

A Colourful Life

A Collection of Poems and
Stories by Immigrant Seniors

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by Immigrant Seniors**

2019

About This Anthology

This anthology is the result of a collaboration between **Immigrant Services Calgary (ISC)** and **Mount Royal University (MRU)**. Facilitated through the Community Initiatives for Immigrant Seniors Program (CISP), funded by **Family & Community Support Services (FCSS)**, it was over the course of twelve weeks that immigrant seniors worked with a group of university professors and creative writing students to write and craft stories about their notion of home.

In partnership with:

funding provided by:

The Community Initiatives for Immigrant Seniors Program (CISP)

The Community Initiatives for Immigrant Seniors Program (CISP) is a locally funded social inclusion initiative designed to enhance the integration and inclusion of vulnerable immigrant seniors from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, creating welcoming and supportive environments to help them feel respected and valued.

This program adopts a proactive, holistic, outcome-driven approach to address the physical, emotional, psychological, social and intellectual (PEPSI) needs of immigrant seniors and facilitate their integration in Canadian society. CISP focuses on empowerment and building the capacity of our seniors to be active and contributing members in the community, and it provides them with opportunities to take part in spearheading, implementing and sustaining meaningful community-based projects.

If you are interested in learning more about CISP, or want to join this program, please visit us online:

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Contributors

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Hai Fu Lu immigrated from China two years ago. He is an avid photographer and enjoys sharing his photos with everyone.

Hilda was born and raised in Germany. Nature fascinates her and she spends her free time hiking in the mountains.

Laila was born and raised in Alexandria, Egypt and currently lives in Calgary with her son and his family. She is now starting to enjoy writing.

Liubov Verkhov was born in the Soviet Union. She loves Chinese brush painting and traveling. Her dream is to try skydiving.

Liubov Truzhnikova is originally from Kyrgyzstan and has been living in Canada for five years. She enjoys traveling to warm countries during the cold months in Calgary.

Luke Oparah is originally from Nigeria and the UK. He has a PhD in Analytical Chemistry and enjoys volunteering for different organizations in Calgary.

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Pratima Mallick is a homemaker from Bangladesh and has been living in Calgary with her son for the past year. She has a BA in Political Science.

Shahla immigrated to Canada with her family three year ago. She is very interested in creative writing and self-expression.

Suchitra Mallick is a retired business man from Bangladesh. He likes to watch cricket, football and badminton and enjoys traveling.

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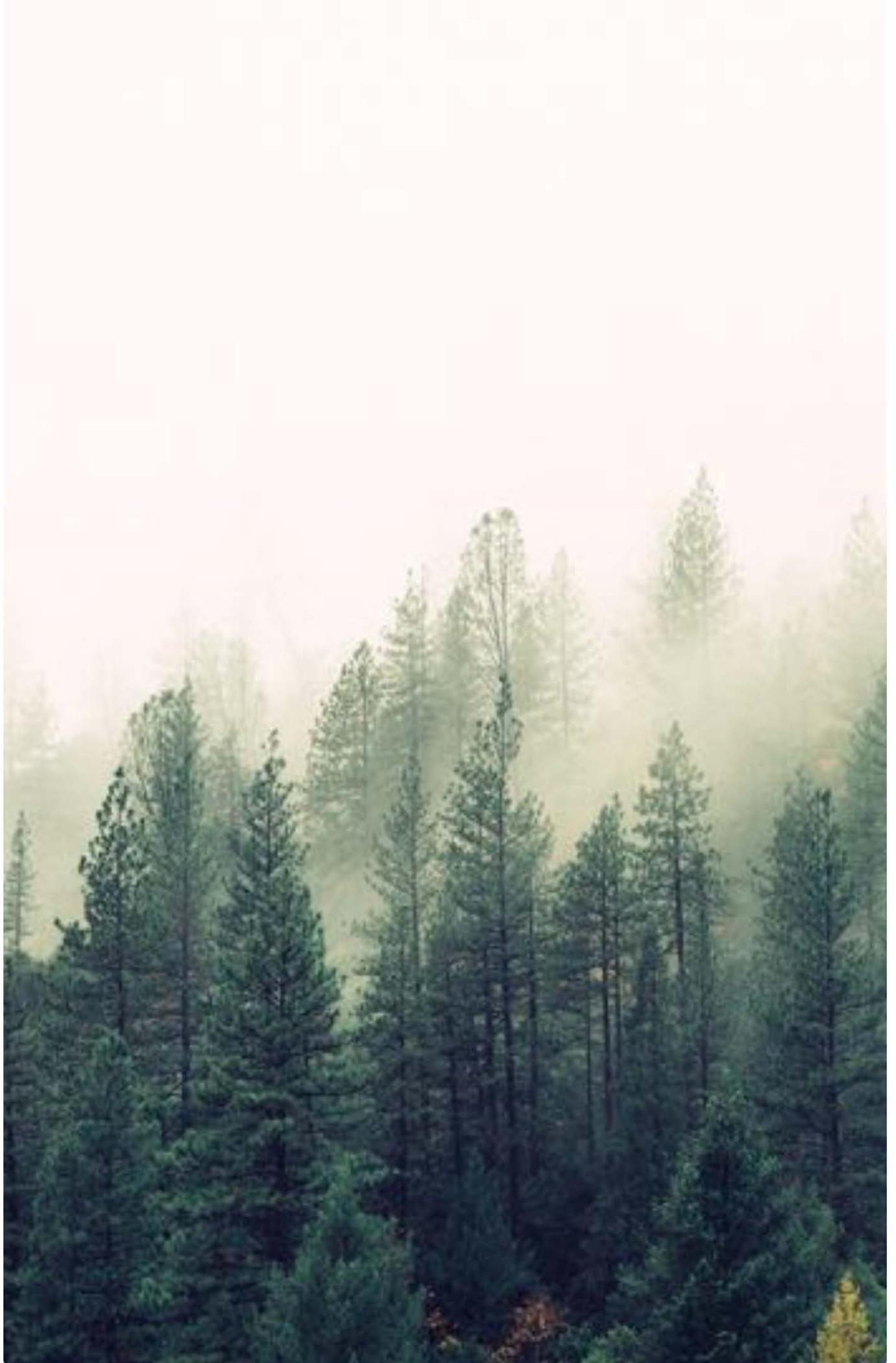
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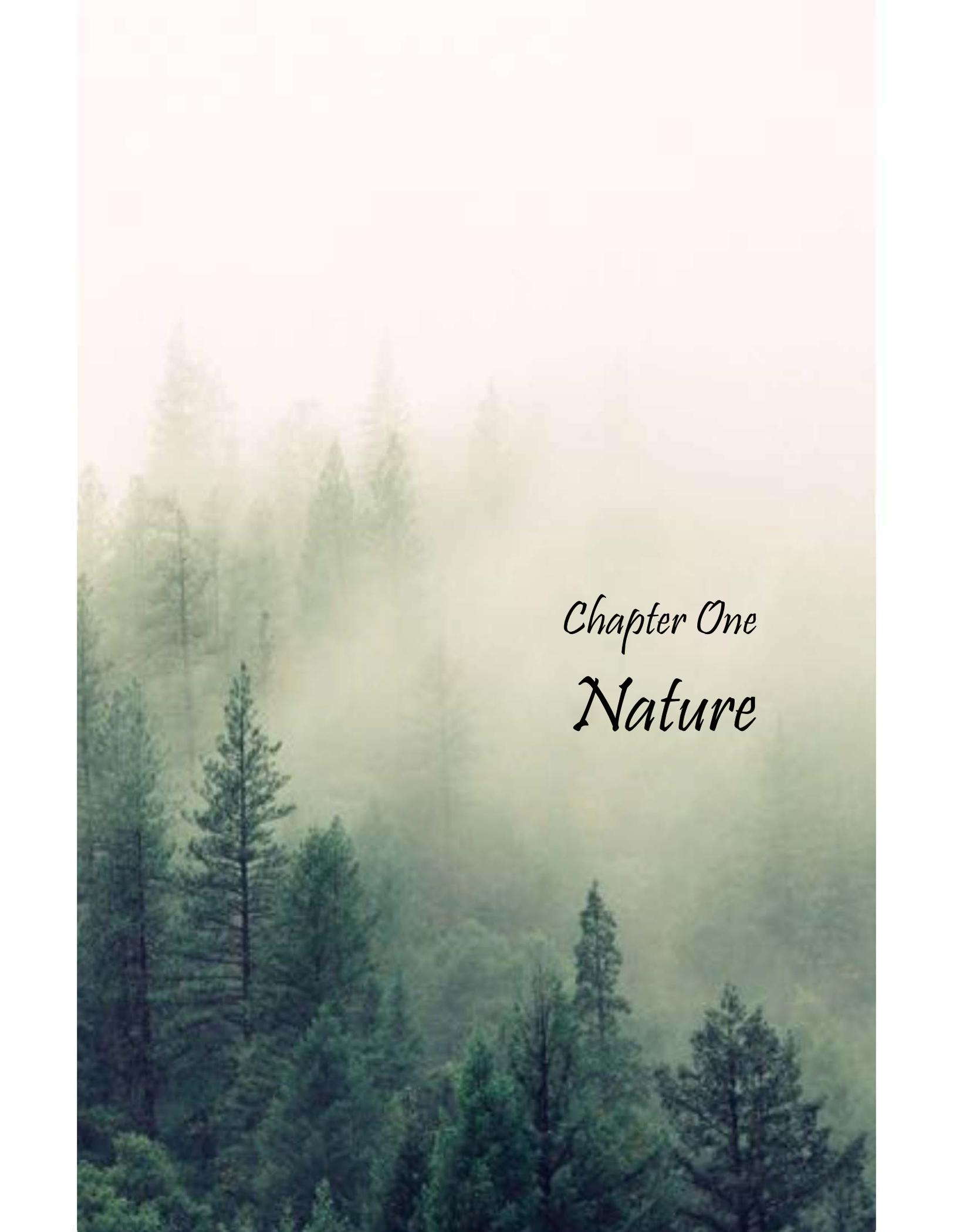
My Mission by Liubov Verkhov

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A vertical photograph of a dense forest of tall evergreen trees, likely pines or firs, shrouded in a thick, soft mist or fog. The trees in the foreground are dark green and sharp, while those in the background are lighter and more ethereal. The overall atmosphere is serene and quiet.

Chapter One
Nature

The Mountain

by Hilda

Majestic, powerful, invincible
the mountain presents its presence.
Created millions of years ago
its shape exhales solitude and age.

Its loneliness shows
superiority and independence,
but its lovely trails and the knowledge
that it has been inhabited by man and beast
invites me to dream and walk forward
forcefully.

Below I discover gurgling streams.
A bird starts chirping –
a squirrel asks for attention.

An unknown happiness takes possession
of my thoughts and feelings.
I become one with nature.
I am at home.

Calgary in Four Seasons

by Pengyuan Zhao

Spring

The spring festival is a prologue:
opening
One party connects to another
with gongs and drums and lions
dancing.

The firework of the night sky is lovely.
Ducks and geese in the river
swimming.
The plains have horses running free
when the primrose is in full bloom...
Every family should meet in early
spring

Summer

Summer in Calgary is the coolness of
place.
We get rid of the sweat and the haze.
Animals and birds find their voices.
It is coolness everywhere, indeed.

I feel a breeze touch my face
The scenery is beauty all around.
Someone sings and someone dances.
Cars drive always toward the
spectacular backdrop
of the mountains.

Autumn

The fall wind is rustling and blowing
street ripe fruit grows on the tree
No one picks it.
Swans are outlined against the sky,
honking.
Under the sunset, I find a poem for
thought.
There is turkey crisp and pumpkin sweet.
Thank God for the harvest!

And thanks to the mid-autumn festival
time to eat mooncake with friends.
Many friends in all skin colours make the
party inspiring.
The rich simple pleasure of life surrounds
me
Prosperity and calm everywhere you look.

Photo by Hai Fu Lu

Winter

Northerly latitude offers special scenery.
The sunset kisses the west mountain at
4pm.
The morning dawns to snow, heavy.
Heavy snow like wet cotton
As small animals and birds run and hide.
The fog on the pine trees is a carnival of
raging.
Cold outside, but warm within.
Ah, what a great white north!
A livable city, in truth
And a good place to call home.

Photo by Hai Fu Lu

Calgary in Summer

by Wuhong (Lily) Zhang

Accompanying the majestic Rocky Mountains
The Bow and the Elbow rivers flow
On all sides, surrounding us
Like green scarves of water

High-rise buildings climb into the blue sky and
white clouds
While houses with gardens ring the city centre:
These are the cheerful homes of Calgarians.

Sun shines, flowers bloom and birds sing
While squirrels and rabbits gambol on the grass
And geese frolic in the water.

Photo by Hai Fu Lu



Calgary in summer is beautiful as a picture
Calgary's summer is comfortable as the spring

The beautiful blue landscape of Banff,
The Calgary Stampede attracts tourists from far
and wide:

With rodeos and shows
Parades and music
And smell of delicious breakfasts:
Bacon and maple syrup in the air

People camp and picnic
People sing and dance
Calgary in summer:
Beautiful as a picture, comfortable as the spring
And full of vitality everywhere.



The Secret Mind of Birds

by Hilda

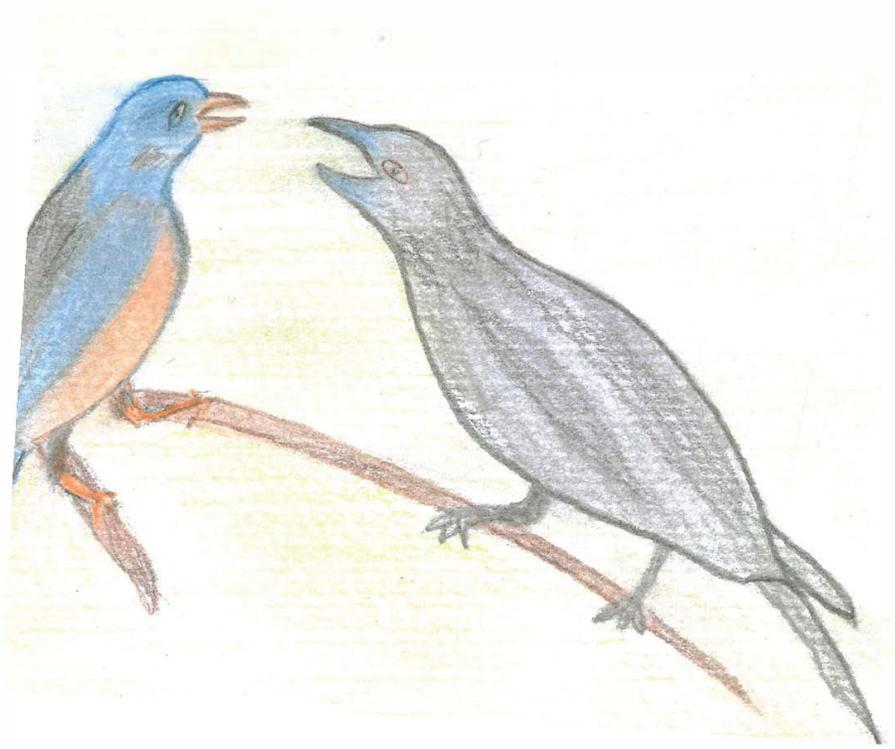
It was bitter cold, about minus 22 C. I had purchased some groceries from the store and carried them home, reflecting that I definitely do not want to go out again, even with my car. Thinking about food: I am, in some way, happy that it is this cold. Under the present circumstances, I have no excuses not to eat the food stored in the freezer.

I walked toward home, using mostly clean pedestrian sidewalks. I was protected with warm gloves, warm shoes and a scarf carefully arranged across my mouth and nose, to keep the cold air from touching my skin or my lungs. The rest of my face was protected with sunglasses – I must have looked like someone from a different world, but no, I looked like a real modern Canadian winter person, not like someone from outer space. Anyway, I did not mind: “At least I am warm” I reflected and thought I might take a shower or a hot bath once I got home, a pleasant thought forced aside for the moment.

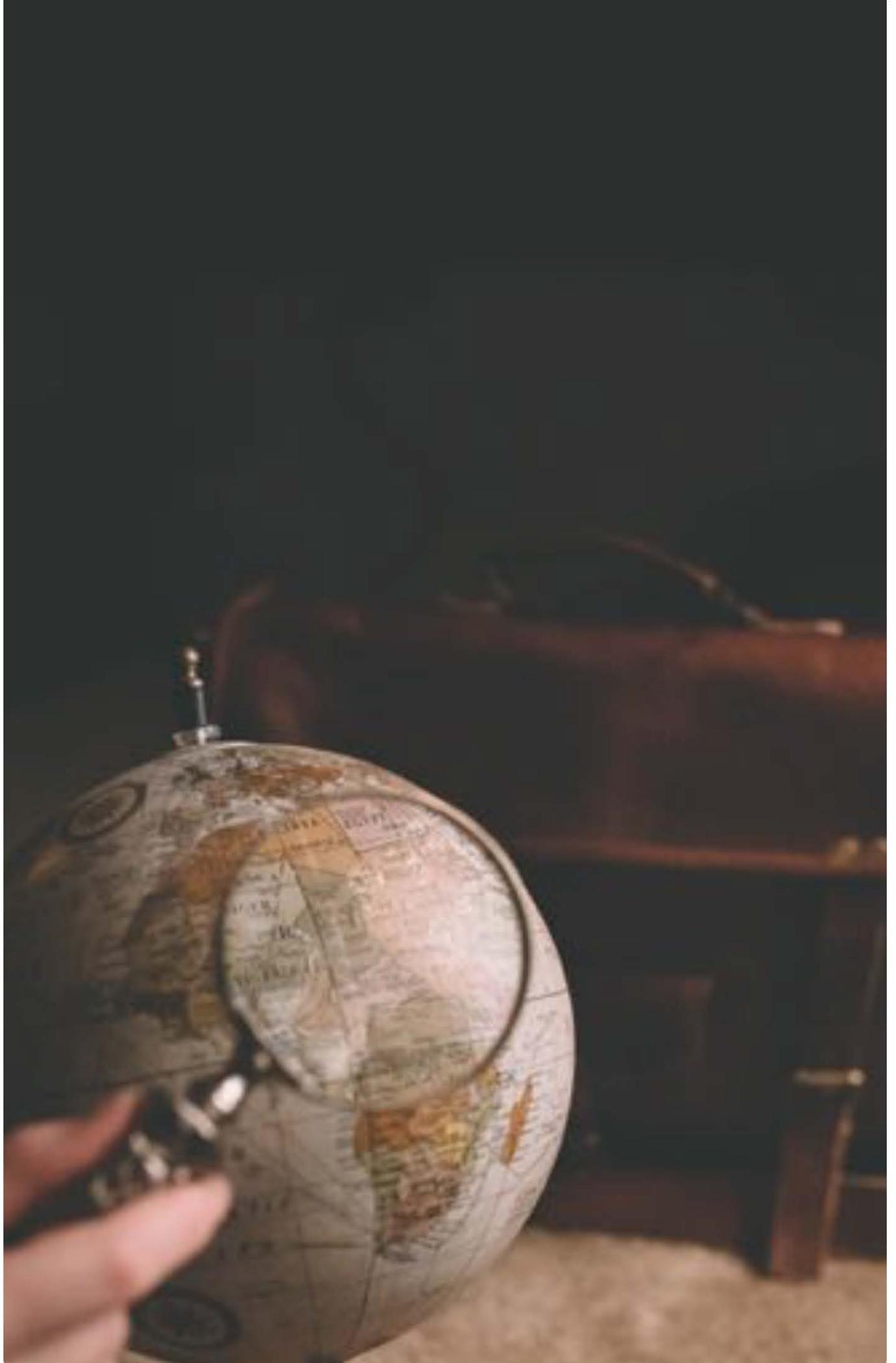
At that moment I noticed two small birds, chirping loudly, aggressively. I looked up. They wore black feathery coats and flitted around quickly.

An elderly man approached. I turned to him:

“I wonder what the noise is about. Is this called winter singing, or asking for food?” And his response was: “**No they are praying for summer.**”



Illustrated by Gyan Chand Kapoor

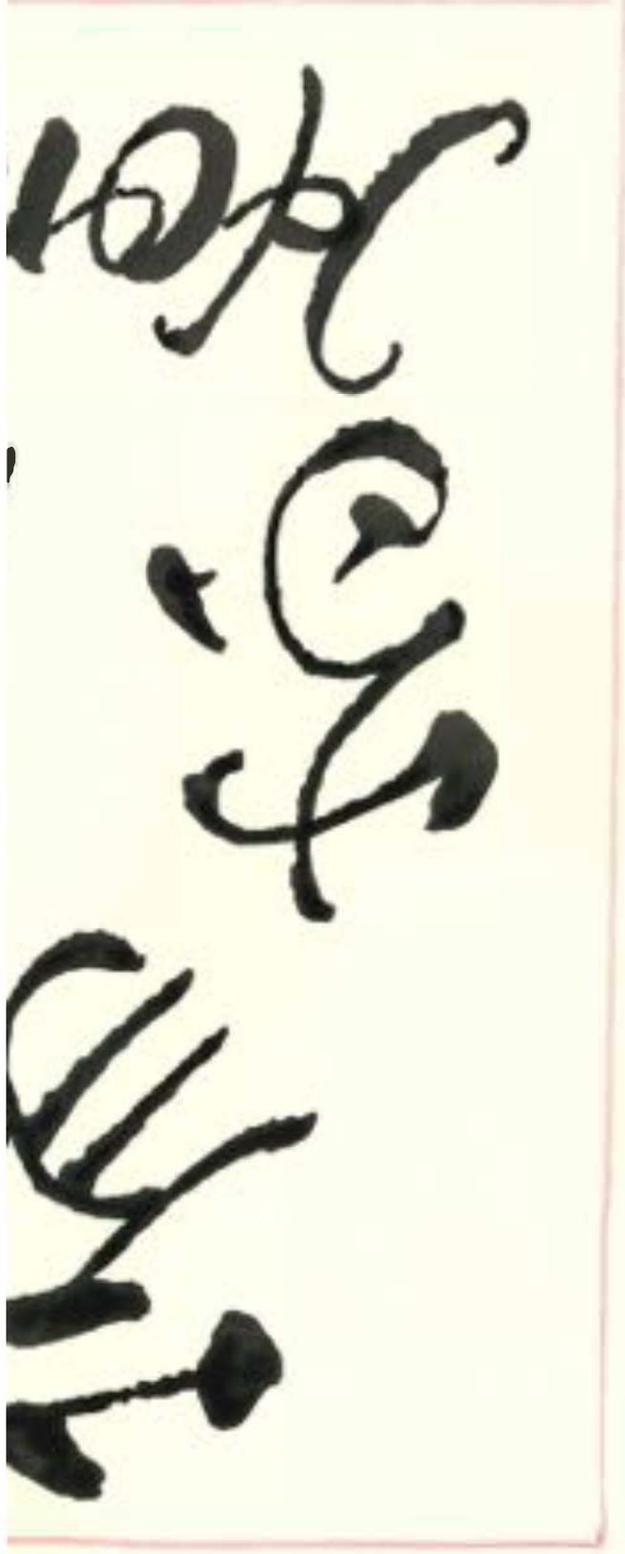


Chapter Two

Homeland

My Past Home in China *by Wuhan (Lily) Zhang*

When I feel lonely
I often miss my past home in China.
I dream of:
My mother and my daughter,
My brothers
nieces and nephews
When I feel lonely I think of my past
home
Near the oil fields in China
Where my brothers lived
And the Yellow River flowed.
When I feel lonely
I think of my one daughter
How she studied very hard
How she loves singing and dancing,
How she filled my quiet home
With more joy



When I think of my past home
I remember the Spring Festival:
Firecrackers, presents, decorations
and food.
Red coloured paper for good luck,
wealth and longevity.
When I think of my past home
I remember the whole family
gathered at my mother's table
making dumplings.
Children receive red envelopes with
money,
We shoot off firecrackers,
The table full of delicious food
And we chat, laugh and celebrate
the new year.
Our faces light up with affection and
joy
This lives in my memory forever.

Illustrated by Pengyuan Zhao



My Country

by Suchitra Mallick

The name of my country is Bangladesh. The citizens of my country are Bangladeshi.

Urdu is spoken in the west and Bengali in the east of the country. We are one hundred and eighty million people.

Dhaka is the capital and Chittagong is the second capital.

This is my homeland.

There are six distinct seasons that we enjoy in Bangladesh, each according to our choice and taste.

My country is almost like Calgary in its geography. There are so many hills, big and small. There are so many rivers and moreover the wide water of the Bay of Bengal.

Cox's Bazaar is the finest travelling town where the sea and the hills meets together and the beach is the longest in the world.

I love very much to sit on the bank of the sea and look out towards the Bay of Bengal.



MAP OF BANGLADESH

Illustrated by Suchitra Mallick

Home to me was...

Home to me is...

by Laila

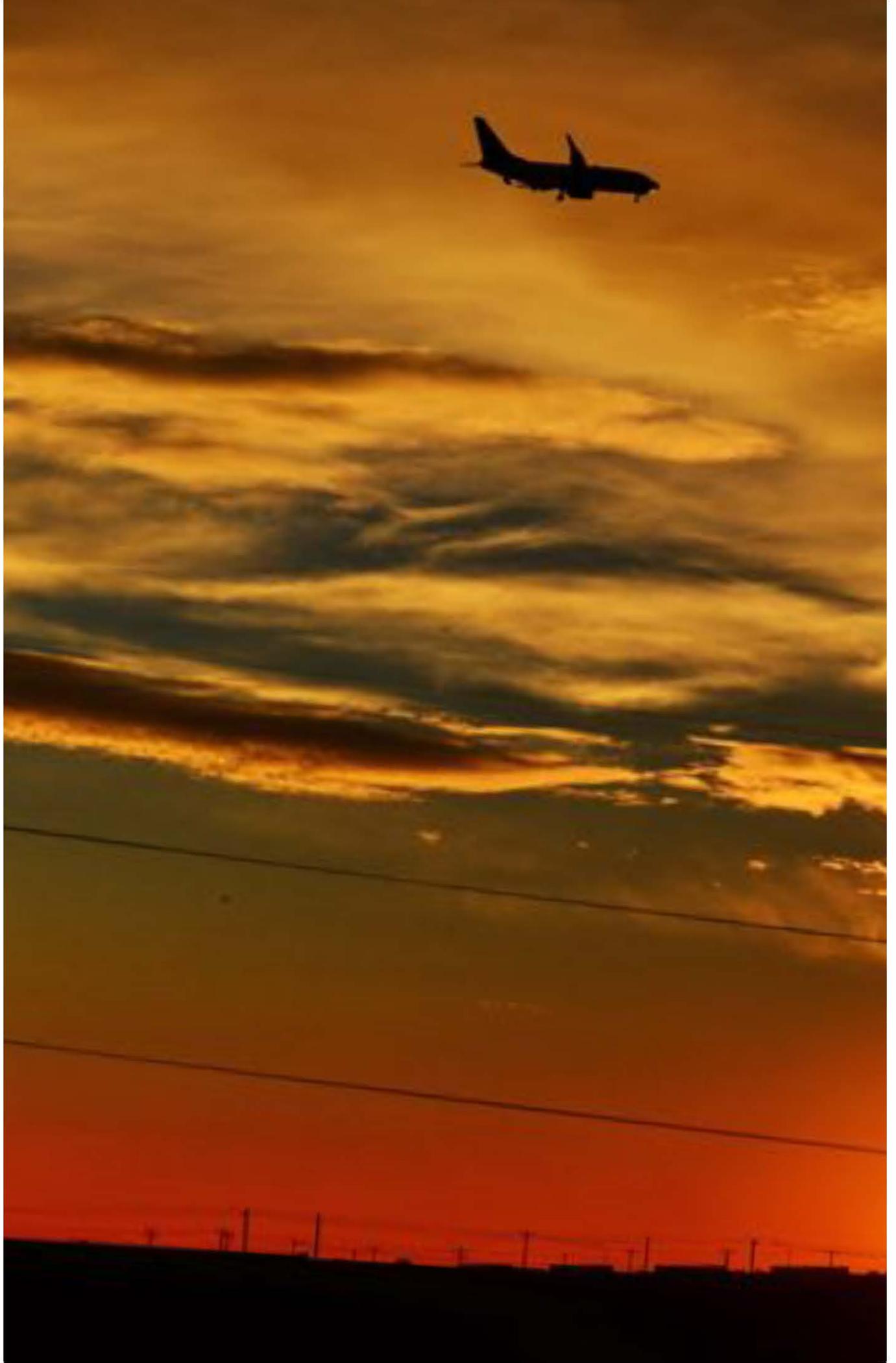
Home to me was my family. I grew up in Alexandria in an apartment building. My grandma was the landlady, and the building was home to all of the extended family. This building had six stories, and each level consisted of two apartments and a large terrace. In Egypt, we enjoy sitting on the terrace and have the benefit of the cool breeze, especially if you live in Alexandria on the Mediterranean coast.

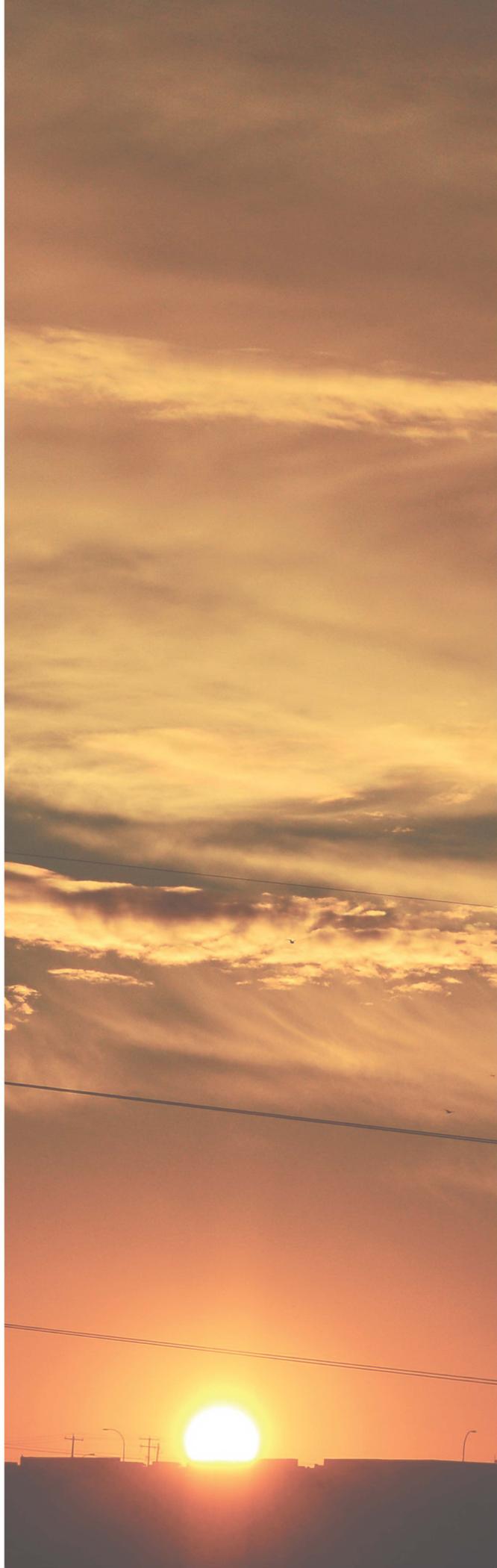
But the best part for me was the family gathering once or twice a week. Oh...I loved it regardless of which apartment it was taking place. These memories bring to my mind these no-frills, casual gatherings. These gatherings were not for special events. We wore sneakers, comfortable slippers, t-shirts, pants, and handmade shawls.

In time, these gatherings created a kind of positive competitions among the mothers to make tasty dishes and create new recipes. I can picture my eldest aunt's famous date jam pie and my youngest aunt's homemade pomegranate juice, but for me the best was my mother's rice pudding which was incredible. Mom shared the secret. It was the fresh cream she added.

Now, in Calgary, home for me is my new friends. It was not hard for me to get closer to the new community. Although the thoughts, traditions, and languages are different, here, it is not a big issue. I do my best to enjoy my new life here. I don't like to be isolated from the community.

I am blessed to have friends from different countries across the globe. Just like in Alexandria, where home meant large and food-filled family gatherings, my friends are my home now.





Chapter Three
The Arrival

Photo by Hai Fu Lu

The Arrival

by Liubov Verkhov

I am in the Calgary airport at first
My long journey is almost passed.
I worry as I meet with border staff.
My heart is beating super-fast.

I see a bonny, pretty pup,
He jumps on me welcoming, jumping up,
I want to pet his cozy fur,
And forget, momentarily, my fear at all.

The dog looks very cheerful.
His owner seems, on the other hand, dull.
But all at once he strictly asks if
I have forbidden foods.

I am at loss. Why does he ask?
What do I have? “Just wrapper scraps” ...
The next moment it’s thrown out.
I take a breath and go on my route.

I am alone, scared, and tired,
arriving to the Calgary airport.



A Sweet Calgary Life

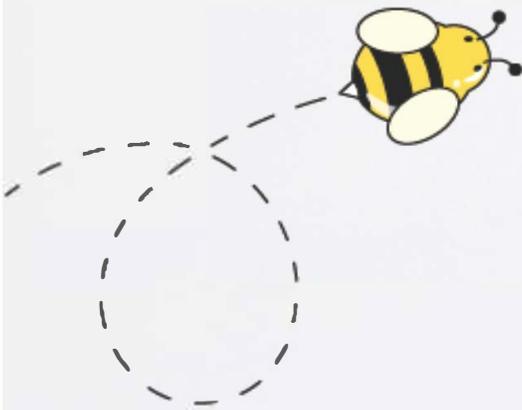
by *Liubov Truzhnikova*

When I first arrived in Calgary, I did not know the English language. I could just smile and gesticulate.

I brought from my country a gift for my son, a bottle of honey. A Border Officer asked

me: “What is this?” But I could not explain what it was. The officer wanted to throw it away.

Then I showed a candy with a picture of a bee and I said: “Bzzz...!” I waved my hands as if to drive the bee away. The officer laughed, gave me my bottle of honey back and he said, “Welcome to Calgary and have a sweet life here!”



A New Feeling Arises

by Xiaoqi (Linda) Cao

When I arrived in Calgary,
I lost the ability to communicate,
felt I was babbling like a baby.

But I made my way, strolling in and around,
various styles of wooden buildings
following the fat rabbits, jumping and running
along the path, bringing me
to a beautiful fairytale world.

I sucked in the blue sky, white clouds and fresh air.
Sniffed the delicate scent the flowers and grass sent
forth
and the smoky barbecue beef.

Come now, Calgary.
I am excited for this new silver world to clean my
spirit.
The Bow River flows with my singing,
trees on the riverbank sway with me, dancing.

A new feeling arises:
I'm not a senior citizen,
not a baby babbling,
but a child, yes a child!
Seeing with young eyes and
living in full, pure happiness.

Arriving in Calgary

by Pratima Mallick

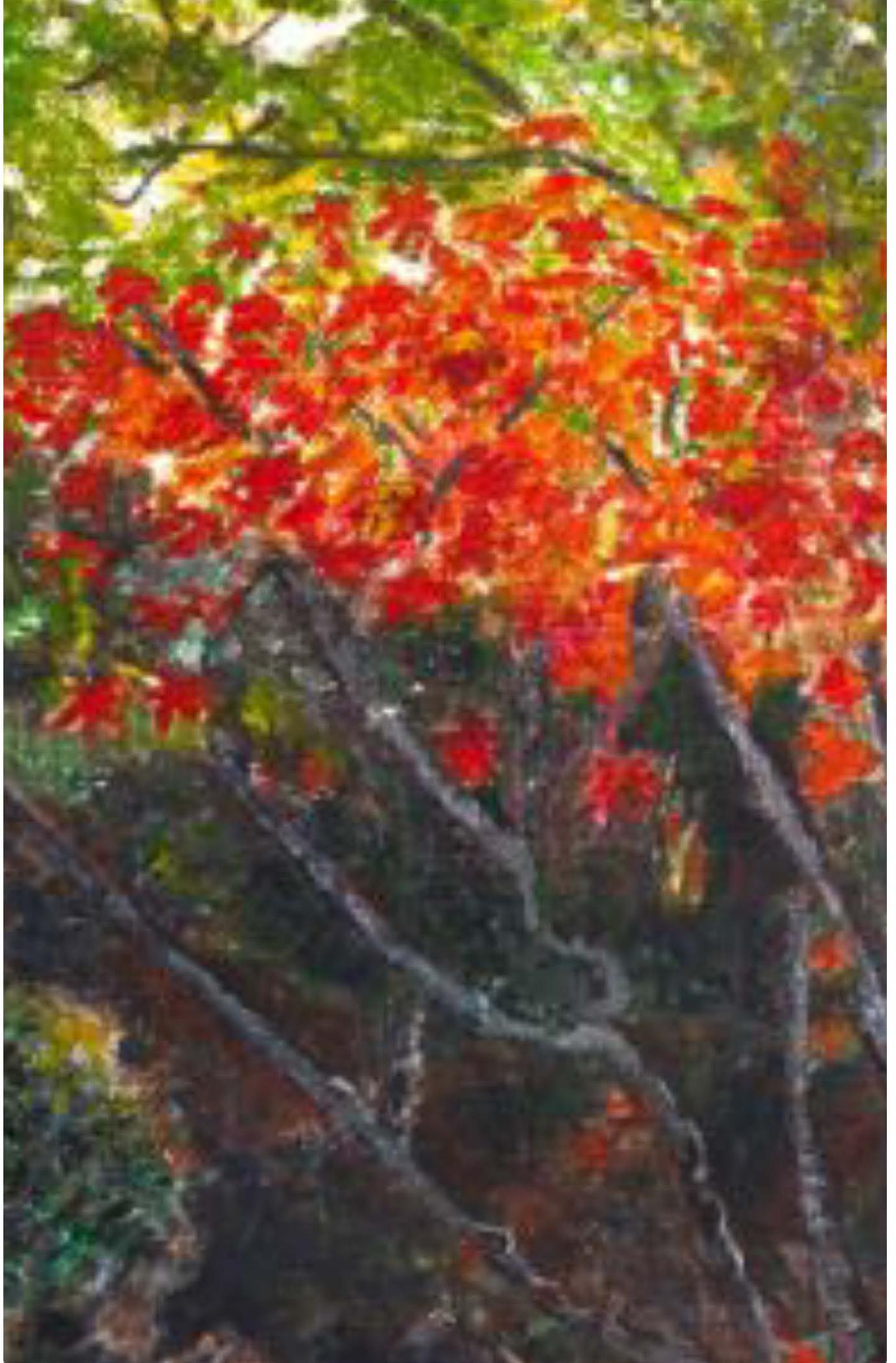
My son came here twelve years before me.
When I arrived in Calgary, he came to the
airport to greet me.

I was very eager to inhale the smell of my son
and to see him and
embrace him firmly.

At last I am overwhelmed with joy to see him
at the gate.
My tears come. I cannot control them and they
flow.

Once we are in the car on the way home I feel
so much pleasure
As I look out at the flowers, the green apple
and cherry trees on the roadside.

Cheerful and clean with a blue sky, the city
smiles at me.



Chapter Four
Love
and Loss

Far Away From My Mother

by Shahla

My mother, my brightest candle (light) forever,
My mother...

Being away from you, never took away your memory
from my mind,
My mother...

You were well-known for dignity, generosity and
piousness,
My mother...

Pain and suffering wasn't what you deserved,
My mother...

Being away from you wasn't what I deserved,
My mother...

You were looking into my eyes,
My mother...

Your hands were in my hands,
My mother...

Time to go when you closed your eyes,
My mother...

You were with the moon (and stars)
My mother...

You went and left me alone
My mother...

You are never going to be forgotten
My mother...

Being away from you, never took away your memory
from my mind
My mother...

I Washed My Face With Tears

by Pengyuan Zhao

The lesson of a bloody past in youth will never be forgotten. The first half of my life was devastating. Political movement and man-made disasters were endless. It is a miracle that young people can still survive there to this day. What I have to tell you is my personal tragedy, within the greater tragedy of an earthquake that to speak of arouses great sadness, but I know I have to face this topic. I was forty years old on the terrible day of July 25, 1976. We were a family of five, one eldest son and two daughters. The earthquake cost me my eldest son and daughter. I have only one little girl left who is fighting alone, in Calgary.

It was a hot summer and my family lived in a small home of thirty metres, divided into three rooms with decorative wooden windows in between. I slept in the middle of the room. My eldest son was in the hut near the east wall. My wife and two daughters slept in the west room. The walls of our home were made of clay blocks. The flat roof was coal slag. There was no such thing as an earthquake-proof property. We were sleeping as the earthquake hit. At three thirty in the morning, a particularly strong earthquake hit: In ten seconds our whole family was buried in the ruins of our scattered house.

Though my mouth was full of dust, my head was active. I could breath, I could talk to my wife, but I could not move because of the weight of the rubble on my body. When I heard someone nearby, I called out for help. Neighbours helped move the heavy bricks that pinned me down. I struggled out of the mess and bricks... my back was badly damaged and bleeding. It was not yet dawn, so still dark. We cleared the rubble bare handed with no tools. I found

my wife and six year old daughter, who she was covering, and my eldest daughter was next to her. My next thought was to find my eldest son. He was fourteen years old and about the height of his mother. But where was he? It was difficult to locate him. I rushed to remove the blocks that had fallen down. With a tired mouth and dry tongue, anxious to death... time flew by quickly as I searched for him. Finally at day break, I finally found out that my son was dead. The walls of two houses had fallen on him and the ruins were too thick. A metre of blocks piled thick covered his young body and took his life in a very short time. My son was suffocated to death.

I wanted to cry, but the situation did not allow it. I had to find my eldest daughter immediately.

My wife had heard my eldest daughter crying at the beginning, but we did not rescue her first. Instead we tried to find my son. When we found her, we saw that there were fewer things piled on her and it didn't take as much effort to pick her out. We found that her right arm was broken by a heavy object. By the time we found her, my twelve-year-old daughter had stopped breathing. Later we learned that the source of the Tangshan earthquake came from the East. The seismic waves were directional and the walls fell to the west.

These moments of disaster can never be forgotten. They are stored in my mind, lingering and repeating. The earthquake killed a total of 250 000 people, one third of those living in Tangshan and the city became a disabled body. Healthy beautiful children, gone and replaced with tears and sighs. Our hearts, our lives--broken, helpless.

My son was dead. If I had set out to save my eldest daughter first, she would possibly be alive today. My misconception at the time was that men were more important than women. I made a big mistake and will carry my regret and self-reproach with me all my life. My son and daughter are excellent children. Both were violinists. My son had finished his first year of junior high and was in the school band. My daughter was in the fifth grade of elementary school. A few hours before they were singing and playing the violin. A few hours later, I said goodbye to them forever. How can I accept such a reality?

In the days that followed, I was in great pain. I washed my face with tears. For two years I wrote poems in memory of my children. I cried and sang long songs and these were my regular lessons. Later I began to play chess and to learn English and Japanese. I tried to free myself of the pain. Finally, today, I know how to love, how to be grateful and how to start a colourful life again. Thank God! I am happy now to meet my children, in a dream. In a simple shed. In 1976.

Love

by Pratima Mallick

I sat by the window and gazed out
waiting to see you and feel
your presence in and out
night ends morning shines,
but the pain of waiting does not
seems to fade out

Oh dear! My epitome of love
and wisdom
come soon
I'm eagerly waiting to make
you the queen of my kingdom.

Photo by Shahla







Chapter Five
Lessons from
the Wise

A Young Old Woman's Advice

by Xiaoqi (Linda) Cao

A wrinkled grandmother with a pale face, cloudy eyes, often sweating, but she is dedicated to her English classes. Thinking about the teacher's questions, she forces her brain to search for English words.

In the sunshine, she rests in a rocking chair... with her teenage self in her mind: sixteen years old, from Beijing, full of simple youth. She walked along the valleys, forest paths and quiet streams, singing along the way, giving greetings to squirrels, rabbits and birds around her. Her singing was so carefree as her voice echoed along the valley.

Fifty years pass by.

She often speaks to herself. If she would give this smart healthy girl advice, she would say: "Learn foreign languages! Besides Mandarin and Russian, there is English. Do not sing and dance all day long! Maybe your future life will be more convenient and relaxed."

Now, the first thing the old lady does when she gets up every day is remind herself:

"Hey little girl, study hard, don't waste any more time, listen to English conversations and read English books."

She lets herself back into her youth. She puts the English phrases now into her mind, very hard. She is optimistic that as long as she persists, she will grasp the tools of communication and complete the journey of life healthy and happy.

A Suggestion To My Younger Self

by Liubov Truzhnikova

When I imagine my young life, I have a lot of questions. Sometimes I have the answers,

sometimes I do not. Now I ask myself: “Liubov, why didn’t you learn English?” In my home country of Kyrgyzstan, I was a university student. I had just one hour a week to learn English. It was a university program and I didn’t know that English would be such an important and significant language for my future.

I regret what I didn’t do in my youth. It is hard to learn English and it is key to being comfortable and confident for my new life in Canada.

Returning to my years of adolescence, I would tell that young and energetic girl, “Liubov, please, learn English! It will be useful to you in your future life!”

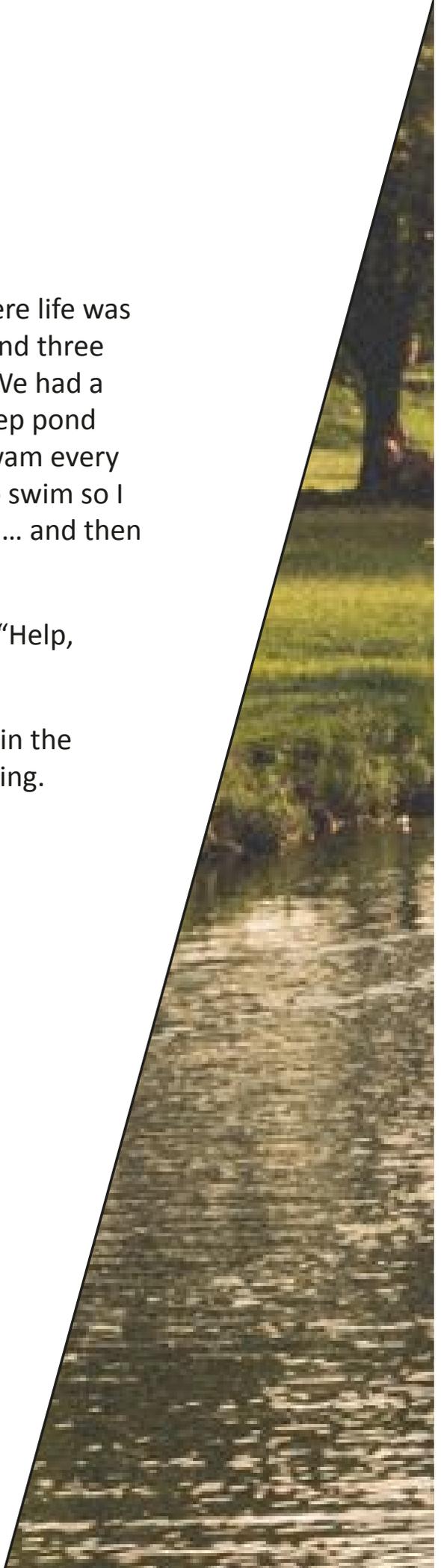
The Art of Swimming

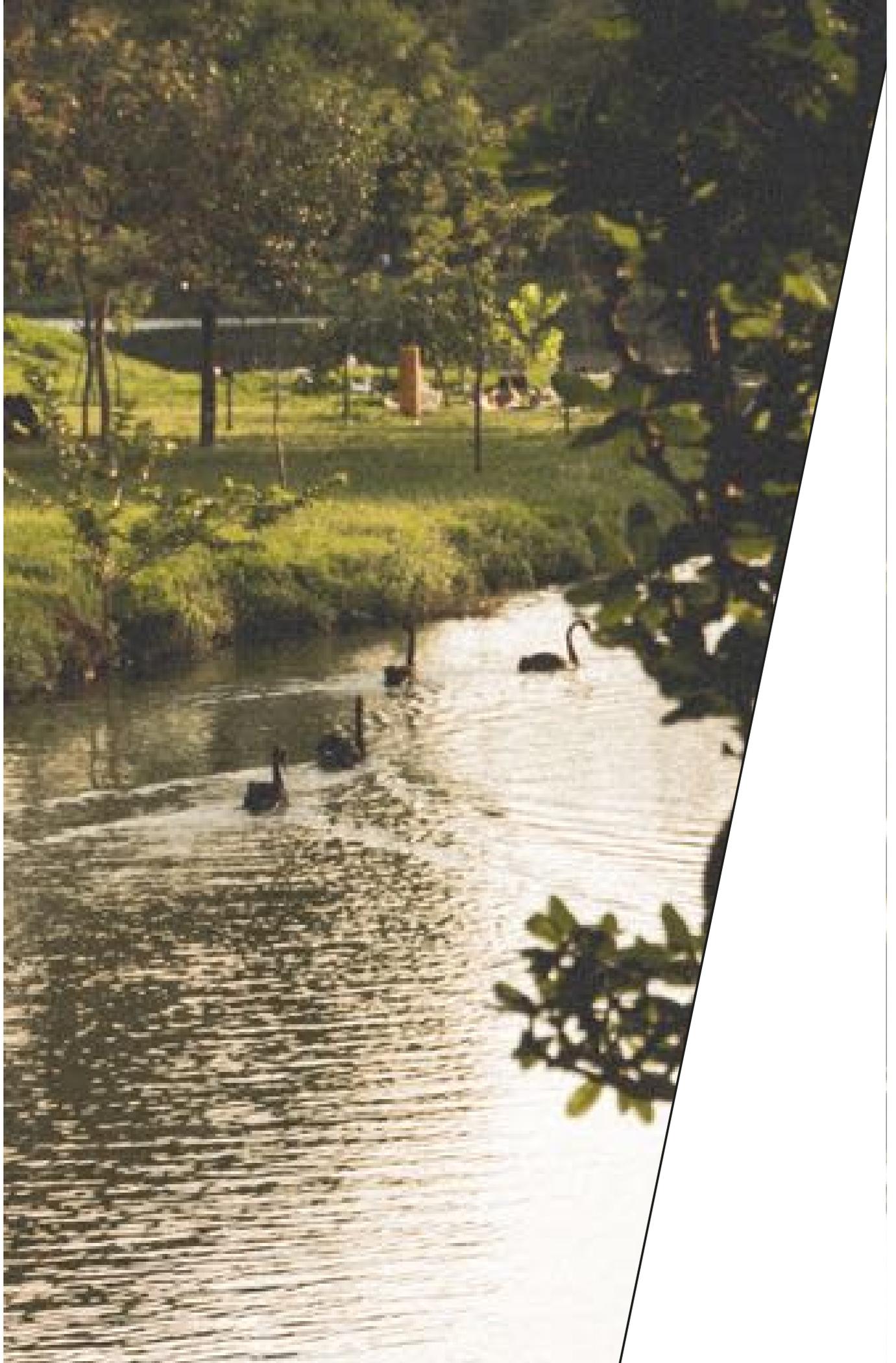
by Pratima Mallick

In my early years I lived in a village where life was fun and enjoyable. I had six brothers and three sister and parents who cared for me. We had a big field in front of our house and a deep pond where my elder brothers and sisters swam every day. I was also tempted and wanted to swim so I ventured close to the edge of the pond... and then fell in.

Since I could not swim, I had to shout: "Help, help!"

And so my advice to you is never to go in the water until you know the art of swimming.





Good Advice

by Laila

I think back to the time I was in grade 12, when I was 17 years old. I was dreaming of going to the university. My dreams stretched to getting a Ph.D. and having a job at the university as a professor or a researcher.

One day, I came back home from school wearing my gray school uniform. My mom told me that we had guests coming who were going to introduce their son to our family. I was about to be engaged. Dad and mom were so happy, especially my mom, who was then in her thirties, and who was excited about the upcoming event. On the other hand, my dad looked like he had a serious mission to look after.

Looking like a football team, the family and the servants raced to fix everything on time. They prepared the salon which was used for important events; otherwise, the living room was our everyday room. Flowers were arranged in crystal vases. There were tall, silver platters full of chocolates and pieces of gateaux, and fresh cold bottled juice. Everything was placed on a side table covered with a lace cloth embroidered with gold thread. We borrowed more fancy armchairs from my grandma who lived in the same building.

Around two weeks later, we invited a small number of family members, and also members of my future family-in-law. We celebrated the engagement party at our home. The party ended, and I felt that I was a grown up lady like my mom. I wore a gold ring and a diamond ring, and was almost ready to start my marriage journey. We rented an apartment only one train station away from my family. My dad and my fiancé shared the furniture expenses.

Everything was soon ready, including the house, the furniture, the wedding dress with a short white veil, a simple white tiara, and sharply pointed high-heeled shoes. We rented a medium hall in a hotel. On the wedding day at my family's home, we celebrated the marriage knot in the presence of the officiant who wore a cloak and a turban. He and the two witnesses signed the document. I was now married.

After a lovely wedding party, I settled down in my new home. I had two beautiful boys. I enjoyed my new social life, discovering secrets of housekeeping and new recipes. My husband was a social, friendly, and sympathetic man, and at the same time he shared with me our life responsibilities and respected my family.

So why this long narrative? It is to clarify that while living this happy life I felt that I was like a chicken and her chicks, taking care of everybody. After five years, I decided to change the path of my life. I joined the university and to do so I had to retake my old grade twelve certificate. I received a scholarship and a few years later, I graduated from the University of Alexandria. I got a job as teacher in a high school.

I am proud of my family and highly cherish their efforts for raising me. But, if I have the right to give advice to my younger self, I would have asked my parents to delay my marriage, and accept modern, contemporary ideas, and consider my personal ambition and wishes to continue my education.



Chapter Six
The Lighter Side





Photo by Xiaoqi Cao

My Silk Scarves

by Xiaoqi (Linda) Cao

When I open my wardrobe, why do the silk scarves always
dance towards me?

Perhaps because they are as thin as a cicada's wing,
embroidered with flowers
and fluttering like butterflies, gorgeous and vivid.

When I need to, I stand to face them while I choose,
appreciating and feeling their beautiful perfume so carefully
time slips away quietly...
until finally, a silk scarf matching the colour of the dress in my
hand drifts
down towards me and curls itself around my neck
as if a kind angel gently comforting and inspiring.

She makes me feel bright, confident and suffused with sunshine
from the inside out.

She is my favorite,
I never leave her regardless of spring, summer,
autumn or winter.

Where Fish And Chips Meet

by Luke Oparah

The King's Head pub (in Clifton Bristol, England), where fish and chips are a must for everyone on Friday evenings. The fish used for this English delicacy is cod. Fillets of cod are marinated with batter and then deep-fried.

The aroma coming from the fryers has everyone salivating before it is served. When the fish comes out from the oil? Whao, it is golden brown! The chips are prepared at the same time as the fish. On a typical Friday evening, by 5:00pm, there is a long lineup for fish and chips.

Normally they start serving at 6:00pm, the food and alcohol as well.

A friend of mine, Mike, would yell, "Put the fish before the chips! Let the chips cover the fish!"

When we ask him why he always wants it that way, he says, "If you put the chips first the fish

would eat them, and you're left with fish only."

With your fish and chips served, (fish before the chips) , you order a pint of beer – in most cases,

Guinness – and you know your weekend has just begun. The final journey of the cod.

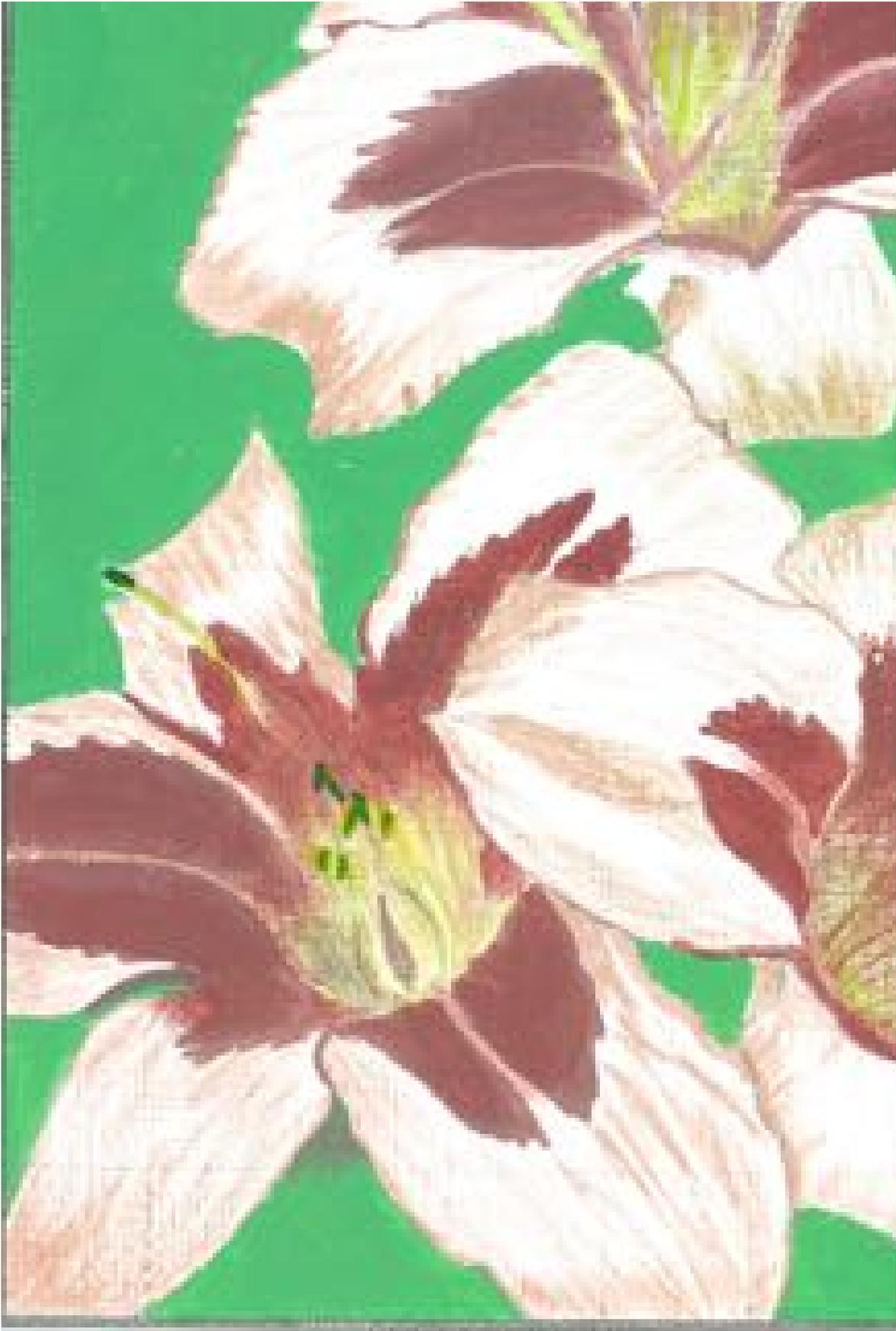
Different Kinds of Flowers

by Suchitra Mallick

I have received a video from my daughter in Chittagong last week to enjoy the beauty of the garden filled up with different kinds of flowers like roses of different species and Hasna (Jasmine) which has a very sweet fragrance. Also, there were marigolds, cosmos Jemia and others. I made this garden twenty-five years ago on the top floor of our building. In the morning, I used to go to the garden for spraying water, manure and cleaning for the benefit of the flowers.

Once I was stung by a bee. Seriously, bees are always flying around the tower to collect pollen to make honey. When I was in the garden two kids came to me for flowers and asked me to give them the water pipe.

It is my great memory. This video of the rooftop garden is one that most reminds me of my daughters.



WILD HONEYEATER

Illustrated by Gyan Chand Kapor



Illustrated by Hilda



Illustrated by Hilda

I Asked My Friend

by Luke Oparah

I remember vividly when we landed in Canada, at the Pierre Elliott Trudeau International Airport.

A friend I was going to stay with was on hand to pick me up. I asked my friend: "Do you know the immigration officials can smile? In England, it is easier to see a red moon than see them smile." He laughed.

I went to the bathroom to freshen up. There was no one collecting fees.

I asked my friend: "How come there are no bathroom fees?" I think he did not understand me. In Britain, someone stands by the entrance collecting money before you go in. Out of the airport, the sky was very clear and bright.

I asked my friend:

"It is it always like this?"

"Yes, this is normal."

Never seen the sky so bright before.

Driving along the way, he kept stopping here and there. I asked my friend: "Why are you stopping, there is no cow."

"For the stop signs. You have to stop fully before you continue," he quipped.

My first time seeing a stop sign on the road.

The roads here are too big. Cars were passing each other freely. I asked my friend: "Why do you pass each way without stopping in residential area?"

In England, one car would stop for the other to pass, the roads are too narrow for two cars side by side.

At his house, nobody was wearing sweaters indoors.

I noticed the heater on all night. Concerned,

I asked my friend: "Did you forget to switch off the heater?"

"We leave it on all day." He replied.

I asked my friend: "Are you sure? Your bill won't be too much?"

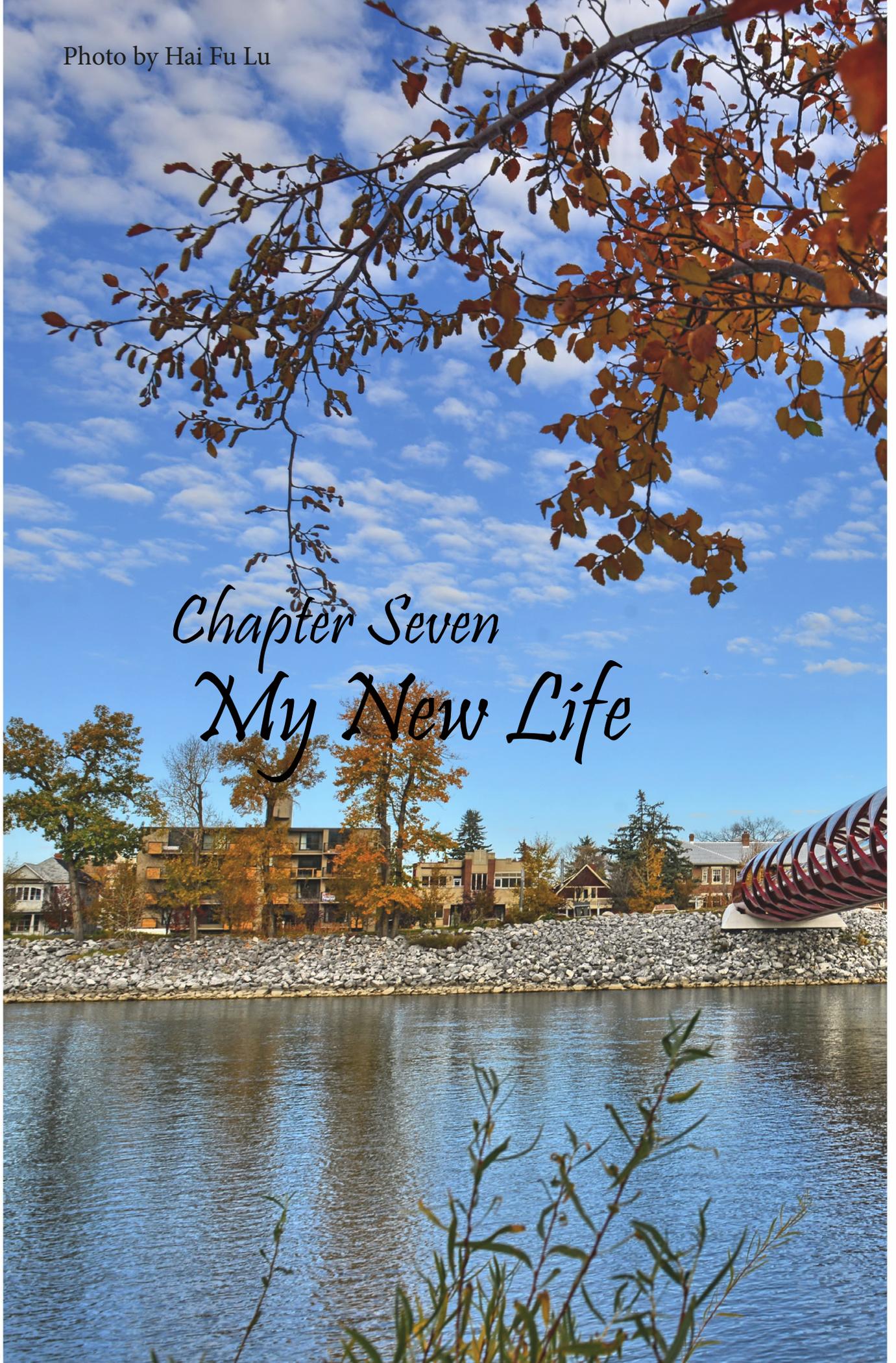
"For us, it is cheap." He said.

Have you ever seen someone from England?

without a sweater? The culture shock!

Photo by Hai Fu Lu

Chapter Seven
My New Life





My Mission

by Liubov Verkhov

Home for me was the lovely city of St. Petersburg, Russian culture, national traditions, my dear friends and my ancestors.

Now I work at keeping that identity alive while living in Canada, making a new home here my own.

I have been taking English courses since I arrived to Calgary and now enjoy speaking this language. I am really happy when I understand what people are saying. Day by day, my vision of Canadian life becomes brighter, as if the horizon rises above.

But I do have a mission here: to keep alive my native Russian culture and traditions, especially my mother tongue, at least among the members of my family. My grandchildren must speak, read and write Russian fluently! They have to know about Russian culture. I assist them. They do their best. This makes me proud. It helps me to build a home for myself here.

When I first arrived, I had a fight with Anna, my fifteen-year-old granddaughter. "Why do I need to keep my Russian?" she asked, annoyed. "You need to know Russian culture, you need to read Russian books in the language of the authors, it is to better your education and be successful in life!" I tried to be patient because we had had this dispute before. "I don't see a problem. All the Russian masterpieces are translated into English, so what is the big deal since I can still read them?"



The Door Key

by Hilda

This golden coloured door key gives me privacy,
peace and pleasure.

This golden coloured door key
gives me sadness, solitude, reminding me of the
times gone by.

I decide to be positive.

I open my fridge and prepare the dish of the day.

The telephone rings.

A friend – wonderful – a human voice.

Now I am definitely at home.

Sunny Calgary

by Liubov Verkhov

From the plane, the landscape was sad.

Snowy and gray, houses with black roofs,

Like our Russian land on the north shores of the
Pacific Ocean.

Is it really a gray land?

“Just wait five minutes” said the man next to me on
the plane.

And he was right.

I love Calgary for its sunny skies.

photo by Hai Fu Lu



Fresh Air and Freedom

by Shahla

Airport arrival and worries about the future.
Welcome to Canada! She says, her old face smiling.

She carries our luggage.

She is very strong, and I can be strong too, just like her.

In my home country, when women get older, they have no
opportunity to work.

This is the difference between my home country and Canada.



I am in Canada because of freedom.
Freedom for my daughter, who is everything for me.

Being free is like breathing fresh air.

If I can be strong,

If I can survive,

I will thrive.

