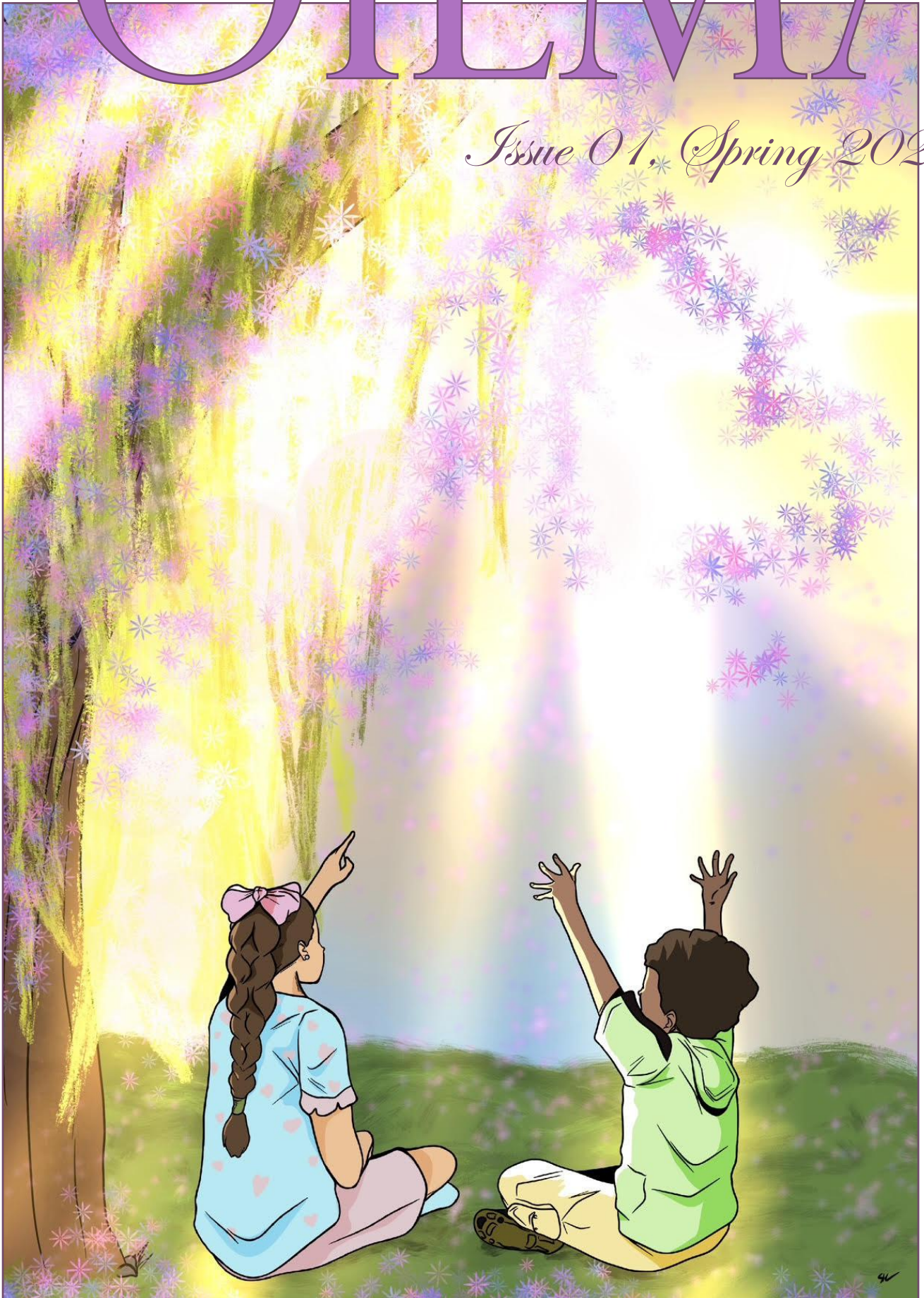


# POIEMA

*Issue 01, Spring 2025*



EXPLORING THE WAY SALT AND LIGHT REFLECTS IN EACH PAIR OF EYES



## Cover design by Shawn Haliburton

@chaotic\_campaign

Hi, my name is Shawn Haliburton! I'm a digital artist that enjoy's telling stories through creating my own original comics. My inspiration for creating stories comes from different moments in the Bible and through watching anime. I believe the talent God has blessed me with is a great way to glorify him and a way for me to share my passion through my artwork to the world. I hope my art will eventually reach many and I'm truly thankful for the different opportunities that may come my way, allowing me to create and share what I love doing.





# Editor's Letter

For a long time, I wondered why God never spoke to me. I'd hear testimonies from the church about God's voice, timely and gentle, guiding their lives and their ministry as they called upon Him. And for a long time, I sat in wait for a voice from the heavens to whisper instructions. What do I do next? How do I serve you, God, with the personality you equipped me with?

As it turned out, I was searching for God in the sky when He was trying to speak to me right where I was, in a little Australian suburb surrounded by bush, hills and sea. Truthfully, *Poiema* blossomed from a thought I'd had in the shower one Sunday night, after a church service about ministry. I wondered where my place was in God's big plan. I tried to picture myself as a youth pastor or a missionary, but I just looked so out of place in those positions. It wasn't *me*. My words only ever made sense on paper, not spoken. Even so, I dreaded entering the creative industry, where darkness intertwines itself in beauty.

I wanted more than anything to serve God, but I wished I could do so in a way that invites Him in to my career and my passions. In the coming days, I experienced little moments that brought me back to that shower thought. A uni assignment on publishing. An advertisement for a writer's group at church. And slowly, God brought the pieces together to formulate an idea in my mind. But I wasn't sure about it yet, so I started to pray. Lord, should I start this creative magazine? I don't even know if anyone else reads creative magazines anymore. How in the world will I reach Christian creatives?

And then one night, as I was reading 1 Peter, a verse jumped out at me so hard that I knew with all my heart that this was it. This was God's voice.

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God" 1 Peter 4:10

God doesn't always speak to us in ways of grandeur. I met Him in a small verse in 1 Peter, and through a simple shower thought that He planted in my mind. It seems like a metaphor to me: you don't need to be somebody 'special' to carry out God's mission. You just need to be willing. Listening. Seeking. And if He spoke to me in metaphors, the language that I understand best, He'll speak to you in your own language, too. You'll find yourself in a moment between you and the Father — and it may not be grand, but He'll use something unexpected to spark a light in you. And maybe that spark will be found within these pages.

With that, dear reader, I welcome you to *Poiema Magazine*. It truly is an honour to share this labour of love with you, and I hope and pray that you find solace and community in this issue and the many, many to come.

And so it begins.



Jasmine Krnjaic  
Founder and EIC

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Oh how sweet it is to remember  
That love so deep, and wide, and tender

The breath at dawn  
The cradle at dusk

That quiet leading  
And gentle touch

Oh how loud is this world  
We so quickly forget

The One who calls our souls to rest



# Love Stronger



It was not nails that held my Savior to the cross:  
With hosts of angels at His call He did not have to stay,  
He could have let me die as I deserved, and walked away;

It was not nails that held my Savior to the cross:  
To pursue this wandering rebel with the depths of His love,  
He came to save me from the wrath above;

It was not nails that held my Savior to the cross:  
To extend this sinner's heart mercy and grace,  
He willingly stood condemned in my place;

rising

# er than Nails



It was not nails that held my Savior to the cross:  
To restore this fallen slave to His side,  
He carried the cross on which He died;

It was not nails that held my Savior to the cross:  
To ransom this ruined soul by darkness torn,  
He endured the piercing nail, spear, and thorn;

It was not nails that held my Savior to the cross:  
With hosts of angels at His call He did not have to stay;  
He stayed that I might live by the death He died that day.

# WHEN BALANCE BECOMES BONDAGE

HOW SURRENDER UNLOCKS PEACE AND PURPOSE

An essay by Cathy Colver Garland

We live in a culture obsessed with balance. Work-life balance. Ministry-family balance. Even self-care balance. It sounds noble, but what if the very thing we're chasing is keeping us from the life God is inviting us into? I know because I've been there.

## **The Struggle: The Invisible Battle**

I entered a season where everything looked balanced on paper: family, work, ministry, and even self-care. But inside, I was brittle and anxious. Spiritually, I was performing for God instead of communing with Him. My faith became a checklist. My family got what was left of me. My calendar was full of purpose, but my soul was running on empty. Balance had become my idol. I was tempted to believe that if I controlled enough variables, I might not need to lean on God fully.

## **What the Bible Really Says**

Here's the surprising truth: the Bible never tells us to "find balance." The concept is a Hindu concept, based on balancing yin and yang, good and evil. As Christians, we don't balance good and evil; we are wholly on the side of God's goodness and wholly opposed to evil. This concept has crept in, and I'm convinced it's keeping us in bondage.

Readers might be surprised that the Bible doesn't even tell us to prioritize, numbering things from 1-10. This concept is not practical for mothers, influencers, or anyone attempting to accomplish a lot. Life is meant to be lived. Messy. Measured in intimacy, not checkmarks.

What Scripture gives us instead is rhythm—seasons of sowing and reaping, resting and working, fasting and feasting.

"There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens."

(Ecclesiastes 3:1 NIV)

And above all, Jesus doesn't ask us to balance Him into our lives. He commands us: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you."

(Matthew 6:33, ESV)

True peace and fruitfulness doesn't come from juggling everything evenly. It comes from aligning with God's Kingdom in the season He has us in, seeking His presence above everything else.

## The Wake-Up Call

This became clear to me when, one morning in prayer, I heard the Lord whisper: “You don’t need balance. You need obedience.” It stopped me cold. In that moment, I realized peace would never come from achieving perfect balance. It would only come from surrender. I had to lay down my plans, my metrics, and my striving, and align instead with His voice.

## Four Shifts That Changed Everything

Here’s how God reframed my thinking and how you can step into the same freedom:



### 3. Trade Metrics for Markers

Social media numbers and revenue goals don’t measure faithfulness. Obedience does.

Practical Step: Define three “faithfulness markers” you’ll measure instead of metrics.

Examples: Did I follow God’s leading today? Did I serve with excellence? Did I rest when He asked me to?

### 4. Build a Surrender Habit

Surrender isn’t a one-time act—it’s a daily decision.

Practical Step: Set a phone reminder titled Surrender Check-In. When it goes off, pause. Breathe. Pray: “I release this to You, Lord. Make my steps firm.”

## The Fruit of Surrender

When I stopped pursuing balance and started practicing obedience, everything shifted. My home grew more peaceful. My connection with God was measured in intimacy, not discipline. I became more fruitful; not because I balanced better, but because I surrendered.

## Final Encouragement

If you’re doing all the “right” things and still feel dry, balance might have become bondage. Lay it down. Cast down any lies and replace them with God’s truth. What God works through you will always be better than what you could organize yourself into.

Seek His Kingdom first. Trust His seasons. Walk in obedience. Freedom isn’t the absence of something, but the presence of Someone.



### 1. Name What You’re Clinging To

Surrender begins with awareness. What are you gripping too tightly—a launch, a revenue goal, a reputation?

Ask: “What am I afraid will fall apart if I let go? What lie am I believing?”

Practical Step: Journal your stress points. Label each: Mine to manage vs. God’s to carry.

### 2. Replace Balance with Rhythm

Balance implies sameness, trade-off, and compromise. But God calls us into seasons—and His seasons lead us into rest and fruitfulness.

Ask: What’s eternal? What’s urgent? What can wait? What is God saying?

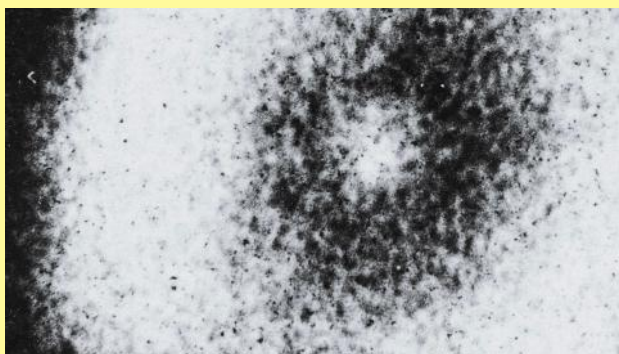
Practical Step: Begin your week with a God-led priorities list.

*Medicine*

*for a*

*Little*

*Moon*



*by hannah zello*



**Prescription: One Dose of the Planetarium {take as needed}**  
**Mission Log: Maladaptive Daydreaming Sobriety**

**Coordinates: 1 year, 7 months, 8 days, 16 hours, 28 minutes, 32 seconds**

It goes down bitter:

The desaturated hues of Mars, plastered across the wall — the rusting of the heavens  
 Which, after all my daydreaming, is still mostly a black, cold void.

Bitter, the highways and whiny children. The reminder that here, this is all; and out there, that is all.

Another, Lord, give me another. I grimace though my insides are cleansed, oriented toward what I wait eagerly for, groan for.

I let go of trying to romanticize this — these spheres— to quench a thirst they were never meant to slake.

It goes down bitter, but good, good:

To shift my eyes from fading stars to their true object of adoration, to plant my feet willingly on this cracked, concrete city ground and be — aspire to be — content right here. To cling not to aesthetic or anesthetic; to be blinkingly awake, eyes open, seeing earth and space and You and myself as we truly are.

It goes down bitter, to harness my creativity as salt and light in this reality. But hook me up to an IV, if you have to.

I am less and less sedated with each passing hour: more able to glimpse You for who You are instead of who I deign to fashion You into.

Frames fade in luminescence. You grow ever more radiant, white-hot righteousness. Bathe me in Your light until I glow.

Thank You for having mercy on this remote, cold little moon. For drawing me into Your orbit, giving me life and purpose. Remove anything in this system that eclipses my communion with You, my reflection of You.

It goes down bitter, and You are the sweetest, brightest reality of all.

“He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.” — Hebrews 1:3a (ESV)





J.P. Ambrose

## End This While You Still Can

“You must end this while you still can.”

The sound of the torrent of the night’s rain upon the Tent of Bereavement was an apt setting for the tense scene before me. My heart was tempted to be grateful for the canvas around us, but the comfort it provided was the enemy’s exact weapon against which we would have to defend.

“Charalampos was not your brother,” the Bereaved replied with slurred speech, downing another bottle of wine. The alcohol would be digested in minutes and the task at hand would be easier. If he had minutes to spare.

“He was still my kin, and I hope to see him again in the Fields of Endless Day.”

The Bereaved threw an earthen platter to the ground and stomped upon it in fury. I half-hoped he would flip the entire table before him, at least to ruin the food for his own sake. Although, dysregulating himself in rage would be just as dangerous as by love of food and drink. The grief that sought to wrest hold upon him was canny — it knew that the time had not yet come where it could shed the crutch of the lavish meal before his eyes. My beloved cousin was haggard, his face smeared with sweat and tears. His hair fell down his back as a matted mane, so unlike his habitually well-kept braid.

“It may not be so bad — he could end up like me,” inserted Omiros, the only other present. “A life such as this comes with not only pleasure but great freedom.” By a chance grace, or, perhaps, a curse, some of our people can safely eat the foods of man. My people’s ancient term for this rare breed is achalinotos. Unbound to the strict disciplines that govern our people, they are valued by the human overseers as pawns that can be bribed and manipulated. Achalinotos such as Omiros are then made as lords over their fellow slaves — still below any human citizen of the Tetrapolis, but free from the sting of the whip, and rewarded frequently with pleasures of the palate and of the flesh.

As a youth I had been tempted by some peers to join them in testing whether one of us might be of this unusual breed. Such a life was thought glamorous at the time, for we understood not the boons that come with our people’s constraints,

and we took our fathers’ sermons as moralistic products of a naïve older generation. “We will notice the signs early, and should they come, we will stop,” they had said. It is said that our ancestors were able to eat and drink with men without fear when they received or came as guests. But under the conditions in which we now live, the pleasures of the foods of man are so wont to hold us rapt that it is better not even to begin. I did not partake with them — not through wisdom, but out of fear of my father discovering us. All who were brave or foolish enough to partake that day succumbed.

I ignored Omiros’s comment and approached the Bereaved to place a hand upon his shoulder. The stomping of his hooves slowed and halted, and he threw his arms around my shoulders, sobbing into my neck.

I scooped a cup out of the pouch of oats from my shoulder, and handed it to him. “You need to eat something with real sustenance.”

Omiros chuckled. It was an innocent chuckle, as though he did not grasp the gravity of the moment. “You can probably tell by looking at me that the food of man indeed has sustenance,” he said, patting his protruding belly.

The Bereaved poured the cup into his mouth. In order to support our large bodies, we must consume copiously throughout the day, usually in this fashion. On Sundays, on which we traditionally take our rest (though our taskmasters do not heed our customs), I will permit myself to take some grain and oat and mix it with some water, fashioning it into a cake of sorts. This treat is then to be taken in reverence and gratitude. On one occasion, during the Feast of Besmocath in my eleventh spring, my father smuggled me an apple, which is safe for centaurs to eat but is not permitted by our taskmasters except during Bereavement. It was the most delightful thing I have ever tasted.

My cousin swallowed with difficulty. “It’s so dry,” he whispered. His tone was not one of disgust, but of despair.

“Let’s get you some water,” I said. “Omiros, I should not leave him. Can you get us some water?”

Omiros, either distracted or ignoring me, picked up a wing of chicken and began eating it. “You know,” he said, “even if I was of lower physiology, I think I would still partake of the food of man. It’s worth it, even if it could only be for a short while.”



Mukta 2012

I genuinely did not think he was trying to tempt the Bereaved further, but rather had no concept of what was occurring. “Omios,” I said gravely. “Water. Now.”

The squat achalinotos cowered in the shadow of my taller and stronger form, and galloped out of the tent with haste. I would surely reap the bitter fruit of that interaction later, but attending to my cousin was more important.

When I turned back to the Bereaved, he held a chicken drumstick before his face, as though pondering his mortality over a skull. Fresh tears streamed down his cheeks. “I need you to wrest this from my hand.”

In a flash I was before him, and I cast the morsel to the ground and stamped it into the dust with my hoof. He looked longingly at the ruined treat, and before I could do anything he snatched a cube of cheese and gobbled it up.

“Ooh,” he gasped.

“Alright, alright,” I said, hands outstretched as though towards someone training a weapon on himself. I approached him slowly and tried to impose myself between him and the banquet table, but the space was too cramped for the equine half of my body. “It was just a little cheese. Let’s get you out of here and cleaned up.”

Was his face already looking a little longer? No, it was the low lighting. It had to be.

The Bereaved held his hand out, suspended half-way in the act of choosing evil upon himself. He didn’t want to. Should I grab it? It was the desire for food, more so than the food itself, which would bring the ruin upon him. Choosing the food would be just as bad as physically taking it, and stopping him might exacerbate the desire out of sheer contrariness. But, it might rattle him out of the state he was in. His hand moved slowly closer to the charcuterie, a pained expression upon his face.

A flash of lightning illuminated the tent, and a crack of thunder interrupted my thoughts. At that moment, another centaur entered the tent, with Omios visible in the rain behind him.

It was Timaios. Like Omios, he was an achalinotos, immune to the corruption that threatened the Bereaved. Unlike the blubbery centaur who sulked behind him, his penchant was not for the foods of man, but for his temper. His lower half was built like a warhorse, and his human half was just as strong and powerful — he had the physical discipline for exercise for which our people are famous, but was not subjected to the nutritional deficits that plagued his underlings.

Timaios was infamous among all those enslaved about the Tetrapolis. Alas that he was here. “What is this I hear, a dog has ordered his master to fetch a cup of water?” he said.

There was no safe way to engage, and my attention was needed for my cousin. “Look at me,” I said to the Bereaved. “Just look at me. Cast not your eyes upon the food, nor upon—”

“Look at me when I’m talking to you!” Timaios roared.

With the practiced calm that only a seasoned slave can have, I turned my head to him. “Whatever the punishment for my insubordination, I shall submit to it willingly. The matter at hand is urgent, and I request your leave to settle it first.”

The hulking centaur advanced and shook his head. “That won’t do. The dog cannot command his master, and he cannot choose his punishment.” He reached across the table and thrust my head into an apple pie.

I clenched my jaw and lips shut. While raw apples are safe for my kind, baked and candied ones are not. I struggled against his merciless arm, but against such a foe, mere strength is of little use.

I heard my cousin’s gasp. Struggling, I turned my head, still oppressed by the mighty centaur’s arm, and opened an eye. The Bereaved was staring in horror at the violence unfolding in his sight. As if to comfort him, his hands seemed to be acting of their own accord, bringing a fistful of chocolate cake up to his open mouth.

“NO!” I yelled, but the cry was lost in the gurgling of the syrupy mass in which my face was thrust.

By then it was too late, and my cousin’s hand and face were smeared with chocolate and the cake went down his throat. He began to make disorganized vocal sounds, like those of a child in extreme discomfort, but which also took the quality of a frightened animal. He leaned forward and began biting at the many delicacies before him: cured meats and cubed cheeses, a fattened turkey and roasted potatoes, buttery breads, and a vast array of sweet confections. His face was much longer now and his arms much shorter, and he ate voraciously as an animal.

Ever since the mad god Ainsel combined Cleisthenes with his horse for beating him in a game of endurance, and so created the first centaur, my people have had two natures: man and beast. A centaur, if he is to survive his growth from boyhood to adolescence, must learn to rein in the beast and subject it before his rational faculties.

The beast is not suppressed, but mastered. O, how was it that we, who attain to mastery by our nature, were brought to subjugation by others? How did any of us survive?

Thenceforth, if one of us should fail to keep his bestial self in check, and succumb to its desire to reign over him, then so it shall. The human nature perishes, and the centaur, once so noble, is irreversibly transformed into the beast who now holds sovereignty. Such is the irony: he who develops a taste for the foods of man likewise develops a morphology which can palate it no longer.

Timaios had released me, I knew not whether intentionally so, and was rapt in beholding with twisted pleasure the transformation which took place before his eyes. He must have seen it happen a thousand times before this, and yet he did not let himself be distracted from his dark delight. I spat out the sickly sweet fruit.

The Bereaved, now a horse, whinnied in fear and horror at what he had become. He reared up and knocked over the table, and a platter of crumble cakes sitting in strawberry jam splattered on Timaios — a dessert tar and feathering, a far lesser punishment than he deserved. Omiros fled into the night. The Bereaved began frantically running about in circles.

“Ah!” Timaios cried, wiping the jam from himself. “You shall pay for that!” He turned and kicked with his hind legs. He missed, and hit one of the tent’s wooden pillars instead, which splintered. “Stop!” I cried. “You shall injure him, and he shall be destroyed!” Although this horse was no longer my cousin, I still longed for his good. Horses that once were centaurs were excellent — more intelligent, and longer-lived than those of normal stock. Every rich person in the Tetrapolis would covet him. He would be taken by the taskmasters and put to work or sold, and treated better than he had been during his life as a slave.

But Timaios gave an evil grin. Destruction was his delight, and his mind was set upon this horse as his victim. “Hold still!” he grunted at my former cousin as he struck once more with his hind legs. He missed again, and the horse continued to scream and run about in panic.

I knew not what I was doing, but I found myself reaching down and taking up a shard of the sundered pillar. I thought it near a spear in length, though I had never seen one. Timaios back-kicked at the Bereaved again.

It was like time was in slow motion. I contemplated the wooden shard in my hands.

I looked up and made eye contact with Timaios. His irritation at the Bereaved was painted on his face, but it gave way to a fury mixed with terror as he read my eyes. I watched my hands ready the spike, and it was my hooves that made a charge. I drove it into Timaios’s bare chest. It stuck out his back.

The achalinotos looked up at me, his eyes wide. He attempted to take in air to yell profanity, but his damaged chest cavity would not allow it. He grabbed and wrenched the shard from his chest, but it left a mighty hole through which he lost a sea of blood. His second heart, in his horse half, kept up for a time, during which he brandished the weapon and charged at me. He was unbalanced, however, under a haze as he weakened. I skirted his murderous charge, but we ended up chest-to-chest. Holding the splinter with both hands, he strangled me with it, its side cutting into my neck. I tried to wrest myself free, but to no avail — even in his dying moments, Timaios was impossibly strong. I flailed my legs and attempted to strike him with my hooves, but he jerked me around by the neck with terrible aggression. Just as blackness was clouding around the edges of my vision, the achalinotos’s grip suddenly went slack, and he slumped down before me. Timaios was slain.

I looked down upon my own hands, fully convinced I would meet the same fate as my cousin for my act of violence. My whole body was covered in the dead centaur’s blood. Nothing happened.

The horse that once was my cousin had slowed in his rampage. He looked upon me with fearful eyes, but the fear was not of me. I approached with arms outstretched, and consoled the creature.

One slave had put out his hand and slain another. Perhaps, I thought, that would be all this incident amounted to, and the issue settled at the end of a rope. I had no idea at the time that I had started a revolution.

# Kintsugi

Louise Mathieson

PLATE XIV



I think I am addicted to closure.  
Happy ever after? That' s a wrap.

I believe I may be addicted to answers.  
Solutions! Fixes! Results!

And I realise I am addicted to triumph.  
Trophies + victories = success.

I think I may be broken, actually, and I don' t like it very much at  
all.

Always the need to achieve. Explain. Convince. Perform. Attain.  
Lest I discover--again--  
That I am broken, actually, and I don' t like it very much at all...

So begins my unfinishing,  
forcing my eyes to fearlessly examine the damage,  
unflinchingly tally the flaws;

learning to be comfortable with incomplete,  
with yet to be,  
with patchwork me.

Wrestling for contentment with the mess  
and all the rest,  
my loose split ends;

and in the relaxing,  
releasing the tyranny of conclusion,  
embracing all to-be-continueds as I make space for grace.

The molten gold of mystery:  
what if, not yet, plan b,  
pours steadily in

binding my breaks,  
completing my cracks,  
perfecting my piecemeal;

invoking new habits,  
evolving my wholly holy unfinishedness

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**One minute**

**after**



**midnight.**

One minute after midnight, the phone rang and rang, and nobody answered it. If there was one thing I remembered growing up at my grandfather's estate, it was this: never, under any circumstances, answer the phone in the upstairs hallway.

Everyone thought it was broken, or just an antique for decorative purposes. But I knew better. I remembered the nights when I'd sneak back into the house to find my grandfather with the receiver against his ear. He'd speak in hushed tones to the person on the other end, too quiet for me to catch more than a few words. When he'd see me, he would simply wink and raise a finger to his lips. He never mentioned to my parents how I would sneak out at night, and I never mentioned the midnight conversations I overheard from the phone in the upstairs hallway. That's how it stayed.

For a while after I moved away, I would often visit the manor to see my grandfather. But life grew busier, and my visits became few and far between. I thought about him, all alone, and guilt panged at my heart. I'll go next week, I always told myself.

Everything happened too fast; his health took a turn, and all too soon, I was staring at the piece of stone that read:

**Here lies Miles Silver**

The guilt of my distance was an ever-present weight on my shoulders as my elder sister and I arrived at the manor for the first time in years. In an attempt to cleanse my shameful conscience, I had offered to stay there while I got my grandfather's estate in order. I was pretty sure Lola had only offered to help because it got her away from the screaming six-year-old waiting for her at home.

Which brings me back to that night. Exactly one week after the funeral.

After a long day of sorting through boxes, I was just a few steps away from my bedroom door when the ringing of a phone brought me to a halt.

My legs had turned to lead. This was the upstairs hallway. That was the phone I was forbidden to answer, under any circumstance. I wondered if, when my grandfather had made that rule, the circumstances included his death.

My brain didn't process the movement of my hand towards the phone until the ringing suddenly stopped. What was I doing? I withdrew my hand and turned on my heels. Nobody answered that phone. The only person that ever did was gone.

The ringing started once more. With my heart hammering against my rib cage, I slowly turned to face it. My curiosity became almost overwhelming. No one would ever know, I thought. If I didn't answer it, who would?

Before my brain had the chance to apply reason to my next action, I reached for the phone. With a shaking hand, I raised the receiver to my ear. At first, all I heard was static. Maybe the caller was already gone.

'Billie.' A familiar voice spoke my name.

Impossible.

'Tomorrow. One minute after midnight. This phone call never happened.'

I couldn't breathe. I was sure my heart had stopped beating. The line went dead, and I was left standing with my mouth hanging open. It was the grief, that's all. The guilt from the way things ended. I was dreaming. Hallucinating.

How else do you explain a phone call from someone you buried seven days ago?

# Silence of the Earth

Sarah had seen much. Perhaps too much. Too much for her to believe in God anymore. As a war correspondent, she knew feelings that others can't imagine. She had aged a life-time in the span of three years. But here she was again, scrambling through the rubble of another war-torn theatre. Was it all really necessary? Nobody would ever really know. Especially not the survivors.

As a child, she had visited Syria. That was before the war. Long before. With her family, she had visited Damascus, Homs and Maaloula.

Maaloula, in Southwestern Syria, was particularly fascinating with its village built into the mountains. As a qualified linguist, it was also fascinating to Sarah because it was the last place in the world where Aramaic was still spoken. The experience was surreal. A beautiful village carved into the hills that spoke the language that Jesus spoke. The sunset at Maaloula made any Hollywood sci-fi movie look ordinary.

And here she was again, scrambling through the rubble of what had, till recently, been an intact cradle of history. Destroyed by men who couldn't really explain why they did what they did.

That was the hollowness of the victor in every war. And she had interviewed quite a few. Behind all the bravado there was a lostness that had taken residence.

Nobody wins in a war. Except a fearful silence.



Putting her thoughts aside, Sarah continued to record the scenes around her through her Nikon.

Ash fell like snow.

Children's drawings fluttered on scorched walls.

This was once a classroom filled with joy. Now, a graveyard for laughter.

A frail old man with a very kind face suddenly filled her lens.

"Hal ladayk ma'u?" the old man said. Realizing she might not understand Arabic, the man asked gently, "Do you have water? It is for the children."

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The camp was nothing like what you see on the news. A roof was a luxury. Any roof. There were no UN logos anywhere. Every surface reminded Sarah of the insides of a coffin. But yet, there they were in the midst of numbness, a congregation of smiles. Five children jumped with joy at seeing her. Surrounding her. Touching her. And for a minute Sarah almost forgot where she was.

"These are my children", Father Paul said. "Can you get food and water for them?"

Sarah looked at the frail old man. And then at the children.

Food and water would be easy. Protection would not.

\*\*\*

That night, lying under the stars, Sarah pulled out a worn photograph of her brother from her pocket. She had lost him in Afghanistan. And her faith had departed with him.

Her thoughts were interrupted when Leila, one of Father Paul's little girls, lay down beside her and asked, "Do you know why God allows wars to happen?"

How do you answer a twelve-year-old who has experienced more death than you could live through? The moonlight caught the silhouette of a twisted cross that was once a lamppost.

“I don’t believe in God”, came Sarah’s stoic answer. She regretted it the moment it left her lips. There was something wrong with that answer, something she couldn’t put her finger on. Leila’s eyes clouded with sadness.

“Why don’t you believe in God?” came the soft response.

Sarah just smiled back.

“Do you know if you don’t believe in Jesus, you won’t be able to love?”, Leila said.

Sarah thought about that a bit. The conversation went on to other things till they fell asleep. It had been a long day, and the earth was silent.

The next morning Sarah woke up to find Father Paul and the children packing whatever they had and preparing to move.

“Where are you going?” Asked Sarah.

“Somewhere safer for the children. And a place we can pray in peace. Especially for those who torment us”, responded Father Paul.

Sarah watched them leave. Leila was gone. Everything else was as it were. A ruin. A rubble. She reported back to her base over her radio and they would come to pick her up.

She remembered Leila. Her words. It didn’t make any sense. How could a child speak of love in such profound terms? How could a child who had suffered so much even think of love?

A bird landed on the lamppost.

Love never made sense. But Sarah hoped. And that was all that was required.

*Creative Nonfiction by  
Anil Constantine*

As the leaves know when to leave a tree,  
So should we... know when to leave  
know when a season has come and gone,  
know when it's time to embrace a new one  
the leaves do not cry when it's time to say goodbye,  
instead they turn a beautiful red when it's time to die  
they do not fight when it's time to turn from green to yellow,  
rather they said hello to the new hue  
as the leaves do, so should you.



A close-up photograph of several overlapping green leaves. The leaves have prominent yellowish-green veins that create a complex, geometric pattern across the frame. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture and color variations of the foliage.

*Love is  
my*

*Portion.*

His grace is sufficient for such a time as this  
He's carried me through more storms  
than I even realized I was in  
Hindsight is 20/20  
Yet blind to how bad it truly was  
It was His grace in action

Love is my portion  
It overflows in every flower  
Every baby's smile  
The memory of the scent of my grandmother's  
cooking  
I see the glitter of His grace in all things

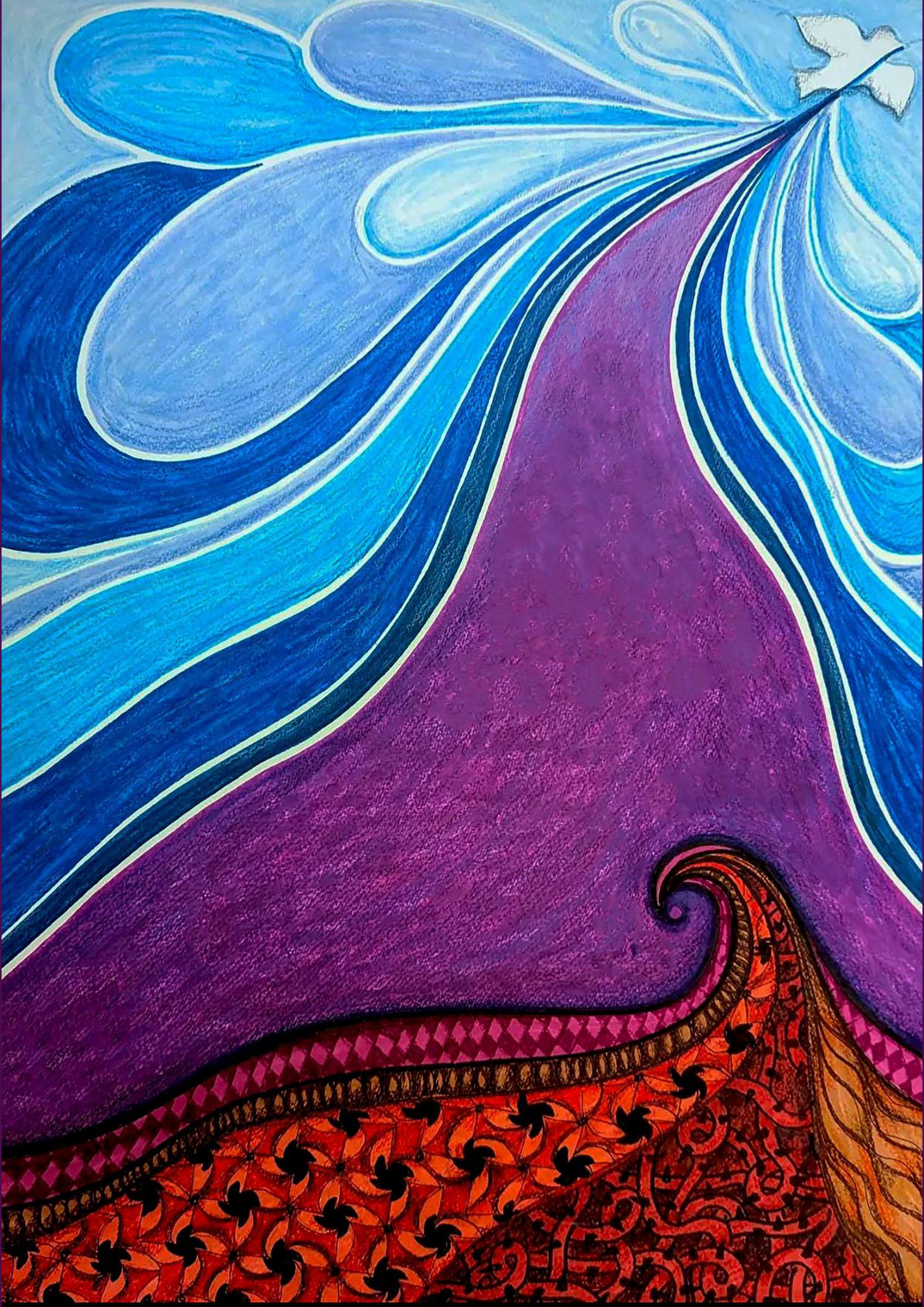
His love envelops me  
Wrapped around me like a blanket  
On a chilly winter's night  
It's a good book and a cup of tea  
At the end of a day filled with haste

A never-ending portion  
Of His compassion  
And benevolence  
Is ours to claim  
If only we would unclench our fists  
In order to take His hands  
And receive  
Our inheritance

*Cazoshay Marie*

*Faith over  
Fear*

*Amy Panfalone*





A Springday  
*Feast*

*by Theresa Lajoie*

The Great Oak groans a roaring  
yawn  
Waking sleepy chicks and fawns  
The woodland stirs as branches  
knock  
On the vernal equinox

A meeting of the brutes ensues  
to greet their kin and count their  
broods  
Wash muddy paw and yawning  
face  
and bask in daylight's warm  
embrace

Great Oak decrees, "Let us rejoice!  
Cry out to God with gladdened  
voice  
For we survived that long, cold  
sleep  
So on this joyous night, we feast!"

Then vixen, bear sow, doe and hen  
process unto the river bend—  
Make preparations for the feast  
for celebrating bird and beast

A foraged spread is made with care  
By mother bird and deer and bear  
To cook with love, they cook in  
song  
And laugh and chat the whole day  
long

A simmering broth perfumes the  
day  
While curds are hung to drip their  
whey  
The roots and fruits are baking  
slow  
While grains are ground and  
soaked for dough

A wild roast was scored and brined  
Then doused in floral honey wine  
And baked all day, encased in clay  
With leaves of fennel, thyme and  
bay

Then it's propped up on a spear  
And finished with a smokey sear  
And basted with a rosy brew  
Of cherry nectar, chives and jus

The little chicks and little whelps  
Decide that they would like to help  
They stir the pot and sneak a bite  
To make sure that it tastes just right

The strongest birds and bucks and  
boars  
Take on the most laborious chore  
Of building up the banquet table  
With cedar, mud and shedded sable

The bees give up their golden wax  
And squirrels weave linens out of  
flax  
For tablecloths and candles, born  
So that the meal can be adorned

A winding flight of forest birds  
Descend in winding, spinning whirls  
To set the bowls and silverware  
And steaming pots of supper's fare...

The work is done as evening falls  
And chiming bells sound dinner's  
call  
They fill each others' bowls and cups  
With food and drink to sip and sup:

Blue jays dole out buttered bread  
Chipmunks offer offal spread  
Beavers share their broiled roots  
Rabbits give out roasted fruits

The stew is served by forest mice  
And foxen plate up seasoned rice  
The possums pour out barley malt  
And ravens carry bowls of salt

The black bears bring the roast out  
last  
The height of this revered repast  
A blackened otherworldly beast  
Placed at the center of the feast

They take a moment just to gaze  
Upon the wondrous meal they made  
The scent would leave you teary-  
eyed  
But do not taste 'till sanctified...

The Old Tree croaks "Let us  
begin..."  
And songbirds hum an earthy hymn

"We thank our Lord for all these  
gifts  
of life and sustenance, to wit

"We thank the Lord for this Spring  
day,  
For sunny skies and beds of hay  
For blooming boughs on hollow  
trees  
But most of all for you and me!

"We thank the Lord for soups and  
stews  
Their broths with bronze and  
amber hues  
For milk so white and fruit so red  
And most of all for buttered  
bread!"

In thundering cacophony  
The beasts fell down on bended  
knee  
The beasts all roared and rolled  
and clawed  
All bellowing their thanks to God!

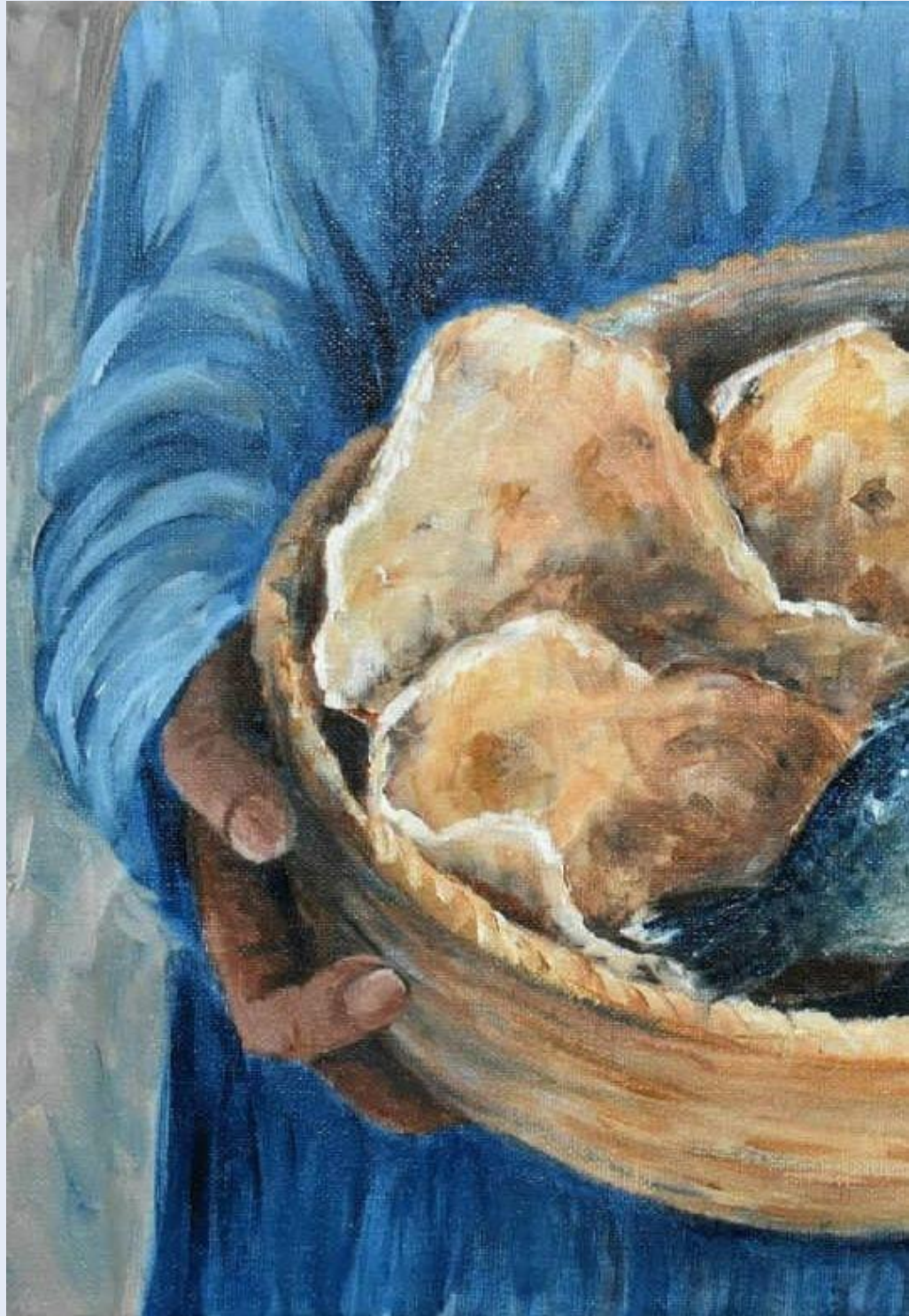
They settle down and take their  
seats  
Eyes widened by the breads and  
meats  
And every handmade baked delight  
Which flickered in the candle light

"Now we feast!" The Tree calls out  
The beasts fill up their beaks and  
snouts  
They fill up at this splendid trough  
And wash it down with milk and  
broth

He then proclaimed, "Let there be  
dance!"  
The beasts arose in lyric trance  
They swayed and hummed and  
stepped in time  
And followed in a twisting line

Into the night they dance and sing  
With drums to beat, and bells to  
ring  
With flutes to pipe, and lutes to  
strum  
For God has blessed them, every  
one

“ So many times in my life I have come to the Lord with what little I have had to offer, and he has multiplied that in greater magnitude than what I could have ever imagined. He provides for all our needs and is such a good Father. We just need to have faith in him.  
- Anne Dallman ”





*Loaves and Fish*

# *When Love Triumphs*

Weh von Wee



19.3.58

☆☆☆

When wisdom triumphs, it only brings deep sorrow and grief  
 For who am I, to carry the weight of this world?  
 If I had all the knowledge and understanding, all the gifts and the talents, all the faith to obey but have not  
 love,  
 I am absolutely nothing  
 For what can a cold heart of stone do? It touches no one and brings no warmth  
 If I know all of the Lord's secrets, shared generously to the lacking and served to the poor in spirit but have not  
 love, I am a nobody  
 For there is nothing worth gaining from selfish intent in securing one's self

When fear triumphs, you seek power and control in hopes you will never be hurt again  
 But who are you to take authority over people in exchange for your own security?  
 You either build walls and hide, or wield a sword to slay anyone who opposes and threatens you  
 How cynical and cunning, using the same game of tactics, unbeknownst to the cost it brings  
 You'd do anything to keep the pain away, even at the expense of hurting other people who have done no wrong  
 You either push them all away, or drag them to your own fiery furnace until they're dead  
 But what is there to gain when you succeed, standing alone and broken in the podium?

When anger triumphs, you burn the whole world, killing yourself along with it  
 But who are you to cast judgement in this world, if you're just as flawed and sinful as the rest?  
 You seek justice against those who abandoned you, those who crushed you, those who rejected you  
 They left, rejoicing in your anguish and suffering  
 They left, blissfully ignorant of your silent pleas  
 Your fury and rage, the only thing they ever see  
 Your wrath, destroying every beautiful thing in sight  
 And yet you are left with nothing but bones and ashes

When forgiveness triumphs, there is hope for you and me  
 For true love starts in the forgiveness of sins.  
 It began at the cross, where Christ died for you and me  
 Where His unconditional love brought deliverance and reformation for the lives of many  
 For when love triumphs, in an accursed land full of thistles and thorns,  
 Even the murkiest crevices etched in desperate yearning  
 And a heart plagued in anguished grief, shall find the ever-engulfing warmth of His deep embrace  
 In surrender, there is no more running and searching,  
 There is nothing to hide and beg for, my ashes and bruises are all seen in His light  
 For He stands still, secure and enough



I trust you, Lord,  
except when I don't  
because I try to handle it  
on my own

I trust you, Lord  
except  
when I sit in trouble  
for too long  
my faith blurs

I trust you, Lord  
except  
when things get hard  
and don't get better  
I wonder – where

no exceptions



I trust you, Lord  
except  
I've prayed and prayed  
gnashed my teeth between screams  
too loud to hear you

I trust you, Lord  
help me to trust you better  
without exception

sue santiago

A few months ago, my husband Jarrett and I were on our annual cruise to Alaska—a rhythm in our lives that offers time to reflect, breathe, and recalibrate.

One morning, I found myself alone on the Lido deck, watching the wide, uninterrupted ocean roll past. I felt the stillness settle into my chest as I thought about the year behind me and what might lie ahead. And out of nowhere, Joseph came to mind.

Not just the Sunday School Joseph with the colourful coat, but the whole story. The injustice, the loss, the slow movement from betrayal to redemption. His story wouldn't let go of me. I started taking screenshots on my phone of every chapter in Genesis that mentioned him. That still, sacred morning, I found myself especially drawn to one painful moment: when Joseph, after interpreting the dream of Pharaoh's cupbearer in prison, says, "And please remember me and do me a favour when things go well for you. Mention me to Pharaoh, so he might let me out of this place" (Genesis 40:14, NLT).

But the cupbearer forgets. And Joseph stays in prison—forgotten, alone. Back in the pit.

### **The Pit and Its Echoes in Our Lives**

Pits are awful. They are sudden, dark, disorienting. Sometimes they come out of nowhere—unexpected betrayals, sudden losses. Other times, we see them coming, creeping in slowly, until the fall is inevitable. When I read Genesis 37, I see the deep pain of the pit, and I also see myself. I've had three major "pit" moments in my life: the death of my father in 2002, the painful end of my first marriage nine years later, and, three years after that, the loss of a job I deeply loved.

It's that third pit I want to reflect on here. For eight years, beginning in 2007, I served on staff at a church in Abbotsford. It was a place that allowed my creativity to flourish. I had teammates who became true friends. I brought ideas to life, felt energized, purposeful, and needed. I found spiritual siblings—people who shared my passion for faith and service. As an only child, I had always longed for that kind of chosen family, and during that season, I truly felt I had found it.

In 2013, an Executive Pastor was hired, and with excitement, we launched into a strategic planning season. We were dreaming big. I felt fully alive.

In March 2014, Jarrett and I got married. My church family filled the front rows of our wedding—places reserved for those who mattered most.

It was a day of celebration and joy. But just six months later, everything changed.

### **"Thrown Into a Cistern" – My Own Genesis 37**

It was a Wednesday morning. I walked into the church building around 8:45am, was called into the boardroom, and was told—because of the new strategic direction—they were letting some staff go. My name was on the list.

Shock. Disbelief. Nausea. I went home, told my new husband and our kids, unfriended people on Facebook, and then threw up. Again, and again. My spiritual home was gone. The relationships I had called family—ripped away in an instant. I had been thrown into a proverbial cistern and sold off. Loss of relationship. That's what pits often come down to. That's what happened to Joseph. And that's what happened to me.

That story is nearly 11 years old now. And yes, like Joseph, I made it out of that pit. But the pain? It was real. The grief? Deep. The disorientation? Profound.

I want to explore two things:

1. How Joseph's story in Genesis 37 reveals the complexities of human relationships.
2. What we can practically do when we find ourselves thrown into a pit.

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## **Part One: The Complexities of Human Relationships**

### **1. Love and Envy: A Tangled Web**


Joseph's story begins in a home riddled with tension. He brings a "bad report" about his brothers to their father Jacob (v. 2), and then we're told Jacob loved Joseph more than any of his other sons (v. 3). That love took tangible form—an ornate robe that marked Joseph as set apart. Unsurprisingly, the result was bitterness: "They hated him and could not speak a kind word to him" (v. 4).

Favoritism is a dangerous thing. Jacob, himself the victim of parental bias in his youth, now passes that dysfunction forward. Love that is exclusive creates wounds—wounds that often fester in silence.

Joseph, for his part, doesn't help. He shares dreams in which his family bows to him. Was it arrogance? Naiveté? Maybe both. But the damage is done.

### **2. Rejection and Betrayal**

The brothers' hatred takes a dark turn. They conspire to kill him. Reuben intervenes, suggesting they throw him into a cistern instead.



**Thrown Into a Pit:  
Loss, Faith, and  
the Slow Work of  
Redemption**

*Beckie Evans | A Reflection on*

*Genesis 37:1–28*



**“In the end, all we  
are is story”**

*Margaret Atwood*

Eventually, Joseph is sold to passing Ishmaelites for twenty silver coins (v. 28). It's a picture of rejection so profound it almost defies belief—rejected not by strangers but by family. That's why betrayal within church communities can be so unbearable. Because we expected better. Because we thought we were safe.

### *3. Deception and the Illusion of Control*

Back home, the brothers dip Joseph's robe in goat's blood and give it to Jacob. He believes his beloved son is dead and mourns inconsolably. The lie holds, but it costs them dearly. "All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted" (v. 35).

How often do we maintain appearances—out of fear, pride, or the need to control? Yet deception, even well-intentioned, breaks down trust and erodes peace.

### *4. God's Silent Movement*

And yet, even in this story of betrayal and pain, God is at work. The path to reconciliation has already begun—even if no one can see it yet. God does not cause the pit, but He will not waste it.

## **Part Two: When You're in the Pit**

So, what do we do when we find ourselves in that cistern—hurting, abandoned, grieving? Let me offer a few reflections, grounded in my own journey:

### *1. Acknowledge the Pain*

There is no shortcut around suffering. Only through. Pretending we're fine when we're not, doesn't help us or anyone else.

As spiritual caregivers, we need to give ourselves and others permission to lament. To name the pit for what it is.

### *2. Reframe the Valley*

Psalm 23 is often read after a tragedy, but I invite you to read it pre-emptively. "He guides me along right paths..." If we believe that, then even the darkest valleys are still right paths. Not punishment. Not abandonment. Just part of the journey.

We are in the valley not because we've failed, but because we are human—and being human is hard.

### *3. Be Careful with Romans 8:28*

This is one of the most misunderstood verses in Scripture. It says: "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him..." Yes, God redeems all things. But this is a big-picture promise—not a bandage for acute wounds.

Quoting it too quickly, too casually, can shut down someone's grief instead of holding space for it. Imagine if Joseph's brothers had handed him a scroll with Romans 8:28 scribbled on it: "Don't be mad, Joseph—God will use this!" No. The healing of that wound didn't come from a platitude—it came from years of soul work, surrender, and grace. When people are in the pit, what they need most isn't explanation. It's presence. Relationship. Someone to sit with them and say, "This is hard. I see you. I'm not leaving."

### *4. Offer Time, Not Timelines*

The grief that comes from lost relationships doesn't resolve on a schedule. When we find ourselves in the pit, the most healing gift we can receive—or give—is time.

Time to sit. To cry. To ask hard questions. And eventually, when the moment is right, to look up and take a step forward.

## **Conclusion: The Currency of Story**

One of my favorite lines is: "Story is the currency of changed lives. In the end, all we are is story."

Joseph's story changed him. My story changed me. Your story is changing you.

So, when you find yourself in a pit, remember it's not the end. And God is not absent.

Whether you're in the cistern, or just climbing out, or standing on firm ground looking back—your story matters. And God is at work, weaving even the most painful threads into a tapestry of grace.

Let's be people who make space for the pain, hold onto hope, and offer each other the healing gift of relationship.

Beckie Evans is a licensed minister (MCCBC) and writer who believes in the power of presence, the value of story, and the healing that comes through honest lament and hopeful faith.



As I sat having my morning quiet time, enjoying the warmth of the sun and reflecting on the blessings that the Lord pours out each new day, chaos suddenly seemed to filter through the peace that I was enjoying.

The sound of birds screeching above as they said their never ending morning cries across the sky. My girls squabbling over who gets to hold the pet rat today which extended into extra complaints for the morning. The sound of cars I could hearing leaving for work. The noise seemed overwhelming to my thoughts and drowned out the quiet of my "secret place".

It brought to mind a hearing appointment I went to with my dad the day before, and the Lord gave me a thought. Just as my dad was tested with different frequencies and background noises while having to hear and repeat words, isn't it the same for our spiritual ears?



We are flooded with noise from the world on a non-stop daily basis. Noise can take on various forms, literal noise from kids running around the house and non stop chattering. Noise from social media and podcasts, even though they may still be serving a purpose. Noise from our own thoughts, insecurities and the non-stop lectures and advice we give ourselves through the day.

Noise from the enemy that he puts in our lives to distract us. How do we hear the voice of the One who really matters through all of the noise? Do we find time and space to retreat from the noise and simply to be still? Do we spend time training ourselves to block out the noise?

The audiologist told my dad that even though his hearing was still relatively good, she suggests hearing aids because they will prevent further deterioration of his hearing, there are certain high frequencies that he can't hear and that he struggles to hear.

By training ourselves to spend time in the quiet, time in prayer and speaking to our Heavenly Father, by spending time in His word, and flooding out the noise and replacing it with the sound and words of His voice, we can train our spiritual ears to hear Him and prevent that slow deterioration that pulls us far from Him.

She also spoke about how hearing loss can actually cause parts of your brain to start to die, because those parts are simply not being used anymore, and that research shows a link between hearing loss and dementia. I think of the brain in a spiritual sense to connect these dots, as our heart in this matter. As our spiritual ears begin to deteriorate so we start to lose parts of our heart for God.

It gets easier to just replace our quiet times and worship time with the noise of the world and everyday life. Our heart starts to grow colder and die resulting in a very dark place for the Holy Spirit to live.

Would you flourish and thrive in a place that is dark and cold, where you feel forgotten? No. We want to create a place where the Holy Spirit can thrive and live brightly within us, to give us life and words from above, to lead us and guide us and connect us straight to the Father and the Son.

How do we hear God through the noise? Simply by making time to train ourselves to block out the noise and train our ears to hear His voice above it all. "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." - Matthew 6:33

When we start pressing into these things and start hearing His voice, feeling His presence and experiencing His peace and joy, we don't want to go back to that time of hearing loss and a cold heart, because we are experiencing so much more than what the world has to offer! A gift that only God can give us through the storms, the noise of a dying world.

I hope that this encourages you today and gives your heart the push it needs to go and connect with a good good Father who loves us and wants to bless us with his peace and love and joy that is everlasting.

"Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you" - James 4:8

Go to Him today, go find that place of quiet even just for a few minutes and begin to train yourself once again. He is always there waiting.

How will you train yourself to hear God's voice?

- nicole

*Zenith  
of my  
Mind*



I reach for a star  
Does it belong to me?  
Flowers bloom like echoes of light

They whisper songs of the ancient days  
With a fragrance seeping through the  
Floral essence

The star pours its liquid gold onto every branch and petal  
The star I had wanted hung above me in celestial wonder

8 million flowers it can see when it's well past its zenith  
9 million miles it travelled to look at its favourite garden  
I can only watch and not possess;  
Can mortal hands hold beauty in a bottle?

The star sings to the flowers in reply,  
They join in gleeful chorus as the pink doves coo  
and every living thing moves;

I consider my inequities and I lie down,  
Stupefied;

All things are made beautiful  
at the right time;  
I look forward to the day  
the light cleanses my heart  
and brings about the  
Zenith of my mind.

by Lavinia Grace Sebastian

## Faith and Action: Johnson Eminence

We lift our voices for things we never lift a hand to do.

We cry out to a God we claim has not answered, when our own inaction has silenced the reply. A lack of intentionality, a broken practicality, blinds us to the doors He has already opened.

We pray for love, but our hearts remain clenched fists, unwilling to give the love we ask for.

We pray for provision, but our hands remain idle, refusing the work that leads to abundance.

We pray for spiritual gifts, but our spirits remain dormant, never stepping into the space where they are meant to be.

We pray for knowledge, but our minds remain closed books, unwilling to do the work that leads to wisdom.

Faith, without works, is truly dead. Let us pray with our actions as much as with our words.



# The Chosen Donkey

One of my hind legs buckled. The pain I felt was beyond comparison, and even the strongest animal would have cried. The sky was beginning to clear, and there was no shade where I could rest. I was on the verge of exhaustion. I was climbing a steep mountain, and my owner had no limits or compassion. When my paw buckled, I gave up. My breathing became so strained that I thought I'd never live again. I felt a few lashes on my back.

I was on the cliff, stuck and unable to do anything, until a man came and stopped beside us.

'Sir, are you all right?' he said.

The stranger offered water to my owner when he saw sweat running down his forehead, and he offered some to me as well. I felt as if the sky and every vessel of divine water were pouring down upon me.

I heard them talking.

'How much do you want for him?' the stranger asked.

'Give me five denarii and you can take him with the merchandise,' my owner said.

'I only want the donkey.'

'Take it for four.'

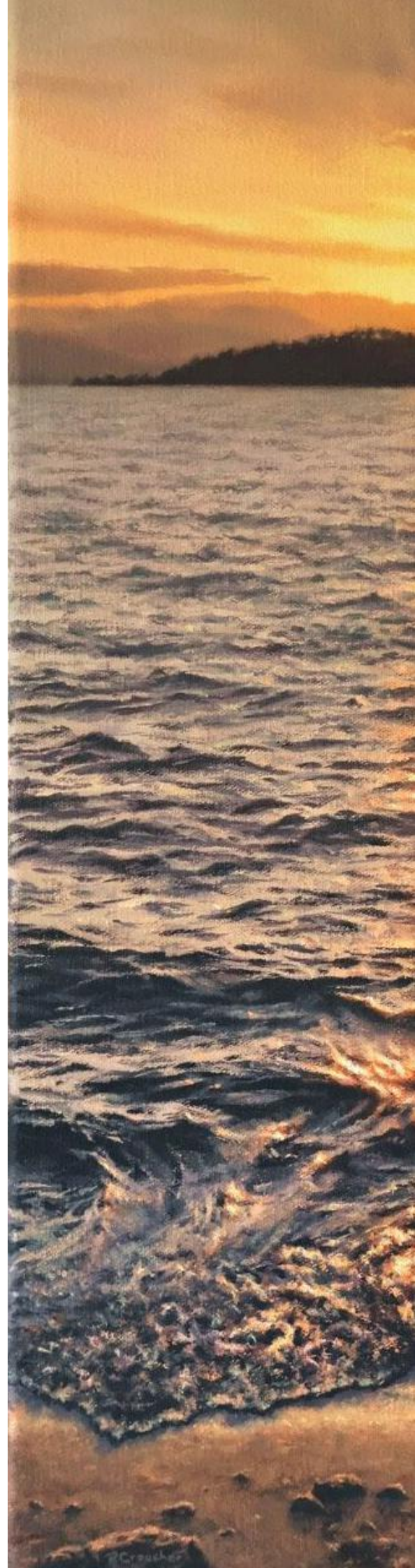
Knowing that in such a critical moment that man had given me something to drink, I wanted to respond to his services in a friendly way—but it wouldn't be that simple. All donkeys carry the nagging doubt about whether we'll be treated with the same level of disrespect and neglect we received from our previous owner.

When I arrived at the new stable, tired and worn out from the pain of my previous work, the new owner wanted to heal my lash wounds. I threw a tantrum in case he tried to do the same thing to me that my previous master had. He tried to calm me with affection and sounds that soothed my anger. Eventually, I relaxed, and after a week, the wound had healed. The new master placed a light load on my saddle, and set off on a journey to Jerusalem. Along the way, I noticed how many donkeys were joining us, walking alongside their owners, who were placing items on their saddlebags. I wanted to be friendly and say hello to a few of them.

'Hey friend, how's your day going?' I said.

'Terrible. Don't you see I'm an idiot? We're only born to suffer. Get used to it.'

I turned my head to the right and bumped into another one.



‘Hey, nice day, isn’t it?’

‘Oh yes, it’s magnificent. How wonderful it is to spend your days carrying and carrying without ever getting a well-deserved break.’

‘But, this is life,’ I said, ‘everyone carries something. Not doing so would mean shirking our responsibilities, and if that happens, everything will be chaos. We’ll work double shifts—now that’s torture.’

‘Friend, it’s clear the sun has fried your brains. When you can think clearly, we’ll talk. Goodbye.’

I didn’t understand what was happening. What was happening to the pack animals? We had no right to choose. They chose us. A tremendous lash struck my backside, forcing me back in line. It wasn’t my owner, but someone else who thought I was his property.

While walking to the city of Jerusalem, I heard of rumors about a certain man that had the Sanhedrin—the great elite—worried. It was fomenting riots over the townspeople’s beliefs: Moses and his laws versus this man and his preachings of love. People were divided and fighting among themselves, creating chaos and facilitating confusion and disorder—the Romans’ main enemies. From the moment word spread that this Jesus was coming to the people, the crowd (those whom this man had healed and freed) wanted to open the gates of Jerusalem to him. This unsettled the temple fanatics, who feared death under the rule of the Caesar.

Being a donkey, I was assumed to be clueless, so I remained silent and waited for my master to rid me of the abuser who was lashing me with his whip. Minutes later, my master arrived. He drew a knife with a gleaming edge. The man was intimidated by the sight of it and fled in terror. He stroked my wound and poured water over it. We set off for the sidewalk near the gates and eventually settled our journey at a small house on the edge of town.

Two days passed, and the marks on my skin had healed. Other donkeys occasionally passed by. Some belonged to the Roman army, and when they saw me they’d make fun of me. ‘You’re boring. Haha! Do you understand? Boring!’

Others would tell me:

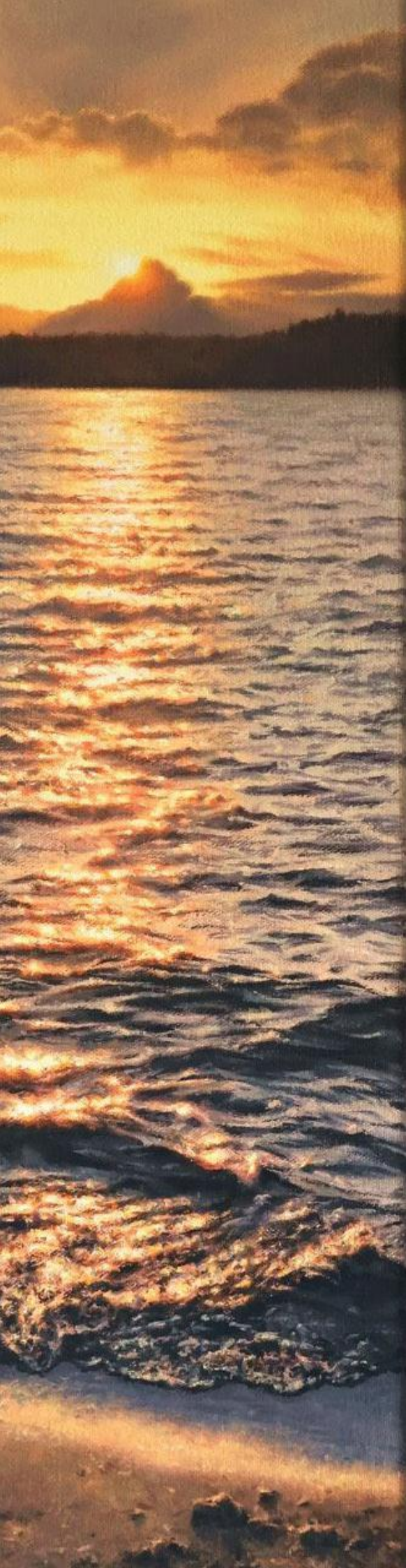
‘You’re nobody. You’ll end up like everyone else: nameless, lifeless, with nothing. Like those Greek soldiers who are so eager to have their names etched in history.’

I wondered what purpose one could have as an animal. Would my whole life pass before my eyes without me ever knowing the reason I existed? What did I have to do with this—with anything?

On the third day, something unexpected happened.

Two men arrived at the house and untied my leash.

Painting by  
Rosanne Croucher



They treated me as if I were their property, but for some reason I didn't protest as I would have before. My master woke up when he heard the strangers.

Where are you taking my donkey?' he said.

'The Lord needs him,' they said, in a humble and straightforward tone.

'Why? Why a donkey?'

They told my master about the exploits this man—Jesus—had gone through. Things that were said about his birth. That a donkey was present. And that there was a donkey that spoke to a human in the time of the prophets. That a donkey's jawbone was used to defeat ten thousand men, almost an entire army. Stories and legends I'd never heard before. My master offered no resistance. On the contrary, he seemed to have a face full of happiness. As if he had been waiting for that moment. Something glorious was about to happen, judging by his expression. I had never seen him so happy, if such a word even existed. All I had known until now were heavy loads, the whips on my body, the abuse, and, like a miracle from heaven, the little affection from my last owner. I had no knowledge of my parents. I didn't know anything about family.

As we approached the meeting place where the men were taking me, I was taken by surprise. Thousands of people were surrounding the famous man named Jesus. They were waiting for him. Many of the donkeys wandered around the outskirts of the crowd, jeering at me, and their trunks didn't look very lively. I sensed in them a certain unfamiliar jealousy.

He approached me like no one ever had before. He looked at me with tenderness and a smile that I can never describe. He took my snout and stroked it.

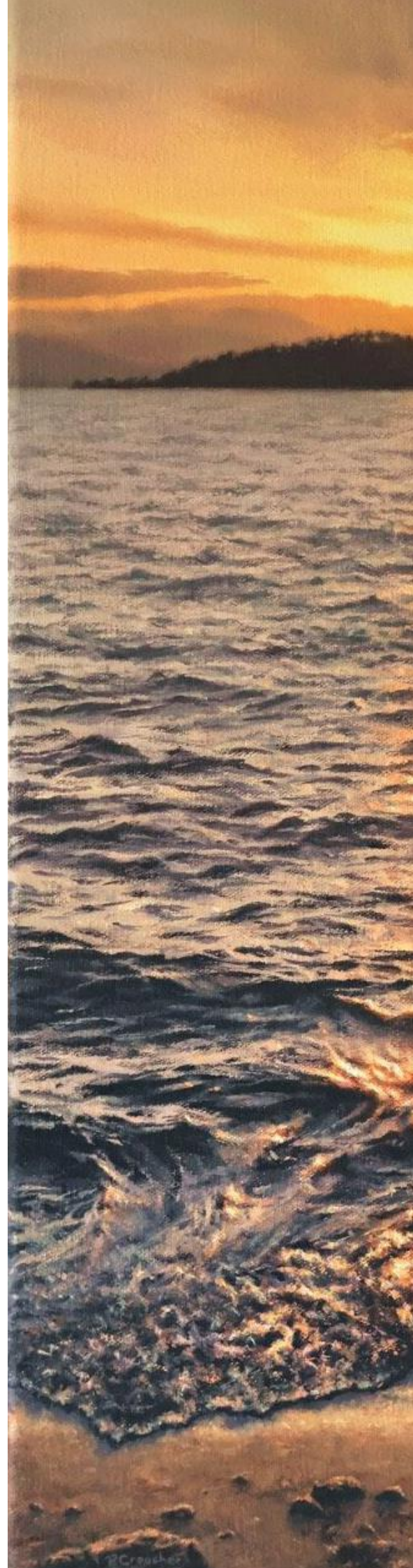
'Everything will be fine from now on. You have been chosen to carry me. You had to suffer quite a bit. I'm sorry you had to go through all of that. The ignorance of this world produces pain; the knowledge of God can only produce joy. Now, we will triumphantly enter the glorification of the Lamb.'

I didn't know what was happening. When I stood before Jesus, I felt a sense of comfort throughout my entire body. Jesus's calm soothed my wounds to the point that it flooded my entire being. The scars on my skin from previous punishments disappeared, and I wore not a single scratch.

What is this happiness that pierces the very core of my animal essence?

Jesus mounted me with the help of another. However, after his words, I didn't feel his weight. What's more, I could have sworn that I felt the sensation of happiness.

The march began. Thousands of people crowded the area, throwing bouquets wherever we passed. Those beautiful green branches that adorned the palms and were reserved only for kings—those were the very ones I was stepping on.



And they shouted, giving thanks to God for the wonderful things they had seen Jesus do. They said, ‘Blessed is he who comes as king! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace and glory in heaven.’

Glory had come into my life. I felt no vengeance for the other donkeys who made fun of me. On the contrary, I wished they could have been there too in that moment. I couldn’t hold back the tears of overwhelming emotion that embraced my soul. When he got off my back, the same men who had brought me to him came to take me back to my master. When he saw me return again, he was pleased in an unusual way. He brushed my skin between hugs and smiles. He cried with an emotion I didn’t recognize. Something was happening, and I had no idea what it was.

My master no longer bound me. I didn’t need to go anywhere either. The mocking donkeys began to visit me. We spent a few days enveloped in the spirit that gave us eternal joy in friendship and love.

But a few days later, my master gestured for all of us to go outside. He wanted to show us something.

Pointing with a shaky finger toward the mountain, we hurried toward the meeting point where our eyes could behold the mountain known as The Skull, at Golgotha.

We saw three crosses, dark silhouettes against the clouds. On the middle one was a man, unrecognizable from the abuse he had endured. My master gave out an intense sob from the depths of his soul, saying:

‘That’s Jesus.’

I couldn’t understand the reason for this murder. If he was the Jesus I knew, the one I had carried on my back, he shouldn’t have been strung up on that cross. He should have been sitting on a throne adorned with precious stones, wearing a crown on his head like the King he was. In my mind, there were no answers.

But I remembered his words: ‘Now, we will triumphantly enter the glorification of the Lamb.’

And my heart understood.

Life was different, after that day. Every sorrow, every memory of pain, every instance of mistreatment was as if none of it had ever existed.

I was a new creature. I was different. I was known as the donkey that had carried the Lord, the Son of God. He of whom the prophet spoke: ‘And he will come riding on a donkey.’ wwwI had played a part in Jesus’ sacrifice and triumph.

And he chose me.

*by D.S*  
*Darwinland*



*Jesus Christ my  
Lord and Saviour*



*Angela Leibold*

Jesus is our everlasting Savior, mighty to save and faithful forever.  
Everything is possible for one who believes.  
Surely with God, no word fails, and no power is too great for His hands to perform.  
Under His wings I find refuge; safe from every storm.  
Set apart before I was born, He called me by name and claimed me as His own.

Christ was given, pure and kind, a perfect God in human form.  
Holy and humble, He made himself low, though all of heaven was at His throne.  
Redeemer and healer, His love can restore, turning darkness to light forevermore.  
Instilling faith and love so deep, He calls us higher, His path to keep.  
Shepherd and Lamb, He came to restore, lifting the fallen and opening the door.  
The way that leads, the truth that frees, the life that flows eternally.

My soul is His, I am reborn; He leads me through the toughest storm.  
Yet His love is mine; not earned or won, but constant as the rising sun.

Lord above, yet servant low; He bowed in love, and now we know.  
Over every storm and every soul, His hands are near, His power whole.  
Resting in Him, wrong becomes right; His faith lights up the darkest night.  
Deep in brokenness He makes us whole; He binds the wounds and heals the soul.

All the prophets spoke of Him; love so willing, the light within.  
“Not my will but Yours”, He cried blood and sweat, yet love supplied.  
Drawn to death, but still He prayed; choosing love that would not fade.

Sin defeated, death undone; victory came through God’s own son.  
All our guilt upon Him laid; the weight of sin, His life He paid.  
Vanquished death, He rose anew; conquering the grave for me and you.  
Infinite grace, the Spirit came, bringing life in Jesus’ name.  
Once lost, now found through mercy’s call; the Gospel’s gift, salvation for all.  
Raised to dwell where angels sing, eternal life with Christ our King!





In love, all things are interconnected.

<sup>16</sup> you will  
know them  
their fruits.





EXIT

1914-1918  
WW I

WISCONSIN

CIVIL WAR

SPORTS

REGIONAL  
MIDDLEWEST

AMERICAN  
HISTORY



### **The Mirror and the Flame**

“Better is the end of a thing than its beginning: the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.”

There is a wisdom that whispers from the consummation of things; a wisdom veiled to the rashness of beginnings. The dwellers of this present hour are seized by the fever of perpetual motion, ensnared in what may be called the ‘to-and-fro malady’. We hurry toward horizons yet scarcely know from where we come. We traverse with speed but without a true destination, restless both in the body and in the soul.

The Preacher warned: “The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit,” yet we have exchanged patience for presumption and endurance for arrogance. In our restlessness, we have inherited blindness: eyes that behold but perceive not, ears that hear but do not discern. We mistake shadows for substance, activity for progress, and information for wisdom.

# *The Forging* Reuben Ansah- Sarpong (THE C.E.O INITIATIVE)

### **The Curse of To and Fro**

Agur, the son of Jakeh, lamented: “Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I have not learned wisdom, neither have I the knowledge of the Holy One.” He did not exalt ignorance but confessed the limits of the unquiet mind.

The seekers of phantoms are intoxicated with knowledge yet incapable of understanding. We have multiplied the facts but diminished the truth. Blaise Pascal foresaw this affliction when he observed: “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” Our haste—our to-and-fro—has exiled us from stillness.

Thus, our commerce gorges itself yet remains unfed. Our nations pursue dominion yet find no peace. Our philosophies dissolve truth into opinion. Our theologies enthrone man as a deity while relegating the Creator to memory.

### **The Paradox of Idolatry**

From the dawn of history, mankind has bowed to creation rather than the Creator.

Jeremiah derided the absurdity of idols: “They cut down a tree from the forest, and a craftsman shapes it with his chisel.” They adorn it with silver and gold... but they cannot speak; they must be carried because they cannot walk. “Do not fear them; they can do no harm, nor can they do any good.”

The paradox of wood is profound. From its grain we raised shelter, warmth, and tools. From its grain we carved gods and fell into folly. And yet from its grain arose the Cross, the scaffold of death that became the altar of salvation.

Francis Bacon truly noted: “Man prefers to believe what he prefers to be true.” Thus, idols, whether wrought from timber, marble, or silicon, are less about their material than our projections. We do not merely shape wood; wood shapes our desires into gods.

Idolatry has not been abolished, it has been transfigured. The golden calf now glows as a screen. The temple to Caesar has become the empire of the self. No longer do we prostrate before statues, but before algorithms. Augustine, seeing the same drift in his age, mourned: “They love the creature instead of the Creator, because in loving Him they would find in Him all that is lovable.”

### **The Cathedral of the Screen**

Here lies the subtle peril: the medium itself has become the idol. Once, words bore meaning; now, the medium dictates meaning. Screens do not merely inform us they conform us. Social currents do not simply distract; they discipline.

Paul foresaw this subtle captivity when he warned of those “having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof.” We embrace the shell images, impressions, and symbols while rejecting essence, depth, and reality.

The danger lies not only in what we devour but also in how it fashions us. Kierkegaard discerned it: “The present age is essentially a sensible, reflective age, devoid of passion... it leaves everything standing but cunningly empties it of significance.” The medium reduces our souls to mirrors, never originating.

Are we alive, yet hollow? Awake, yet spellbound? Masters of creation, yet enslaved to its instruments?

### **The Birth Pangs of the Age**

Even creation itself resists our bondage. Paul declared: “The whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now.” The earth, commodified and exhausted, is worn by our haste. Our commerce spirals into endless debt and extraction.

Our nations bleed themselves in their struggles for supremacy. Our philosophies groan beneath the emptiness of relativism. Our churches sigh under the weight of compromise.

Elizabeth I, at the twilight of her reign, confessed: “All my possessions for a moment of time.” The treasures of empires cannot purchase eternity’s patience. The end unmasks the vanity of haste.

If creation liberates itself by withdrawing its bounty, will this age endure? When nature retracts its patience, when economies implode beneath debt, when kingdoms splinter under pride, shall we withstand the groaning?

### **Ancient Pathways**

Jeremiah summoned his people: “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” Yet they replied, “We will not walk in it.”

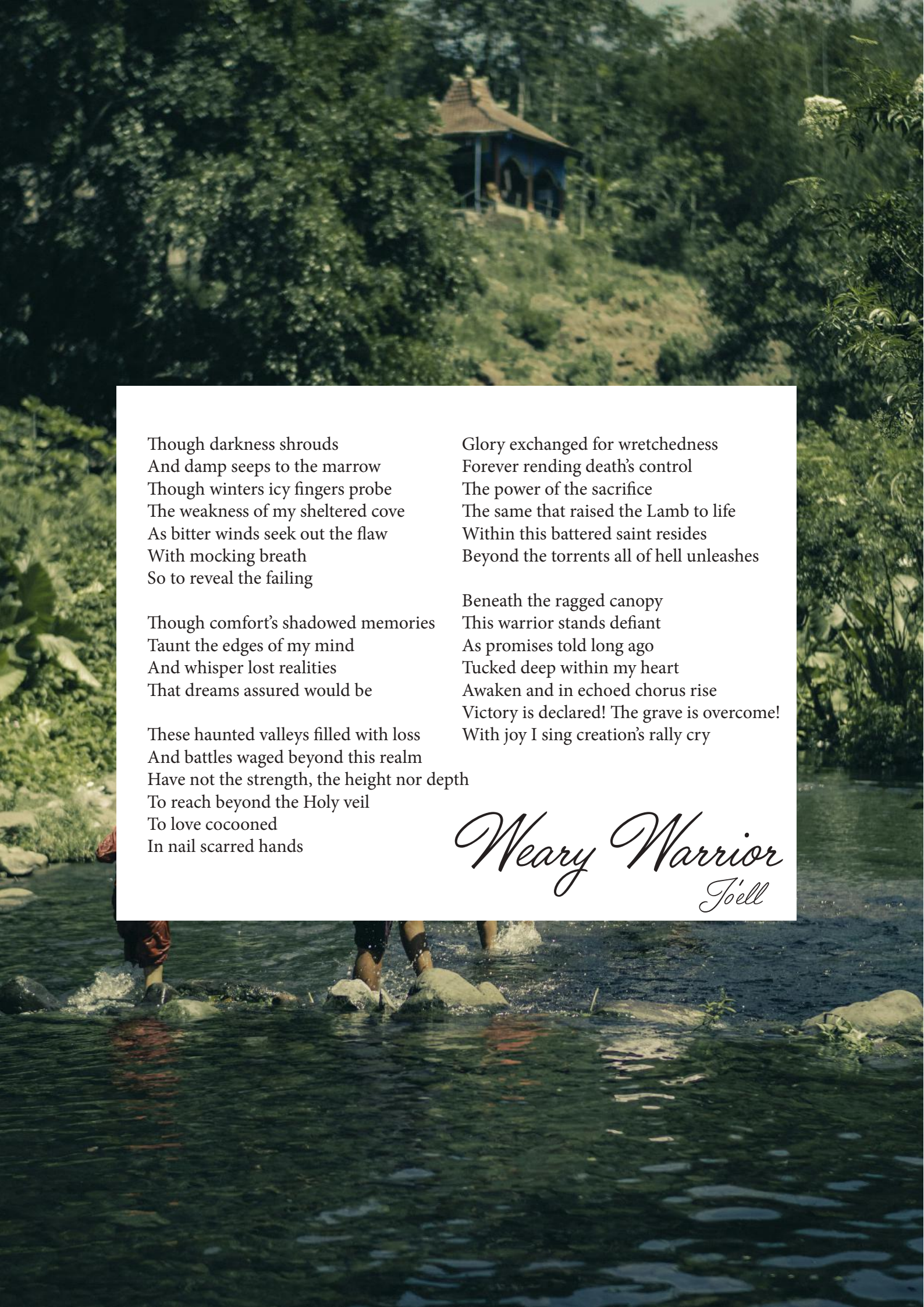
To walk rightly requires the eye that sees beyond appetite, beyond empire, beyond shadow, and beyond idol. The eye stores grain in years of plenty—not hoarding, but preserving life when famine strikes. The eye surveys thrones and discerns that pride is vapor, that a king’s true glory is mercy. The eye ventures into the cave and distinguishes the flickering images from the substance that casts them. And it is the eye that refuses to kneel before the works of its own hands, choosing instead to adore the unseen Hand that molded both the soil and the soul.

Such an eye is concealed from the multitude; yet it alone can pierce the veil of haste and lead through the furnace of the age without perishing. The sons of Issachar discerned the times and knew what Israel must do. So must the heirs of this hour recover that gift of discernment to read the times with wisdom and to respond with endurance rather than haste.

### **The Forging**

History is a furnace. Nations, empires, and souls are thrust within it. Some are hardened, others shattered, a few refined. Forging is neither swift nor gentle; it is slow, searing, and often unseen until the end. “Better is the end of a thing than its beginning.” The arrogant spirit seeks shortcuts; the patient spirit abides by the fire. Idols will crumble, mediums will fade, and haste will collapse. But those who endure, who walk the ancient way, shall emerge as vessels forged.

This is the summons of the age: to be forged, not fractured. To cast off the curse of to-and-fro, and to embrace the refining fire that leads to wisdom, endurance, and the worship of the Living God.



Though darkness shrouds  
And damp seeps to the marrow  
Though winters icy fingers probe  
The weakness of my sheltered cove  
As bitter winds seek out the flaw  
With mocking breath  
So to reveal the failing

Though comfort's shadowed memories  
Taunt the edges of my mind  
And whisper lost realities  
That dreams assured would be

These haunted valleys filled with loss  
And battles waged beyond this realm  
Have not the strength, the height nor depth  
To reach beyond the Holy veil  
To love cocooned  
In nail scarred hands

Glory exchanged for wretchedness  
Forever rending death's control  
The power of the sacrifice  
The same that raised the Lamb to life  
Within this battered saint resides  
Beyond the torrents all of hell unleashes

Beneath the ragged canopy  
This warrior stands defiant  
As promises told long ago  
Tucked deep within my heart  
Awaken and in echoed chorus rise  
Victory is declared! The grave is overcome!  
With joy I sing creation's rally cry

*Weary Warrior*  
*To'ell*

Freed from the angst  
 Unknown tomorrows loan  
 In canyons dark my voice cries out in praise  
 As e'en the weakest flame of light

In darkest darkness shines  
 And all that tries to hinder  
 Does instead with darkest night  
 Enhance the flame that once was dim  
 But now with spark of hope ignites

Shine on weary warrior  
 Stand firm within the glorious sheath  
 Fitted by the King of Heavens realm

Stand firm weary warrior  
 And on the hope of Heaven fix your gaze  
 For He is faithful who has called  
 And slumbers not in darkest days  
 His right hand will uphold you  
 And His truth will guide your way

Rejoice for His return is nigh  
 And victory shall resound  
 At trumpet's blast  
 Then we will rise enrobed in white  
 To meet Him on that glorious day  
 As hosts throughout the heavens  
 Join with us in shouts of praise



And all of darkness gathered hence  
 Will not extinguish nor e'er dim  
 The light of Truth  
 Which rises from within

Hold fast to Heavens hope  
 And the story written  
 Ere the dawn of time  
 Of the perfect blood of Jesus  
 Poured out in sacrifice  
 Which will render silent every death  
 And swallow all of darkness into light

Then with the heavenly chorus  
 We will join our voices nigh  
 And lift up songs in every tongue  
 Unfettered praise to God on high

And when our days have numbered  
 More than sands upon earth's shore  
 Still the songs of hallelujah  
 Will stretch onward evermore

He will save us all  
He will save us all  
You can deny Him all you want  
But He will come  
Let me tell you  
One thing about Him that you'll never understand  
Or never comprehend  
Because its guaranteed  
It's always something different when it comes to Him  
Comes to Him  
Comes to Him  
Ooh, ooh, ooh  
Our Father  
Ooh, ooh, ooh  
He taught us how to live  
How to love  
How to give to everyone  
When he comes  
He will save us all  
What can make a broke man feel so sad?  
What can ead a soul train off it's tracks?  
He will save us all  
My soul has no limits  
My broke pass terrific  
Got more mad detectives and  
Post-traumatic sickness  
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh,  
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh  
He will save us all  
(He'll save us, He'll save us)  
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh  
He will save us all  
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh  
(He'll save us, He'll save us)  
Ooh, ooh, ooh, ooh  
He will save us all  
(He'll save us, He'll save us)  
He will save us all  
It's the cause and effect  
Living in regret  
Pieces will connect  
Believe it and you're blessed  
(Sleep)  
Oh, oh, oh  
Our Father  
Oh, oh, oh  
He taught us how to live  
How to love  
How to give to everyone  
When He comes  
He will save us all

Lord forgive me for the way I used to live  
Used to be stealing but now  
All I'm trying to do is give back  
To the ones that I hurt with my wounds  
Here's the faults that I had  
Waking up past the noon in my mind  
All I felt was confused  
Gluttonous with substances I would abuse  
Was blind to my faith thought the dark would consume  
But all it did, God  
Was lead me back to You  
Now here I am fighting temptations  
Cause there ain't no going back  
Sober minded now Your power is in my hands  
Yeah I'm feeling that I give my  
Battles back to You  
Instead of raining wrath  
Tryna correct my tongue  
For when I'm spitting raps  
Prideful in what I was saying  
(He will save us all)  
But Lord, Youknow it's cap!  
Can you help me clear my name?  
Don't want my heart to taint  
(He will save us all)  
Cause its all I have now  
I reap what I sow  
It's no wonder I was seeing strange  
(He will save us all)  
God will save us all  
  
With all His love and  
(With all his love)  
All His trust cause  
(And all His trust)  
You want to be the One  
(Cause You want to be the One)  
With Him and God  
(With Him and God)  
Where all His love  
(Where all His love)  
Is spread around  
Cause He is  
(Ours)

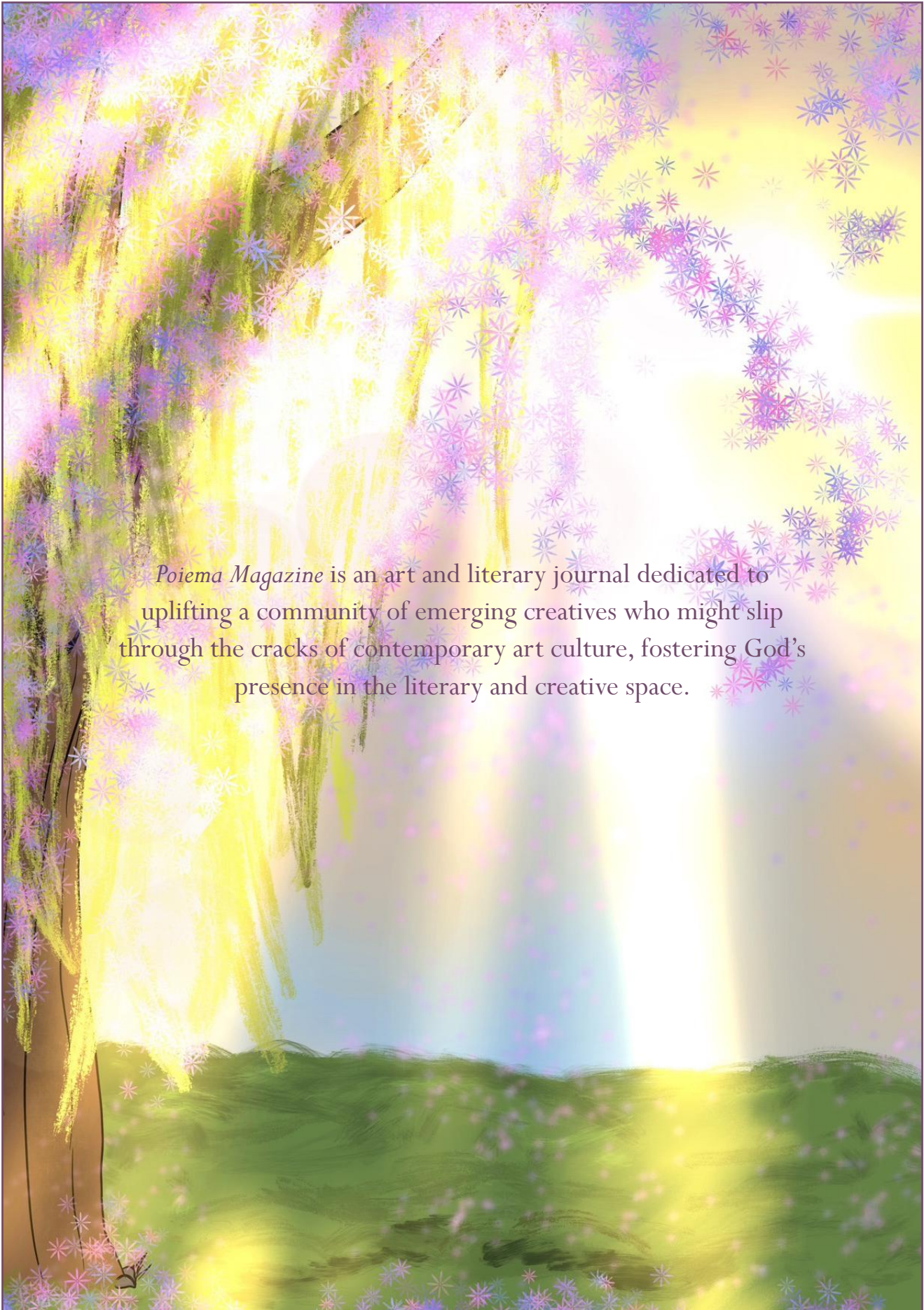
*Nova One*



*Save us All*



“now may the Lord of peace Himself give you peace  
always in every way. The Lord be with you all.” II  
Thessalonians 3:16



*Poiema Magazine* is an art and literary journal dedicated to uplifting a community of emerging creatives who might slip through the cracks of contemporary art culture, fostering God's presence in the literary and creative space.