

Years 11 & 12

3rd Place: Muhammad Malik

Year 11, Kelmscott Senior High School

Gaze

He sat there gazing, outside the window. The scene outside hardly resembled the scene inside his head. Outside it was quiet. Outside there was peace, there was order. Inside just turmoil and chaos. Rays of sunlight fell upon his face, causing a sense of drowsiness. A fake escape. A peaceful slumber. He opened the window to be one with nature hoping it would comfort him. He was met only with hopelessness.

He sat there gazing, outside the window. He sat there and he saw. He saw the flock of birds as they flew across. He saw the white clouds line up in the vast sky. An infinite blue, bright and clear. Seemingly pleasant, much unlike the ground below. Oblivious to the chatter around him, oblivious to his surroundings. The sound of chalk as it tapped away on the board. The clicking of pens and the rustling of pages. Oblivious to all, he didn't have anything, he didn't have anyone. He didn't have an illness; he didn't have a disability. Yet, what he had suffered was the worst of sufferings.

He sat there gazing, outside the window. A slight breeze blew past. In such a poetic setting, he let his mind roam, and then he was gone. Like an eagle soaring the high skies, powerful and mighty, like a young gazelle leaping through the African Savannah. Free and joyful, his mind raced. It raced thousands of miles away. Across the Atlantic, he saw the giant waves come crashing down, showing no mercy to anything within their grasp.

He sat there gazing, outside the window. His body was here, yet his mind wasn't. His mind was off somewhere, somewhere into the distance. He arrived at a foreign land. A land he recognised too easily.

The striped flag, the pinned stars. The flood of people, their mouths wide, faces filled with joy. Like a prized possession, children held on to their parents. Women walked around, now liberated. Buildings towered above making a seemingly giant species seem like ants. He saw the twinkle in their eyes, the smile tugging at the corner of their lips. He saw their happiness, their love. Embodied within the masses he saw everything he had lost.

He sat there gazing, outside the window. He saw the furnished rooms, the packed schools, the lit fireplaces, the healthy families. His hazel eyes, numb with tears as he relived his cherished memories. Afraid someday his mind would betray him and he'd forget. He relived the memories through the pain, the hardship. His eyes now glistening, he wept. He wept silently and he cursed, cursed his misfortune. Not a sound escaped his tongue yet his eyes said a thousand words. They say that eyes are a window to a person's soul. One look into his eyes, and one would see. His soul ripped into shreds. Its fragments scattered across the vast, desolate land, some buried under the Earth, others seemingly invisible. His eyes shifted colour from green to brown, back and forth as the sunlight danced across his face, unaware of the mood.

He sat there gazing, outside the window. He grieved the fallen ones, the lost loved ones. He mourned the lost opportunities, the lost times. All he had to hold on to were the memories. Pulling himself together, he once again became aware of his surroundings. Of the fresh cement, the dust in the air, the whirring of the only fan, the continuous chatter heard across the room. Looking across the green room, his mind escaped. It escaped to lush green trees, running sweet streams.

His hazel eyes longing, wishing for this moment to never end. He sat there gazing, across the room. The children sat in numbers. Pens ready, smiles wide, too ignorant to understand the complexity of the situation. His mind flashed to his childhood, when he too was expectant. He too dove head in, to tackle the world, to delve into the vast chasm of knowledge. A bottomless pit. Yet here he was, at the bottom, facing reality.

He sat there gazing, outside the window. Afghanistan, the country had suffered, but the people had suffered worse. His ears perked up at an all too familiar sound. The sweet whistle, the sonic boom, as this artificial bird flew above. Poised like an experienced hunter. Arm ready, finger on the trigger, weapon loaded...

He sat there gazing and then his gaze turned lifeless.

Looking into his eyes now, one could see the star twinkle, for his suffering had ended. There he sat gazing, his body this time present together with his mind. Sunlight seeped through the roof as he looked around, at the breathtaking beauty which encircled him. He sat there gazing, gazing at paradise.