

Wings That Embraced

Coral Hsu, Grade 8

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Sixteen

I was sixteen when my wings were damaged beyond repair
Pierced by arrows of grief, shock, pain, and terror
I could fly no more

Bombs were dropped
Hot, licking flames consumed my home
Corpses littered the ground
All that remained, were ashes and rubble

Like sheep into the oven, we were herded into the church
To be burned alive, no questions asked
But when all hope seems lost, they let us out; a miracle
My wings fluttered weakly

I watched my mother burn her treasured Persian lamb coat in the oven
I witnessed the soldier cut off my grandfather's beard
I listened to my grandmother's nightly prayers, "Please, God, don't take away my bed"
I gazed tearfully after my father's retreating back, drifting farther and farther away
But I know our heart will always be together, that he will be with me every step of the way

For six months we traveled from place to place, my sister and I
Seeking a haven that doesn't seem to exist
Luckily for us we know the true meaning of love; together we utter prayers and shed tears
While the dreaded number rose, higher and higher with each passing day

At last there came an answer to our prayers
"Now you're under my wings," Mother Superior said
A fire reignited in my chest, permeating every part of my body
Strengthened by memories of my family, I found that I can fly again

Cleansed by my tears, my sorrow, I let her wings embrace me
"May peace be my forever sequel," I whispered; and it was then that I realized
That it is time to spread my wings, to soar, to fly: to share my story with the world
So that during the most difficult chapters of our lives --- whether it be war, plague, or pandemic

We shall all remember to wrap our wings around the wounded