize our dreams

too. He says if other famous people could realize their jobs, why can't we? We are people and we have inspiration too. We can be a creator. We just have to believe in our selves and start working.

He never gets tired of writing. It is like hobby for him. When we tell him that we liked this or that story that he wrote, it makes him very happy. Every week he shows us what he wrote about in his notebook. We can read and maybe we can give him some of our ideas to put in his stories. But he has a secret. One day he said to us that he is writing another book. But he can't show us because he knows that we are not going to like it. I asked him, "Why not? You know us. We can support you in everything, even when you say it is wrong, you have to write it.

He said, "No, trust me. All of you hate something that I like, believe me."

At first we got confused, but after he said these words we understood him. He has some political views. I hate speaking about political people; immediately it turns my day into monotony. For me they are nothing. They always look after just their interests; they pretend like they are working for us. But they do not even care about us.

For a minute I looked in his eyes, but he didn't say anything. I understood that he was writing about that so I stopped. I wanted to change the situation. I said to him, "I am not mad with you. Everyone has a secret in life." Then my other friends continued saying, "It is OK. It is your choice. You can write about anything you want." He said that he was thinking about writing this for a very long time. He was connected all the time with

journalists. And he tries to find every single proof that happens with political people and to write about it. He said that he is not sleeping because he wants to finish his writing as soon as he can.

In those days it was an election and he wanted to be part of that competition, to write and not be afraid. He told us about a meeting that he had two weeks ago. He met the minister of Internal Affairs. He talked to him for about two hours. He told him that he is trying to be part of his parties in order to write as much evidence as possible. The minister accepted his idea. From that day he has been meeting with the minister and some other political people.

He told us also that is going to be on a TV program, that he was invited on it. His role there is to be a kind of policy analyst. We were surprised by all that he told us. We never thought so much about his writing and for his seriousness in this leadership capacity.

We asked him why he didn't tell us about all of this thinking that he were doing at the same time when he was writing an another book. He is a genius to do all these things at the same time. He is our friend. We grew up together. We met him almost every day and we didn't know so much about him. We didn't get angry with him because it is understood that everyone has a secret in his own life. And for some reason we shouldn't tell everyone about our secrets. If we tell, then it is not a secret. People can magnify the words. And maybe for this it is better to be quiet. Or simply if a person has a secret he will feel that it is his life; no one should know about this or that. We wished him luck in his future

meetings. And we said to him that we are surprised. We have a genius friend and we didn't even know it.

He smiled at these words and said, "Let's change this conversation. Let's talk about something else."

While we were talking the music in the café was too loud. Alina was sitting across from me and it looked like she had no idea what we were talking about. This is not strange for me because I know her. Every time when the music is loud she focuses her mind on it. Sometimes she starts moving her fingers because the music makes her play the piano. She loses herself when she likes the music. For an hour she signed and played with her fingers. We were laughing at her for one hour and she didn't see us. She closed her eyes while she was signing. This happened very often.

One night we went out and she did this gesture and we made a joke with her. My friends and I without speaking stood up and went out of the café. We hid behind the market that was next to the cafe. We waited for her for an hour. When she opened her eyes, she looked around, like, what is going on, where are my friends and where am I? What's happened? She grabbed her jacket and came out. We couldn't stop smiling at her and then she heard our voices and she understood that it was a joke.

She wasn't mad with us. She said, "This is the last time that I lose myself in music." Unfortunately, it is not what she did. She keeps doing this all the time.

Anyway, she is a good musician and she can play the piano. On Friday afternoons she practices with me playing the piano and it is a good feeling. Now I like piano because practice makes me perfect. And when you

are perfect with something, for sure you will feel like her.

Alina lives the life of music. Everyone who knows her thinks that she never gets nervous because she always sings no matter what the situation is. The truth is that very often she gets nervous but she tries to keep it inside her soul. This is one of the best skills that she has because life is the most difficult step that we have to pass. And she passes very easy. She doesn't want the others to know about her situation.

In her opinion, no one really wants to help us if we have any problem. People are just curious to know what is wrong with us. So we shouldn't waste time trying to explain our self to others. It very often happens that they misunderstand our words. Everyone has a different question on their life paper. Instead of these, Alina keeps everything inside herself. She sings all the time. It is the way that she calms her mind.

She says life is too short if we stay sitting and thinking; we must continue our life no matter what. Better if we keep moving all the time to enjoy our time, to not think about yesterday. If you did something wrong, learn from that mistake and try to change it. Don't think how and why did I do that? What is done is gone, now look for tomorrow, start a new day, listen to a new song and learn to sing it. Her character is so strong and positive.

This is really what I should do. We have just one life and we have to be happy no matter how hard our life is. Because miracles can bring the best, in those moments when you don't expect anything.

My friend, who is the writer, was a poor boy and he didn't have anyone to take care of him. His parents died in an accident when he was child. He didn't have any cousins or someone else to take care of him. One couple who didn't have children took him and they cared for him like he was their child. Even they didn't have good conditions for living. They tried with all their heart to raise him in the best way that they could. They took him to school and he became a very good student. He always told us about his experiences that he had it in the past. Now he is a writer and he works too. He is trying to return all the things that the couple did for him. He considers them like his parents. And they are proud with him. Now they are living a great life. They never complain about anything because God brought to them a little child. And that child now is making them the most happy people in the world.

One day I went to visit Alina. Like usual, she was in her bedroom singing. I opened the door and she didn't see me. Her eyes were closed. I turned off her music and she said to me, "Sorry, I was thinking and I didn't see you." But I watched her and I said to her, "I don't know why but you look different today. It is like something good happened to you."

She smiled in her own way and didn't say anything. "Oh, come on, tell me what you were thinking about." And I saw that she was holding a photo in her hands, but she tried to hide it. She said to me, "OK, but please do not laugh at me. She showed me the photo and it was Orion. Orion is our friend who is the writer

I knew that she was hiding something from me. Not that she didn't want to tell me but because she felt

shy. She started telling me about her feelings. She said, "I don't know why but my mind is always on him. All the time I try to think about something else but I can't." One moment when we were laughing with each other, I saw in her eyes that she really had lost herself to him. She said, "This is happening to me too often. I don't know what to do. Should I tell him or not? Maybe he has someone else on his mind. I am afraid to lose our friendship for this reason. Maybe he looks at me like his sister. I don't know what to do." Then she explained to me when she had started thinking about him because, in the beginning when we met Orion for the first time, she didn't like him. Furthermore, she never wanted to know about his writing, when he wrote about political people.

But his writing got successful. Journalist chose him as one of the best writers. After that he stopped writing about these things because he had only wanted to prove himself in this category of writing. And he made it very well. He is proud for his writing and also we are proud for him. Because sometimes when someone wants to write something as strong as he wrote he needs to have a lot of courage and trust in himself. The city offered him a job but he didn't accept it because he wanted to continue his life like a journalist as he had studied for. He said that he was going to finish the other book that he was writing about.

He got successful in all of this, but Alina never supported him because she never thought that one day she was going to like him so much. Now she thinks and says, "What did I have in my mind before? I should have understood him about his goal. Like I love music so much and he loves his writing too."

We talked about this and I said to her, “We know that Orion is always close to you. Because every time when he wants to organize a meeting with friends, you are the first person that he calls. Maybe he wants to be sure if you are going to be there. And we know he likes you because once he said that Alina is my life. Yes, he was drunk at that time but you know when a person gets drunk for sure he speaks the truth.”

This happened when we were at one of our city parties. We stayed there all night and Orion started to drink more than normal and he started speaking these kinds of things about Alina. But we didn’t listen to him. We thought that maybe he was pretending and making jokes just to make us smile because that party was important for us. And we had to have a great time during the party. It is our city that organized it every year.

After I said these words, she smiled and asked me to help her in this direction. I said to her that she doesn’t have to worry about this. After this conversation we made a plan to go out with friends and to call him too. And so we did. We met with him and we watched him. We saw his eyes were shining whenever Alina spoke.

These days we are older. We finished the university three years ago. Orion and Alina got married. They are very happy together. Orion wrote his book and he concluded it with everything that he told us he would. He described our city in a perfect way. Most of the people read it and they were surprised how could this be true? How is possible that one book could change their thinking? He became a very famous person because of his writing. Now our dreams have come true. Thanks to

our friend Orion, our city is the most visited place and most popular. Everyone likes to come here to visit the city and maybe to stay here forever, like my parents did a long time ago.

I know a lot of families came in these last three years to live here after they read the book. They simply enjoy living here. Every person that comes here looks for us. They are curious to meet those people that are included in the book because they know that it was a true story. And names in that book are the real people who tried to do their best to change the history of the city. The old city with old buildings and with streets that were made by stones, and the view that makes people think there is no life in it. It became the most popular city.

Oasis of Love

by Dorentina Latifa

There is nothing more sensitive than those sounds in companion of this movie. There is nothing more impressive than the force of love that moves beyond every arduous moment that destiny graces on our way. The inner voice had captured my thoughts in a flame that I had never seen before...tick -tock, a frozen sound made me aware of feelings I never had and I realized how late I was.

“Dianna , you are late.” Another voice interrupts my thoughts. “Don’t worry. I will reach it on time, mum.”

“I am sure you will but, it would be better if you got a look of what you have to do before going to classes.”

My mind soared on the next wind, trying to embrace every nook of my desire. With this mild sunshine and freshness of nature an uncertain feeling kept me incapable of moving

beyond my prior thoughts of love. I left home and started to walk to university but, my legs

were not obeying my mind. I wished to go back but, I had no reason other than the feeling of being swimming in something bigger than myself. More than anything I wanted my strength and passion to be on my studies but all that was left to do was to hope for the best.

Finally my mind got where it had to be but not for a long time. An incoming call came as a thunderstorm on a sunny day and caught me by surprise. My aim was lost because it wasn’t just one call but three, one after

another and I was wandering who could it be and hoped that it was for good matters!

The waves of my thoughts were burning me, and like never before I wished classes to be over but I couldn't do anything. All that was left to do is to try my best to not get lost, but it was useless because all my tries look like going nowhere when I got a text message: "If you say you can do it, then do it. Don't be irresponsible towards those who gave you a chance. Let me know if you have quit. Alvin"

"Oh, what a temper." A smile crossed my face. "I wouldn't like to be like him oh, and poor the person who will have something to do with him," I thought. After a while I was free to do whatever I wanted. Finally classes were finished but I was feeling sorry for myself because I love what I do. I adore studying the English language but today wasn't one of my best days.

"What? You are tricking me, aren't you?" Anna cried.

"No, my dear friend I'm not. This happened for real, look for yourself!"

"I believe you, Dianna."

"I think I should reply to him, just to let him know that he is wrong. I'm not the person he thinks I am."

"Do it. I would give anything to see his reaction," said Anna. She was amused to hear me saying that.

"Wait Anna, you look more curious than me."

"Well you could say that. It is funny, isn't it?"

"No, it isn't. Maybe is an important issue which they have to discuss. I will write to him."

I texted: "I'm sorry to inform you that I am not the person whom you intended to write. Probably you have entered the number incorrectly."

“I did it, Anna.”

“Good. Let him know that you are not up for playing his game. I think that he knows you but doesn’t know how to start talking to you.”

“I don’t think so. It seems to be serious.”

“Serious? Please! You didn’t see him. How would you know if he is serious or just another guy playing games?” Anna was all over me.

“I don’t know, but I feel it.” I tried to explain to her but it didn’t sound reasonable to her.

“Oh ,again!” I was surprised when I received another text message .

“What does it say? Read it!” Anna was jumping at me.

“Slow down, I will read it! Listen because I’m not going to read it twice.” It says: “I am sure than I am not wrong. I will take this as your resignation.”

“What is his personality like? Is he perfect and sees others all as wrong or what is with him?” I was wandering to myself and trying to hide this from Anna because I didn’t want another scene in the street.

“Oh , write to him Dianna.” She was all over me requiring me to do it immediately. I insisted not to do it but it was in vain because she would keep me on the street for another half an hour at least if I didn’t write to him. So, I wrote to him: “It is not a resignation, because I’m not the appropriate one to do it. I’m not the one you think I am. If this is a joke please stop it, because I don’t find it funny. Sincerely D.S.”

“Why do you have to be so formal?” Anna looked at me as if I ruined her satisfaction.

“Because I don’t know him and I’m not going to play with someone’s job.”

My home was just on the other side of the corner and I couldn't wait to hug my dad and brother. It has been almost a week without seeing them because they had taken a trip to see nature. Before nightfall, I received a call which I declined because I was talking to my dad telling him what I did during his absence. In particular, I spoke about today because everything else was ordinary. With his humor, love and care of a good father he advised me to answer the call and explain to the guy that I am not that person.

"Come on. Call him."

"I don't know dad..."

"If you want, I can talk with him. After all you are my little girl."

"No, it is not necessary. I will do it, because I am your girl but, not "little" as you say. I am twenty, don't forget. But thank you dad for being with me every time that I need you." I embraced him then left the room being thankful to life for having such a good and united family. Just as I was about to call him, he called me. I was kind of unsure so it took a while until I got up the courage to answer it.

"Hi." For a moment I could hear just hear his breath as if he was running from something that suddenly caught him.

"Hello. I am Alvin."

"Yes. I know who you are, at least your name," I said, trying to be composed. I continued to talk, "listen I just want to say that you have got the wrong person, because I don't remember that I have promised something to you." I stopped, wondering if I sounded hard but I

convinced myself that I wasn't. I had said twice to him that I'm not the one he was looking for.

"I can see that." It came out like he was talking to himself.

"It doesn't seem right to ruin someone's chance just because you have the wrong number. It is not fair and I'm sorry if I was rude to say things like this but it wasn't my intention."

"No, I'm the one who should be sorry. I apologize to you but it is the same number that I used two weeks ago and it was the right one."

I got a different impression than my first one. He was serious, yes, but he seems reasonable too.

"Are you listening to me?" I heard his voice. I had been lost in thought.

"Yes, I am. It might be a mistake from the phone company. I got the number last week after losing the one I used before." It came out weird, even for me. I found myself saying more than I should and I didn't want to imagine what he was thinking.

"Yes, it could be."

"So, now that everything is clear I wish you a goodnight and I hope you will find the right person." I don't know why I was feeling like I didn't want to stop the call. It was like a flame on ice, as unwanted as the winter to flowers.

"Thank you, I appreciate your honesty. Goodnight and sorry if I disturbed you."

Oh, thank heavens it is over, because I feel released. Yet I felt my heartbeat when I wondered what he could possibly be thinking!

“Get ahold of yourself Alvin. It is not like you have been thrown to the wolves. It was just a misunderstanding caused without intention, so calm your thoughts.” I was trying to comprehend the situation which I couldn’t leave behind no matter what I was doing. “The best thing that you could do is to see how you will find that irresponsible person that took your sketches.” Yet I was on clouds and I wished with all my soul to have someone to pull this curtain from in front of my eyes, because I couldn’t do it by myself. The more I tried, the more blind I was.

“It is almost midnight. You should be home, Alvin. I wouldn’t care if your mother were among us, but she is not,” my dad said to me.

“Dad , don’t worry. You know that I wouldn’t harm a fly. I just had to finish something. I am on my way.” I tried to calm him.

After I hang up the phone, I realized the time. My dad was right. It was late and I was stuck in my own kingdom, rolling inside of my four walls, lost in thoughts with no purpose. The next day went fine until I saw her number. Her voice and her manner of speaking left something behind, something that I can’t expound upon not even for myself. For a moment I fought a battle of two forces: reason versus desire and there was something that pushed me to call her. But, then came the thunder of my mind telling me to put my feet on the ground because I had no excuse to call her. Why or what could I say to her!? That I was wrong again...no , that wouldn’t be the

right excuse . If I want to talk to her I have to come up with a reason. It would be better if I put this effort into work.

“Yes, Anna. One week. I don’t know why you are so surprised of that? After all it was a misunderstanding he has no reason to call. Neither do I.”

“Those were purely excuses. He probably knows you.”

She looked at me in a strange way, like I was hiding something from her, but there was nothing to tell.

“Let us focus on exams, don’t you think?” I tried to avoid her look but it was in vain.

“As you wish my dear Dianna. I was just saying that he...”

“Listen I don’t want to look impolite but really there is nothing to tell and I get what you want to say but this time it’s not how you have seen it.”

“If you say so,” she said to me with doubt.

As time passed, with all my books on list, Alvin was the last thing that came to my mind until a moment when I received a text message. “Hi! How are you? With the hope that I’m not disturbing you, I took the courage to write you about your number. Do you know if it was new or just resale? Alvin” For an instant I looked at it normally. Then my mind took the path of other thoughts, ‘what if Anna’s right?’ The moment when I least expected I start writing. “ Hi! I’m fine, thank you. How have you been? As for your question, I really don’t know because I asked my brother to get the number for me. All the best, Dianna.”

Trembling at what I did I dropped the phone, regretting answering him. But then I saw things in the way that would sound more reasonable as he wrote to me because he had to find that person, and it would be impolite if I didn't write back.

"Alvin, are you listening to what I am saying?"

"Yes dad, you were saying that..."

"Oh , you are not here."

"I am here, dad. Where would I be if I were not here talking to you?"

"I don't know. You tell me? You were whatever place you wanted to be, but not here."

"You see the consequence that you caused by pushing me to write to her."

"Yes, I realize that you become blind when it comes to her. So her name is Dianna?"

"Yes, dad, Dianna. And what now?" I looked at him, confused seeking light in the dark.

"Now , I think you should tell her that she has left an impression on you that is not going away no matter what you do."

"It's not so easy. What if..."

"No one said it is. Don't you think that this question would be the main reason to talk with her and clear out all your fears?"

"Everything seems so easy for you, dad."

"Because it is," he said, smiling at me.

It looked to me like all the troubles of the world are growing on me. I wished to talk to her and have the chance to see what she is...that would be good!

"Your phone, Alvin. What is it?"

"A message from Dianna."

"What does it say?"

"Alvin, I asked my brother and he told me that the number it is not new. Probably the person you are looking for has changed his or her number. I hope you will find them."

"You see. She wrote in a friendly manner. There is no name or formal expression."

"Do you really think that or are you just trying to satisfy me?"

"No, son. I really mean it and you know that I don't say things just to give pleasure."

"I do, but still I fear what is to come."

"What, you have fear? It is hard to believe that. Even if you are scared, you should bring out the Alvin that I know - the humble and courageous one who fights for what he believes."

"I will write to her."

"Yes, you should. You are the one who everyone admires."

"I appreciate all you are doing, more than anything. Thank you for your sincerity."

"Was it hard?"

"No, but let's see her response." I turned around, looking out of the window, so I could find a little calm for my thoughts by seeing the dynamic life of the city and the joy of others.

I'm looking at every glimpse of the blue sky to break my thoughts for him but it looks like everything was moving against all odds. Suddenly the clouds changed and become united. I envy them, because whenever they want, they can bring something different like this rain on my blue surface. It was like a fuel added to my fire. I decided to write to him because I don't want to regret not doing it. No one knows why uncertain things happen and none of us know what is up there. We just have to go for it. As they say, "don't ask the question that you don't want to know the answer to." I was running from this. His response to my messages flustered me. He asked me if I knew what was going on, which reasons are we following, and with what trust we write to each other without having any idea of who we are. But what mostly affected me was his answer to his own questions: "Dianna you will decide not to write to me anymore and I will understand that but I can't drag the force that is pushing me to be honest with you. I don't know why but I really have something that is making me to think in an uncontrolled way about you, and I know it may sound like nonsense, but it is true. I don't know anything about you, but I would love to meet you." Now I really was a bird flying without direction or shelter. "Alvin, thank you for your sincerity but as you said we don't know each other." I wrote to him without thinking. But I know that I don't want to meet him, even if this was against my inner voice. But in this, I preferred to follow reason. I have heard so many stories about

relationships created by messages and I knew I didn't want to be the next one.

He wrote to me this morning: " I have passed these fourteen days without talking to you, not because I didn't want to. I did. But I tried not to disturb you. I have decided to write to you, no matter if you reply to me or not. I know that it is hard to believe that on the other side of the phone is a person that really cares for you even if he doesn't know you." And he did, he wrote to me every single day telling me about his life and I was emotionally moved when he told me about his mother and what he has been through when she passed away. There were so many times that I wanted to call him, but I didn't.

The next morning I enjoyed the sunrise of a beautiful summer day, though everything was good something captured my mind because I didn't receive a message. At first, I convinced myself that it is all right. He is engaged in other activities and he will do it when he has the chance.

I started the day looking at the sunrise and ended it with sunset and the same thoughts: why didn't he write to me or what if something has happened to him. Only then I realized how close I had become to him. The night looks so good and the moon is full just as my head, but to all of it came the end when I heard my phone ringing. I saw his number and I open it without thinking. I just wanted to put an end to my state .

"Hello, Dianna. Thank you for taking my call. How have you been..."

"Is everything all right?" I interrupted him because I couldn't wait to know how he is.

“Yes, everything is good and how are you?” I felt relieved by knowing that he is okay.

“Everything is good with me , thank you!”

“I have written to you...” again my mouth worked faster than my mind and I interrupted him by saying :

“Yes, but not today.”

“So this means that you have read my messages and you have been waiting for another one your entire day! Then I may take the courage to ask why didn’t you write me back?”

For once my mouth was closed and I didn’t know what to say...

“Maybe it was an attempt to know how patient I am and you decided you are testing me.” I heard him smiling but also heard my heart beating faster and faster.

“As you can see, I am very determined towards what I want.”

“Well I believe in heroes and I haven’t seen one that gave up no matter what difficulties destiny puts in their way.”

“Is this advice that I should take into consideration?”

“I don’t know. You decide.” For a moment, I couldn’t believe what I was saying but it looked like my heart took over and I was feeling butterflies.

“I will do that. Dianna, I called you tonight because I wanted to hear you before...” As he was speaking I was fearful of what he would say “...before I go to work, but I will be back after one week and I will hope that by then you will decide to give a chance to the coincidence of fate that brought us together!”

“I will think about it, but without any promises.”

“As you wish. Then I should say goodnight to you, because I have to catch my plane.”

“Goodnight!”

I started my day with thoughts of him and with them I will sleep, all was done there is nothing to change because I promised him that I will think about it . You can't cry for things that are done, but I am scared to meet him! What I fear more is my condition of being worried about him. I don't know when I became so close to him. This week was one of the longest of my life. I couldn't wait for it to end but it would be better to be longer. In one side I had Anna talking like a bird in my ear that he is just pretending that he doesn't know me , in the other side I was saying to myself to accept his invitation because I would be honest with myself and with him. After all the struggles of thinking things didn't come out how they were meant to be. He didn't call or write to me for another week and I decided to end whatever this was. I was disappointed with him but more with myself for hoping and believing in him.

When I least expected it, I heard my phone ringing and with it my heart, but I was saved by another ring . Ring a bell that sparked a forgotten decision, end this. I decided not to take his call , yet I was burning inside to know his excuse. After three calls one after another I received a text message from him: “Dianna, I can understand that you don't want to talk to me, but I beg you to answer your phone because I want to apologize to you , please!” I read it over and over again but I didn't know what to do, it's just excuses. He called again after a little while and again I didn't answer. I regretted my decision one moment later and I was mad at myself. I

should have done it sooner - not give a second chance, but end it. The moment when I thought he gave up, he called again. This time I answered it and at the beginning I couldn't breath!

"Thank you. I was convinced that you didn't want to hear from me."

"I just want to say that there is no need to explain to me. After all, I'm no one to you."

"You are wrong, because I care for you and even if you don't want to know I'm going to tell you."

"Really Alvin, there is no need."

"There is. Listen, you are so stubborn."

For an instant I started to smile. I think he heard me but said nothing then he continued to tell me the cause of his "late" call.

"As I told you I was in a work group, but there was a change of planes. I stayed at a hotel for five days then I went to visit my sister. I have planned to stay with her for two days but my nephew insisted that I stay longer and my sister too, so I apologize for that."

"I appreciate that but..." I was speaking when he interrupted by saying:

"No matter what you say, I feel obligated to tell you because I said I will do it, and I hate to disappoint people I care about."

"I hate that too but don't worry. There was no promise, remember?"

"Not from you , but I promised which is why I wanted to apologize." At first I was feeling embarrassed about how I acted, then I was grateful to him for his respect. Trying to change the subject I asked him about his sister:

“So, your sister is here. How is she and her son. From what you have told me I think he is five!”

“She is enjoying the time with our old man , and yes you are right, her son is five. Our house has never been happier than now.”

“I am glad for you.”

“He makes my day.”

“I’m happy for you, Alvin. I’m sorry but I have to go because I have to be at university early in the morning.”

“Oh, that is good for me. I would spend more time talking to you. It looks like time flies when I speak with you.” I didn’t know what to say.

“Goodnight!”

“Thank you. I wish the same for you.” He paused for a moment then he said “I know I have lost my chance to meet you, so I guess I have to wait a little more.”

“Well, you are right on that. You have lost your opportunity.”

“You are so stubborn. I was hoping you will feel sympathy for me and decide to give me a second chance.”

“I have to be. I’m not always stubborn, just when I see that it is necessary like...” he continued what I was saying.

“Like in this case?”

“Why not?”

“I won’t insist, but you have to know that I’m not doing it because I don’t want to. I don’t think it would be the right thing if I push you to make a decision that you are not sure about.”

“Thank you, I appreciate that. Listen I have to go.”

“Yes I’m sorry for holding you up. Goodnight.”

“Alvin, where were you? We have been waiting for you.”

“Sorry, dad. I was talking with Dianna.”

“I told you, Mariana, that he has to be talking to her. Otherwise he would be here.”

“I think you are right dad. He mentioned to me something about her but I didn’t know that he has come to this point of being lost for a girl.”

“Mariana! Dad! You two please stop!”

“Don’t take it badly. We are happy for you but we are worried for you too.”

When she said this, I wandered what could it be then she continued, “Alvin, dad and I were talking about this and I think you should listen...” I stopped her because I was worried about what she would say.

“Mariana, you are confusing me. Can you please just say what you have been thinking?”

“It’s just that you don’t know this girl and you have become so close with her.”

“You are wrong. I know her. I just haven’t seen her, that’s all.”

“I am not wrong. I can see it in your manners. Look how you are acting when it comes to her!”

“Mariana, dad, I know you mean it for my own good but believe me, I am good. You would like her if you had the chance to talk to her as I do. She is determined and she cares for those that she loves. What else could possibly be wished for!”

“If you say so. We just want you to be happy.”

“I know.”

The first days of autumn brought dynamic life to the city. Trees wore the best colors which have gave a lovely cloak where we live. You can see it even in the faces of people enjoying the beauty of this season.

“Alvin, can we go out today? I have just another week left. Lets enjoy the good weather. What do you say?” She might be my “big sister” and be a mother but she still looks at me with baby eyes when she begs for something even Jim, her son, looks my serious when he asks for something.

“Jim, come we are going out!”

“Uncle, can we go to the lake? I want to feed the swans.”

“You know that you are the king and we your soldiers, so we will go wherever you want.” For a moment I wished an impossible thing, and I couldn’t hold it inside. I turned to Mariana saying:

“I wish I could invite another person.” I stopped talking for a moment and I imagined how wonderful that would be. I turned and said to Mariana that she wouldn’t come, because I have been asking her all summer but could not convince her.

“Aren’t you tired of waiting?”

“No. I would love to see her, but she is scared, because of the way we started to talk. She fears I would just “play” with her and I understand that.”

Being out for a moment with the most beloved people and sharing the last days of them here affected me and I think they were even happier than me, because Mariana kept

saying how good is to be home and enjoy the walks
where you have grown up .

“The fresh air is so good to me and Jim seemed to love
the park. And, this coffee is the
tops.”

“I’m so glad that you are enjoying it.”

“Alvin , please take the phone from Jim don’t let it to be
his new toy!”

“Why? He is not doing anything, leave him.”

“He is calling someone. Jim, give the phone to your
uncle!”

I was smiling to see how serious my sister became and
to see him not obeying to her, but
not for long. My smile frozen when I saw him calling
Dianna. Not only my smile but
my heart too, because Jim was saying “look I’m calling
that pretty girl”. At first it was
incomprehensible why he was saying that. But at the
end he is just a little child. Still it wasn’t
better when I realized that he was right. He accidentally
called her and the phone of the girl
at the next table was ringing ... Could that be her! What
if she is Dianna? Would that be
possible! For once I had more than hope . I wanted it to
be her !

Mariana caught me lost and asked me what was wrong,
and I told her what
was concerning me. To clear the sky from clouds and
hang on to my wish took me a lot of
courage. As she was about to leave I followed her and at
the most unexpected

moment, I cried her name. I had to do it or she would become a shadow in my thoughts and my deepest regret for not listening to my inner voice . The force of my desire was in mist when she turned around, and I couldn't believe that destiny brought us on one way through phones and now here I was standing right in front of her. She seems so strong but so fragile in companion of her beauty. She looked so full of life in her green dress and her hat was like the crown of a queen. Her eyes were shining , her smile ...her smile would give a second life .

The way she looked would give you the impression like she was trying to find a solution to a puzzle, but at the same time she looked as though she knew who I was.

“Hi! Dianna, I’m...”

“I imagine you are Alvin!”

“Yes and I’m sorry if I disturbed you!”

“I’m just surprised.”

“It looks like fate is on my side.”

“You can say that. The ice is broken.”

“So, can I take the courage to ask you for a coffee or a walk whatever you want?”

“I don’t know. I can’t leave my friend.”

“As you wish, but as you said, “the ice is broken” and next time you have no excuses for not coming.”

“I promise, but for today forgive me.”

“Good, then go catch your friend.” I was departing from her but I felt like I was with her. I just have to wait for my next chance of seeing her.

I was in shock when I reached Anna. I was all in clouds and when I told her who he was just like me she couldn't believe it, but more than this she couldn't believe that I declined his invitation and she made me go back. And I did. I don't know how or why I was listening to her. I was waiting at the entrance of the restaurant trembling for what I was going to do and I don't know where that strength came from! When they came out I looked at him, smiling at his nephew. I noticed that he stopped and looked for a moment like he couldn't believe what he was seeing and I felt insecure ! All the fear went away when he smiled at me.

"Is the invitation still on?" I said it trying not to show my emotions.

"I don't know. Now we have to ask permission. Oh, forgive me, I forgot to tell you that she is my sister, Mariana."

"Dianna , I am so glad to meet you."

"The pleasure is mine."

"As for permission, it's all yours."

Mariana talked in a good manner. I really liked her. We walked through the park for an hour but it felt like only a few minutes. Time was flying in front of us .We said goodbye to each other without any promises for the next meeting , but we both knew that there would be a next time. I went home not believing what happened today. I didn't imagine a meeting like this, not even in my dreams and I am about to live the turns of my fate.

Now here I was looking to the future and memorizing what happened today. His behaviour was polite and he is a good looking man, serious in his way but kind. I was wondering what can he possibly be thinking when I receive a text message from him: “thank you for making my day. I will never forget it and I should be grateful to fate for bringing you my way.” I was impressed by his affection. I can’t say that I wasn’t feeling the same way. I was. Tonight stars are my friends and the moon my protection because I have built a mountain in my heart and mind .

The following day I couldn’t wait to finish what I had to do. Without doubt the dinner will be the best part of this day. I will meet her. I have already seen her, but I was full of emotions as a child on his first day of school. Every time I looked at the clock I had the impression that it’s not working. I was waiting for the end of this long day. As the color of the sky changed I was enjoying the sunset and when the night kissed the earth, the moon was full and one of her stars came out beautiful as the first time, her smile is her bulletproof vest and I am feeling blessed to be the one who stands by her side. Everything was under our orders except the time that looks to be against our wishes . I left her home but I took her smile for a goodnight.

Time passes away, but not the feeling nor the people you love. It is just the way you choose to build the bridge of your destiny, just the way you choose to live your dreams, and sometimes let your heart lead you. Here we are now telling our story, standing right next to each other, day and night, holding each other's hands in pain or joy, living the present waiting for the future . After all, you never know. Just hang on to your beliefs. It is love.

**THE (UN)LUCKY GUY DENIED BY THE (UN)BLESSED
PEOPLE**

by Arlind Jerliu

Kosovo, spring 1999

The end of the new beginning is to take place. Alban is feeling sleepy, and he says, “I am exhausted. I want to sleep.”

Alban’s mother cries in a sad voice, “Alban, please wake up! Don’t sleep! I am here with you. Why do you close your eyes? OPEN them, dearest of mine!”

Alban’s mother is trying to keep her son awake, but in vain... Alban is bleeding badly, vomiting occasionally, and the first aid is not coming faster than his sleep.

Having been wounded by a bullet that went just centimeters away from his heart and not knowing what the meaning of pain was, Alban keeps “smiling,” as his small face turns whiter and whiter.

A car driver, carrying the six-year old injured child, keeps moving at the maximum speed towards the nearest hospital. The little boy, half-conscious, continues vomiting blood, the blood which was from the last liter of the overall amount. Alban can barely speak, let alone complete a sentence, but he manages to finish some of his very last meaningful words—he told the driver that he was sorry for the dirtiness that he had made to the car.

Divinely, an army helicopter reaches the location of the little innocent child. Though the child has already

“slept,” they manage to rapidly give him the first aid before sending him to the nearest military base. His heart is still beating, despite the fact that he has already lost consciousness.

Alban, though he is unconscious, is seeing some visions. “Mom! Uncle! Soldiers, they are all around me!! Why is that happening? Mom is crying, I feel no pain and yet they are all staring at me... weird. Wow, my clothes are red and my face is so white... wait, they are carrying me to the helicopter... oh, I’m flying! So beautiful up here... look at the houses, they are so small. Mine is much bigger, definitely. People too are very tiny... but wait, that gurney with all the people wearing white running with that...”

Alban’s family, feeling speechless, are waiting for any news in the corridor of the hospital and it is only afterwards that a doctors appears with some news. “His body temperature is almost 43°C. I should avoid telling them this fact,” the doctor whispers to himself while he is walking towards the child’s overwhelmed parents.

Father asks, “Is he alive?”

“Thank God, he is... but we are doing everything we can, and his health is not really in the state we would want it to be. We have to immediately transfer him to another hospital in one of the bordering countries if we want him to receive a more sophisticated operation,” the doctor says.

“Do you really think he can survive that journey?” the father hopelessly asks.

“Is there any other option which you would suggest...” the doctor says, ending the conversation,

letting the parents know that this is the best, and the only choice they have

Miraculously, Alban survives the journey, and even the operation despite the skepticism of the doctors...

Autumn 2011

Mirand asks, "It's our final year of high school. Have you made up your mind about the major you would like to pursue?"

Alban replies, "Actually, I still have to decide... but I would love to study abroad. What about you, my soul mate, have you decided yet?"

Mirand says, "Well, I am not sure too. I was just introduced to the opportunity of studying in the army academy. This allows you to study in the best university in Kosovo, AUK, without having to pay anything. Therefore, one would be lucky to have the opportunity to give such a "gift" to his family, and, of course, to have the chance to help this country that is overcome by the corruption that is spread everywhere. I mean, it sounds great but I am suspicious."

Alban says, "What is it? Do you find it hard fulfilling their requirements, because it sounds great to me too! I mean, we can try it together."

Mirand explains, "Brother, it's not that at all. I mean, they do require a lot, such as physical tests e.g. 80 push-ups within 2 minutes to be performed, 3.2km within 12 minutes to be run etc. and it's been one year and a half since we have gone to the gym. But I can say, even now we would be able to go through that. Hmmm,

and even IQ test, math, TOEFL, and others are to be taken, and you know that we are great at these too.”

Alban interrupts, “I can see that, but what’s the problem then?”

Mirand answers, “Only 14, out of more than 300 hundreds applicants, are yearly accepted... and you know what I mean.”

Alban says, “Come on, don’t we know that our army institutions are declared as the most trusted ones. I know there might be people who will enter this major without deserving it, but I am quite sure that not all of these fourteen applicants will be such people. And we can fight for those 7, or 6, or even 3 seats that will be merit-based.”

Mirand says, “Brother, I pray this is so. And you know that I am an optimist person, but we will do well if we find someone who will ensure that there is no injustice in our case.”

Alban says, “I still believe that we may end in the top three applicants and there will be no need to ask anyone for help. But, it’s ok, we may discuss it later. Let’s go to pray first--adhan is calling...”

Alban and Mirand answer the call as usually but they now have some more special supplications to ask.”

Alban supplicates, “Allah, your decisions are way better than my wishes. Accept my prayers, as you are the only One who accepts them. God, you are the only One who knows what our hearts whisper. If the major that I’m having in mind is good for me, let it be my future profession. Let it be the profession I can contribute to the most, and let it be the place where I can

strive for the most good. I know that, “*Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people until they change what is in themselves,*” (Quran 13:11) but let me do my best!”

Summer 2012

Having worked hard in the targeted fields for almost a year, Mirand and Alban now have already applied to join the Army Academy. They did great in the final exam in high school, took the highest average in the 3d year, just like in the 2nd and 1st, and they are highly motivated and haven’t even thought about a plan B.

The Army Academy informs them that they, together with 315 other applicants, have successfully applied. They add that the physical tests are to be taken in the next few days.

Physical Tests Day

Mirand says, “Alban, it’s boiling out there. The other group of applicants had to perform the same required tests at 8 o’clock. It’s 1 o’clock now, and I bet this is the hottest day of the year.”

Alban adds in a sad voice, “Exactly, it’s almost 37°C. We are used to running during dawn or at least just before the sunset, but never did we run in such temperature. I am shocked.”

Mirand says in a smiley face, “At least, the temperature is the same for everyone of our group.”

Alban says, “You are right. And thank God we drank more than two liters of water last night. If we die, thirst won’t be the cause for sure.”

Mirand says, “Besides, we had a great score in push-ups and crunches. If we manage to finish running in time, I assure you that we will be among the best.”

Alban says, “That’s it my brother. Adding to this the fact that, till now, I have seen no injustice and the tests were administered so strictly.”

Mirand, says, “Let us not disappoint ourselves and finish this challenge greatly then!”

It’s 2 o’clock and the temperature has reached its peak. There are about 150 applicants who will run at the same time. And the crowd makes it even hotter. The test administrators, however, supply each applicants with a bottle of water, and they announce a motivational last speech before they give the green light to start the run.

The soldier, who is in charge of motivating the applicants, utters “This is probably the most challenging moment in your life. Do you want to give up this soon? It’s hot, YES, but the price is much greater than this tiny challenge. Don’t you really want to study the best major in the world, with the best conditions that one could ever dream of? You surely want this. Then MOVE your asses and tell us what you can do! If you can run 3.2km then RUN them faster, if you can’t manage to run them, RUN them!... yes, use your hands or whatever but don’t be a loser for God’s sake, because losers will always stay

home.”

The run starts and everyone is in hurry. The absolute majority of boys, motivated by the speech of the soldier, start to run with the highest speed that their bodies afford.

Alban says, “Mirand, go with the plan... they will all fall soon. They are not using their brain, for their energy shall be non-existent in the next lap.”

Mirand confirms. “They all seem to fall into this simple trap. How can one run at this speed continuously for such a long distance? Or, perhaps, we are the weak ones. See? We are behind most of them. Brother, I think I can afford increasing the speed a bit. I will do so in the second lap, if God pleases.”

Alban: “You know it better, and do what you can. I will save my energy and will try to go at the same rhythm throughout the “journey.”

It’s the third lap and, as expected, only a few applicants are still running. Most of them are walking and some of them can’t even stand on their legs.

Alban tells himself, “Mirand is doing well. He is ahead of me and there are only a few people who are running with us. In fact, there are a lot in every meter I run, but they are in the second lap, or even the first, while we are in the third. I can barely breathe, and I am sweating as never before. One lap remains but I need some water, so that I can freshen my mouth.”

Alban finds the bottle of water he left when he started running, but he didn’t feel freshness at all. Rather, he thought his mouth was burning from the boiling water due to the extreme high temperatures of

the atmospheres. Mirand manages to finish the race and, being exhausted, he lies down and tries to calculate the time he ran the race and the people who were before him. He realizes that there were only few people who ran faster, and meanwhile Alban reaches the finish of the race as well. Alban is much more exhausted, and overcome by fatigue, he has nothing in mind but to find a shadow where he can put his head.

Mirand watches the rest of the marathon peacefully
“Thank God, we had a great day and our names are among the best, and, even, these are only the first tests and our opponents have almost vanished from the competition. Wait! The soldier is writing down this guy’s name that was just behind Alban! But I can remember it is his second lap, and not fourth. Look! He is writing another one who is in his third lap! This can’t happen and I hope I am wrong but I am shocked.”

Day of the interview

Mirand: “Brother, we are almost there. Don’t you see, only 35 people are left and everything is going smoothly, thank God. I just pray your prediction comes true.”

Alban adds, “I don’t want to be too enthusiastic, but I feel the same. We CAN be there. Adding to this, the fact that we are greatly prepared for this interview, we may hope this can be a reality.”

Alban, having directed his hands towards the sky, supplicates, “God, the only thing I want is to give the

best of myself in this last step. There is no prayer of mine that has not been answered, none. I put my trust in You, and let me give my best to this day, so that at least I don't blame myself for not being able to enter the major that I have been dreaming of. If there are people who deserve the seats more than me, let there be no injustice, and vice versa. And, surely, You know best."

Mirand had finished the interview, and he thinks he did well, for the most part, of the question that had been asked. He, together with Alban, had prepared in advance. A soldier, who used to prepare the questions in the previous years, had told them the possible question that might be asked. This soldier, though not so optimistic, tried to prepare them in the best way, so that, as he said, "You may, somehow, give a great impression and end up there where you deserve to be."

Alban is inside the room. Five people in charge start asking him questions. He is fasting and, noticeably, his throat becomes drier as he keeps answering. All the questions asked were perfectly answered, as left an impression. However, the most touching answer of his was the one in reply to the question of what his motivation was for taking this step of applying for this major. He greatly expressed that the Army "lifestyle" suited his character the most. He said he was a person who loves to have an organized life, where he could win the day- meaning that he could fruitfully give his best, and his maximum, at the same time within a day. He related the story of his that he once was saved from soldiers, and that he would like to do the same—save people through this profession. All his words were

convincing, and it could be seen from the jury's eyes that they were all pleased. Alban never said he wanted to pursue this major because he wished to be advanced so that he could fight corruption, for he knew that the people he was speaking to might have been just the wrong ones- corrupted. Thus, Alban, having answered in the best way, saw the light at the end of the tunnel, and he could hope his answers were enough to win the heart of the evaluators.

It's been days since they finished the interview. They are happy to have reached this far together. Alban explains that, no matter what the results are, he is happy to at least support his friend, and that he would feel over the moon even if only Mirand was accepted, for he surely is the one who deserves to be there. Mirand feels the same and he adds that he would feel down if it happened that none of them were to successfully finish the task.

Mirand: "Brother, you should have asked someone to help you investigate your results to make sure that you are not unfairly rejected. I did so, and there was no possible space to even ask any other additional questions, but I told that person that my progress should be investigated, for I fear the injustice."

Alban thinks to himself, "He is right, though there is no obedience if it involves disobedience (hadith), but is it disobedience if you want your application to be justly considered? This undoubtedly requires using unlawful means, but is it necessarily called the same thing if I want to be equal with the others? I don't know, I really don't.

Nevertheless, I wouldn't have been able to find that person, even if I knew all of this in advance. God, I know "that the supplication of the oppressed person is not refused" (hadith), but please save my tongue from cursing them if we are both rejected, for I would want You to guide them rather than punish them, except in momentary disappointment where I lack to always judge properly, so save me, o Allah, from asking You such an impulsive thought!"

Some days later Mirand receives a call from the Army Academy. "Mirand," they say. "You have passed the interview test and before we can welcome you to the major you have applied for, you have to go through another English test once more."

Mirand is in a state of incredulity and he loiters around his house. "I can't believe it. I am just walking in agitation and I don't know what to think. Perhaps Alban has received the same call and is in the same state as me. It's been one hour and he is not calling though. It can't happen that he didn't receive the same call; at least I won't be able to accept such a reality. Therefore, I'd better stay in this state of anxiety than in a possible state of sorrow."

Alban, however, some hours later, receives a call from Mirand and understands that he didn't pass the interview test; for only the ones who passed this stage were supposed to receive a call.

Mirand speaks in a sad voice "Come on, check your phone—you might have unwillingly switched it off when they tried to contact you because

they have no reason to reject you.”

Alban: “It is okay Mirand. They might have called me on the other number I left if it happened that, as you say, I had a problem with my phone. But, hey, it doesn’t matter when I know that at least it is you that can reach there. Did you forget? We have the same goal, and let us be satisfied for you are nearly about to everyone feel proud of you.”

Mirand: “You must be kidding. We had the same results in every single test, and I don’t know why on earth they didn’t give you the “good news. Shame on them...”

Mirand weeps for a while, whereas Alban is remorseful for only one reason—that of not having the chance to be with Mirand all the time now, as he used to be during high school. They won’t be sharing the same school desk anymore; nor will they be saving money to eat food after working out in the gym. They won’t be hurrying up to go to the English course, and they won’t be taking ablution together with snow anymore, in days where water used to freeze, that is, they won’t be sharing great moments, which they never had time to think about how great they were. However, Alban is happy that Mirand is likely to be given the chance of to accomplish his goal.

Alban: “Allah, I thank you, because your decision can not be changed no matter what my reaction is. Therefore, I choose to thank You, for indeed those who thank are the winners at the end of the day. Allah, lighten Mirand’s path, and let

him not go astray, and so do with mine. Oh the One Who responds, let it be that those who will be accepted are, if not the best possible ones, then the ones who at least passed all the tests in their own. Amen!”

Months later

Alban was given no reason for being rejected and Mirand managed to enter the major, so everyone is feeling proud of him. However Alban’s wish didn’t come true, for some of the guys who were accepted could not finish the physical test; half of them were not able to listen to English lectures (so they needed one more additional year of training in English), and some of them were the cousins of ministers of the security force of Kosovo, or other “noble” people as well. In short, Mirand was far superior when compared to them, and thus he could easily finish the first academic year as the best student in his major, but the sad part of this is that, even he wouldn’t have been accepted if he were to enter the competition only “on his own.” That is, the people who would be accepted were chosen even before the competition was open.

“O my lovely country,” Alban whispers. “I am not the ‘lucky’ guy to just have the opportunity of being justly treated by you. Yes, there may be someone who has the power to do what he wants, but “Does he not know that Allah sees?”(Quran 96:14). Surely, these people are not from Mars, they are merely the mirror of us. Anyway, “Indeed, Allah will not change the condition of a people

until they change what is in themselves.”(Quran 13:11). I ask the question, do we really want to change ourselves?! I don’t really want to know the answer, for, no matter what the reality is, I have already decided to give you, o my country, that which you didn’t give me—treat you justly by giving everything I can wherever and whenever you need me. In fact, you did teach me something vivid, that is, the ability to reflect upon the difference between good and evil. Now I clearly see the consequences of (not) following what is good or evil, which is a great, priceless lesson undoubtedly.

Written from Samsung phone

by Anonymous

It was night. The sky was dark and all around me were sleeping. Loneliness gripped me for a moment and seemed to me that it was going to be my friend until death! Within the four walls of my empty room, where prayers become ordinary, the pain that I felt in my heart joined the prayers. In my hands, I was clutching a glass of wine, there emptying anger, pain and everything else. After every glass that I was drinking, one by one, memories came into my mind, which made me feel that someone hit my heart with a bullet. Oh my memories. All were turned into a nightmare, just because I asked to be happy! Life is behaving unfairly with me, by taking from me all. The love of my father, the kisses of my mother, warmth of my sister, the support of my brother. It took my own life, only because I fell in love in a different way. They judged me because I fell in opposition with mother nature...With God!

Oh no, I am a good person. I have a good heart and with love to give, but there were only few people that were able to understand me and my world, but I swear I've given everything from myself to make everyone happy! I spent many nights without sleep under the moonlight, with my head in books; I studied a lot. I was trying to be an example in every aspect! I've never served only myself, always hoping that one day my family was going to be proud of me! My mom and dad never had the opportunity to get an education and to know things that I know right now. For that reason I

never judged them. For the respect that I had for them, their words became an order for me because I loved them and I valued them so much. Inside one of those books that weighed on my back it said that, "The family is sacred and invaluable." Now when I think of these lines it makes me not wake up from dreams. At least there is nobody that can steal the love of family, in dreams there they are next to me, and I loved them without any doubts, even when they didn't want to understand me.

They don't want to agree with the fact that I am a man and I loved a man and I loved him so much that I decided to confront the hatred of my family! For this, they don't want me anymore. They decided that in their lives I'm going to be a simple unknown person! An unknown who remembers always cleaning his tears from the corner of a jacket, without forgetting the importance and the love for them! I don't know if life is putting before me a lot challenges, or if the only fault here is mine. I feel that I'm the one who stays here, eating by myself, thinking how everything changed so fast. How quickly changed all my life. Like this between four walls, softly I wonder what an "unknown" person should do.

In a story there must be a conclusion. But I cannot write that yet because I still have not found my peace. I have no advice for the reader.

Her Diary

by Arta Krasniqi

Today I woke up thinking. During the weekend I often sleep until 11 am but today I just woke up earlier and in fact I didn't even wind the clock last night. I have the impression that this day looks different from the others, maybe the weather got me in this kind of mood because the rain doesn't seem to stop. I really hate this depressing time of year when you have the idea that sun disappeared somewhere and forgot us, and that's very sad. It's so cold outside so a cup of coffee would be a great idea this morning. I have no motivation to do anything else but thinking! I'm wondering how time passes so fast, how people and things change. I experienced a lot of bad moments in life but now everything is as I always wanted it to be because I'm now in love with Lisi. He is special, there are no words to describe him best because he has all the things a man should own. He is very understandable, handsome, has dark hair and black eyes. I always liked this type of physical appearance, I find them more attractive. I don't live with him because of the traditions in our country. We live separately until we marry. It's like a rule. A woman should live with her family until she marries. My parents like him a lot and he is always so kind and nice to them. This makes me appreciate this relationship with him even more. It was very difficult for me to get sensitive and be able to love anyone and you may now wonder why? What was the problem?

Through the years that passed I learned something important, women always get through difficulties more than men and that's a real fact. Thinking leads me to different situations of my life, the painful past, it's the story of my life, the end of the 90s, how the greenery of nature began to appear ,and this didn't have sense to me at all because stories kept going all the way wrong. Our country was in war and political conflicts as well, a great number of people were victims of this terrible act, so was I. Miserable stories happened in that time here. I remember a family in our neighborhood, they were big family with so many members - about nine I guess, all of them were killed by Yugoslav forces and only one child remained alive and the worst thing is that he had no one to take care of him and his house was destroyed and burned. I know that today this story is almost forgotten here and government doesn't really care about their economic status and doesn't even try to give them a hand and this is the worst thing that you can imagine. There are many people whose life was harder than we could think. And close to his house lived two elders, they took him in under their roof and this act really made me feel better in that time, how someone can be so kindhearted and help homeless people who don't have any food or place to rest and sleep, the only place they can find themselves is on the street.

I never had the courage to tell this part of my story to anyone, which started from that wartime period and is still part of my memories. I would like to share this history here, in this small black diary which contains some parts of my life. I now remember that horrible

springtime how people lost everything they had and how houses were burning and everything seemed to be catastrophic.

This period left me with a lot of depressing problems and it was so difficult for me to get out of them. Is one important thing that I would like to share right now, the paper that I wrote some days after that miserable day but didn't have the courage to open until today.

Today, May 18th

“Nobody knows the way I feel today, how disappointed I am with this world and with human beings as well. No one can understand what is within my body and my soul and I have the idea that my heart is broken in pieces, so this means I am totally destroyed and with no motivation to live. I never felt like this, for weeks I didn't speak a word, I underwent the worst thing in my life. How much I would like to wake up in the morning with the idea that this was only a nightmare and everything is going fine and like it was before but in fact things are different now, never in this way and this hurts.

I was with my family in our home. I lived only with my parents because my brother lives abroad with his family. As we all know Yugoslav forces started the war with our army for their political interests. I can clearly remember every moment of our evocation, how things started and continued to happen, I was staying in the living room with my father listening to recent news on the radio and mom was upstairs cleaning her room. We had nothing else to do because we were not allowed to go out of the house. As we were listening we heard my mom's shouting: “They are here, they are destroying houses and

killing people”. We could hear a big noise coming from the other neighborhood. We were terrified, I never saw my parents like that, in that kind of situation and I understood that we were in a big risk. In that time I was only sixteen but I really felt that misery and was a victim of it. They entered the house, and I still can remember those faces, and how sneaky they were. It’s like they had no feelings, not the way any human being can be. My dad went to the corridor and tried to talk to them and beg them for mercy but this didn’t seem to help us. They pushed him down and came in the room where I and mom were. Grabbed my mom and took her in the corridor, mom started to scream and shout loudly but this didn’t help, it was the first time that I had the chance to see my dad crying and family in that kind of situation, it really hurts. Then they came for me.

I still remember the whole thing, the way they laughed and the way they enjoyed their criminal acts. I have been wondering whether they have families or any kids because I don’t know where they found the strength to do those kind of things to people, and be so heartless as well. I don’t have the strength to detail everything that happened in those moments because you may imagine, that day I experienced the feeling of being burned in hell, it’s like I had a terrible heartache. But it can be summed up with two words: rape and abuse.

I don’t know if I can ever get out of this misery that I think will be part of my life forever. It’s still wartime here and people are still being killed and abused from those creatures that don’t resemble human beings. This fact destroys me even more. I didn’t talk to anyone from that day, not even to my mom but I know she

understands me well and knows the reason behind this. I wish that someday I can really understand the positive side of life and find a little bit of happiness in this world. This is my biggest wish right now. I know a lot of women have been treated like this and they have the same situation as mine but are finding the strength to fight with the reality they are living in. Still hoping for shiny and better days! ”

You may now wonder why I decided to open the letter today - it's because of tomorrow and if I have force to tell Lisi about this then I can breathe freely and feel more honest towards him even if I don't know what his response will be or if he will forgive me for not being faithful. Time passed and now we are more than ten years older and my parents are the ones that know the hell I experienced but not every detail of it. I am still the only one who knows the whole story and those terrible images that are stuck in my head and will accompany me to death, but at the same time are those that ruined my happiness for a long time as well.

I say for a long time because I couldn't trust and love anyone 'cause I saw the worst parts of a human being and I was afraid to be part of anyone's life.

I always had an idea with me, that people can be wild, unconscious, brutal and without feelings until now.

I am now part of somebody's life, and he is my other half. Different from people that I expected to be part of the world we live in, he is gentle, a person who is always there for you, understands you and he is worthy as well. He helped me a lot to change my opinion of people. Just

thinking of him leads me to the most wonderful moments of my life, the way he treated me made me the happiest person on earth. I remember our first meeting, it feels like it happened today and I still remember how he entered that door of the bar when the big event took place.

You cannot imagine how much I love New Year events. They give me the impression that there is still a little peace and happiness in the world, and people get united, you celebrate with the idea that peace is still part of our lives sometimes.

My outfit was red, this color fits me so much and he with his favorite suit.

I went there with my two friends and he was with his work colleagues. I never believed in love at the first sight, but this time was different. It made me change my opinion by experiencing that thing. I felt like never before.

It was the first time I talked to myself and understood a few things. These were words that crossed my mind: "I'm destroying myself with my memories, with things that are stuck within me and with the idea that I cannot put my trust in anyone or that no one can be faithful enough in my eyes, why not give it a try?" "Trying to convince myself that not all people are the same. Some can be insensitive, wild and without feelings but the others are different and may feel attracted by anyone. As he entered that door his eyes reflected my heart. The way he looked at me is still stuck in my head and I glanced away but I could still feel him staring at me. My friends went to take drinks. I couldn't because I had pain from my heels. After less than five minutes I heard

a soft voice whispering at my ear from behind. “If you don’t go out with me tomorrow I know you will regret it for the rest of your life for missing this chance.”

This kind of threat really made me smile and after we talked for a while I decided to take this little “risk” and accept that invitation which changed my way of living for sure. We went out and I had the time of my life with him. I tried a lot of things that I didn’t even imagine before. And I want to mention someone really special who became part of my life and part of me as well. It’s Lisi’s son, Noar, a 9 year old kid who is very sensitive, smart and handsome, with dark hair and blue eyes, I assume that girls have already started to fall in love with him at school. He had a difficult childhood because his mother died in a car accident 7 years ago so his father, Lisi, raised him and of course with a lot of difficulties and I met him a couple of years ago. He really changed my life and made me happier than before. I still remember how last year I went with him in a store to buy something and after that I sent him to school, when we went close to the class he hugged me hard and I could notice that happiness inside him when he said: “Thank you for being my mom”- it’s like he gave me the world. Holding a child’s hand is a feeling that no one can really express, the best feeling in the world. To turn in the present, tomorrow is my big day, my wedding. I cannot wear the veil without being honest to him. I know he wanted me to be faithful from the beginning of our relationship but this time was different. It’s not that I didn’t want him to know the whole story of my life, but every time I thought about it and wanted to have the courage to share my secrets I failed. I will be destroyed

if I lose them because now they have a special place in my heart. No one can imagine how much I would like to wake up in happiness without stress or thinking about anything but the reality that I'm living in seems to be different and very difficult for me. We should be realistic and face with the truth even if that seems to be the hardest thing. I don't want to lose people who helped me to get out of the misery I lived in and that's why nothing looks easy right now. Sometimes I think that the best decision that I can make is to give up from everything but when I look back at those beautiful nights I had with Lisi and Noar I don't feel like I have that strength. So, the best choice I can make right now is to call him today, meet him and without letting him say any word to find the right speech and open my heart to him even if this can hurt me more than ever before I can feel free and faithful for the first time. I want to know what that feels like, I want to live it. I still hope that one day someone will understand what is inside me and take me as I am. Because no one can choose his life, it happens. So I'll be right back to write the details of our conversation on the phone.

Here I am, I made the best decision. He was at work and after three times trying to call him, he finally answered. He said "Darling you are free today, why did you wake up early this morning?" "My heart beat faster than ever and I answered "Maybe it's because of tomorrow or maybe because I have something important to tell you before our day". I'm really sorry, because I could notice by his voice his fear, the same I have inside me. Then he replied "Why do you have to ruin this beautiful day,

don't scare me because I don't need it today, let this wonderful day happen" I said "No, I want it to happen just like you do, but I want to be clear and true to you before deciding to get married." Lisi: "Okay, whatever happens I know you did nothing wrong and don't forget you are the best thing that ever happened to me, my other half" I answered trying to not cry " I love you, see you tonight".

The Triangle

by Ariana Kuqi

Autumn knocked on the door. Those hot October's days and she was the new girl in town. Everything was new for her except some friends. She was a University student. At 18 years old she came to study 86km away from home. She was her Daddy's princess.

Lorita just started to live independently. When she began University her Daddy felt proud of her and her Mommy missed her five days per week until she got home on the weekend. Cell phone calls between Lorita and her family occurred at least 10 times per day. Her mother wanted to know everything that her little girl did; what she ate, how her day was and all the other details. Lorita, the youngest of the family, left her eldest sister behind and her brother had been isolated from the real world.

On Monday she left home to return again on Friday, wanting so much to return home because she was used to so much love and care. Being away from home everyday was routine. She woke up in the morning to attend University classes, learn as much as she could, pass her leisure time with her friends and in the meantime she began to like the city too.

She started to become familiar with Prishtina but there were also moments when the brown-eyed girl cried and missed Peja. One breezy night Lorita and her two best friends, Mimoza and Ema, were going out to reminisce about high school and have fun together since

they were attending different Universities and missed one another during the day even though they communicated via SMS. They met up at a bar at night at 8:00 PM. They shared their experiences, even the smallest details like their crushes. The very tiny Lorita was shy about this topic and didn't have a crush on anyone. Afterwards they changed the topic to complain about their new life in Prishtina, and as they conversation continued they ended up sharing their shortcomings and Lorita said that she would like to be a little fat because she was very thin. She stood up to go to the bathroom to check her appearance and on her way back to the table she bumped into a handsome guy who had fair hair, dark brown eyes, was tall and 22 years old. Lorita, who was shy, felt her heart beating fast and said she was sorry and walked away. Her scarf lied on the floor without her knowing it. He picked up the scarf and yelled, "Hey, your scarf!" But Lorita didn't turn back.

She ran to her girlfriends, breatheless, and said, "Girls, you don't have any idea what I just saw," and pointed with her finger towards him, but he had gone.

"Nevermind," she continued.

"No, tell us what," replied to the girls. Lorita continued.

"I saw a handsome guy and my heart leaped up. I don't know what's happening with me. I'm shaking."

With one voice the girls replied, "Love."

Lorita's face was red and all the way back home she was quiet. She went back to the flat and prepared to go to bed but he was on her mind all the time.

She woke up the next morning and had started to forget his face and in a way she felt bad because through

the years he was the only one who rang the bell of her heart. She started another day, but this Monday morning she was a different girl. She became someone occupied with thoughts and feelings. As Monday's routine ended she turned back to sleep with a space in her soul but feeling like she was on cloud nine. The space that she felt in her soul could be fulfilled only by seeing him.

A week later the weather changed and the next Monday during a rainy day her mood matched the weather. She got prepared to start another University day, wore her best clothes in order to influence her mood to reflect the opposite of her feelings. She went outside the door and found herself at the entrance of the flat she remembered that she forgot her umbrella. She went back to pick it up, checked the lock and realized that she was a little bit late. She rushed and left the flat and on her way to the faculty encountered a strange situation. An old man stopped her and asked her for money because he needed to pay for the bus on his way back home. She offered him her money even though she knew she was late. Walking very quickly she crossed the road without looking and as a sign of bad luck a car almost hit her. Her heart almost stopped and she was stunned in place. She took a deep breath and woke up because of the shouting of the car driver.

She apologized to the driver twice and walked away. On that windy day even the umbrella wasn't working. Her hair was messy and distracting her so much that Lorita couldn't see the way clearly. In that fog she could see one bright light. It was him. She couldn't believe her eyes. She felt she was having a heart attack for the second time that day. He came

closer. She looked down and when she looked up she saw him in front of her. He saw Lorita from far away. When they found themselves in front of each other, he pulled her scarf out of his pocket and said, "Is this yours?"

Lorita replied, "Oh, where did you find it? I've been looking for so long!" As if she wasn't aware that he picked up her scarf the night at the bar.

He continued. "May I know the name of the owner, before she thanks me?"

"I'm in a rush..." she said.

"But you must thank me, Lorita," he responded.

She was stunned in place. "How come you know my name?"

"I was your secret agent for the whole week," he said.

"Why did you do this?" she asked.

"I had to get this scarf into the right hands. Now that I know your name, are you interested to know mine?"

"Yes, if you don't mind, because I have to thank Mr. Someone," said Lorita.

"I'm Robert."

"Oh, okay."

"It's cold, may I offer you a hot drink?" Robert asked.

"But I have class," she said. Looking at the watch she realized she was already late.

"But I insist," he said.

"Hmm, okay. But first give me my scarf." She put it on and they walked away next to each other to the nearby coffee shop. They ordered their drinks and the

conversation started with family and University, and then he asked Lorita if she had ever been in love.

Lorita became red in the face and with a half voice replied, "No, never." It was a taboo subject for her to discuss. They finished their drinks and he invited Lorita to join him his friend's art exhibition at the National Museum. She agreed.

At the National Museum they met a lot of Robert's friends and he introduced Lorita to all of them. While looking at and discussing the artwork, one of Robert's female friends came to greet them. She asked Robert about one girl but Lorita couldn't catch the name well but she saw Robert's reaction. The situation continued as though nothing happened. When the exhibition ended Lorita said, "I had so much fun." Robert smiled and replied to her, "So I can see. You like art, right?"

"Yes," she said. "But I don't know anything about art, I just enjoy looking at beautiful things."

Robert replied, "Neither do I, but I bet you like partying as much as art."

"I've never been to a party before," she replied. "So please say yes to my invitation for Saturday night's party, organized by one of my friends who is graduating."

"I'll see if I can make it," she said.

"When will I hear from you?" asked Robert.

"I don't know," said Lorita.

"May you give me your phone number?" asked Robert.

"Add me on Facebook, we can chat there."

"But I'm not an active user of Facebook," he

said. He actually but he couldn't become friends with her on Facebook.

"Okay, write down my phone number," she said.

"In the meantime I'll learn it by heart and never forget it."

Lorita smiled as she wrote down her phone number.

"I'll call you tonight to wish you sweet dreams."

"I'm sleeping early tonight because I have to wake up at 6:00 AM to go study at the library because exams are coming very soon."

"Okay," said Robert. "I'll call you as soon as you leave."

"Are you kidding?" asked Lorita.

"No, I like to hear your voice and I may miss it."

"Haha," laughed Lorita. "Are you human?"

"Yes, a human that is becoming addicted to you."

Lorita just enjoyed his words and said nothing.

As they came to Lorita's flat, they stopped to say goodbye and unintentionally Robert hugged her. He apologized and said he was uncomfortable and walked away with a sparkle in his eye. Lorita quietly went up to her flat and prepared for bed and immediately her phone rang. It was an unknown number but her heart felt that it was him. Lorita answered.

"Allo..." and she heard nothing except some music and then a sweet voice.

"I dedicate this song to you: 'Days when the rain came down in the hollow, playing a new game. Laughing and running hey....my brown eyed girl. You ...my brown eyed girl. Whatever happened to Tuesday and so slow..." Lorita was listening carefully to the

lyrics and liked the song so much. Suddenly, Robert interrupted.

“Well, girl I just called to say good night. I hope I’ll see you soon.”

“Before you go will you tell me the title of the song and name of the singer?”

“It’s Brown Eyed Girl by Van Morrison,” he said.

“Thank you and sweet dreams,” said Lorita.

“Sweet dreams, brown eyed girl,” said Robert.

When Lorita hung up the phone she ran to the PC to check YouTube for the song. She downloaded it and put it on her iPod. She became addicted to the song. The next morning she woke up and saw a message on her cell phone. It was Robert saying, “Morning beautiful, I wish you a good day.”

That message made her day even though it was raining outside. In her world spring was in bloom. After she felt tired from studying that day she needed to rest and eat. She called Robert and asked him to join, and without any doubt he went.

As their eyes met, their souls warmed and they greeted each other and walked to the nearest fast-food. It was pretty annoying for Lorita to eat in front of him as he stared at her, but she continued because she was hungry. After eating, Robert invited Lorita to go for a walk in the park. While sitting in a park chair Lorita asked Robert if anyone was in his heart.

Robert said, “There were many girls in my life. Their time passed and I always wanted someone to make my heart leap up, to take the sleep from my eyes and to miss everyone she leaves. I never found someone who I

felt that way about, but lately I think I am reborn and for the first time – and you may laugh at this – but I'm feeling butterflies in my stomach."

Lorita laughed so hard; she found it cute.

Robert then asked, "Now tell me more about you. What type of boys do you like? Or in general what makes your heart sing?"

"I never thought about the type but I really wish to meet someone who understands me and accepts me for who I am. I don't dream that someone brings me breakfast in bed because I want someone to feed me with emotions."

Robert smiled and said, "Girl stop searching you already have found him, haha," he said. He didn't want to be direct because it was so early to speak about his feelings. Lorita checked the time and it was late. She stood up and said, "I must go now, I have so much to study."

"Let me accompany you," said Robert.

On their way back, Robert's phone rang. He checked it but didn't answer. Lorita thought it was weird and asked him why he wasn't answering.

"Nothing important," he said. "Just a friend of mine and I'll call him later."

Lorita didn't trust his words but yet walked in silence. They hung out everyday of the week and then Saturday evening came. Lorita took her friend's advice about what to wear that night. She wore a red dress, black heels and the red lipstick on her pale face gave her the look of an innocent girl. When Robert saw Lorita he was so surprised how she could transform to such a

degree, from schoolgirl to lady with class. The taxi was waiting for them and Robert couldn't stop staring at her the whole time.

He said, "You surprised me. I'm so happy to enter the party with such a lady by my side."

"You are looking awesome too. I like the suit."

"I am nothing compared to you," he said.

"Let's stop this game, we're both looking good," Lorita said.

When they entered the ballroom everyone was staring at them. Robert said, "I told you that you are looking stunning and I'm a little jealous that I'm sharing your grace with them. I wanted to enjoy the beautiful view only for myself."

"Oh stop," said Lorita.

They sat in their places. After awhile a wonderful song was playing in the background and Robert asked Lorita to dance with him.

While they were dancing, Robert noticed that Lorita was a good dancer and he couldn't wait to compliment her.

"You are such a good dancer, where did you learn to dance so well?"

"When I was a kid I used to go to ballet school but after a year, while dancing in a show I dropped and broke my leg. After that my father ordered me to stop," she said.

"Oh, you shouldn't stop," said Robert. "You could have become a professional dancer."

"Exactly. I continued to dance two months after my leg felt better. I danced behind my father's back but from time to time I felt some aches and decided to stop."

“I wish I could watch you dance forever,” said Robert.

“When I dance I feel another part of me comes alive.”

The song ended and they sat down and talked. Just when Robert was about to show his feelings his phone rang. He looked at the screen. It was the same number. He apologized to Lorita and walked away to answer. When he came back, he looked nervous and acted differently. Lorita asked him what happened.

“Nothing, just a family problem. I am going outside to get some fresh air.”

“Do you want me to join?” asked Lorita.

“No, I need to be alone,” he said. He walked outside, forgetting his phone on the table.

Suddenly the phone rang again, the same number as before. Lorita took the phone and went outside to give it to Robert, but he wasn't there. She answered and a girl's voice said, “Robert, why are you hurting me this way?”

Lorita said nothing and put the phone down. Her mood changed. She just wanted to leave. Her perfect night was destroyed.

She went into the hall and took her jacket, called the taxi and went back to her flat. She entered the flat crying. When her roommate saw her she ran to her and asked what was wrong. Lorita wasn't able to say a word; she just couldn't stop crying. She went to her room and her phone rang. She didn't answer. Then a message came, “Lorita why did you leave that way? Where are you now?”

It took one hour until she felt better. She started to think clearly and replied to his message.

“I’m at my flat, very depressed from the state I am in right now. I don’t want to be the reason for another girl to cry. Stop hurting her,” she wrote.

Robert called back. “Lorita, what are you talking about?”

Lorita replied in a low voice, “Who’s that girl that you are hurting and what did you do to her?”

“Lorita I don’t know what you are talking about.”

“I answered your phone tonight and the terrified voice said, ‘Robert, why are you hurting me?’ And I don’t want someone to feel bad because of me,” she responded. The situation was out of her hands. “Please don’t even call me until you are sure of what you feel.”

“But Lorita...” Robert said, but the connection failed.

It was a boring Sunday and Lorita woke up feeling down. She phoned her mother and told her she was going home. Her mother was surprised because she never goes home on Sundays, she usually goes on Fridays unless she has to study, then she’ll pass the weekend in Prishtina. Lorita packed her things and rushed to the train station. When she got home her mother asked her what was wrong.

“Nothing mother, I just needed to take some rest from all of the University stuff.” “Sweetie, what do you want to eat for lunch? I’ll prepare something delicious for you.”

“Whatever you want, mommy,” replied Lorita quietly.

One week later there were no phone calls or text

messages and Lorita was struggling with her thoughts. After that terrible week, Lorita went back to Prishtina. One day when she went to school she found Robert sitting in one of the park chairs outside and he saw her and shouted her name. Lorita acted like she didn't hear him and ran to class. When class was over, she saw Robert waiting outside and this time she couldn't run from him. She felt her legs weak as he spoke.

"You must hear what I have to say. I left her for you," he said. She felt awkward.

"Why did you do such a thing?"

Trying to manipulate the situation, Robert replied, "I don't want to lose you."

"But you never had me," she said.

"I had you in my dreams."

"In your dreams? Ha, then go on with your dreams because I want someone to act mature, someone who doesn't lie to me and who knows what he feels."

"But Lorita, I made a mistake. I need you to understand me. I was forced by her father, he told me that I had to marry his daughter."

"Then do what her father said," she replied.

He cried out, "No! I don't want to be with someone who I don't love!"

"If you didn't love her why are you in this position?"

"I was young and easily influenced..." She was surprised by his words.

"You? Young? Really? You are able to decide for yourself," she said.

"Yeah I know but the situation was out of my hands."

Showing some ignorance Lorita replied, “You convinced me, hah.”

“Lorita I really want to start everything right from the beginning without lies. Just you and me in a fair world.”

“Is it possible, Robert?” she asked.

“Yes, I just need you to trust me,” he said.

“Let’s suppose I trust your words, but what else is hidden in this story?”

“I’ll explain it all. Lorita when I was in high school I met this girl and then her father found out that I was in a relationship with his daughter. He came and told me not to date his daughter. He was so traditional. Little by little I began to feel something for this girl and one day because of my youth I took her out and went to a tattoo designer and got her name tattooed on my hand,” he said, showing Lorita the tattoo. She felt bad seeing this but he continued to talk.

“I will remove this tattoo soon. She had my Facebook password which is why I said I don’t use it frequently.” Finally Lorita spoke up.

“But what happened with the girl, why did she say on the phone ‘don’t hurt me’?”

“Because I said I’m in love with another girl and I don’t want our relationship to continue.”

“Poor girl,” said Lorita. “You threw her away like nothing.”

“I just decided to be honest with myself first and then others.”

Lorita didn’t know what to add after his last words. She just asked for permission to leave and in a way she felt convinced by him. In the evening he called

to wish her goodnight and she started to feel alive again, but she hated the fact that she became addicted to him. She could feel his presence just by smelling his cologne on any guy and she pictured him in any place they had been together even if he wasn't there.

One night he decided to make her feel special. He organized a romantic dinner at his place. He cooked – he was a master at cooking, unlike Lorita who could even burn water. It was a special meal: chicken, which Lorita liked so much. Candila and rose petals were all around the room and he even prepared a gift for her, a necklace with a little bright star. Lorita was addicted to stars; she was able to look up in the sky for hours and disappear from the real world just by staring at them.

Their emotions just got stronger in those cold winter days and their hearts were warmed from passion. They fulfilled each other in every aspect and Lorita became a girl guided by a man with experience in love. Robert was there for her whenever she needed and he could replace the care of her family that she missed in Prishtina. He took care of her in every way and freaked out whenever she got the flu or felt bad. Their love got stronger and they felt weaker, weaker in the sense of their need for each other.

No temper could be more cheerful than hers, but yet she was like snow: beautiful but cold. She didn't want to get attached to him and yet he became what she needed. All was going perfect but just when she decided to tell her mother about him, a message on Facebook destroyed her happiness.

“Hi, I'm Robert's girlfriend. I've heard from a little bird that you are hanging out with my boyfriend

and very soon we're planning to be engaged."

Lorita got nervous and was shocked. She couldn't breathe easily. She sat down and spoke to herself, "Calm down, everything is going to be well." After an hour when she felt better she replied to the message.

"I'm really sorry, I didn't know he had a girlfriend. I won't talk to him any longer." She immediately phoned Robert and yelled at him.

"Why are you playing with me? Why are you treating me as a second option? Why?"

"Calm down Lorita, I don't know what you are talking about," replied Robert.

"Your girlfriend wrote me on Facebook. She ordered me to leave you alone and told me that you are going to get engaged."

"No Lorita, she's trying to keep me to herself against my wishes," he said.

"Yeah right," Lorita responded. "I bet she's hurt, I don't want to hear from you anymore."

"Lorita, I can't imagine spending a day without talking to you."

"I don't care, Robert. You should have thought about that before. Goodbye." Lorita switched off the phone.

Days went by and her health got bad. Her friend Ema took care of her. When she switched on the phone, there were a number of missed calls from him and many messages saying, "She was lying to you...I don't want to lose you...I'm feeling really bad...I don't want you to think worse about me."

Flowers bloom but not her heart. She felt leaves

falling deep inside her soul. Walking down the streets with people walking by she heard birds singing, cars moving and everything in a rush just like her feelings. As she started to forget and got busy with University she got a phone call.

“Hello Lorita, is that you?” said the voice.

“Yes, who’s calling?” replied Lorita. The female voice continued.

“I’m the girl that wrote to you and I’m pleased you got away from Robert. I’m pregnant and I don’t want to raise my child without its father.”

“Wow girl, slow down,” said Lorita. “I haven’t talked to Robert since the day you sent me that message on Facebook. I would like to stay away from your problems, but congratulations.”

“I felt Robert was so different those days and that’s why I thought he was still talking to you,” said the girl.

“No, he’s not. Bye and have a good life.” She broke down and ran to her friend Ema and told her everything. She cried so hard until she couldn’t breathe. She almost became someone who separated a family and she felt even worse. She fell asleep crying and the next morning she felt released from everything. She wanted to scream out all she felt but she was afraid she wouldn’t be understood because what she felt was only hers and it is hard to express your feelings when others don’t feel the same.

The warmth of a June day doesn’t compare with the fire she felt in her heart when she heard his voice calling out her name. She knew it was him. It was the voice she missed for so long. In front of him she

couldn't act rude. Lorita greeted him in a soft voice and couldn't keep her words to herself.

"Congratulations, you are going to be a father," she said.

"What?" asked Robert with an awkward voice.

"Your girlfriend told me she is pregnant. How is she doing by the way?"

"Hah, how far she went I cannot believe. Lorita, she is not pregnant, she lied to you. I can't believe that I lost you just because of her," he said.

"She deserves you, Robert. She did everything to keep you by her side."

"Lorita, her father forced me to get engaged to her. I was in a difficult situation. I wanted you to give me strength to defeat him. You didn't call me. Why? I wanted you to be my muse and guide me to the place I deserve to be and you just walked away without saying a word." Her world again sank. She felt dizzy, became numb and after a deep breath, replied.

"I wish you all the best in life. I realized I was living someone else's life, that's why I walked away. I belong somewhere else." She felt Robert's last words.

"You selfish girl, you made me live two lives. One is wrecked and I am forced to live with and the other I am dreaming about every single day. My body is elsewhere while my heart still belongs to you."

Lorita didn't stop her steps and she couldn't hear his words. She did it intentionally because she knew if she heard his voice she would be convinced. It was too late. Her shooting star had landed in another heart.

What is Her Destiny?

by Donjete Latifaj

Once upon a time in the east of Kosovo a mum gave birth to her third son, whom they named Nikola. The two elder brothers of Nikola were very close to each other and were almost the same generation. Most of the time they played together, went out, and left in loneliness the boy called Nikola. The brothers grew up, and when the war between Kosovars and Serbians began, the two elder sons escaped to London, leaving Nikola lonely here with his mother. Nikola now turned 25, but still remembered the old times, all the ups and downs, and his efforts in learning in order to be someone sometime. He had a secret in his heart and that was that he cried for his father almost every night. He never met his father, because he was only one year old and a few months when his father died in a train crash. He could never forget what his mother went through in order to educate them and still he was the son she loved to have. He chose the profession of a pilot and knew four or five foreign languages, visited Europe and had a lot of experiences, was open-minded, easy going, and adored meeting new people, and helping them in different areas.

As I was saying, the war between Kosovo and Serbia began in 1998/9. Nikola became a soldier and helped Kosovo a lot. He fought for liberty, for our freedom until he and his patriot friends really managed to create an independent Kosovo.

During the war, he had to visit every family in the east of Kosovo, to see if there was any need for aid or to inform them about the war. So it happened to him that he met the peasants and among them, the most beautiful lady he had ever met. Since it was war time and terrifying days and horrible situations were happening, he promised her father that he would come back after the war to ask for her hand. He even told her father, who was a very noble one, "Whether you will give me her hand or not, she will be my bride. Just give me time to bring freedom to our families first. Then the man said, "I hope we will be alive until then, my son," crying.

For the next year, until it ended, Nikola was fighting without stopping and finally realized his dream of making Kosovo independent. So after the war ended and people began to control their lives, he went to see and look for that family. At first, while he was knocking on the door nobody answered and his heart was beating faster than ever. He wanted to know whether they were alive or not, and yes, finally Sarah's father opened the door and was glad to see him alive too. He invited him inside and they discussed the war and all that they had experienced. It seemed like Sarah's father knew what he was trying to say, so without hesitation he invited his daughter Sarah, saying, "Here is your husband and we want you to prepare dinner for us." At first Sarah blushed, but inside felt happy to hear that, since she had fallen in love with him ,too.

Some weeks later, they decided to marry and they had the most beautiful wedding. Nikola prepared everything

to make it perfect, and actually Sarah impressed everybody with her beauty, but even more so with her inner beauty because she had a golden soul.

Her mother-in-law was very happy to have such a beautiful, noble bride, and they got along so well together. Everywhere they went, they did it together, until one day she (the mother-in-law) ejected the couple from their home without telling them the reason, only that she was very cross and cursed them, telling them never to come back. To tell the truth, they felt guilty without knowing the reason. They believed she had found a man and wanted to keep that a secret and to bring him home. Since Nikola heard something like this once, he said that he would rather die than have anyone replacing his father. Frankly speaking, Sarah felt like the guilty one and said to Nikola, “You do not have to part from your mother. I can go to my home and be divorced from you. You do not have to be with me if she considers me guilty for anything.” But, Nikola knew that Sarah did not do anything wrong and he told her that he would come with her and would part from his mother, since she was guilty, aggressive without reason. “It seems like she lost her mind,” he said.

For ten days they lived with his uncle until they found another place to live. After some months, the host of the house they had been living in told them to leave the home, and they had again to leave that home and look for another one, with some elementary conditions. Again, the home they found needed too much work to be recovered; however, they created a little comfort for

themselves without too many barriers in front of them. The good days began to come and they felt much relieved and then understood that Sarah was pregnant. The couple felt really happy and promised each other that they would put a lot of effort to raise the baby in the best way possible since Nikola had not had this chance of "being raised by two parents."

Since Sarah's brothers were not living in Kosovo, they gave her money to buy a home in the very east of Kosovo, in a small city, and they both decided to spend their whole life there, with a very beautiful environment even though it was an old one, too.

His mother was alone, and she preferred staying like that while her two other sons were abroad. They never came home, in a way they hated their home, and did not get along well with their mum. They felt envy, jealousy, that everybody loved Nikola. The couple were not very much surprised by their relationship, but it seemed weird to them how she had destroyed the happiness they had together, and they felt very bad that she had cursed them.

As the years were passing and they were enjoying the time together, sometimes they wondered whether his mother was alive or was dead because she had nobody to care anymore for her as the couple did. Nikola said, "She always will be my mum. I have her in my heart and always will think of her, even though she hates me and my bride and we both do not know the cause of that." By that year they had to continue living and working. Nikola opened an office and began to teach students of

the local community computer programs. Sarah became a policewoman. So they began to take some steps in order to develop and create some conditions for the baby that was due.

Some months later, Sarah gave birth to a very beautiful girl. They were so happy for their first child, Nikola named her Era and promised her and his woman that they would be happy forever because he would work hard. He bought his daughter different things, everything he saw in the stores, even books he bought her, and sometimes Sarah caught him talking to the baby and teaching her English, French, German, and Albanian words, of course. Frankly, they continued to work hard, but it seemed like Nikola was losing weight and felt sick. He did not want to listen to his woman's advice to visit the doctor, and always said that he only had a flu, and that by drinking tea it would pass, but his health was becoming worse and worse, until finally his wife pushed him to visit the doctor. He discovered that he had leukemia and that it was caused by an infection he had had since in the war. When they understood this, it seemed like the world had over turned on them and his mother curse had taken place. The couple felt awful. Sarah began crying, but Nicola told her he would not give up. He would fight another battle and would win like he did in '99. The medical supplies, the operations, and everything else were very expensive. Staying in the hospitals for therapy was very expensive too. This lasted for one year and three months. Sometimes he had to go in the hospitals outside Kosovo, but the long time he spent in Switzerland seemed to cure him every time.

Sarah was caring for him in different hospitals, leaving her baby with her sister for a long time.

At first it looked like he was becoming healthier and the doctors told him he could leave the hospital and go home now and live, so he was so happy to hear that and decided to come to see his daughter whom he had not seen for a long time. He booked the flight to come to Kosovo, and everybody was waiting to salute him, but it seemed like the infection became worse and the same day he was on his way back to Kosovo, he went dead in the coffin. In his last breath he told Sarah that she has to care for Era and to give her everything and he said that he wanted to be grieved for in the city where they had lived, not where he had been born, and the last words he said were "I love you, both, my priceless ones, hug my daughter for me, and tell her every time how much her daddy loves her, and will see and care of her from afar."

Sarah was very, very sad, of course. She did not know what to do now since she was alone, without him, without his love, without his support. She had given everything of herself to see him surviving, but God wanted him in front of Himself for Himself. She felt let down, and knew that she would go back in Kosovo to grieve him, knew that Era would not have father anymore, was imaging how difficult it would be for her to raise their daughter. She asked herself how she would manage to tell her that her daddy was dead, and would never come to hug her, would never be there to celebrate her birthday, would never be there to send her to school, to see her festivals, or to be there in sickness and in happiness.

They came back in Kosovo, Sarah crying all the time, for their destiny. Relatives, friends, Nikolas' friends (soldiers, colleagues, mates) all were there to say farewell to their adorable, noble friend with all the attributes of man. But his family, his mother and his brothers, even though they knew he was sick, they did not want to salute him since they were very jealous that he was the smartest of the sons. Among them was the baby crying, Era. In her hands she had a toy helicopter, which her father bought her. She went to see her father for the last time in the coffin. She wanted to talk to him, to give him that beautiful helicopter, to say to him that when she grows up, she wants to be a pilot like him. Everybody was crying seeing Era, knocking on that rounded circle in his coffin. Now, she was only one year old and a few months, and she did not know too much, but it seemed like she understood that she is seeing her daddy for the last time.

In general, it looked like Era would have the same experience like her daddy, of being raised only by her mother, because Nikola was the same age as Era when his father died, and had been raised by his mum, who ejected him from her life, just because of her own insanity.

For Nikola was and is being held in honor every year at the academy because he was noble, and war was the cause of destroying his health. Sarah every time hosted a lot of his friends who came to help them both since she lost of the only man in their family. Sarah decided to never marry again and raise her daughter in the best way possible and make Nikola's will and dream true. Because he always wanted to see her as the most intelligent girl in

her community, he wanted to see her, going to language courses, to music courses, and Sarah, working very hard with the help of her relatives, accomplished Era's and her father's dreams.

She was 11 years now, a thin girl but very pretty, very much like her father. She now has understood about her father definitely because when she was younger so many times she was asking her mom to invite her daddy over. "Why you don't miss one week and he may come to stay with me, then you come and he goes, and the opposite every week since we never can be all the three in the family seat?"

Sarah had a lot of responsibilities: to send Era to school in the morning, to go to work, come back and take her from school, send her to the courses. She had to play the role of both father and mother; she had to take care of the house, to drive the car, to pay the bills for electricity, water, rubbish. If anything does not work, she fixes it like a man does, and very often goes to water the flowers of her husband's tomb. Once, while Sarah was at work and Era come back earlier from school, Sarah did not find Era, neither at school nor at home. She was very worried about her, looked for her everywhere, called her teacher, her friends on the phone, but without any answer. She began crying; she even thought maybe her grandmother had taken her, and would never give her back. So Sarah went to her husband's tomb to cry and tell him what was going on, finding there Era, watering the flowers. It seemed to her like she was watering with her tears, and they both hugged each other and stood crying there in that beautiful environment and near their man.

Every day is the same thing, they both see each other in the morning and at night, very often they have nightmares, very often they are afraid of earthquakes and in their very old house they pray a lot. Oh goodness, and then Era started to have some problems with her health, too. She was very sensitive, and maybe also because Sarah was very afraid of losing the only reason to live, she sends Era to the doctor every time she feels bad, or just has a little higher than normal temperature. But then the doctors discovered Era had some heart problems, and needed a chirurgic operation immediately, and this was not possible in Kosovo. She had to be cured somewhere abroad, like in Germany for example. This was another shock Sarah felt. She thought she would lose her daughter too, but fortunately people helped her with money, and the operation went through correctly.

In that dark atmosphere, I can see the chimney of that old house of two ladies with a lot of bad experiences, Sarah and Era, two imported ladies, who promised each other to never split and to remember their husband and father as the one who is near them and who loves them both. And Sarah prays to God that Era continues having such success in her life and, being so lovable, she hope that Era will find a boy to marry as gentle and lovable as Nikola was. And impatiently she wants to know, "What is her daughter's destiny?"

The Cure

by Leotrim Maxharraj

Another rainy day here in this town! It resembles the way that I am feeling inside. After that awful day, I dare to remember, we had seen nothing but rain. Sometimes I feel that outside is not raining at all but my eyes full of tears make it look like this. I have heard people say after every rain there comes a rainbow. I wonder when my rainbow is going to show up and shine. I honestly hope that all this is a nightmare and as soon as somebody will wake me up everything will go back to the way it was before. It seems like yesterday when everything was just perfect. My family did not have too much money; we were neither poor nor rich but it did not matter. All we needed was each other and we were the richest people on Earth. How much I want to go back to the days when all the family gathered together in our lovely garden. I can still picture my mother bringing the delicious meal, my sister helping her with the dishes, my father reading the newspaper as he always does and my little brother waiting impatiently for the meal. We could stay there for hours. Laughter and joy was all you could hear. Nothing is the same anymore since this miserable disease became a member of our family. It has turned our world upside down. No matter how hard I try I will never forget the day the doctors told my father that my brother is really sick. I still remember every word they said: "We are sorry to inform you, sir, but your son is really sick. He has cancer." I was furious with this horrible news but also with the doctors for telling it. Cancer is a word no

one wants to hear or think about although there are plenty of people who face with this ugly word everyday. I never thought that this would also happen to my brother. For a moment I could not feel my body; I became numb, felt as if I was stuck into a nightmare. Why did it all have to happen?! Why did this wretched illness have to come and destroy everything?! Why did it have to happen and why to my little brother?! He is so innocent; he does not even have a clue what is going on. It cuts me like a knife every time I see my mother's wet eyes. My father, even though he tries to console us all, deep inside I know that he is the one who suffers the most. Staring out of the window watching the pouring rain I was lost in my thoughts and I did not figure it out till a knock on the door broke the silence. There was my friend with a smile on his face. After he took a deep breath he began to speak:

-I have some good news for you; a friend of mine has started working at a company in Prishtina. He told me that they are looking for an employee. I thought that maybe you might be interested. It is not a perfect job but I think is enough to pay your own studies.

To tell the truth I was really surprised. I did not expect it. It is true that I got accepted to the university last year but due to financial issues I had to stay home for one year.

-Pardon me if I had made a mistake by doing so, but I think you should take this opportunity under consideration. It is such a shame for a boy as smart as you are to stay home- continued he.

-Thank you very much –I said -Thank you for everything you have done for me. I really appreciate it. I promise that I will think about it.

His words so amazed me, I was speechless. He is a good-hearted young man, and friends like him are rare to find. We have been friends for a long time. We grew up together; he was like a brother to me. He was my accomplice in stealing strawberries in our neighbor's garden. Thinking about all the troubles that we made and everything we did makes me nostalgic.

Later on that day, when my father arrived from work, my mother told him everything that had happened. I was lying there on our cozy couch watching TV when my father sat next to me and with a lower voice he asked me –Do you want to go and study?
I never lied to him before; thus I could not lie him now either.

-Yes-I cried.

-This is truly a great chance. You have to use it--
said he

-But what about...

-You focus only on your studies and the rest leave to me. I should apologize for not being able to pay for your studies. I am really sorry you are obliged to work and study at the same time-said he

-Do not worry dad, I appreciate what you have always done for me. I cannot complain. - said I.

I could see in his face that he felt ashamed. He always encouraged me to learn so in the future I could be a successful person. We made plans and he told me what college life looked like. I cannot blame him because he has always been a great father, and it is not his fault that

he cannot pay for my studies. Now he does not have much money; all his salary is used for my brother's medical treatment. I have never complained because my brother's health was way more important than any other issue, even my own studies, which has always been my biggest dream.

When I woke up early in the morning I was amazed by the sight. "What a beautiful day!" I said to myself. In contrary to other days today was a bright sunny day. It was supposed to be the happiest day of my life. How long I have been waiting for this moment to come! How long I have been dreaming about it! Now that it has come true I do not feel like going. How could I go and leave my family in these circumstances!

When I arrived in Prishtina I did not know how to feel. My feelings were mixed; I felt pleased for being there but on the other side I could not stop thinking about my family. Next week I was going to start working. I felt quite excited and a little bit nervous indeed. In my first day of work all the employees gave me a warm welcome and made me feel at home. Everybody seemed nice except for my boss. He was an old man around 50 years old, and this was also what he looked like. The employees portrayed him as a hardworking person but also very mean. They advised me never to come late to work because this would drive him crazy. As it was meant to be, one day I was late for work for I had some lectures at the same time. When I arrived he became very furious with me, he insulted me, and he also made me work after my schedule was over. I felt really sad; my father had never behaved with me in this manner. I felt so small; it looked like the world was

on my shoulder. I felt alone; I had no one to talk to, no one to tell my problems. Everyday gets worse; a day looks like a year to me. My boss always criticizes me for everything I do. It is hard to be strong when the right seems so wrong. Working all day long I do not even have time to concentrate on my studies. I will never forget the day, how embarrassed I felt when a professor asked me, “what has happened, you were so active and hardworking in the beginning and now you rarely show up?”

I just put my head down; I did not know what to say. Never in my life had I felt more ashamed. Working and studying at the same time is actually very distressing without mentioning the fact that I feel truly lonely. It is hard to live so far away from my family, I feel homesick. I cannot help but think most of the time about them. Even though I often speak on the telephone with them I just cannot believe them when they tell me that everything is alright. I truly wish it is as they say, but I doubt.

Finally, the day I waited for so long came. I felt so happy and excited; words cannot describe it. As soon as I arrived home all my happiness was ruined. The situation there was worse than I expected. My brother's condition, if I may say, was miserable. Illness had altered him. He was not the happy and full of life boy I once knew. He had a lot of dreams for the future; he wanted to become a professional soccer player. All those remain now nothing but dreams. He now has his life flashing before his eyes. He stays all day on his bed and has no interest for life. It is unfair for a little boy to have such pain. I know that now he is living in hell

every single day. Oh God, is there any possible way for me to take his place? I cannot bear to see him suffering. You cannot imagine how glad he was to see me. It is like I was his motivation, and the reason for his second coming to life. I blamed myself for going to Prishtina and not staying with him. I wish we could have spent more time with each other. I should have come to see him more.

The sickness has had an affect not only on him but on all my family. My mother looks sicker than my brother; her eyes are red from tears and sleepless nights. I made my mind not to go anymore to Prishtina but to stay here and support my family. What is the family about but to help and support each other during moments like these? My father did not allow me to stay; he told me that if I do stay here he will never talk to me again. I did not have other choice but to go back to Prishtina even though I was brokenhearted.

Just thinking about the fact that I had to go to work and see my boss' wrinkled face made me sick. Fortunately, he did not come to work today, which was quite a surprise because he is never absent. Some employees told me that today he will not come at all because his daughter is coming from USA. She has been abroad for a year and now she has returned. Although I did not know her, nor have we ever met, I hated her. I started to imagine what she is like, obviously she is like her father.

Today I started working as early as possible because I did not want my boss to have material against me. I was cleaning the floor when all of a sudden a beautiful young girl appeared. She was the most

beautiful girl that I had ever seen in my life. There was sense and good humor in her face, and her manners were perfectly unassuming and gentle. She came slowly towards me and with a polite voice asked me:

-Do you happen to know where Mr. Berisha is?

-He might be in his office. Go on the second floor and then turn left-I replied

-Thank you a lot-cried she – are you a new worker here because I have never seen you before.

-Yes I am, indeed -cried I –this is my first year working here.

-I am sorry I did not introduce myself. I am Nora

-Nice to meet you. I am Erion.

-It is my pleasure. So do you like it here? What is it like?

-It is pretty good I may say.

-Do you study anything?

-Actually I ...

-Oh darling, you are here. Why didn't you tell me that you were coming?-said Mr. Berisha

-I wanted to make you a surprise. Why are you wasting your time talking to this useless boy!

-But dad, how can you talk like this? I am really sorry Erion, my father sometimes says things he does not mean.

-Oh, do not worry-cried I

-Come on, darling I have a lot of things to show you-said Mr. Berisha

I could not believe what my eyes were seeing. How can this be possible?! She is Mr. Berisha's daughter?! A girl like her to have a someone like him for a father is quite impossible. Actually, she did not seem

rude as her father; in contrast, she looked really polite. Quite different from what I had imagined. How unjust I have been!

It seems but a day or two since we first met but I really longed to see her again. Do you believe in love at first sight, because this is what happened to me. She hypnotized me with her blue eyes and her personality is what made me love her even more.

She was very easy-going in contrast to me. She would come and sit next to me without caring what other people might say. We could spend hours talking; every time I was in her company, time flew. One day without seeing her felt like a century to me. There was this instant attraction; every time I saw her my heart skipped a beat. Truth be told, I would have never told her my feelings, I was afraid of her reaction, maybe she does not feel the same way as I do and I did not want to lose her friendship.

One day when I went to work I figured out that Nora had not come, but instead I found a letter on the table. I opened it and started to read:

Hi Erion!

Knowing you, I know that you would never tell me how you feel so I decided to break the ice. I hope that this letter will find the way into your heart.

Tell me something what are you? I need to know because my world stops when I am not with you. You make me forget about my past and I do not even want to think about my future if you are not in it. The word love was unknown to me till the day I met you.

I feel that I have a lifetime that I know you. You make me feel complete. These three weeks have been the greatest weeks of my life so far. Every time I look into your green eyes I forget that the rest of the world exists. It is hard to find the proper words to describe such love. My love for you is stronger than anything on the world. As long as you are with me I care for nothing else. You make me feel like everyday is my birthday. Each moment with you is like a dream come true. Lonely is the day when I am not with you. Every time you are near me I can feel those butterflies in my stomach. You melt my heart away with a smile. Every little thing that you do it makes me fall in love with you. I cannot get you out of my head. All I ever prayed for was to find someone like you. Thank God that I finally found you. There are millions of people on Earth but my heart beats only for you. I hope you feel the same way as I do.

I love you

Nora

I found myself laughing while reading this letter. This was the most beautiful thing that anybody has ever said to me.

Our love was growing stronger every day. We could not live a minute without seeing each other. She was my other half; she made me feel complete. She was my escape from reality. Her father did not like me; he even tried to separate her from me but our love was pure and innocent, it was stronger than anything else in this

world. Even though he was a mean person he loved his daughter, she was his greatest treasure, so he had no choice but to accept our love.

Little did I know what would happen when I woke up this morning and my phone was ringing. When I opened it, there was my father's voice. I could notice from his voice that something was not right. I do not know why but I had this feeling that something bad was going to happen. My fear became true; my father told me that my brother is at the hospital and he is really sick. As soon as I could I went there. How sad I felt when I saw the condition that my family was in. My hopes started to fade with the passing of the time. After long hours of waiting, suddenly the doctors went out of the hall.

They came slowly towards us and one said – who is the father of the child?

My dad answered – I am. How is he?

-I am sorry to inform you sir but he is no longer alive. I am sorry for your loss! - said one of the doctors.

I could not believe what my ears were hearing. This was the worst sentence I ever heard in my life. How can this be possible! It does not make any sense. -Damn cancer! Damn death!-I shouted. Why did you have to take him so fast? Now I do understand that only the good die young; it seems so real yet it feels so wrong. Oh my little brother why did you have to go so fast? We have got so much more to laugh, so much more to do. Life will never be the same without you. Why did you have to go so soon?

I felt that something inside me broke. My world shattered in a million pieces. I could not control my tears; they were falling as if it was raining. I never

thought that today was the day we would be saying our last goodbye to him. I just could not imagine that he would not be here anymore and that this would be the last that I would ever see of him. There will be an empty place at our table now. Today a part of my heart died together with him. Nothing will be the same anymore. Nora, as soon as she figured it out, immediately came here. Her presence somehow consoled me.

Even though some years have passed, I still have not recovered from what happened 10 years ago. It has stuck into my head and it will never go away. Never a day goes by that I do not think of my little brother.

Suddenly a voice was heard from the living room. -Darling are you ready?-This was Nora's voice.

-Almost-said I

-How do you feel- said Nora.

-I am a little bit nervous.

-Oh do not even bother about it. You will be just perfect. I trust in you.

-Thank you, darling, for always being there and encouraging me.

-Daddy why are you dressed up like this-said Emma, my six years old daughter.

-Daddy has a conference now. This is why he is dressed like this.

-You look perfect daddy.

-Thank you my little sweetheart.

Sometimes I feel that I am the happiest person on Earth. With a wife like Nora and a beautiful daughter like Emma, is there any other way but to feel happy? They and their presence make me a better man.

-Darling, Hurry up please! We are late for your conference!

There was a huge crowd waiting for me to give a speech. I could see the faces of my parents in the crowd. How delighted and pleased I felt.

-Thank you everybody for being here. I cannot describe how happy I feel in this moment. Truth be told, I never believed that this day would come true. I am so happy I finally found the cure for cancer. It was not easy, but nothing is impossible. If you believe in something there is nothing you cannot do. I would like to share my story with you. Ten years ago my little brother was really sick; he had cancer. Unfortunately, at that time there was no cure for cancer so he died. After his death I made a deal with myself. "No matter how long it takes, I will find the cure for cancer," I told myself. I did not want other families to go through what my family did. Believe me, it is the most horrible feeling in the world. My little brother was so young and full of life, but death came and took him away. He was my motivation all of the time. I did not want other innocent people, like my brother, to die. Even though he is gone I can still feel him, and I know that he is watching over all of us. Thank you my little brother. You will always be on my mind. I could feel that my voice was trembling but I could not let it show.

After my speech was over my parents came to congratulate me.

-How long I have been waiting for this day! You cannot imagine how proud I felt today, thank you a lot, my dear son-said my father with his voice trembling

My mother could not say a word. She just burst into tears.

Undoubtedly, today was the happiest day of my life. Since I was a child I wanted to become a successful doctor and make my family proud. This day finally came. Now I am the person I always wanted to be.

Who ever said that dreams do not come true? Actually they do, but you have to work hard for it.

Unexpected Marriage

By Nurixhyz Mexhiti

When I woke up, I felt something fascinating, something that I had not felt before. I did not mind it. Usually I do my daily chores like cleaning the house, eating breakfast, and then I go to school. Today, I also started my routine, but all the time something was on my mind. Something that I could not define. It was a sunny day in the spring, when everyone wants to do something, because spring gives people pep. It is the best season with full flowers, birds twittering. New green leaves show up in the branches of the trees after the dry winter. It is the sign of life all over the land. That feeling influenced me. Therefore, I left home and started walking. The streets were full of people, cars, everyone running in his or her way, but still I was in the same mood. Something was pushing me. That was a very strange feeling; I wanted to greet everyone even, a cat, a dog, every girl and boy that I saw. Everything became lovely for me, even the muddy roads. My old neighbor, a tailor, with whom I rarely spoke a word, was sitting before her shop. I just approached to her and greeted her with love. Strange, this never happened before. I arrived to school. Everyone in the schoolyard was waiting for the bell to ring. My friends also. Linda was my best friend, she was not very beautiful, a short girl, a little bit plump and always with same style of short brown hair. On the contrary, I was tall and slim and I have been told by the others that I was good looking, but, nevertheless, she was very kind and she always helped me in school.

But now she had a boyfriend and her boyfriend came everyday and took her from me and now she could not spend time with me anymore. However, in school we always were together and shared almost everything. During the lesson, she told me she was invited by her boyfriend to go and meet his family. The teacher was looking at us. But it was not just us making noise in the classroom. Everyone was talking. No one was listening to the teacher. The students at our were somehow very briskly. It was the high school of economics and almost every day was the same noise. Students went to one after another classroom just to gossip, get news about what happened, and listen to different love stories. I was not interested at all but, I was among them and I had to fit in anyhow without making any gossip, but just listening and laughing. Suddenly, as I was turning my back and talking to my friend, (she was asking me what to do when she went to her boyfriend's family,) a hand touched my shoulder, and along with it a big shout, "Hey, you are the winner!" I was shocked. Now I could not even speak. All my friends came, hugged me, saying congratulations. It was the prize that I won in the behalf of our school as a best student, because we often had knowledge competitions between schools in my town and always our school was the winner. Teachers came to congratulate me, as well. Now all the school was happy, the noise doubled with the echoes of students. Besides, it was almost the end of high school. We were preparing for the exam. Teachers were giving us extra lectures, but today even the teachers were very happy so they proposed to celebrate this big day. We were told by them to collect money for the next day and get prepared.

The celebration would be tomorrow night. Some students collected the money the next day when we came to school. Afterwards, they went shopping. Everything went on very well. The celebration was held in the corridor of school. It was beautiful. As the night began, the director of school delivered a speech. He started by commending our school, especially our team that was the winner. By the way, he mentioned my name as a best student, because I was the head of the team. Suddenly, he called me to make a speech. I was not told about this and, of course, I was not prepared. As he pointed out my name, cheers and applauses were raised more than ever before for me. It was excellent. I did not know even how to behave, because, of course I was ashamed; but anyway, I reached the stage and looked at all my dear teachers and my dear colleagues, and stumbled for a moment. I was astonished somehow, but I had to say something, and I began by saying, “my distinguished teachers and colleagues,” then inhaled and exhaled deeply. Everyone in silence was looking at me. Even though I was very ashamed, I started saying. “Today is a very important day for our school. You all know how much we have worked for these competitions, and thank God, we won in succession in all competitions that we had with eight schools. This school is our future, and I think that with teachers and students like you we will build a better future for our descendents. You are maybe those who will be the leaders of this country, and you know that in this country, love is needed more than ever, in the spirit of peace and tolerance to overcome all the problems acting in unity, you the future students of this country will make Kosovo more powerful. I know that

you are the guarantee of our tomorrows. Tomorrow will be in your responsibility and I know you will be the ideal, qualified, knowledgeable ones, who own the best upbringing.” As I ended, all clapped. It was great. Everyone liked it. Afterwards, started an amusing time, music, dance, and so on.

At eleven in the night, I came home. My mother was waiting for me in the window. Always when I was late, she could not sleep until I came home. Then she cooked something for me, and as usual, we talked like friends. I was very close to my mum. I lived with my mother and my little sister Dona. She was ten years old. My father died when I was eight. Mum was everything for my little sister and me. Our house was very small and old; we had just a living room and a small kitchen with some old furniture. Since my father passed away, we had had a very hard time. I remember when my mum went to clean houses just for food because we did not have anyone to help us. I have an uncle in Germany but he never cared for us. He called once and talked with my mum and although my mum complained to him that we had not anything to survive, he just said, “Yes, it is the same here. We barely find work,” so my mum did not want to continue anymore, and she hung up the phone. Moreover, she never tried to ask anyone for help. She worked all day long, but it was enough, just to pay some bills and to buy some food. That spring was my mother’s first real job. She had just started to work for a big company; her wage was much larger and, most important, now she had insurance. When she got her first wage, she promised me that she was going to buy a dress when I finished my high school. As I opened the door

and entered the house, she was waiting for me beside the window, and the dress was lying on the couch. I was surprised. Meanwhile, I thought, “why did I not have it tonight on this big night that was very important for me.” Anyway, I had it now. I just went and hugged my mother and kissed her. She looked at me and said, “Sit here my dear. Tell me, how did you fare?” because I was used to telling her everything. “This was an excellent night,” I said. I told her about my speech and everything else. “Did you dance?” my mum asked. “No, but... basically, yes I danced. After everyone started dancing, err... you know, that new professor of history, sure you know him, he just started working in our school, he is very handsome, and I could not say “no” to his offer.” No word was said. She just stood up sighing, and went to the kitchen, brought some food. The silence was continuing. Maybe she was angry with me, or I really did I do something wrong? Millions of thoughts were going through my head. Why does she not say anything to me? I wondered, because it was not her custom. My mum always gave me her opinions about everything, and certainly, she advised me. It was fifteen past three, in the morning, when I woke with sorrow in sweat, from a very terrible dream. While I was dancing with my professor, a big storm came and parted us, but somewhere in the distance, I saw my mum. She was looking at us and smiling. Oh, thank God, I said. That was just a dream. I could not sleep any more, but just turned in my bed.

“Would you come with me?” said my mum. “I am going to the Besa’s.” I was waking up. My mum was pulling the curtains. Sunlight penetrated inside. I was

very lazy, while I stretched, “Oh mum, but what am I going to do there?” said I. “Nothing dear,” said she. “Just to accompany me. Do not worry, I won’t let you do my job. I hope for sure you will be a gentlewoman, not like me, a cleaner.” “Hmm,” I murmured. “Maybe one day.” Therefore, I went with my mum. The house was very big with four floors and a beautiful garden, with many pines. In the middle was a fountain surrounded with wooden chairs. Besa was the woman that my mum cleaned for. She cleaned her house twice a week. Her husband Bekim was a lawyer. He was the benefactor of my mum because he gave her work in the court as a cleaner, whereas Besa worked in a bank. They had two children. Ali was their biggest son, twenty years old, and Alisa was seventeen. On Saturdays and Wednesdays, my mum worked in their house. Today, being Saturday, they were on a picnic so nobody was at their home. As we entered, my mum immediately got some rags and started cleaning, since it is her job. I was astonished by the beauty of the house. I went to Alisa’s bedroom and smelled her scents. They had a wonderful flavor with orange and vanilla, but I dared not use them. My mum was staring at me, from the threshold, not that I was afraid but I know that I must not use others stuff. That is not right. “Mum come here to see this beauty,” I said. I was looking out the window, because there really was a beautiful landscape: mountain, pines, everywhere you could just see greenness. She approached and whispered in my ear, “When you look at things from this height they are beautiful. I, too, would like to look at things from this height but not by cleaning windows, because you don’t see that beauty of theirs. Of course, she was

right, but there was nothing to do. She continued wiping the shelf. "Let me help you mum," I said. "No, it's ok, no need for help," she murmured. Anyhow, I took a rag wanting to help my mum, but I did not notice the small chair in front of the dressing table, and fell on the floor. My mum laughed, "oh my dear, this is not for you. I said sit and wait until I finish my work." "Ok mum, I just wanted to help you finish it sooner." She took my hands and said, "Your hands will do big and important works." "But oh, mum look at your hands, they are split." "Yes, bleach makes them crack." "You will see. When I finish the university, I will buy you several creams; your hand would be fluffy." "Oh my honey, you are going to save our lives." Her eyes were in tears. "My daughter," she said. "Cleverness and beauty are a gift given by God, and you have both of them, yes, you were born from poor parents but in the future, you will live like a queen."

My little sister was all day alone at home, she was grown enough to do some chores at home, but she did nothing. She went outside to play football with her peers. I told her often, "You are like a boy. Don't play with boys." She got angry with me but I liked teasing her.

When we came home it was already dark, I helped mum cook something for dinner. Then I ironed, while she was preparing the table. Meanwhile, Dona came home, and mum yelled at her, "What is up with you? What is all this mud on your shoes?" But, mum I played football. It is normal to have mud on my shoes. What do you expect to be on my shoes?"

“Of course it’s normal, but there is no need to play football every day. So come and have dinner, don’t talk too much, and bear in mind I am not going to let you go all day outside, playing with guys.... take your books and study. It is almost the end of the year, and I need to see your grades improved.” “I know,” she said. “My grades already are good. I improved them all.” “Great, then we will see.”

Finally, tonight is our party at school. I had the handsome dress that my mum bought a few weeks ago. I got dressed, put some make-up on, and with my friends went to a hotel where all the students and teachers gathered to celebrate the end of high school. It was well prepared; they had a good time there. All were dancing, eating something, but I was not in a good mood, and just stayed like a statue looking around. Linda, twisting her body, approached. “Come please,” she said. “Come to dance. Why you are so unhappy? However, I know, I think,” she said. I just smiled. “You know nothing,” I said. She turned and looked around. “Hey I can see a boy over there. Is he our handsome professor?” I immediately turned my head. Yes he was. I saw him. He was not here before but. Anyhow, I was both surprised and astonished. Due to work, he could not come to school, and I had not seen him for a long time.

When I met him I knew it was love, but it was not easy for him to see the love right there. Maybe he needed a little push. It was after midnight when I came home. He walked me home, we walked together, no word said he, all the way. As soon as I approached the door to open it, he caught my hand. “I love you so much, would you marry me?” he said. It was like a big stroke

on my head, trembling, yes, yes but I. I could not speak. I turned my back and went inside. I closed the door, and breathed so strongly that my mother heard. "Are you ok?" asked my mum. "I think I am." "Well then, go to sleep. Tomorrow you will tell me. It seems you are so tired," said my mum.

It was Wednesday. In my town today is a market day. My mum's shopping starts early in the morning, but today she was sleeping and no work was done at home. It was unusual because I was used to see everything being tidied and a ready breakfast. I shouted loudly, "mum! What is wrong why are you sleeping?" But meanwhile I was very happy. She barely could lift her hand. "I cannot stand. I have a terrible headache," she said. Therefore, I called a doctor. "You have to send her immediately to the hospital," said the doctor. "Yes, of course, I will, but why? Could you explain to me why? Why is she like that?" "I cannot say anything before testing her blood. Do not worry we will see. She is going to be ok," said the doctor. After they checked her in the hospital a specialist doctor said, "I am sorry but you have to know the truth. She is suffering from cancer." "Yes," I said, astonished. My whole body was in sweating like a big pot with boiling water was thrown on me. "What can be done, nothing? I asked with a trembling voice. "Yes, it is too late," he said. Thus, I did not want to leave her in the hospital because there was nothing to do. The doctor said that it was our decision. If we like, we could take her home and look after her. According to the doctor, she would just some months be with us. We could only give her medicine to prevent her pain and nothing more.

This was the first night that I knew she would die soon. I always liked to stay in the corner of the living room where I have all my stuff: computer, my books, and all other things. My mum was lying in the couch, the old one, with a pale face. Every moment now was dangerous. Every single time I was in a terrible state thinking, she will die. This idea killed me somehow. I did not know what to do.” Can you give me some water and sit next to me?” my mum murmured. Immediately, I stood up. I went next to her. She drank water and just looked at me for a while. She was very tired. She just lifted her head and with tears in her eyes said, “Do you have anything to tell me?” “No I do not,” I replied. “But my daughter, you said that you had to tell me something last night. Please, do not treat me as ill. I am not that much.” She thought that I know nothing. Therefore, I acted as if I do not know. “Yes,” I said. “I have already forgotten. So what do you think mum? I told you about my new professor Bekim? Last night we were together. Believe me that I do not know him well. But he asked me to marry him.” She opened her eyes widely, taken aback, “What? I do not give you permission. You are very young. First, you have to finish university. Then we will see and think about marriage, but now it is too early.” I knew something was wrong. But due to her illness, I could not ask her. The reasons that she gave me were not true. I knew this. “Oh, mum do not think about that now. I just told you what happened. I am not going to marry him today. There are plenty of times and we will discuss about it later.” “No,” she said. “There is no time left for me.” “You have to know the whole reality.” “What are you talking about? What reality is that?” I

yelled. She could not speak. Then I gave her some medicine that the doctor told her to take when she had more pain. "Do not talk. The doctor said that you need rest," said I. "Ahh, my dear, you know I love you both so much," she said and continued speaking with difficulties. "Death is nothing for me. The biggest pain is to leave you without shelter. You are very young. How you will deal with life?" "Do not worry, mum. You will be ok." "No," she said. "For me there is no more time and I need to let you know that your father is alive." I was terrified. Never ever, could I imagine that my real father was alive and the person that I called father for years was a stranger. "What are you talking, mum?" I said. "My father died when I was just eight years old and I could remember him very well." "I know, my dear. He was just your stepdad, but not your real father. And the new professor that you fell in love with..." She stopped for a while. "What is wrong with him?" I retorted. Breathing deeply she answered, "He is your cousin." She stopped speaking again and just looked at me in sorrow. She saw in my eyes the love I had for him. How can it be true? I was shocked. I went outside and walked about three hours without any intention. While I was walking, I looked at people, how they were happy. Maybe, it just seemed to me. Maybe, they are not in trouble like me or have such torment. However, I had not had too much time to wander in vain. My mum was suffering. I had to go home and take care of her. I promised myself I would not say even a single word. I will forget him forever. I just went straight at home trying to forget everything. Dona my little sister did not know anything. Why mum is lying in bed all day?" she

asked. "She will be ok after she takes this medicine and has a rest," I said. Dona cried, "You think I am stupid." "No, you are not," said I. "Then why you do you not want to tell me anything?" she said and started crying. "Because there is nothing worthy to tell you." "Ok," she said, and went to school with the tears in her eyes. I know it was very hard for her. I was her age when my father died. Even though I had my mum, I could barely overcome the situation. Now, I knew that he was not my real father. But, I have the same feeling for him as if he was. He took care for me and never showed that he was not my father. He really loved me. On the other hand, I could not stop myself from thinking about the person that my mum says is my real father. What does he look like? Do I resemble him? Why he is not here? Where is he? Is he married or have other children? O, my God, millions of questions were running through my head.

My mum everyday was getting worst. She was not able even to eat with her hands. I fed her every day. I gave her some milk to drink, but she could not swallow it. The milk poured on her neck. She felt very weak. "I want you here. Do not go outside. I am afraid of dying alone," she said. "But you are not alone. I am here every single moment and why do you think about death? It is too early." I said this but even I did not believe these words. She just laughed. I tried to lift her to the balcony. I thought maybe the sun would help her. But, I saw it was impossible. She was motionless and I was powerless.

One month later, in the middle of the day, the phone rang. I knew it would be one of our relatives. When they heard of my mum's illness, all had come to

see her and would call to ask about her situation. But it was a boy's deep voice that I heard through the phone. "Linda how are you?" I realized he was Bekim. "Fine," I answered. Then I asked "What about you?" "Well," he said and continued, "I am really sorry I did not want to embarrass you, that is the reason why I did not call you until now. How is your mother? I know she is not well." "Yes, she is not," I said and I was quiet for a moment. "Can we talk outside?" he asked. "I have many things to tell you and they are all important." Maybe he wants to ask me to marry him again, I thought. I murmured, "No, I cannot because there is no one who can stay with my mum and I cannot leave her alone. She may need something." "Of course, I know that, but is there a way to talk with you?" he pleaded. I thought it could really be important. Then I asked him to come to my home and he consented. I did not have a guest room. So, I had to host him in the kitchen. My mum was in the living room, where she had from the day that she returned from the hospital. However, his coming was not very sensational for me. I was preoccupied with my mum's illness. When he came, I put on some tea and we talked a little about school, how things past so fast. He asked me which university I wanted to go to. But I did not think about university. He was really in trouble. He did not know how to start telling me that old story. "You know what? You are my cousin," he said. "How do you know?" I retorted. The night that I offered you marriage, after we parted I went home and with happiness, I told my parents. First, they were glad and asked me who that lucky girl is. So, I told them it was you. When I told who are were they both were shocked." "Where do you

know her from?" they both asked me at the same time, their eyes opened widely. Then I explained to them all about us. My dad took me by my arm and said 'sit here. This is very important. First, you have to know who she is. Then you will decide whatever you want to do.'" Then Bekim continued to tell me without interruption. "Your mum was married with my uncle, for two years. When you were six months, they went to Sweden. I think that they had a very happy marriage, as my dad said. But, no one knows even now what happened with your father. After three months time in Sweden, your dad went to work and he never came back. Your mum, with all his friends, looked for him all over the land, but no trace could they find. They went to police and everywhere that you could imagine, but it was vain. Therefore, after two month of looking for him, when there was no hope left, your mother came back with you. After you returned here my dad said, that he did not know anything about you except that he heard about your mother's marriage. Now do you understand why I could not come to talk to you?" "Yes, I know my mum told me. I think there is no sense in of talking about such things. I will consider you my cousin and you as well, I hope," I said. "Of course, Linda," he said, and as he stood up without looking at me. "Do not forget that I will help you in whatever you need." "I need nothing. I just want my mum's recovery and nothing else." Once more, he turned and looked at me; it was last time I saw him.

A Monday morning was my mum's medical examination. We went to the hospital. She was in the wheelchair, and very pale. Therefore, the doctor gave her an infusion, but nothing changed. She was getting more

and more pale. After two hours she just looked at me and said, "Take care of your sister. She is your sister and she has not anyone in this world but you." "I know. I will take care of her and do not mention it now," I said. We went home as she finished the infusion. I understood she would not be better; all the medicines she was taking were nothing but vanity.

The next day, one of my mum's friends came to see her. She asked me, "Why do you not send her abroad? The medicine there is more advanced and maybe she would heal there, who knows?" I was astonished. Why do people come and say to me things that I could not do? She knows that I have no money. How can I send her abroad? I have nothing in my pockets, let alone to send her to such expensive hospitals. It was impossible. But I said nothing to her. She said, "God might help you. I have a lot of work to do," and she left. I went to see her off. In the doorway she stood for a while telling me that I should do something to help my mum. "I know," I said. "I will do anything possible, but you know that there is nothing else I can do." "Yes," she said, "you can." I said "How?" Then she told me about a boy. He was her neighbor and he was very rich. "You have to meet him," she said. In addition, he told me that he admires you very much. He said, "I just want to marry her. I will do anything for her. So think about it; do not say no. He may be an ideal person for you."

It was unexpected, in such conditions. How could I get married? I knew him. He used to follow me every day while I was in high school. He was a rich boy. He came to school with a new car. However, I never would

want to marry him. He was somehow, err, not the one I had dreamed about. I went inside, and looked at my mum. She was suffering. I was in between, to help her or myself. If I marry him, maybe she was going to recover. But I would suffer for all my life.

During the night I prayed, and did not sleep all night. I had to make a decision. When I woke up, first, as every day, I helped my mum to the toilet. I made her some food and gave her medicine. “Do you have anything to do today?” she asked me with a shaky voice. “No,” I said. She was feeling, maybe, what I had decided. Now I was determined. I would immolate myself for her health. Thus, I called my mum’s friend and said, “I am ready. Do what has to be done, you know that I cannot deal with this thing.” She said, “Do not worry. It will be easier than you think.

On 15 July, I got married. Without wearing a wedding dress. Without anything that I have ever dreamed of. We just got married with a signature. “Mum, can you stand and prepare? We are going to Switzerland today in the afternoon. There you would have a chance to be better.” She just lifted her head. “How can we? With whom? What is happening?” “Nothing wrong, do not worry,” I said. She did not know that I got married because we agreed that she would not know until she recovered.

The hospital was something that I could ever imagine. Very tidy and the doctors were very kind. They immediately took my mum in several medicine examinations. It lasted all day. She got tired. But the hope was big. All the time I dreamt about her, how she walked and worked like in the past times. I was very

young. I thought that in this hospital she would leave everything bad from her body and return home recovered. It was but a dream, nothing else. After the doctors examined her, they said that she must undergo surgery. It lasted six hours. I thought that this would never have an end. Waiting in the doorway was terrible. She could speak just after two days. We were not allowed even to see her. Nevertheless, day by day she started to walk and talk much better. Her face was not pale anymore. Her hair began to grow. It seemed she exceeded this illness. After a month, we returned home. But unfortunately, her pain started again. She continually was pale after we returned. She did not eat anything and her pain became unbearable. So, we decided to send her again to the hospital. But, unfortunately as we were preparing the documents that were necessary for the voyage, which lasted for three days, she passed away.

The Curse

by Ardiana Morina

A narrative road leads you to a beautiful place. It is a long journey that makes you feel tired but the landscape gives you a pleasant feeling. The long and beautiful trees block the sun and the wind blows in a slow way which brings the smell of trees. The fields are long with the animals feeding on the most delicious grass, and the grass field has beautiful flowers. The bees get close to the flowers using their small wings and they taste the sweetest part of the flower. Peace invades this place; only the sound of a small river reaches your heart when you take a deep breath and the freshest air fills your lungs.

On the other side of the beautiful landscape is a shepherd looking for his cows and sheep. Their eyes look toward the grass and at each other as if they understand one another and stay together. The wool of the sheep is so soft just like the clouds in the blue sky. The animals have a loyal companion. He leads them to the right place and when he feels danger he barks to prevent and protect them from the risk that is present in this beautiful area that they share with all the creatures of the world. The bells ring on the neck of the cows as the shepherd watches and sings the pleasant songs for his cows and sheep. At the same time he walks and sees the mountains which surround the perfect landscape and the birds showing their happiness by eagerly singing and flying freely toward the unlimited sky.

Suddenly a pretty and warm voice interrupts the silence of nature. It is the voice of the children who are playing and singing together. They are playing some interesting games in a primitive way, but those games with primitive gadgets give them the happiest moments of their lives.

The children are fifteen years old and are playing with all the children of the village. A boy named Sali is tired and decides to rest for awhile. He is not very tall but he is taller than his friends. He is also thin with curly blond hair and his eyes are blue, a beautiful blue like the sky in the summer. If you look deep in his eyes you would find warmth that makes you feel good in his presence. He is smart, handsome and a very calm person; very naïve, friendly and sincere. Everyone loves him.

He lies in the grass, looking at the sky while thinking about his life. Suddenly he turns his head and sees blackberries. Licking his lips, he gets up to eat some. His mouth and hands turn red and he immediately wants to go home to clean them. He says goodbye to his friends and runs so fast that his friends couldn't say goodbye to him.

As he nears his house, he screams from far away, "Mum, mum!" The door opens and a woman with a black skirt and blue t-shirt answers. She is not very pretty. She has long straight hair and is not a very smart or understanding person. Her family knows that there are secrets that are known among the family that they do not talk about. Her name is Ajshe.

Sali says to his mother, "Look Mum what I did with my face and hands!" He watches his mother with a

big smile, apologizing for what he did with his shirt, hands and mouth.

His mother quickly replies angrily, “Oh my boy, what did you do with your shirt? You know how I suffer to wash our clothes by hand.”

Sali’s father, Ramë, is listening to the conversation between Sali and his mother. He smiles at his son and says to his wife, “What can you do?” He tries to make his son happy. “He is just a kid that is eating some wild fruit.”

Ramë is tall with short blond and grey hair, which came from working hard, stress and caring for his family. He is a good person but he always asks his wife before he decides anything and will change his mind based on his wife’s opinion. This is his weakness. Sali is just like his father and while Ramë is listening to the conversation between his wife and son he says, “Do not say to our son those things.”

She wonders how she could say in a rude way “He is too young to know about the difficulties of life.” Sali takes off the shirt and gives it to his mother as he thinks about the words of his parents. He stays outside the cottage not wearing any shirt.

Suddenly, his sister throws water onto him; it’s so cold you can hear his teeth chattering. She is smiling about the face that he made when she threw water. His sister is a lovely person and he spends most of his time playing with her. She is a lovely girl—hardworking, whenever she can help her mother she does. But on the other side she talks a bit too much. She is thin, shorter than Sali. Her long, blond hair, which she has caught in a

ponytail style, fits perfectly with her beauty just like an angel. Her name is Lule. He watches her with great happiness but his happiness is hidden inside. He takes a bottle with water and throws it at her, so they start a water fight; it continues until her beautiful dress with flowers is wet enough to stop the game. They understand each other, maybe because they do not have a big difference in their ages. After a great time, Lule asks Sali, "Shall we go inside? It is a bit cold and we are wet."

While they go inside the cottage, they notice the smell of the trees—so fresh—just like the day they cut them to build the cottage. When they get closer to the walls and notice the smell of the pine, they have the feeling they are in the wood. Everything inside the cottage is made from the trees: tables, chairs, sofa, spoons, dishes, and other things they use. The cottage is large and the family is not so poor.

They have a simple and a comfortable life. Their accommodation lies in the cows and sheep they care for; and they have a lot of dairy products. Sali with Lule go inside the cottage and see their younger brother and grandmother. Sali notices the sadness in the eyes of his grandmother, and after they change clothes, they stay with their brother and grandmother. Grandmother is very old, her hair grey and her face is covered with wrinkles—in a beautiful way. Sali's younger brother is so close to his grandma that he sits in her lap while she knits a scarf. This younger brother is too shy and is more close to his grandma than Sali and Lule.

Sali gives his grandma huge hugs and kisses on her wrinkled cheeks and asks her with warmth in his voice, “What is wrong grandma?” giving her a big smile. “Are you feeling sick?” She replies immediately, touched by his question, “No, it is nothing my child,” closing her eyes. “But I am thinking about your grandfather.” While she speaks her eyes fill with tears. Sali sits for a time with his with his grandma, sister, mother, and brother.

When Sali hears his father call him, he is not surprised because he knows what his father is going to say and replies, “Yes father, I am coming.”

“You know that it is time to send the cows and sheep in the field to eat grass.” While Sali waited to reply to his father, he noticed a poor old man and I said to his father, “Look father, someone is coming toward our cottage.” The poor old man’s clothes were old and dirty, his shoes were destroyed from walking the long road. His eyes and face describe something that you cannot say. Something special, which is very difficult to understand, is in his eyes. Ramë asks him, “Are you tired old man?”

Before he speaks he looks at Sali like he wants to say something and replied, “Yes I am.” Sitting, he continues, “I made a long journey to get here.”

Sali is conscious that the old man has made a long journey and asks, “Do you want water or something to eat?”

The old man says with smile, “Yes, please, if you have something to eat.” Ramë calls his wife to tell her to bring something to eat. She comes out to see what her husband wants and sees an old man watching him with ignorance.

Ramē says to Sali, “Go now. It is getting late.”

He replies immediately, watching as the old man tries to get into his eyes. “Yes father.” While Sali is walking with the cows and sheep, the old man stares at him. But Sali has a feeling, one he never felt till now. He could not explain it. Sali’s mother says, “Yes, I will bring it to you immediately.” But when she turns her back her thoughts are in turbulence. With that mind she puts water in the milk. She gives the food to the old man and he thanks her. Without pausing a minute he starts to drink the milk. It has a strange taste and he knows that water is in the milk. He is so angry that he throws the cup of milk on the ground and screams so that all the family hears and come out of the cottage to see what is happening. The old man looks at them one by one in the eyes with sadness. But when he sees Ajshe he looks with anger and curses them.

“Oh God, take this family away from this world just like the water in the milk!” he says. When he says these words, the sky listens to the words of the old man, turning the clouds grey. Everyone in the family is shocked. Their eyes open, wondering why he has cursed them. The old man is alive then suddenly he disappears into white shadow. Ramē’s mother is watching him with tears falling from her eyes. One way or another she felt this curse will affect her family. Knowing what invades her mind Ramē’ turns to his wife. “What did you do with his food?” he asks.

“Nothing,” she replies. She is afraid to tell the truth and be judged by her family. So for her it was easiest to lie. But all the family watches her with doubt as they go inside the cottage, the rain starting.

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Sali is watching the cows and the sheep when the rain starts. He wants to go back to his cottage. But he's walked so far that he cannot return. The rain has turned the soil into mud. The situation is getting worse. The cows cannot walk, so he decides to wait till the rain stops. The rain is so heavy that it hurts when it touches Sali's skin. Suddenly, a cow scared from by the storm disappears. Luckily the cow has a bell on her neck. Sali follows the sound, chasing the traps of the foot. But when the rain covers the traps, he cannot see clear through the storm, Sali notices the cow behind a tree. He is so happy he found cow, and patiently waits til the rain stops.

The situation is getting worse at the cottage. The family is staying in and waiting for Sali to come back. And they worry, thinking about the words of the old man. They watch each other like they know what is going to happen. Suddenly the silence of the family is interrupted. Something hits the cottage and everyone is scared. Ramë, worried as much as the others, goes to see what hit the cottage. From the window he sees that the stream has grown. That moment is the worst for him because he is thinking of the old man's words. Ramë's mother hugs her niece and nephew, trying to tell them not to worry. But she cannot say a word. Ajshe suffers and struggles over her behavior, wishing to have a second time to do things in the right way. But she wakes from her dream wishing she could turn back the time to have another chance. While she is thinking, she looks toward the window. She sees a big tree falling on their

cottage. She closes her eyes imaging what is going to happen to her family over a cup of milk. In the last minutes of her life she watches her family one last time and smiles with them, at the same time thinking about Sali. Rapidly the stream, which turns in a big river, takes the cottage with all the family and everyone dies in the cruelest way, the river flooding their cottage. Spreading all the things in different places, nothing remains in its place—only a big river near the cottage, which now no longer exists. The river vanishes and the storm stops, like it has finished its job and went away. The worst thing is that the river took their bodies to different areas, like it wants to forever fade their existence. But nature was against that expression in different ways. Clouds, even though they helped the storm, are still grey, like they are mourning what happened and feeling sorry about Sali. Left all alone in this planet, the worst thing is that he does not yet know that his family has died and he has no place to go. As Sali watches his cows and sheep, a hard cold invades his heart and he feels that something is wrong with his family. He hurries to the cottage, giving a hush to his cows and sheep. Helping his owner like his best friend, Sali's dog is very helpful in the moment when Sali could not control his sheep and cows. As Sali walks to his cottage, unfortunately there is nothing to see. The dog did not act like he usually does. He has a bad feeling, but Sali starts to play with him, trying to make him happy.

When they get close to the cottage, Sali is astonished and confused by what he saw.

He is wondering what happened to his family. He is numb about what he is seeing. At the same time, his

eyes are filled with tears and Sali starts to cry, He screams, “Oh, God!! What happened? Why is this happening to my family?!” His scream is terrifying. He falls on his knees and wonders again what happened to his family. The questions are tormenting his mind. “How? Why? Why only my family?”

He has so many questions in his head. Quickly, his neighbor comes to him, wondering if this is the proper time to ask him about what happened to his family. But he knows that this is not the right place and time. He sees Sali's red eyes and his knees that are dirty from the muddy ground. Quickly grabbing Sali from the ground and giving him a hug as strong as he could, the neighbor is keeps saying to him “Do not cry.” But deep in his heart the neighbor knows that Sali is not going to stop crying, because it was his family, the only people he had in life. His neighbor is touched from the scene and starts to cry together with Sali. Touched by the situation, he took him inside to his cottage.

A day after his family tragedy, he is staying in a chair crying in silence. His tears fall down his pale face, like small rocks that hurt you so much. He hasn't eaten anything, unaware if he is surrounded with other people. In a moment somebody knocks on the door. The neighbor opens the door, talking to them outside. Sali could only hear whispering. Sali knew that it is about his family and he opens his eyes and ears to hear what is happening. His neighbor sees him trying to listen but he could not tell him immediately. He is a very kind person, honest and very straight to the people; he has a very beautiful family, a pretty wife and a baby girl. She is just fourteen months old. His wife took care of him very

much. He watches the wife as if he is trying to force from her words to tell him, but then husband and wife try to tell him together. They are explaining where they found the bodies of his family. This tragedy affected everybody; every one heard about the tragedy of the family and the poor boy who survived.

The bodies of his family were brought to him and buried on that day. The coffins were there. Sali wanted to see his family. The wife of the neighbor did not want to let him but her husband said "Let him. He is strong enough to see what happened to his family." They watch together while Sali walks toward their coffins fearing what he would see inside them. When he get closer to the coffins he is afraid of what he will see and quickly closes his eyes. But when he opens them and sees, he starts screaming and crying loudly, smiling in a sad and cold way. If you saw him throw his heart like that your own heart could break from his feelings. He said, "My lovely family, you are in a better place now." The coffins were closed, and flowers were thrown and the hole filled with soil. While they filled the hole, his happy memories warmed him just like a day in December, thinking that even though he will not feel their presence, at least in his memories they would remain alive.

Everyone kept telling Sali not to be sad, that they are sorry about what happened. He could not reply to them. His head wanted to reply, but his heart could not handle anymore. They understood his pain, leaving and touching his head. The funeral was over now and Sali with his neighbor and his family went to the cottage, went to his bed to sleep and said to them, "I am not feeling well"—touching his head. "I have headache. I am

going to sleep for awhile.” He left the room. The man, touched by his tragedy, talked to his wife about Sali, saying, “He does not have anyone from his family to care about him.” Speaking from his heart he said, “We should take care of him,” waiting for her response. She immediately said, “That is fine for me.”

Suddenly their conversation was interrupted by the cry of their baby girl. She went to take her and he was so happy to see the picture of his family. He took his child from the hands of his wife to play with her. Something moved upstairs. They turned their head and saw that it was Sali, watching them and crying. The man gave the baby girl to his wife and said to Sali, “Come closer to us,” with a smile in his face. “We want to talk with you about something,” He was walking slowly toward them. He was afraid what they going to say to him, that they were going to tell him to leave the house. But his thoughts were interrupted by his neighbor saying, “We want you to stay with us like a family.” Sali was happy. He couldn't say a word and he laughed with all his heart, making them laugh also. He gave them a huge hug, putting his hands around their neck and saying "Thank you so much," saying thank you in a tenderness way. “I do not know what I could do without you.”

Suddenly he went out to take some fresh air, seeing the place when his cottage used to stand. His cottage was close enough that even you can see it. He was sad but this time he did not cry. His heart even laughed for a moment. It was full of joy and he started to talk with his family, saying “I am fine. Do not worry about me. I am glad that there are still people like them that gave love and support to me, giving me warmth without

condition.” Looking toward the blue sky he continued. “I found another family now but they will never be like you.”

All the time he thought about his family, imagining how each day would pass with them, how his mother would reproach him when he made his clothes covered with blackberries, his father protecting him, smiling, how we would play with his sister Lule, doing stupid things as they used to, how he would hug his grandmother and his youngest brother everyday and tell them that he loved them.

But life goes on. His heart will feel all the time of their absence. His photo in his mind is not completed, just like the puzzle that's not completed, needing one more piece to complete. Even though he misses a piece of the photo in his real life, his family photo is completed in his heart.

The Old

by Violeta Morina

An old woman, a lonely woman with a pale, sad face looks the same as darkness, as if chilling before death. Under cover of despair, she spends her days and nights looking for warmth, love, sincerity, and tenderness.

Lonely...

Breathing...

She feels abandoned and looks like a clod over the sea. When she looks back at the past, a light smile shows on her lips and her face flickers into wrinkles. It seems that something is coming again.

Several times. She says “hmm” in a trembling voice.

Lonely. She feels lonesome. Breath is heard everywhere, breath all over. She seems destroyed with suffering. She walks and walks, slowly, over the carpet and suddenly stops in front of a picture. It is an old picture covered with dust, so full of dust she can barely see anything. With trembling hands she tries to clean a bit of the picture. At once, her face is sprayed by tears. But she continues to wipe the picture, the picture that said much to her: smile, sweetness, love all together in the same place. One cold trembling that make her feel her longing.

“Yearn, yearn,” she burbled. She has much yearned.

She feels chills, chills and cannot stop them.

“Is somebody here?” She heard her voice...“Please, is somebody there?”

For the second time she called: “Voice, voice I hear a voice...What is that noise? I want to hear it again because the silence is drowning me.” Slowly approaching the window she looks for the noise but she sees just the howling of dogs; their noises heard everywhere high and low. Her eyes are tired and she feels whacked but she cannot sleep. Even darkness says much. She needs to sleep, even though the dreams are without words, without people.

The morning always starts with strong winds, with gaps, with pain. The blue sky is half-hidden by clouds, and dark grey streamers. It is going to rain. The only thing she can hear is tik-tak, only tik-tak. She steps out of bed. Over on an old shelf suddenly she sees a notebook, a notebook that she had looked for several times. “Here is all my life!” She noticed the pages were half-torn. She had been read that for 34 years.

“I began to read five years after you were not here my son. I read every day and night. I would talk with you and feel close to you. I would feel your smell every day, every minute. But you are in the past now, not alive. I talk and show you everything everyday but you do not answer me. Writing was consolation for me but now I do not have the strength to read or write again. My eyes are weak. I am going blind.”

Slowly and carefully she browses through her notebook and promptly she stops at the pages that bring around her life. And for a moment she feels something lovely that comes inside her. She stops at the day that

changed her life, the day where love began, and happiness, the day when she took the title “mother.”

Summer Morning. The sun was shining a beautiful sunrise. Songs of nightingales just started with their sweet voice, and flowers just opened their petals slowly. “A beautiful morning,” my husband said. “Yeah,” I replied and we continued to drink our morning coffee. The first sip made us feel good and ready for a new day. “Can you feel it?” he asked. “Feel what, dear?” I replied. “The peaceful wind that is playing with your hair.” In a moment, I went back to my 20’s when he played with my hair too, and felt even better. While I was smiling about it, something just happened. I knew it because it started to hurt me hard. It was him.

It was a baby’s warning to me that he is ready for this world. That was the moment when I was excited. My husband grabbed me fast and sat me in our living room, while I was yelling. He was stressed as much as I was. I remember when I started to lose my pure view, and my eyes started seeing things faintly. “Hold on dear, nanny is coming, can you hear me?” were the words I kept listening to. After that, I remember that I heard some unknown voices but I could not find the concentration to hear what they were talking about. And, after the hurt and the pain, it came to me, my gain. And what kind of gain, a piece of heaven fulfilled with love and hope. There was a little lovely boy there, crying over and over while the others were smiling at him. The best gift of my life. I heard my husband’s voice yelling and screaming all over the place. “It’s a boy, it’s a boy!” were the words of the newest father in the world. Our happiness was indescribable, and...

“No, no I cannot do this anymore. I cannot continue reading!”

Her tears fall apart, filling the wrinkles on her face, like the water fills in rivers bed. Her heart is broken once again. I do not know why it's called heartbreak, when every part of her body is broken too.

“Give me some power, my lord! Please! Give me the courage, I have to stand up now!”

She kept saying these words to herself while trying to stand up from the floor where she lay down while reading about the day her son was born. After a couple of minutes, she got the spunk, and kept trying to stand up, step by step, while holding onto the chair her husband used to sit on. After she got up, she went out, locked the house door, and slowly walked down the streets of town. With her little footsteps, and a sad face, she could not speed her pace. Too old to walk faster.

“Oh, my knees, please be patient, I'm almost there!”

It was only the dark shadow that was following her round and round. She felt a coldness, not from the weather, because sun beams were everywhere, but from inside; she was as cold as ice on a no-mercy winter.

“I cannot even feel warm on a warm day. I'm frozen here, stuck alone in a big world...”

After passing the main street of the town, she turned left and kept walking. People were staring at her and thought that she has lost her way. They even stopped her and asked if she was fine, and what she was looking for. But she kept walking and could not respond to anyone. And huge thoughts carried her lost mind.

“Will I arrive alive? Poor me!”

Streets were so familiar to her, and full of bittersweet memories. She even passed the street where her boy used to play with the neighbors' children. On the other side of the street, where a big garden full of roses used to be, she was reminded of her husband, who took the most beautiful rose and gave it to her on her birthday.

"Memories, memories, and memories...Bitter or sweet memories, kill me please! Do not leave me alive, torturing me like this!"

She thought that being dead would be worth it. It was as if the loneliness kept her alive, and she was punished with the pain. It hurt so much...

Not only the shadow, memories, pain, loneliness, and weariness, even the tears were following her on her way. But still, alone. She did not even feel like she was a full one. She was not complete, she was not even a half without her soul mates, who were not in the same world that she was.

Step by step...

Time after time...

She stopped for a moment. Her legs stopped her at the place that her heart brought her to. She was in front of the cemetery of town. Right where she wanted to be. Right where she took the road to. But why?

"The heart gave courage to my body and brought me here, my lord..."

She entered the cemetery, passed some lines of graves, and stopped again at the penultimate line. She turned right, and walked a little bit more until she found the graves of the people she wanted to.

"I came here, to visit. Have you missed me, like I miss you?"

As she started crying more and more, she lay down between the two graves. The grave of her son and her husband, who were buried near to each other, like she wanted them to be. After a while of crying, she was tired of tears, and it was like her tears were consumed. She took a deep breath, and started speaking to both of them...

“Dear lovers, soul mates that left me alone here in this black and white world. How can life be so unfair to me? Why am I even living? I do not know. All I know is that I need you too much, more than ever. But you are not here with me, and I am still burning here; it feels like a real hell to me. But I still remember everything. I only live in memories now. I keep calling you both, but you have not responded. Even though I know that you never will, I still speak to you. It is pointless. It is like fighting with the wind, you keep on fighting without seeing it, even though you know that you cannot beat it. You still live inside of me, and I still live locked in my past. It’s been years and years, and I am still not used to it.”

After saying those words, she shared some tears on her husband’s grave. After a couple of minutes, she turned back to her son’s grave, and started speaking to him:

“I still remember. Remember everything. We were good, and happy with each other, you made me proud almost every day. You were a good boy. Even though we were not the richest parents, you were fine with how much we could give to you. Even though it was not our fault. You knew of the state problems, and enemies everywhere, and we were not secure until nowadays. But we tried to give you all the love we had, and believe me,

we did. Mostly I did. I could not sleep without seeing that you were doing fine, and when you were not, I stood up all night just to make sure you would not be needing anything.

Eh, these enemies...

They took from us times... places... wealth... tranquility... and most of all, people... Our beloved ones.

You know, dear, I always kept the trust in God, that someday they will see the nightmares they gave. They will get what they deserve. You were too young to understand, and you could not stop asking questions, like: “mother, mother, what is that boom, and the other boom, and why are they screaming?”

And I always held you up, and replied: “It’s alright, darling, the rainbow comes after the rain. You were always mad at me, and asked me why I kept saying always those words, what were their meanings.

After you grew up a little bit, the situation was getting worse and worse. The enemies took all adults into the army for their service. Your father and I kept you locked at home. We were so afraid, so we wanted to make sure that you would be alright, and nothing was going to take you away from us. That showed how precious you were to us. Even though you kept being mad with us, because we would not let you go out with friends, we were not mad at you, because we knew that you still did not know what was going on outside.

I remember when you even cried from being tired of being isolated inside four walls, and my heart leaked blood. I was sad as much as you were. But you could not understand that.

I remember when winter came. It was cold. Cold but sunny. We were happy to see you growing next to us. You were even bigger, and taller, and ripier. But it was the day when my heart stopped beating for a moment. Your father was out, and I was alone with you at home. In the middle of the day, I heard knocking at our main door. I was so afraid. First, I remembered that I had not gone out to open the door, and I shut my mouth, pretending like no one was home. But they kept knocking. Harder and harder. I put my hands up to cover my mouth because I already started freaking out, and crying. Then I heard some kicks; big kicks were kicking in our door. I was going to lose my mind. I came to you, grabbed you by your hand and took you down into the basement, next to the shoes closet. After that, I heard that the door was shot down. I went upstairs screaming for your father but he was nowhere. And they started yelling at me, pushed me down, and looking all around the house. It was worthless. One of them directed a weapon at me, and I could not stop them. They were three bastards, busting our home, looking for you, to take you away from us. And then one of them went downstairs, right where I hid you. I was going crazy. I already lost control, screaming all the time, even though the screams were helpless. Then he came out grabbing you, with one hand, and in the other hand he had his damn weapon directed at you, pointed it at your head. I remember that I almost died. You were trying to keep me calm, saying that it is okay it is okay, everything will get fixed up, as they walked you out of the door. You were turning back around with your head and saying that you will come back.

“I do not want you to leave, pleaseeee leave him alone, take me instead or take me with him!” I said. In fact, I yelled.

But nobody was listening to me. They made up their minds to take you. You were screaming, and you promised me that you would come back sooner or later.

I was crying to death, I pleaded them to let me hug you for the very last time because I felt that somehow I would never see you again. They let you free to come and hug me. I still remember that warm hug that you gave me, and we were sharing tears together, you kissed me on the forehead, and I held you until they came and took you off of me.

“Do not cry, lady. Your son will be here after he finishes the army. He has an obligation to do that. He has to finish the army like all his friends. And the army has a rule. After a year he will be here with you,” said one of them.

Ahh, it was the worst day of my life. It was the day when it seemed that everything in my life died, a day when a part of my soul was really separated from the body. I was losing my mind. How could I live without you? I lay down on the floor, crying and crying over and over, until your father came home and saw everything that happened. He was going crazy, and just gave me that look that he wanted to ask me: Our son is gone, isn't he?

I could not speak. He could not speak either. He helped me stand up, and I stood up. Since that day, I have been looking out the window every day, half of the day, waiting for you to come home, even though something inside told me that that was the last hug you

gave to me. But I still could not agree with reality. Sometimes your father came next to me, and enjoyed the view of outside. Still waiting for you to come home...

And I kept asking myself all the time: Where are you, what are they doing to you?

Nobody could give me the answer because nobody knew what they were doing with the people they took away from their families.

We were cursing them every day and every night, and hoping that I would see your face again, that I would see you here, next to me, smiling and crying, sharing your emotions, with your mother. But where were you? I did not know. All I knew was that you were not here with us.

After a couple of months, we got grizzly. We were filled up with wrinkles. And I started to feel that I was getting weaker and weaker. Your father was sad as much as I was. We were still thinking that you would come back, someday, somehow.

We could not find any peace inside of us. We were worried as much as the first day they took you away. Everywhere was silence. We almost forgot how to smile, how to feel good, how to enjoy days.

But the time flies. Time could not wait for us, or for you.

After months and months, the state was better than it used to be. But not as good as we wished it to be, in order to see you again. I numbered the days and still we did not have any piece of news from you. We were waiting with hope that one day we would see you.

And it was an autumn day. The day that we had been waiting for so long. Streets were full of leaves,

colorless leaves, no green anywhere. Just leaves in the streets around, and naked trees. It was a windy day. I remember I went outside when I woke up, to clean the garden from the leaves, and I saw three men coming near me.

I see them walking slowly, with their head up, but not happy. My heart stopped for a moment...

I felt it. Yes I did.

Seeing them that way did not make me feel good. My heart felt it. Something happened. But what?

What could it be? Maybe news from you, but bad news?

No no. I do not want to hear it. Please go away, I beg you...

As they were coming near me, I was thinking of a lot of things that they could say to me. Maybe good, just maybe.

Keep calm, I said to myself.

But I could not because something inside of me would not let me feel good. Here they come.

"May I help you?" I asked.

"Greetings, madam. We are sorry to inform you about something, but we will not say anything. You better come outside and see what we have for you," they replied.

"What is it? Why cannot you just tell me? I am so curious about it, please tell me!" I said, as we were walking out of our garden.

"Oh my God!"

This could not be real. No, why? "You are lying," I screamed. "Punch me, please somebody punch me because I am in a nightmare!!!"

I almost had a heart attack. I saw you dead. Do you know how it feels to see your own child dead? How can this be? I do not believe it!!

Everything changed, as I came near to your body to see your face, to see if it was really you, and trust me I was out of my mind. Your father came out and saw you that way. We were terrified, and I cursed every damn man in this world. You were gone, away from me, away from us, from this damned world. But why? Why this way?

I could not agree with the truth. It was horrible. Every part of me died that day. I wish I could have been in your place. I wanted God to take my soul, not yours.

I remember the last words they said to me: "Your son committed suicide, madam, we are sorry!"

And, after I looked at your body. I analyzed you. And I did not understand how they said that to me, when the bullet was in your back!

How did he do that?

In his back with a bullet...

Emmy

by Dafina Muqiri

“Huh...” Emmy sighs, trying to open the door. It is a new door, the door of her new room in the dormitory, the place where she is going to start a new life. Finally, she opens the door, and looks at the room, which from today will be her new home. She will divide it with another girl, who will be her new roommate. She used to sleep alone in her house in the village while here she has a room which is not hers at all. She puts the bags in a bed that she thinks is hers because there is nothing on it and then closes the door. She lies upon her bags. She cannot do anything. She is very tired, as she walked 30 minutes from the bus station to the Students’ Center with some bags in her hands. Emmy directs her eyes to the room; it is a simple room, not what she always imagined, but better than the room in her old house in the village before coming here to Prishtina. She has two beds, two shelves on which to put her clothes, a small table with two chairs, and a refrigerator. She sees a bag and some books on the bed in front of her and a glass with different pens on the table; she already knows that someone lives here.

Emmy closes her eyes to rest for a bit, but the noise that she hears does not let her. The sound is coming from the windows that are covered with an old curtain. She moves the curtain and all that she can see from the windows is the beautiful garden of the dormitory which is full of people; some of them playing football, some laughing with their friends, and a number

of them doing something with their phones in their hands. Emmy is happy about this view, because, if she feels alone, she must only push the curtain aside and look at what is going on outside her room, seeing people doing different things.

“They are all probably students like me,” she thinks. She has a desire to go out and join the crowd but she can not do it because they are strange people for Emmy; she does not know them.

Suddenly, she hears another noise, but this time it comes from the door, someone trying to open the door with a key. After some tries, the person behind the door asks, “Is anybody there”?

Emmy is afraid. She thinks to herself, “Who is talking there?” When she hears that it is a female voice, she opens the door.

There is a pretty girl with curly hair, not very tall, with green eyes. Emmy is wordless for a moment, and then she speaks to the new girl.

“Yes, can I help you?” she says.

“This is my room, what are you doing here?” says the girl with curly hair, angrily.

“This is my room too!” Emma responds. “I set up my things in this room this morning. The director said that I can put the things in my new room.”

“Ah, ok! We are roommates then,” say the girl with curly hair. “Welcome to our new room!”

They enter the room. She looks at Emmy in a strange manner. Emmy is a very pretty girl with long straight brown hair, not very tall, with blue eyes like the sea. “What is your name?” she asks while looking at Emmy.

Emmy returns the look and a smile like an accessory that girls usually wear. “Emmy,” she says.

“Oh, that is a beautiful name. Nice to meet you, Emmy! I am Tina, your new roommate; I hope that we will have a great time together.”

“Nice to meet you too! I think that we are starting to have a great time now!” she laughs.

“Do you study anything?” Tina continues to ask.

“I study medicine, I started lectures today.”

“Really! I am a student of medicine too.”

“Oh excellent,” says Emmy. “We will not only share the same room, we will share the faculty too.” Both girls laugh with a loud voice.

Everything is new for Emmy. Living in a city is different from living in a small village with a small population like where she used to live until three months ago.

Emmy’s father died in an accident during a trip to Albania so she and her mother moved in with her uncle. Those were very hard times for Emmy and her mother. They weren’t working, and the only solution for Emmy’s mother was to live with her brother, who lived in the small city of Kosova. It was the best choice that she had. Remaining in the village was very difficult for a woman with only a sister, and Emmy had to walk one hour to get to school.

Emmy was very depressed. She was eighteen and this was the time when she should start University, but she never mentioned that to her mother. She knew they didn’t have any income or social help. The only hope for Emmy was her uncle who was an economist.

Her mother was depressed because she felt they were a burden for her brother. She couldn't get a job, she was sick, and she had problems with her heart.

"Why are you depressed, my sister?" said Emmy's uncle.

"Oh, I am very depressed, my brother. I'm not able to do anything. It is time for Emmy to go to University, and all I can do is sit here thinking about it. She is all I have in life," Emmy's mother replied.

"Do not be worried! I am here to help you and I will care for you as long as I am alive. I do not want to see you crying anymore. Everything will be all right; you should not be depressed and you should care for your health. Emmy will start University and she will live in Prishtina during her studies."

"Thank you very much, my brother. I really appreciate what you are doing for me and Emmy. You are the only hope that we have. Emmy will be very happy that she will start University and she will make her dream come true: to be a doctor in the future."

One month later, Emmy's mother had a heart attack and her brother sent her to the hospital.

Emmy is in her room, reading to prepare for a pre-test at University. Her phone rings and it is her uncle. Her blue eyes like the sea are brighter than other times because she has not spoken with her mother for one week and she is happy that she will hear her mother's voice. Unfortunately it is not her mother calling, but her uncle.

"Hello Emmy!" says her uncle.

“Hi, my uncle, how are you? Glad to hear your voice,” she says.

“I am fine Emmy, thank you. How are you? How are your studies going?”

“Very well,” she says. “I adapted to everything quickly. How is my mom? Where is she?”

“Oh Emmy, she is a little bit sick.”

“Oh no! Give me my mom, please; I want to talk with her,” asks Emmy.

“I am afraid you cannot. We are in the hospital and the doctor is examining her.”

“Is she okay? Please, tell me the truth,” she says as she begins crying with a loud voice.

“Yes, yes she is fine, but I just called you to tell that. Do not be worried, your mom will be okay; I will call you later, and tell you about everything.”

“I am going to come to the hospital immediately. I want to see my mom; I cannot wait,” she says. She ends the call, takes her bag and walks to the hospital. She hurries, as she cannot wait to see her mother with her own eyes.

When she arrives at hospital she sees her uncle waiting outside the door in the hall, worried for his sister’s health. When he sees Emmy coming towards the door behind which her mother was lying, suddenly tears begin to fall from his eyes.

They hug each other and cry together.

“Where is she?” Emmy asks. “Please say me that she is fine!”

“I do not know Emmy. The doctor is with her now and he is examining her. We should wait till he comes and tells us how your mother is.”

After a short time waiting in the hall of the hospital, the doctor opens the door of the room, and comes near Emmy and her uncle. He is handsome; tall and dark skinned with glasses, a white coat and a lot of documents in his hands; his eyes seem serious and worried.

"I suppose you are Jane's family, are you not?" he asks.

"Yes I am her brother, and this is Emmy, her only daughter. Doctor, please tell us how June is?"

"We are not sure yet, but as we have seen she is suffering from heart disease. We will perform tests to see what the problem is. This is all I can say for the moment. You can see her, but you should not stay long, because she needs to be in a quiet environment. Stay only 5 minutes. I will keep you informed of everything."

"Thank you, doctor. Please do what you are able to do for my sister, she is the only family that Emmy and I have," implores Emmy's uncle.

"It is my job to do all I can," replies the doctor.

Emmy runs into her mother's room. She sees her mother lying in a bed. It is a very hard moment for Emmy. She cannot stop crying. It hasn't been long since her father died, so seeing her mother in this state is an unbearable thing for Emmy. All she could think about is the fear of being alone and thinking of this terrifies her.

Day after day, Emmy's mother's health gets worse. Every day after she finishes lectures, Emmy goes to the hospital to see her mother and stays with her until the late in the evening. She doesn't want to be separated for a minute from her mother. She is all that Emmy had.

Emmy sits near her bed holding her mother's hands in her own.

"Dear Mom, I love you. Please open your eyes? I want to see them again."

For a moment, her mother hears her daughter words, and she slowly opens her eyes. She saw that Emmy's blue eyes - like a sea, as she usually called them - are filled with tears.

She cannot speak, but in her eyes Emmy could see the pain that she feels. Two tears flows down her face. Emmy is happy that God hears her prayers as her mother opens her eyes. She hugs her mother and with her hands she tries to dry her tears.

An hour later, she leaves the hospital and goes into her room in the dormitory. There she finds her roommate, Tina, who is studying, and when Emmy enters the room, Tina stands up.

"Emmy, how is your mother? I suppose you are coming from the hospital?" she asks.

"Oh, what to say! She is not good; her heart is getting weaker every day." She sits in her bed and begins to cry. "I cannot believe that this is happening to me."

"Do not be worried, Emmy. Your mother will be fine, she is only in her 40's, and she will come home soon," said Tina.

"I want to think so, but when I see her in that state, I think that she will never be able to come home again."

"You should believe that everything will be okay."

Emmy hugs her roommate, as she is the only person than can console her. She has been there from the beginning, and has helped her to adapt with the life in a big city. It was a dream for Emmy to go live there. Tina helped in her studies, too, because Emmy went to visit her mother every day and she usually did not attend classes.

The next morning, Emmy gets to the hospital earlier than usual because she wants to talk with the doctors about her mother's health. Unfortunately, her mother's doctor doesn't have any good news for her. He tells her that during the night, Jane had another heart attack, and her state is very complicated.

Emmy and her uncle are very depressed. They are standing in front of the door of the operating room, unable to do anything. The doctors are trying to do all that they can, but it is not in their hands.

After some hours, the doctor opens the door of the operation room. He is a man with a white coat, white glasses and a face covered with sweat. They hear only some words that come from doctor's mouth, "Sorry for your loss, we have done all we could."

Those words are the words that have always remained in Emmy's mind, from that day and as she worked towards her career as a doctor.

Living without parents was the most difficult thing for Emmy. She was just a student and her uncle was the only person who paid for her studies. She found it difficult to accept this aid from her uncle, but he insisted that he would always help her to realize her dream.

Emmy wanted to be a doctor, but she hated the doctor who was operating on her mother, convinced that he was the cause of her mother's death, because he did not do enough for her. It was very difficult for Emmy to accept the reality that her mother had died just like her father did five months before. She was completely alone.

After her mother death, Emmy started to work hard on her studies. She always wanted to be a helpful person for sick people. She was very successful during her studies; she was one of the best students in the school of medicine.

Emmy began to work in hospital as a nurse. She was a hope for the sick people there, and her smile was something that they wanted to see every day. She was not only a nurse, but she was a lovely person, with a warm smile.

She did not want to be like a postman that didn't bring good news for her patients. Her vision was to be someone who would help people when they lost their direction, be there to encourage those that start to lose their faith and have no hope for the future. Besides, being a doctor, she wanted to be a beacon of hope for everyone.

Eventually, Emmy achieved her dream of becoming a successful doctor. She never forgot the aid of her only uncle, who was the initiator for realizing of her dream. She usually visited him on the weekends. He is proud of his niece.

Emmy always believed in her dreams and she worked hard to achieve her goal. She got married and

she has three children. She is now still living in Prishtina and working as a doctor. She is living her dream.

Old Love

By Besart Osmani

It was a weekend, a Sunday. He was still asleep when his little children came to his bed and saw that their father was sleeping. Lona was just four years old, a girl so beautiful and lovely. Loni, Lona's twin, had green eyes. A very attractive boy he was. Lona looked more like her mother physically, but with the strong character of her father, and Loni looked more like his father.

As they were playing with their daddy who was in his bed, they made plans of where to go that weekend.

"We will go for a walk and eat ice cream," Lona said.

"No daddy, we will go play some children's games," said Loni.

The children started to fight about where to go. Well, the wishes of children are numerous and varied. While Lona and Loni were discussing where to go in their father's bed, mother came and brought coffee for her lovely husband. Both Father and Mother enjoyed seeing their children discuss how the weekend would end. Eh, greedy family, how happy they were. Their dad had worked long hours and a long time just to bring his children happiness, while their mother with effort and sacrifices had raised her children in that age, and had often left things badly for herself, for the happiness of her children.

"I decided!" said the father. "It is a sunny weekend so we will go together to nature for a walk."

All agreed. Loni took a soccer ball to go away to nature with, and Lona took some dolls. Shpresa and Ali took those necessary things that should be had with nature and then they went. Ali also brought a book, *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, a book he was reading for the second time; he liked to read in nature. When they arrived at a beautiful place, green with nature, no one could stop Loni and Lona now. They were in their world running, singing, playing, and only when they got hungry they remembered their parents, then ate quickly and then returned playing in the beautiful nature.

While Shpresa and Ali were talking together, they realized that their children were seated near a person. The distance was about 100 meters away and she was a woman. There was no risk because they saw that their children were laughing and talking with her.

“Who can she be?” said Shpresa.

“She is surely just a woman who has gone out for a walk in nature. Perhaps her children are around here somewhere,” said Ali.

Her conversation with the children continued for a long time. From Loni and Lona, it was clear that they enjoyed talking to the strange woman. They were laughing all the time. The woman from the distance seemed to be very nice and very lovely with their children.

Ali saw that Shpresa began to worry because the children now had talked with her for half an hour. At one point, Ali stood up and went to see what was happening.

The closer Ali walked toward the woman, an interesting feeling, not a quiet feeling, began in his whole body. He had not had that feeling since in his

teenager times. Such a feeling suggested to him that the woman who he would meet would be a person who once had left traces in his life. It happened. She was Tringa, a girl who Ali had once liked very much. In a moment Tringa felt bad, while Ali felt more bad for Tringa's situation...eh, similar as 15 years before when they were "good friends." Even though Ali loved Tringa so much, in the situations when they were together with friends he acted as if nothing was happening, and even now in front of his children he was acting as if he didn't know Tringa. But when he saw that his children were playing nearby, they talked for a few minutes.

In Tringa's eyes, Ali saw that she was not the Tringa he knew 15 years ago. He realized that Tringa missed happiness, that she was alone, and then, just for curiosity, he asked her. "What are you doing? Are you married?"

"No," she replied. She looked sad and her eyes filled with tears, and for some moments she couldn't talk. They were silent for a moment. Ali felt sad also and he remembered fifteen years ago when he prayed for Tringa and he to be together. He remembered everything he had done for Tringa. He still did not understand why Tringa hadn't wanted to be with him; he had never understood it. Tringa was so undecided; she didn't know what she wanted for herself, and often when discussing the various topics of love she always said, "I do not know what I want from myself." Apparently, her thoughts had brought Tringa to that situation she was now in.

"You have beautiful children. God bless them," said Tringa.

Ali didn't want to give more pain to Tringa but he said, "They could be our children." With this, Ali wanted to tell Tringa how much he loved her but how she had played with her own destiny and now here she was.

When Ali took his children, they wanted to stay with Tringa because she was so lovely to them. And Ali with a charm in his face said, "Tringa the same as 15 years ago. So lovely with children." Tringa now understood that she must leave because the situation was becoming complicated.

"I wish you all the best in your life," said Tringa, before she left.

Ali just watched Tringa's eyes and also said, "The same as in our time, I still just think good things of you. You didn't want to be with me. You chose another way, but I again tell you it is not too late. Even though you are 38 years old, it doesn't mean you can't find any other good person to live with. I wish also all the best for you and I wish a lot of happiness in your life."

"My time has gone," she said and left.

Ali took the children and turned back to Shpresa, and the children immediately told their mother about Tringa and how lovely she was. Shpresa realized that something was wrong with Ali, but Ali was always so sincere with his wife, even since the time before they created their relationship, had told her everything from his past, even of Tringa's history.

"She was Tringa," Ali said. "All was lost. I felt so bad for her. She was the same. She hadn't changed even though 15 years have gone. Still beautiful and smiling, but this time her smile was so sad." Then he

went near to Shpresa, kissed her forehead and said, “My lovely Shpresa, if only I could help Tringa. I could be happy to see Tringa near any man.” Shpresa always understood Ali, and also understood why Ali said that. She knew what a loyal and kindhearted husband she had and for that she also kissed Ali and said, “God will help her.”

Ali knew that Shpresa understood him very well because they loved each other so much and they had a wonderful family and were very happy.

It is a weekend morning at 9am. Loni and Lona just entered their father’s room, but now they are not five years old. They have now grown up to be 22 years old. Lona graduated in Economics and Loni just finished Engineering. This time they didn’t enter their father’s room to request to go out into nature, but they went in for something more important. Lona and Loni have decided to show to their parents their Loves. They said, “Tonight we invited them to our house for dinner.” Lona, her boyfriend and Loni, his girlfriend. At that moment, Shpresa, as always, brings coffee to her husband and smiles because she already knows the information that Loni and Lona told their father. And then, so happy, they all discussed it together.

Ah, what a happy family!

Epilogue: The message of this imaginative story with fictional characters is to tell you that we are those who decide for our own happiness, with good behavior, good work, and by our decisions

Lost in the Woods

By Asdren Rafuna

He was the only boy in his family and he was very much in the spotlight. He was the smartest boy in his primary school and quite attractive and passionate. He loved football and never got tired of it even after playing five hours a day with his friends. He was very much in love with science fiction books and films as well. He liked biology and astronomy. He was in a swimming club near his city. All of this is to say that in one word he was a sportsman. But most of all, he was very much in love with nature and animals.

In the summer of 2000, after the war that happened in Kosovo, and after the longing to see again the beautiful places in his lovely country of Kosovo, he decided to go for holidays to his mother's uncles because his mother's relatives were living near the mountain that is considered the highest peak in our country. Since he is addicted to nature and animals, he wanted to take a trip only by himself and maybe with the uncle's dog, which he also loved so much.

His uncles were not far away from his mother's uncles. I have to mention that he was very socialized, knew how to communicate not only with people, but with animals, and this includes even his uncle's dog. If you were to see them together you would see them reading and understanding each other very much. This is because Dreny—this is this attractive boy's name—always played with the dog every time he visited his uncle and always took the dog for a walk.

For his visit, he took the important things with him that he might need later on the trip. He took a compass, a book of about camping, to know things like how to build a pavilion. He took a Cannon to take pictures so that he could show his classmates the beautiful places he had visited. He took a little ball that the dog might play with. Since he was going on a long trip he couldn't take his cat with him, the cat he took care of since the day the cat was born. The cat's name is Figaro, but he decided to leave him at home. So he took everything that might be needed later and put it into his backpack.

His mother was very afraid of what he was going to do. Even though he didn't tell her much about the trip he was planning, you could see in her eyes that she could see in Dreny's eyes the trip he was planning to do after visiting his uncle.

She hugged her only boy warmly, and told him to take care for himself. He kissed his lovely cat and gave her a farewell hug, giving you that impression that he might never see Figaro again. He hugged his sisters too and said to them to take care of themselves while he was away because he usually always took care of them and protected them from anything and everything.

He took a bus for one hundred km to his uncles. He looked at his watch, watching every minute, such a careful boy he was. His life perception was to use every minute of life with pleasure and excitement. His eyes could tell you that he had a very big dream in his mind, and he would do everything in his life to achieve it. His eyes shone to far away places, and you could see how much he loved nature and the life itself within those

shiny brown eyes. His far-away eyes looking out the bus window told you that his heart was beautified with art and passion and love.

His trip lasted two hours and he was a little bit tired from the awful driving of the bus driver, but it was not the fault of the driver only because even the road was hard to drive on with a lot of huge curves.

And so he finally arrived at the birthplace of his mother. He looked around and realized that he had very much missed that place. He looked at the children there, making their amazing noises while playing, and chasing each other, and he told himself, “I am going to have fun every damn minute here!”

He started to walk along the little old road to his uncles while staring and watching and smelling everything there. He missed so much that place and since the war he hasn’t seen any of his uncles who he loves, and is loved by them too. He sees those old beautiful houses. Some of them have straw in their walls, a smell which he dearly loves. So his going to his uncles is more a dream than a trip. He is visiting the place where he had grown, visiting those beautiful working hands, from which he was fed. The home of his mother is a place of his heart, and he has preserved very carefully his beautiful memories there.

When he enters the door of the home he feels and smells the air and the grass and the trees that were in the garden. He walks with slow steps now in order to clearly observe that magic that he missed so much. There were no noises at that moment and he hears everything—even the little cows in the animal house eating their straw.

And finally he shouted loudly, “Does anybody want any guest here?” with a smile on his face. And somebody came out running towards him to see what was that strange noise. It was his uncle’s boy.

All the family comes out now and walks towards him. This was such a great moment as they remembered the past, and now here comes the warm hugs. He almost cried then and there, but his face was covered with a smile. He was feeling amazed, how his uncles always took care of him and his family, were good with them at any time. They are really a great people, people of work and people of great manner.

They always taught him a lot of things, things from the field and things from life as well. So it was really a beautiful day. After he entered the house he started to watch things like a little child. All this was from his longing for that place. After they stood in the living room, they fed him something and he went outside into their long yard and analyzed even the littlest details there: the place of the cows, the place of the dog, the place of the rabbits and all the places where he grow up and had he played with joy.

After a long and enjoyable day comes the night and like always in this big house it is very beautiful. And then with great pleasure they ate dinner, like always with a lot of fellows at the table. After dinner for the Albanians comes the tea, and this is his loveliest part because he loves tea. And when comes the tea, there comes the talking time, so they started to tell the stories about the war, where had been and how they had gone through those trials. Some of the tales where blood

curdling and some of them, thank God, were attractive and interesting.

After that long and beautiful night he expressed his idea to visit the uncles of his mum and theirs as well, in Hogosht, in that beautiful place near the mountain.

They were not so far from Dreny's uncles, about 10 km. He decided long ago he would never leave for his big trip without consulting his big uncle, whom he loves so much and from whom he always learns and takes life advices.

He told him everything about his plans for the trip and his uncle was very happy for the initiative of his little spunky nephew. His uncle told him that before he left he had to take the dog with him because he would accompany him during any dangers that might occur.

Dreny was very happy to hear that from his uncle so he hugged his uncle very tightly and kissed him and thanked him many times.

His uncle decided to give him a lift into that wonder place with the dog back in the boot. His uncle wanted to help his nephew a bit to achieve that dream of his. They arrived there very fast even though they had to chase an old mountain road without any pavement. If you looked at that boy's eyes you could tell he was very excited. It was a look that would relieve you completely. This was a place with such stunning beautiful nature, with big trees all around, a house untouched by human hands.

He opened the window of the car to play with the wind outside. He could hear the song of the birds and he started to sing with them. That easy breeze pervaded his

face and he enjoyed it a lot. The car was already close to the houses of my mother's uncles and that beautiful place captivated him whenever his eyes fell in contact with it. Their house lay in a valley with big trees and fruit trees everywhere. One of the fruit trees was in the middle of their yard. It was a very old one whose roots touched the ground and expanded a lot. In this tree he had played and climbed on many times. Behind it was an old car that was not functional, in which the little birds and the chickens lived. There were many old gardens, which beautified that place as well. There was a water source that came from the mountain, in which the cows and all the animals, and the peoples drink from. Above the water source were some bees in their combs making their noises. Further, lay the forest with its unnumbered creatures.

They arrived there finally and all the members of this family of uncles came out to see their unexpected guests. They were surprised, of course, but very excited to see him there. As well here, came the hospitality, like they always do.

The first night it was amazing there, everyone enjoying the hospitality. Everyone, especially the oldest in the family, told some of their magnificent stories that kept them really concentrated. They are really lovely people, their life and all that they have, coming from the hard work and a great manner as well. Happy and excited as they were, Dreny wanted to take advantage to the opportunity to speak about his trip in the mountain.

At first they were surprised, but then they admitted that it was a great and brave idea. Then they

realized why they brought the dog with them. Even though they had one, he wasn't as smart and strong as Jackie.

After they realized his purpose, his uncle got in his car and turned back to his home. The dog was put in a very safe place because they told Dreny about some wolves that wander around there, especially late at night. So everything was perfect. Tomorrow he needed to prepare some good food.

The next day he woke up early and went out. He saw the sun in the sky that was shining without any cloud around to prevent its rays. After eating breakfast they started to prepare some food for Dreny for his famous trip, even though he didn't want them to prepare anything for him with all the work that they had.

He went outside and started general preparations by gathering stuff that he needed the most. He had with him a backpack where he puts two knives to cut any branch of wood and for other things as well. He put the compass in it, some extra water because he knew that without water his muscles and organs couldn't perform well. He added some extra food to keep his energy alive, rain gear and some of his clothes, some safety items: fire, light, and a whistle. He put in a backpack the camera and a belt for the dog to use in the exceptional case when he is very tired or ill. Finally was the time to make his way up into the mountain. He say goodbye to all the members of the family that were out and started to walk with the dog into the trees. The dog was a husky, a fighter type of husky that is very rare, a very beautiful and very strong one, with blue and white hair all over his

body. He stood always close to him and watched every step that Dreny took.

The woods were awesome with all the green leaves covering the oak trees. He started to take pictures from the start, seeing things like they have spirits in them. Sometimes he spoke with them in their language and raised his voice like a man's voice. "Here we are, you little boy. Where are you from?" he said, imitating the tree's voice. And then he answered in his own voice, "I came along from afar to visit all of you beautiful trees and your green leaves. Can you tell me the road to the highest peak so I can spend a night in your home?"

The dog watching him was amazed and he laughed at himself for what he was doing and for the dog's reaction. Then he set out again, walking towards the highest peak with consistent steps. Once again, he was amazed by the beauty that he was seeing there. The projecting of the sunlight into the leaves and onto the ground made him without words, and with his mouth left open. The music of beautiful birds that rambled corner to corner made him feel like he was in a dream. He just stood there and then walked smoothly while taking pictures.

But he knew that the road was long to go and at this pace he wouldn't arrive till twilight. He needed to arrive before the twilight in order to settle somewhere safe to stay for a night. So he started to walk with big steps, singing along the road and sometimes making strange noises by talking with the trees and with the dog.

Along the road he heard some strange noises that came from not far away—noises like some broken

brunches, and so he took very careful steps towards where the noise was coming from. He took his camera and zoomed in to see what was going on in there. Suddenly his face was covered with smiles because what he was seeing was a deer eating some leaves and watching him. He took pictures immediately and then started to walk towards him as smoothly as possible. He never saw a deer in the woods before so he was excited to the extent that he wanted to touch it or at least to come very close to the deer. He tied the dog to one of the trees and told him not to make a noise. He came in front of the deer and then he started speaking to him. "Hey deer, I am a deer too but I am faster and stronger than you. I don't want a fight. I just want to touch you. I want to touch your ears and your nose and I will let you touch mine too. And you're the most beautiful creature I have ever seen." Amazingly, the deer stood there stiff, and for a while he thought he had made the deer like him, but suddenly the deer moved away very fast and Dreny sat there sad for a while, for not having the chance to touch that deer. He had a great story to tell that deer, because his name in Albanian means "deer" in English. So he lifted himself up, and got the dog, and started to walk again to achieve his dream. His smile again appeared on his face and started to lift up the mountain to feel proud too. He opened his backpack, and after having some water to drink, he took out the belt for the dog in order to help him climb that mountain more easily. The more he climbed the more beautiful the creatures appeared. He saw a lot of rabbits toddle near their bushes, some bees around their honeycomb, and a lot of the creatures living there freely.

There was left one more hour before he would arrive and he saw the sun was near the other mountain and about to set. He started singing with a higher and more beautiful voice, inspired by all the beauty that he saw there.

*“Oh You, who created me with my eyes to see
such a beauty,*

Oh You, who created the deer so lovely,

*Oh You, who created the leaves in the woods so
beautifully,*

Oh You, who created the dog so trusty,

Oh You, who created the birds so colorful,

Make me as lovely for You as You are to me.

How beautiful You may be!

How beautiful You may be!”

So that was his song, inspiring by nature, and then finally he arrived at the place that he always wanted to be. The seven hours of walking towards that peak had so exhausted him and the dog. The sun was setting and he started to look around carefully for a place to stay for the night.

The place was covered mostly by trees, heaths, and a little field in the middle. Farther away there was a water source, falls that made a noise that could be heard from afar. He could see from there many mountains and some little houses in the countryside.

He looked around every corner there and then he set his camp under an old tree that was in the middle, which was the most appropriate place to stay. He dumped his backpack there, and took a huge breath of relief, and immediately started to collect some branches

to make a fire for the evening. He went up and down to find whatever he could. The dog was lying down in the grass and watching him quietly. While he collected the branches, the sun was almost setting and he didn't want to miss the beauty so he sat down near the dog and they watched the sunset together. Afterwards, he took his safety matches and tried to set fire to those branches. After several attempts he finally ignited the fire and immediately took from his backpack some food that his uncles had provided him with. There was some white and red meat and pieces of bread.

So he was settled well there, obviously, and having a great time with the dog that he loved. He heated the meat well and started to talk with the dog and share his food with him. After a long time spent like this eating, talking and laughing he wanted to take a long break. So he lay on his back and gazed at the stars. It was such a beautiful night with a beautiful light that came from the moon. In that beautiful night he fell asleep with the dog on his belly; he was exhausted by the trip that he had taken.

After three hours, the dog woke him by his movements and he immediately rose to his feet. He heard a noise and the dog was staring at the place where the noise came from and something was heading toward them in a very slow way. He thought it might be a dog that lost its way. Suddenly his dog started barking at that creature and immediately in front of him appeared a black wolf with blue eyes that shone from the little fire that remained. The dog entered a fight with the wolf. He immediately took the last branches with fire on them and hit that

damn creature on its head twice. The wolf suddenly ran off but then started barking, calling his mates to help him. Dreny knew what was going on, and started packing whatever he could and moving away from that place.

He didn't know where to go at that moment, so he just put the belt on his dog's neck and ran away as fast as possible to somewhere he could hide. He ran very fast with the huge steps of an athlete because he was part of football team in his city, part of the academy, and was a man who loves running and striking goals. He ran in the opposite direction that he came from but he didn't think about what he was doing. He just wanted to save himself and the dog. He was running into unknown places and the woods started to appear differently, the trees had red colors on their bark. He just ran and ran never stopped until he got again exhausted. He couldn't feel his legs anymore, his blood pressure was extremely high, and he had just a little water left in his bottle.

He lay down on the ground and starting shaking and losing his consciousness for a bit. When he started shivering he immediately took some clothes from his backpack and covered his body. Many wolves appeared before him while he was losing his consciousness and suddenly his head fell down to the ground.

He saw very bad dreams during that time, with a lot of wolves fighting with the dog, and he watching up in a tree, while his dog was being beaten by them. Suddenly, he felt rain in that moment. It wasn't rain, but it was the dog licking his face to wake him up. And thank God he woke up and kissed the dog. He was alive and wanted to go back home immediately. He rose to

his feet and started to walk slowly for a bit. It was noon and he felt exhaustion all over his body. He was surprised that he had gotten away from that dangerous bunch of wolves.

He was very happy for that and many times he thanked God. He took his dog and looked at his compass to know where he came from. He was heading back but taking with him this lesson of life.

His trip had come to an end and he walked very proudly towards the direction of his uncles. But suddenly he heard a strange noise. A man was coming down toward him shouting with a sniper. "Oh my God, what a terrible moment, what the hell is going on?" he wondered. He hid behind the trees with the dog, thinking what the hell to do. He needed to make a fast decision, and bang, the man was shouting again at a little boy. Who is mad like this to shout at a younger boy? He knew Albanians would never do that so he tried to understand the circumstances he was in. And then he knew the language that the man was offending him in was Serbian language. Suddenly he understood that the place he was in was outside the boundary; he was in Serbian land.

He decided to tie the dog to that tree. He needed a place to hide somewhere else. So he chose to leave the dog there alone but the dog was very angry at that and started barking. He ran quickly to his left and hid. Suddenly that damn poor man was walking towards the dog. But that was Dreny's plan. This way he could get above him. He did so with clever and quiet steps and he was now near him. He needed to make the big decision of his lifetime: to hit a poor enemy that hits children with his damn

sniper. So he walked towards him looking for a huge stone. He could only find a small one as large as his hand. He went slowly behind the enemy who was now trying to kill the dog. So he hit the enemy right on his head with a strong force and suddenly the damn enemy fell down.

He immediately untied the dog and ran away from that place. He found it very difficult to look at the compass while running, so he stopped for a bit to know where he needed to turn.

He left the Serbian boundary and entered his own land. He now saw the road that he had walked on before. He now found it easier to run because it was downhill.

So he arrived in two hours less than it took to climb. The dog was very exhausted and his right leg was bleeding from the wound that he had gotten from the wolf. He needed to take some rest as well and so he just tied the dog's leg with his t-shirt and moved on again. He had a lot of difficulties along the road because he was without water and his body couldn't give its maximum.

Finally, after a lot of problems and trials his lifetime trip came to an end. He arrived at his uncle's house and immediately shouted in a voice to spread through the mountains the victory that he won with his enemy during the trip. All of the members of his family came out after hearing his voice of victory and joy, a voice of sacrifice and bravery.

All that night they celebrated the dream trip of Dreny. His uncle from afar came to celebrate as well and they all had a night to remember. They sang old war songs and danced as well—the old and national dances.

That was his dream trip and it will be always remain in his memories how he achieved it with a lot of trials and struggle.

I dedicate this to my dearest uncle Fatmir Kryeziu who passed away 10 years ago. And as well I dedicate this to United States of America for their help to my country.

The Eyes of the Golden Fields

by Mrika Rexhaj

March, 1999

Ken was standing there and at the same time observing with his green eyes the golden fields and remembering those spring days that used to shine in his heart. He just could not believe how his life had changed and how his past had changed too. Thinking had become a part of his life; however his thoughts were bringing him to something else, to another conclusion that he never imagined his thoughts would include—that tragic events were happening and that some evil people exist. His thoughts that everyone wants peace just because he wanted it, were gone. His eyes had opened and he had stopped blaming himself for all everything that happened. There appeared his father, an old man with a white beard and hair, saying to his son, “Stop hurting yourself. Life is not fair and you should get used to it. Please live or die, but do not ever stop breathing if you are still living.” Ken said to his father that he would be alright after publishing the book that he was writing. Their conversation ended by his father hugging his son with tears in his eye.

The picture of celebrating

November, 1996

‘Congrats! Here I have your favorite wine! I am proud of you like I always used to be. I wish our mother could be here in this wonderful event,’ his sister Tina said to him. All night long she did not stop hugging her brother. That night there was his brother-in-law, his father, his nephew, niece, and his friend Dora, a very intelligent girl who studied law in Holland, who Ken knew since childhood. In between those hugs were lots of smiles from his favorite people. But what was the most important was the happiness of his son Mike. The last words of his wife that he remembered were: "I am going in peace since I know that you will be the hero of our son and I hope that one day he will be like you."

There came his brother-in-law, Den, saying to him, "I really enjoyed your book and I am glad that the father and the son have the same talent.

"Thank you, Den," Ken said. "I am happy hearing that, especially from a great writer like you."

"Are you thinking about a future book, Ken?"

"Well, I do not know. Maybe one day if Mike will be happy and will be there to tell me his imagination. I will still write while I am seeing that Mike is not the only one enjoying my books...you know that feeling. You are a writer." Ken smiled while talking.

"Are you happy for yourself, Ken? Forget about Mike and other kids, but do you really enjoy writing?" Den asked.

"Well, yes, I do. I always knew that I could write, but since my wife died my thoughts ran another way."

“While we are talking about reading, did you ever read any book of mine, Ken?” Den asked.

“Huh! I am sorry but I did not read yours yet.” Ken answered.

Tina came. “Ooh. You writers talking about books. Ken, did you read Den`s books. They are really, really interesting.”

“We were just talking about that and I am sorry to say that I did not read any books that Den wrote. But I am saying ‘yet’. One day I will with pleasure, Tina.”

Ken, Tina, and Den went back to lunch and there was Mike explaining to his friends the stories that were written in the book. That night Ken was not only the hero of his son but also of all the members that were sitting on the table.

Ken went out in balcony to smoke a cigarette and Dora, his childhood friend who loved Ken since she was a teenager, said to him, “I was happy for you and I came immediately when I heard the good new that you have become a great writer. I always knew that you could do it. That is why I want to say these words to you again, Ken. I know you will get angry but I am tired of loving a person who cannot know what he wants from his life. I am sorry that you eyes have been closed since your wife has gone. Please Ken, wake up. You see what you can do, you are able to write great books and to take great photographs, but please try to enjoy this great breathe of air. Think about the money you earn from books. You can go everywhere and travel the world. I know that it is one of the things that you most love to do in life. Come and stay with me in Holland because, like this, what you are doing is nothing, Ken. Nothing. You are just waiting

here, staying in one place and waiting for a sight from your dead wife. You listen. Your dead wife is gone, gone forever. You still will wait to publish another book, which would make anyone happy, except you, Ken. I am saying again wake up and give to me the Ken that I used to know.”

“Dora, go inside and leave me alone. If my eyes are closed, it is because I want them to be closed and it is enough for Mike to be happy. I will be like this for he is my everything now and I am sorry that I could never give your heart the love that you deserve, but this is who I am. I wish I could Dora, but I cannot. Always, when I want to start something new, I am just confused and my life takes another direction. And do not mention Kim any more. She has nothing to do with me and my alcohol. She has gone. I know. But now it is about me. I just cannot be on my feet and look the world straight in the eye. I do not know why but I cannot.”

Dora left the event and went alone home.

Ken knew that he had lost Dora and he felt sorry about that but he knew he would feel more sorry if he would start hurting her again by playing the role of a fake lover. He was not sure if he loved her or he just loved being loved by someone like Dora.

Ken said goodbye to his sister, and all the people inside, and went back home with his father and his son.

Today was a new day. Again Ken started to work in the library selling books and, in the meantime, waited for his fans to come and take his books. When Ken would finish work he would go to pick Mike up from school and they would go home together, walking and having conversations all the way.

One day Ken was asked by his son, "Dad, why do you always smell strange, and why is Dora not living with you and me? I can see all my friends have a father and there is always a woman inside the house. Is it my fault that Dora does not want to stay with us?"

"Do not ever think about that, Mike. The reason Dora does not live with us has nothing to do with you. She has gone because she went back to her studies. One day when you grow up you will see how it is to study and how to live independently. And my smell is strange because...you are still too young to understand. I am sorry. I cannot explain the smell," Ken answered. He felt too ashamed to explain his alcohol drinking to his son.

"It does not matter, Dad. I want to have this smell if this makes me to be like you," Mike said to his father.

Ken hugged his son and went inside. They ate, watched a movie, and then he put Mike to sleep. Ken finished his last bottle and went sleep too. The days were the same everyday: sending Mike to school, finishing work, getting Mike, and going back home. But Ken felt happy; even though nothing was changing, he loved doing this and living a life where everyone respected him.

May, 1998

Days became weeks, weeks became months and months and then years. Ken was still the hero of his son and his third book was published and very successful. He never knew that to write about kids would bring him success. He bought a new flat in the city but he could never

change his home because so many memories of his life still lived there. He could not live far away from the golden fields and the way when loved walking his son to school, avoiding cars.

But then the worst day came, a day that Mike could never imagine. It happened while walking with his son and having conversations like always. A car came and tread over Mike and Mike died before the ambulance arrived. Ken felt that hell was inside of him. He could not do anything. His hands were on his head and screaming all the time. The car had gone; the car had not even stopped. Ken`s words were, “It is my fault. I did not help him. That car was supposed to run over me!” Ken`s days were full of alcohol. He just could not believe that his son was gone. He felt that freaking pain, whose eyes and screams could not take it away. He stayed all the time closed up in his room. He could not stand the people around saying it was not his fault because those words reminded him that it was his fault, even though he knew inside that it was an accident. Ken wanted to die. He mixed different pills and alcohol, but the ambulance came and sent him to the hospital and saved his life. Ken woke up after three months in the hospital, and in front of him was Dora, the girl who was always there for Ken.

“Where I am?” Ken asked. “Why am I here? You are here because something happened and you know, Dora. Tell me why Mike has gone? I told you that I am not able to love someone like people deserve and I do not know why. Dora, for the love that you have for me, just let me die.”

Ken fell sleeping again and the doctor told Dora that she had to leave him alone. She went out and smoked the last cigarette in her pocket, crying and praying for Ken, and crying for herself about why she was doing this, why she was still feeling the pain for Ken.

Ken's father sold the house where Ken used to live. He wanted Ken and him to leave that house and the golden fields, which were the road to happiness for the family. They moved back in the city and Ken decided to stay for sometime with Dora. He knew that during that time he needed to be loved by the love of Dora, or maybe he could not accept the fact that the house of the golden fields was sold. He walked with Dora to the same place where the accident happened. Dora, like always, could not stop herself from talking and started to ask Ken a hundred questions. "Ken, Ken, Ken. For God's sake answer this question. Are you sure that it was an accident? How late in the day was it? Where was Mike standing when the car came?"

"Dora! Please stop!"

"Ken!!!" Dora screamed. "Ken this was not an accident. Ken I grew up in these fields. We were together growing up. Ken, was there anyone who ever died? No Ken. No one died here ever. Ken, for the last time I am saying to you, wake up and remember that day. What was Mike's position? Was his hand together with yours? How Ken? Ken, I am not doing this for you, I am doing it for Mike. Please answer me."

“I do not know. We were talking. It happened so fast. The car came and..Oh my God Dora, stop! I do not know.”

Ken left again without saying goodbye to Dora and went back to the city, thinking all the time, crying and he was really realizing that Mike`s death was not an accident. He just could not agree with the fact that someone could do this thing to a child. He was still asking the most important question. Why exactly to a child?

Ken thoughts started to change. For the first time he started to listen to Dora and he opened his eyes for a different view and starting to think about that black day when his son`s life went away, why that car did not take his life but Mike`s life. His mind went everywhere and all that he could think about was the enemy. He remembered his mother`s words, who died so long ago. “My son, a day will come when you will be successful and you will realize who is your enemy and who is your lover.” Yes there were many enemies but who was that evil person who could take a child`s life, just to destroy Ken`s life? Questions, so many different questions in Ken`s head were accompanied with lot of bottles of alcohol.

Ken woke up early in the morning and the first thing that was on his mind was to go to his sister, who he had not seen in a long time. He knocked at her door and she was happy to see him. Tina happily said to Ken, “Ken you here! And you look fine. Come inside, please. Let me hug you!”

“Tina, is anyone at home? I need to talk to you, and as my sister I really need your help,” Ken said in a nervous way.

“Ken, what happened? You look different.”

“Yes, I look different. Thank you. I need someone to protect me until I get what I want and you are the right person to help me. Tina, look at me and listen to me. What I say is between you and me. Mike was not killed accidentally. Someone decided to do it just to destroy my life. I need to find that person.”

All these words sounded weird to Tina and she replied, “Ken this is crazy. You need to calm yourself and get out this terrible thinking that all this was a plan. I am your sister. I will always protect you but what are you saying, it just does not make sense. I am sorry but you have to leave. Now Den will come and I do not want him to see you like this.”

Ken tried a million times to convince Tina, but it did not work. He wondered why his sister did not believe him about what happened? While he was thinking this he thought about her life, how she was not the same person she used to be, how she was not that happy Tina who he used to spend many hours talking to and passing through all the bad things of life together, like a good and brother do.

Ken was all alone. Even Dora did not care for him anymore and he did not even try to call her because he knew that he did not deserve her love and her protection anymore. However, all the time he was

thinking about her and her words about waking up. Even Dora was a different person to him; a change was coming to Ken from all the wounds he had passed through and Ken knew this change was for the best.

Ken started to read different books about killing and the different characteristics of killers. He tried to find something in those characters, something that would make a clear view in between all those confusing thoughts that day after day were pulling him down. Reading and reading all the time he found something weird that made him think a lot about a story of a father and a son. The character of the father was related to his own real character and the son was his inspiration. The story was not clear yet; he could not remember what the author had to say, but he finally the name of the author, the author that he had never read, and wondered who it was. It was his brother-in-law Den Morgen.

Ken was very curious and went to the store and bought all his books. All his characters were envious, angry, and doing everything just to be the best. He remembered the night of celebrating, when Den asked if he had ever read his books and the questions that he had asked: are you happy for yourself or for your son?" Why had he needed to do that? It was clear to Ken that Den had something to do with the death of his son because Ken was a writer too and he knew that the writer always is related to his characters. Reading and analyzing the books of Den, he really began to find that Den's characters always had somebody to kill.

Ken's head was clear. Ken did not suffer anymore. He knew the suffering in his life had closed his

eyes for many years. But now he was asking the question about what he was going to do now. Thinking about this all the night, he decided to write a story about his life, about everything what he suspected. But he did not want to publish it until Den would see it.

Working all nights and days writing the book, Ken lost a lot of weight and his father was very worried about him. But Ken just could not stop writing. And in the end he finished.

November 1999

Ken went to Den`s office. Den let him come inside and Ken told him to meet at 5 for a coffee. “Just you and me. I need you to help me with a book.” Den accepted and they met.

“Hello Ken, I am sorry for everything that happened in your life, and I am glad that you decided to write again. It is never too late to wake up, Ken. Life is like this.” While sitting for coffee those were the words that Den told Ken.

”Yes, Den. It is never too late to wake up. Ken was smiling in an ironic way at Den. “What you have done to my sister, Den? She is not the same person. She is closed all the time at home. She is not the person that I used to know.”

“Ken, what is wrong with you? She is alright and we are a happy family.”

”Den, look at me. Please look at me straight in my eyes. Take this book and read it, and you have to know that this book will be published in December. But if you are ready to talk in front of the justice, I will not publish it. If you ignore me, I will publish it and you know well that your career will be ruined, your family will not be with you, your fans will hate you, and what is the most important thing that will be gone from you is your fame, you idiot. Please read this and do not let anyone to read it. It is for your own good.

Den immediately called Ken the next day, after spending all night reading. They met in the park and Den said to him, “Ken, I admit, you are smart and you are the greatest writer ever. That’s why I had reason to be jealous.”

“But Mike! Why Mike, Den?” Ken said to him with tears in his eyes, “because you knew the he was my weak point, Den.”

“Yes, I knew, Ken.”

At that moment the police came and arrested Den. Den looked around and he realized that the book had been published two weeks ago and people had started to know the truth. Ken just waited for Den to accept it and he did. There was no other choice for him. Tina felt happy about what happened to Den. She knew from the beginning, but she could never talk because she was afraid that Den would do terrible things.

Ken went to Tina and said to her, “I am sorry for what you have been through with this man and I wish I

could have saved you from the beginning, but I was so confused with my life I did not see.”

Tina hugged her brother and said, “It is not your fault. Thank you. You were and you always will be my hero.”

December 1999

Ken went to Holland to visit Dora. Every time he saw the reality of his life and the events that were happening to him, made him think more and more about Dora. That made him to go to her and to tell her the truth. “Dora, look straight at me and please believe me. I know you will ask me what happened and I will answer you, Dora, that something really bad happened because, as we know, every time that we meet something happens and this time I will stop it. Dora, I want you to be with me forever. I want you to be a part of my life, not part of my events. I want you to marry me because, Dora, I am in love with you.

January, 2000

“A new center, a new life, a new chance to live happy. I am this who I am because something happened to me, something that is making me see the world differently. I changed and I am glad,” Ken said to himself.

Ken went to his father, together with Dora. His father was very old by now. Dora waited outside and Ken came whispering into his father`s ear,
“Daddy...listen please. I just want you to know that I am living more than breathing now. I want to thank you for the courage that you gave to me and I am proud that I am now like you.”

Ken`s father died in peace by giving a smile to Ken.

The Cold Coffin

by Fjoralba Shatri

The sun was shining and her niece and two nephews were playing together in the grass. She was sitting in front of her big house and got lost in thought. Her blue eyes filled up with tears as she remembered the last fifteen years.

It could be felt from a distance: the dark skies, the burning odor, the crying of babies. She felt fear and other complex emotions not knowing what tomorrow held.

Grandma stopped knitting, feeling as though something was wrong. She stared at the black gate, her heart palpitating, not wanting to disturb the others. “I must not be concerned,” she thought, but her heart was fearfully anxious.

Walking without knowing what to do or say, she started to think positive thoughts to keep her mind away from anything bad that might happen.

Grandma Time was in her 70’s. She had always been a slim woman, eating only to avoid sickness. Most of the time she preferred just to listen to others rather than speak. She was an easy going person. All her life she tried to do as much as she could for her children and husband, concerned only about making those around her happy.

“Do as much as you can for others; it does not matter whether they will be nice to you or not. God will value that,” is what she always said.

Her daughter and two sons were the most valuable parts of her life. Their happiness was her happiness too. She had considered herself lucky for having a husband who was not just her husband but also her friend. She had been an orphan almost all her life and her husband too. They were bound to each other. She was thinking about helping her son escape to America with his wife. Obviously, she did not want that but he was not her little child anymore. Her other son had gone to Switzerland with his wife, while her only daughter was married in Kosove.

By only turning the television on she could understand the situation in Kosove. The Serbian army was trying to surround the city. Peja was also under threat, so the people there were living with the fear about whether they should leave their houses. Her feared for her children and her nieces.

Her only daughter had two girls with another one on the way. Her daughter's name was Arta. Arta Shala. She was thirty. A very talkative girl, she had long brown hair, big black eyes, was tall and was a very sincere person. She adored her two daughters.

Her elder son was so different from her other children. Ermal had always been the lazy one. He was never sensitive and always did what he wanted. He was married too, and his wife was a talkative person and sometimes very monotone. Her name was Nora, a short woman and beautiful.

Her youngest son was quiet. He always cared about others, trying to help whenever he could. His name was Genci; he was tall and handsome. He was married to Nita, who was shy and beautiful.

The other important person in her life was her husband. She had never met a human being like him. He was everything to her. His name was Jahe. He was hardly ever angry. His hair had turned grey and his eyes were black.

One night, everyone was awake; nobody was able to sleep. From far away noise of weapons could be heard. Everyone understood the message: they must leave the house. Grandma was very concerned about everything, as was all the others. Her daughter was coming with them along with her little girls. She could not figure out where they would go, if there would Serbian men on the way...there were so many questions on her mind.

They got prepared. Their destination was Tuzi. Despite so many difficulties, they got there. They looked to rent a house and finally found a small one.

Two days later her son Genci was determined to go somewhere abroad, so his mother had no other choice but to let him go. She felt tremendous pain the day her son and his wife left. A part of her soul went with them.

The owner of the house they lived in was a very polite and cheerful man. While they stayed there he brought them food, clothes and many other things.

Her daughter was concerned about other thing: she was safe but her husband not. She could hardly sleep at night, as she was living with the fear of losing him. He was in the Kosova army. Days went by, one at a time, and she imagined losing her husband. There would be no more life for her. Her fear grow each day that passed, especially as she constantly heard how many people

were getting killed. But finally they reunited and her heart finally felt calm. They got back in Kosove after the war was over.

Grandma returned to her village with her husband, but everything was ruined. Their house was not the same. Nothing was the same. But she knew she shouldn't worry because at least her family was alive. Their daughter and son-in-law and nieces visited them often. Better days were coming and they could feel that. At this time it was impossible to communicate with people in other countries and they sometimes felt lonely. But after awhile their elder son came back to Kosova with his wife. They were happy, as it had been a long time since they last saw each other.

Everything was getting better. Their new house was being built and she felt happy to be with her beloved. But she could not be calm because her heart and mind were always longing for her other son who was far, far away. Days went by and she could never stop thinking about her son: what was he doing, what was he feeling. She could not allow herself to become angry or concerned because her heart was weak and she knew that. Her nieces were brought her happiness and she adored them, even though they broke so many plates and made so much noise. She could never get angry with them.

Their younger son was a very busy person, working hard to earn money to help his family. Years later, he could not live any longer without seeing his parents, so he decided to bring them to America. He told them about the idea and it excited them. They couldn't believe they would see their son again after so many

years! They had to go through so many things before going there. Their son was not a legal citizen of America which is why it was difficult.

“Mother, you must come here; there is no other possibility,” said their son.

“But nothing is certain, my dear,” she said. “I assure you that I am the one who wanted to see you too, because I don't want to forget what you look like. I want to see your children and I don't want to live another day missing you, my heart is not strong.” She could not continue. Her eyes were filled with tears, no matter how much she was trying to hold them back.

“You must think positive. I know that both of you will be here,” he said. His mother was nodding, her heart was beating fast while hearing her son talking.

Everything felt ruined when they found out that American Embassy in Kosove said no to them. Mother Time could not bear it. Her weak heart was beating fast and she fainted. As soon as she showed signs of life, she kept asking what had happened, without wanted to know the ugly truth.

When she was a little recovered they came back home to rest and she forgot her dream of seeing her son. She forgot her husband's feelings, because he was not showing his pain and disappointment. Seeing their son again would just remain a dream that could never turn into reality. But that was not what their son thought. Although he was disappointed and fatigued he was trying to be optimistic.

A thousand ideas and memories were constantly being floating through his mind. Deep inside he knew that the chance of bringing his family to America was

fading each day, but he could not and did not want to admit that. His children were the only reason that he was holding on. The three of them were born in America and they had never been to Kosove. They were forgetting what it sounds to speak Albanian. He could not stop blaming himself. He had dreamt about a different life; one not far away from his country or away from his family. But his life was the way it was, and he thought it would be better to leave the past the way it was because he couldn't do anything to change it. But even during the most beautiful seasons, holidays or his children's birthdays, he could not be happy because something was missing deep within him.

His thoughts went so far that he was thinking about his parents getting sick. He would not be there. If they died he would not be able to go to see them for the last time. His parents were feeling hopeless and destroyed by every vain attempt they made to get to America.

Grandma Time was trying to convince herself that this maybe was the way that it should be, that God must have his own reason for the situation that was created. But her husband was the one who kept saying, "We are not aware of what tomorrow holds." After some times, their son tried to bring his parents to American again. At first he was skeptical and fearful of failure. But he tried anyway.

They began a long journey of answering question, telling their history and many other things in the American Embassy. Mother Time was trying to control her emotions because she knew the weakness of her heart and did not want to risk her health. It was

worth it: the answer was yes! They could not believe what they heard, so they asked several times to make it sure that it was yes. Both of them were very happy. They had been living with the hope that they would hug their son once again and now finally it would no longer be just a dream.

Soon they booked their flight reservation and got prepared. The time was coming. There was nothing that could stop them now from seeing and hugging their son.

Tears came to their eyes and their hearts beat fast. Their eyes were trying to find one person among the crowd there in airport. The moment that both of them dreamt so much about had turned in reality now.

There he was! They would have known him from miles away. Their hearts could feel his presence. Their hands finally met one another's, their bodies became as one and none of them could hold back their tears of joy. The whole world was theirs because their child was with them again and that is the only thing they had wished for.

Mother Time could not let her son's hand go. She was holding it for as long as she could, as if he would leave again, and she wanted to be sure her heart was beating near his.

They could not get enough of asking each other about everything, like a whole life had passed since they had last seen each other. As soon as they entered in their son's apartment, their nephews and beautiful niece jumped in their arms. The grandparents felt the children's heartbeats. Their daughter-in-law was very lovely and polite towards them.

Their son decided to take a week off from work just to spend as much time as he could with them. They visited many places, ate different food - so different than what they ate in Kosove. They were impressed with all the buildings, noticing the big difference between American and Kosove.

But they were not interested to spend their time visiting different places, or seeing different things. All they wanted was to stay with was their son and their nephews and niece, to talk about all the things that had happened when they weren't together. Just hearing their son speaking was enough for them.

Time went too fast and they wished to stay longer but they couldn't. At least they saw their son, their dream was turned in reality, and that is all they ever wished for. Obviously, it was hard for them to say goodbye and return to their reality.

After they came back to Kosove, it was quite difficult to get used to not seeing their son every day. Now both of them could live remembering the days that they spent with their son for the rest of their lives. They kept telling everyone about their experience, what they had done in America and what their son's apartment look like, all with the intention of speaking about him, so he could live in their memory.

Mother Time and her husband Jahe were growing old, day by day. Jahe never meant to make anyone feel bad or uncomfortable, but not all others were polite and kind towards him. He had worked all his life, whether it was raining or snowing. He never took care of himself, because he could never say no to people. So he kept

working because in his mind he thought he would remain young forever.

But he knew he was not feeling good. He constantly had stomachaches but he was determined he would not tell anyone about it. He didn't want anybody to be concerned about him. As the days passed he began feeling worse than before. His wife began to notice, then his son too. They brought a doctor to see him. The doctor knew that he was very sick. He had a problem with his casing and needed to immediately have an operation. His family members were blindsided. They couldn't understand how the situation had become so critical without their knowing anything about it. His wife could not stop blaming herself for not realizing that her husband was unwell.

The operation lasted five hours. He was not well and his family knew it. His son was afraid and concerned about his father, more so because he knew that if his father died, he would not be able to return to see him. He kept calling and asking how he was. He was trying to find some peace because he felt like he was going insane.

His mother was trying to persuade him that his father wasn't so sick and that he would recover, but the son knew that she was just trying to calm him down. But every day his father was getting worse. His heart was very weak and he couldn't eat or drink. He was very pale. His wife could not feel better because deep within her she was trying to convince herself that the worst was about to come and her heart was against it. It could not be as simple as him recovering. They have been living together almost an entire lifetime, and she

did not want to lose him, otherwise a part of her would be gone too. She hoped for the best, praying to God for him and asking him for another chance.

All she was doing was staring at his face, afraid of losing him at any moment. Tears filled her blue eyes every time when the thought of his death and living without him came through her mind. She sat there beside him trying to tell him her last words. She thought herself an unfit wife, having quarreled with him so many times. Often she may have become tiresome but never on purpose, while he was always showed respect towards her. He loved her not only as his wife but also as his friend, as the one who he would do everything for, just to make happy the one he loves. They had been together for almost fifty years, enough to know how important one person could be and what life would be like after the other is gone.

After another unexpected operation he was not strong enough to fight for his life. His heart stopped beating and his eyes remained closed forever. His voice would not be heard in the house anymore.

Her soul was gone. Someone that meant so much to her was not there anymore. She could feel the pain within her, the empty space that would remain empty forever. It was the most difficult thing, seeing his corpse there, with no life inside of it.

Then she realized that her son has been calling but she was not able to pick up the phone to tell him what has happened. She couldn't be the one to tell her son about his father's death. But she knew that she had to.

"He's dead." Those were the words that her son did not want to hear, but were exactly the ones he heard.

“How? How so fast?” he asked. He was not there for his father’s last moments. His eyes were fixed on a picture, which was taken the last time he saw his father. At that time he did not know that would be the last time he would see him, but now he knew. That winter was the coldest one.

None of them could feel their fingers, numb from the cold weather. The coffin went down into the frozen ground. It started to snow and their hearts were frozen too.

Biographies

Bahrije Arifaj is 22 years old and lives in Prizren. She is a student at the University of Prizren and is studying English. She loves reading, travelling and writing.

Miranda Beqiraj lives in Prizren. She is studying English in the Education Faculty at the University of Prizren.

Saranda Beqiraj is 21 years old. She lives in Prizren, which she considers one of the most beautiful cities. Her hobbies are painting, reading, and watching movies. She likes English literature especially American culture. She would like to learn English fluently and to get a good job.

Fjolla Blakaj was born 30 July 1994 in Istog. She started school when she was six years old and finished primary school in her birthplace. She also continued on to gymnasium in Istog. She is now a second year student studying English Language and Literature in the faculty of Philology at the University of Prishtina. She attended NaNo writing, because she was interested in learning more about how to write a novel. She stated, “At first I thought that I would not be able to write a novel on my own, but while attending the course I learned that this was possible. Therefore I started and also finished my novel. I enjoyed a being a part of NaNo writing a lot.”

Gresa Bujupaj is a student of English Language and Literature at the University of Prishtina. She was born on the 8th of September 1993 in Istog, where she continues to live with her family. Gresa finished High School in her hometown and enrolled her English studies in 2012. She is really keen on languages. Besides Albanian and English, she also speaks German and a little Spanish. Gresa has many hobbies but two things that she enjoys most doing are: reading and jogging. She also likes helping other people and participating in projects that can be beneficial for the community. Gresa is a volunteer at American Corner, Pristina, where she works with young learners helping them improve their reading and writing skills in English.

In the future Gresa wants to become a successful translator and interpreter. One of her dreams is also to publish her own book which is one the main reasons why she participated in NaNoWriMo. Gresa considers that NaNoWriMo classes to have been helpful in learning some basic rules of writing. Gresa encourages everyone who has the will to write to participate in NaNoWriMo, since it is an interesting and unforgettable experience. It is worth doing it because at the end you will have a result of which you can be proud.

Mimoza Collaku studies English in the Education Faculty at University of Prizren. She loves literature and also works as a hairdresser.

Liridona Halimi is 21 years old and lives in Gjilan. After finishing high school of medicine in her hometown, she continued her University studies in

Prishtina. Liridona is a student of English Language and Literature at the University of Prishtina. In the future she wants to be a teacher of English Language. She joined NaNoWriMo because she wanted to learn how to write more effectively and maybe in the future to publish her own book. Her story it's a fiction that she invented about a life of a girl called Hanna.

Medina Hetemi is a student at University of Prishtina where she studies English Language and Literature. She finished both her primary and secondary school in Mitrovica where she was born. Besides studying, she enjoys music, writing, nature and often spending time alone exploring her imagination. Medina is a student intern at the American Corner, Pristina, where she spends many hours helping out with various tasks.

Blerta Hoti was born in 1992 in Prizren, Kosovo. She lives in my birthplace with her family: her parents and her brothers. Her goal in life is to achieve success and to make her dreams come true. That means, to take and enjoy every moment in life, and one day to make my family proud of me. I think the most precious of all the things is a book, and the most beautiful things one can have are the people.

Reze Hoti was born on 28 April 1991 in Prizren, a city in southern Kosovo. She finished primary and high school in her hometown. When she was 18, she moved to Prishtina to study in the Medical Faculty at the

University of Prishtina. At 19, she decided to also enroll in the Philology Faculty and study English Language and Literature. Her hobbies include travelling, listening to music and reading books. She loves literature, especially English Literature and in her spare time she likes to write.

Ylbere Hoxha studies English in the Education Faculty at University of Prizren.

Dorentina Isufaj, “Dona” was born in Kovraga, Istog on the 11th of July, 1994. She attended “Martin Camaj” primary school and “Haxhi Zeka” high school. She is a student of English Language and Literature in University of Prishtina. Movies and novels are her attraction. She decided to take the NaNoWriMo challenge as something new in her daily routine, a new experience. The story that she wrote brings up a known phenomenon; falling in love through telephones and following the beats of the heart without knowing each other until fate decide to make the turn on their lives.

Arlind Jerliu was born in Gjilan on the 27th of July in 1993. He is a second year student of English Language and Literature in the Public University of Prishtina. Arlind is a volunteer at American Corner, Pristina, where he works on reading and writing skills in English with young learners. Having managed to have a smooth success in university studies, he decided to take some more activities outside the class, so that he would be able to improve his

English. Arlind stated: "I was one of those lucky students who were given the opportunity of attending NaNoWriMo (National Novel Writing Month) Course. The course was way better than I had expected. Not only did I improve my writing but I also increased my self-esteem as I was able to finish one of the most challenging tasks that I was given- write a short novel "(The (un)lucky guy denied by the (un)blessed people) on my own". As a matter of fact, I consider this challenge as crucial if one wants to have a real improvement, and therefore would suggest it to everyone."

Arta Krasniqi was born in Peja and is twenty years old. She grew up in her hometown and still lives there, but now is a second year student of the English Department of the University of Prishtina. She attended the National November Writing Month (NaNoWriMo) because she thought that this course would give her a great opportunity to write something on her own and to express her thoughts even more. She found this experience very helpful and says it was a great chance to develop her ideas. She says that this course met her expectations.

Ariana Kuqi was born on 08.02.1994. She is from Peja where she finished elementary and high school. Now she is studying English Language and Literature at University of Prishtina.

"I have always been into poetry and stuff, I mostly like

to read novels but I never thought of writing one. I joined NaNoWrimo in order to challenge my writing skills and creativity, and I never thought I would write a novel for 30 days but I made it. It was a great experience and I hope you all will enjoy my Short Story".

Donjete Latifaj was born in 1993, in Hogosht, in the municipality of Kamenica. She finished the primary and high school in Kamenica. Now, she is a second year student at the University of Prishtina, Faculty of Philology, department of English Language and Literature. Her hobbies and interests are writing poems, reading novels, participating in debates, volunteering in community projects and volleyball. Donjete is also a volunteer at American Corner, Pristina, where she works with young learners. She took part in NaNoWriMo classes because she considered it a worthy challenge and a great experience in terms of advancing writing skills.

Leotrim Maxharraj was born on the 8th of September, 1994. She hails from a small beautiful village called Studenica in the municipality of Istog. She lives there with her family which consists of her parents and three brothers. She says of them: "They are everything to me; they are always there to encourage and support me whenever I need them." Currently, Leotrim is a second year student at the University of Prishtina where she studies English Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philology. In her spare time she likes to read novels. She has always wanted to become a writer and likes creating non-existing characters and places that are not real.

Leotrim stated that she had never had the courage to show her writings to anybody but thanks to the American Corner and the NaNoWriMo course, she finally did it. "It is one of the greatest feelings in the world when you know that you have created something and others are going to read it."

Nurixhyz Mexhiti lives in Prizren, a small and beautiful town in Kosovo. A student of English Language and Literature, her aim is to be a good English teacher. She enjoys sharing her knowledge with others, and appreciates loving and caring for her community. She believes that writing is the best way to express your own and other's feelings. Through this book, with her colleagues, she tried to share her thoughts about people in Kosovo and their difficulties as they pass through this life.

Ardiana Morina was born on the second of November in 1993. She is from Peja and finished primary school in Loxha, in school named "2 korriku" and high school in "Bedri Pejani" school.

Currently, she is in the second year of English Language and Literature in University of Prishtina, "Hasan Prishtina".

Ardiana stated: "From my personal view regarded to NaNo writing, I found it very useful and we had a lot of fun. It was a new experience for me for which I will be very grateful, because now I can write something by myself even though maybe my writes are not that professional, but still I am going to express my feeling

through writing, so in that way my feelings will live longer.”

Violeta Morina was born in 1974 in Fortes, Rahovec. Since the age of four she moved with her family to Prizren. And at the age 6 she started the primary school "Leke Dukagjini" in Prizren and then continued gymnasium " Gjon Buzuku" for natural sciences. At that time it was a war time and the economical situation was not very good causing her to stop the furthering of her education. And 17 years she decided to continue studying and in 2011 she the Faculty of Education in English language at the University of Prizren.

Dafinë Muçiqi was born in 1992 in Llapashtica, a village near Podujeva City. She finished primary school at “Naum Veqilharxhi”, in Llapashtica. After that, she finished high school, Nature’s Science at Gymnasium “Aleksander Xhuvani” in Podujeva. In 2011, Dafina enrolled in the University of Prishtina, “Hasan Prishtina”. Now, she is a third year student in the Department of English Language and Literature. She lives with her family. She has three brothers and one sister. Her hobbies include reading, painting and design. Dafina joined NaNo Writing because she wanted to try this new experience. She said, “It was a very good opportunity for us.”

Besart Osman was born in 1989. He has finished the faculty of electrical and computer engineering. He spends most of his free time in various activities such as writing poems and stories on fictional topics. Some

poems and stories have been published in books and are available at the library in the city of Prizren. His poems and stories are usually dedicated to love, nature, and society.

Asdren Rafuna was born in Prishtina, Kosovo, and he lives there. He was a theatre actor when he was a kid, a swimmer for nearly 3 years in 'OAZA' team, and had attended football academy in 'Flamurtari' club then played for them for around 6 years. He was a painter too, during his days in high school until his art teacher died. At that time he left painting but his art expression never faded. He carried that into writing poetry and novels now. He is attending the faculty of English and Literature.

He worked as a sport journalist at Kosovo.Info, a Project Manager at Kosovo Youth Institute and now he is a volunteer at 'Nektari' organization for helping families and orphan children. Asdren is also a volunteer at American Corner, Pristina, where he works on reading and writing skills in English with young learners.

Mrika Rexhaj was born in Peja-Kosova in 1992. She currently lives in the Capital of Kosova for studying where she studies English Literature at the University of Pristina. Mrika is a third year student. She is also very active at the American Corner, Pristina, where she is a student intern.

Mrika loves nature, music, hiking, rock climbing, photography, reading and writing.

One of the things that she would like to experience in life is the EXPERIENCE itself.

Fjoralba Shatri was born 15 July 1994. She is from Istog where she finished primary school and high school. Now she is studying English Language and Literature at the University of Prishtina. In her opinion, writing a short story on her own was a great idea and a great opportunity to become an independent writer. During the NaNo writing, she figured out an important thing: “we all could write stories, we have to think it as possible and ourselves as capable enough for doing it.” She thinks that everyone that attended NaNo writing did a great job and gave their best.