

MINNOW LITERARY MAGAZINE



EDITION 6 : WINTER 2022

Minnow Literary Magazine fishes for minnow-sized literary works and visual creative works that make a big splash. We accept Micro-Poetry (150 words or less), Flash Fiction (500 words or less), Short Personal Essays (1500 words or less), and Visual Art. Nature-themed works are encouraged, but all genres are considered.

This issue includes works from 7 countries on 4 continents: Afghanistan, Canada, England, Ireland, Portugal, Zimbabwe, and the United States (11 different states represented).

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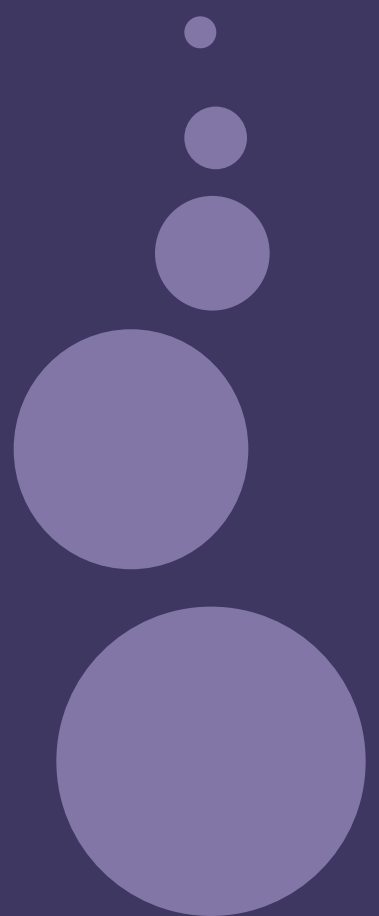
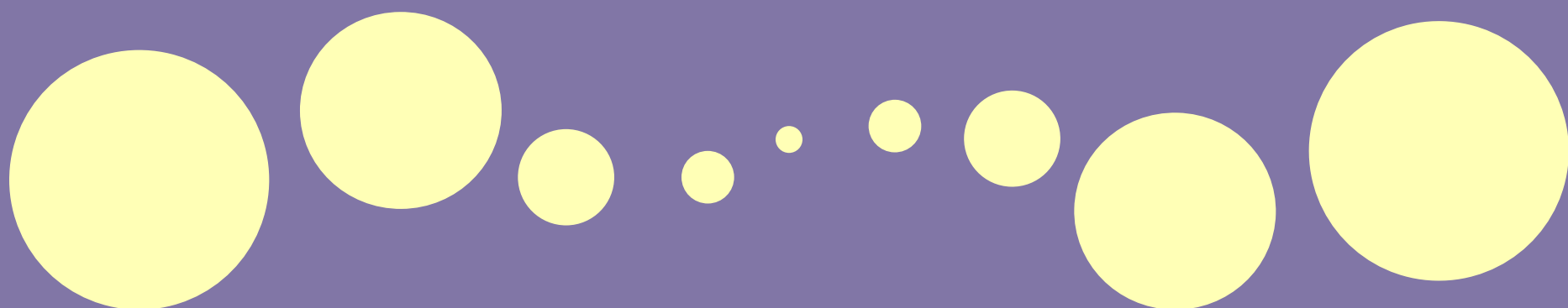


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An Ode to Boardwalks
Diane Callahan

Perhaps I shouldn't encourage
the intrusion of man into nature,
yet the firm planks under my feet
turn me into an observer, a visitor,
an explorer who needn't travel
far from comfort to be wild—not
to be one with the wild but to feel
I belong there, I am permitted,
even though we mark the end of wildness.

November on the Ooligan River
Tiel Aisha Ansari

Today the Ooligan wears a cloak of grey mist
edged with the yellow of the turning maples
and the green of the dark dripping firs.
Today the Ooligan is full to the brim.
Alders stand with their feet submerged
and lift grateful arms.

I too am grateful
for the breaking of drought.
For the quickening of life: careful crowds
on the streets of my neighborhood.
For a glimpse of rainbow over the cliffs.

Today the Ooligan wears a cloak of silver rain
edged with gold and garnet: vine maple,
Oregon grape, elderberry.
The heron returns to his haunts.
Today the Ooligan smiles at the sky.

"Ooligan" is an alternate spelling for the Indigenous (Chinook) name for a species of fish once common in the Columbia River, which was then known as the Oragon. It is thought to be the origin of the name of the state of Oregon.

Waterfall
Laura Lane

The water pivots
one moment serene
being pulled
from the space above
then pivots
into freefall

like thousands of its friends
all launching themselves
from the safety of the plane
to the freedom of the air
as they skydive down
to their next adventure
tumbling as they land
not on hard earth
but into the pool below
tossed under the surface
then floating serenely on
until pulled once more



RUNA, *Diving in the Coral Triangle*, Mixed Media

Tree
Michelle Meyer

Sliced by a storm,
its trunk is shaped
like a high-back chair.

Sit, it beckons.

How nice.
I could use the company.

Where Fire Has Been
Damaris West

Where fire has been

snarling, leaping at trees
till, groaning, they turn
to black torsos,
twisted limbs:
over the bleak scene
a breeze now blows
cloudlets of seeds.

Rich ash feeds
green embryos,
pushes shoots skyward,
opens leaves, till finally
these flowers,
fierce pink as sundown,
bright as flames:
rosebay willowherb—

fireweed.

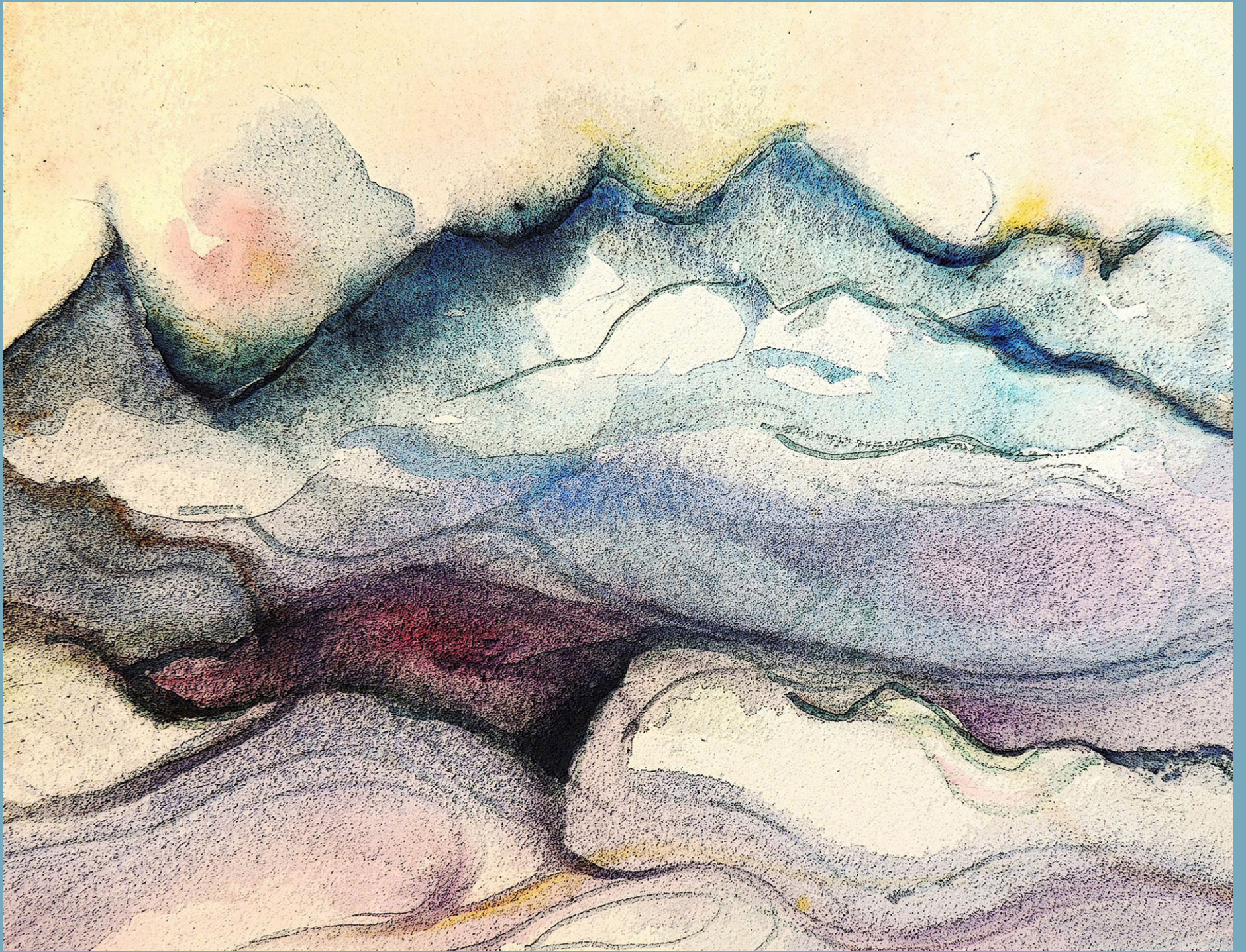
Wildfires
Wayne Lee

The sky is choked with smoke
as the green earth turns gray.

In this middle world we burn
in the wildfires of confusion.

We are both fuel and flame,
dead wood and sacred rain.

We drink before we drown.



Pat Bingham, *Idaho Hills*, Water Color

Sailing
Chris Sowers

I'm floating alongside the capsized sailboat, and it's bothering me that I can't see my feet. The water is too murky. Kids' lifejackets are too snug on me now. You handed one to me while you were convincing me to go out on the sailboat with you, but I swapped it for a larger one when you weren't looking. Instead, the adult-sized lifejacket slides its way upwards until it digs into my armpits, and I grab it just above the top buckle and tug it downwards back into place. It immediately starts its journey back up.

"You won't tip it over?" I'd asked you.

"I won't."

"You promise?"

"I do."

I tread water. Not because I need to with the lifejacket on, but because the movement keeps the piranhas away. *People that live around the lake, you like to tell me, they buy piranhas as pets. But then they get tired of feeding them; it gets expensive, so they dump them in the lake. Don't ever get in the water with even a hangnail. They'll smell blood and be all over you before you know it.*

I tread water and think about my hangnails and the scratch on my shin and the piranhas racing towards me like torpedoes. I kick my feet harder and raise my hands out of the water. Less bait. Hopefully there's a kid somewhere else in the lake bleeding to death from losing his foot to an outboard motor.

I curse myself for watching *Jaws* recently.

You've shed your lifejacket. It's hard enough to right a capsized sailboat without it getting in the way.

This time it's taking longer. You usually have the boat right-side up within minutes. I look down at the dark water and picture the cover of the *Jaws* VHS tape. Huge shark, teeth bared, darting upwards towards an unsuspecting swimmer.

You finally give up. You clamber into a standing position on the underbelly of the boat, face the shore, and wave your hands over your head. Grandpa sees you, and walks down the dock to bring his pontoon out to us. I don't see Mom.

"Your son is trusting you," she'd said.

You laughed. "I know, I know."

"You don't have to go," she'd told me.

"I know. Dad wants me to."

We haven't been on the sailboat since you moved out, but now you're back. Saying you and Mom are working it out.

I climb onto the pontoon and Grandpa helps you free the sail from the underwater weeds. The boat bobs into its rightful position. Grandpa lets me steer the pontoon back to shore, towing the waterlogged sailboat with you in it. He stands beside me with his arm around my shoulders.

"He just thinks it's funny," he says. He sounds tired.

"I know." I try not to sound disappointed.

Mom is starting the car. Grandma wraps a towel around me and I climb into the back seat. "You're staying," Mom tells you. She wears sunglasses when she's crying. I can't see her eyes but I hear it in her voice.

I'm terrified of the piranhas and great white sharks that live in the depths of this northern Indiana lake, and I don't ever want to go sailing again.

The Swash of Your Inner Salish Sea
Pamela Hobart Carter

cover your ears with your cupped hands
hear your inner ocean surge an inside rhythm
the swash reminds you what degree of you is marine
reminds you what degree of you is cupped
in the palm of the briny Salish Sea
reminds you of a dream in which fish sing

Pisces at Dusk
Terri Yannetti

Two fish in the sky
Dip closer to the ocean
Luminous fins splash
Barely visible ripples
Is it water or starlight?



Sheree Stewart Combs, *Gnarled and Icy*, Digital Media

Bubble
Shahema Tafader

I remember
blowing a soap bubble
in the chill of winter's breath
It was pure crystalline magic then
when snowflakes danced up the ball
But now I see the flakes as icy claws
clambering up the bubble's belly
gripping every inch of its prey
making roots like the ivy
Imprisonment

Ice Storm
Claire Galford

Icy wind slams into the single-paned attic window, and coldness leaks into the unheated room. She cannot sleep because she is freezing, especially her bare legs.

She thinks about putting on her winter coat, the one with the hood and faux fur collar, but she dreads leaving what warmth the duvet comforter provides by stepping on the cold wood floor.

She hears the wind coming, ripping through the trees before banging into the house. Ice and snow cover the shingles of the roof sloping below the attic window.

She remembers other wintry nights, curled together to get warm, two people as one, her lover warming her insides as well as her outside. But tonight, she is alone and cold.

Because it is too cold

I sip solitude and tea.
Candlelight teases
lines of poetry
collected by strangers
who tattle in perfect phrases
for this time of night and
this light of time
in me.

Pamela Nocerino

Stephen Jackson

Snowflakes decorate
the streets like sheet cakes complete
with streetlight candles.



Inna Malostovker, *Intimate Landscape*, Photography

Melting Snow
Carol Mikoda

It is too high to hear,
but each molecule cries
over the change of state.
Loss is loss; change is wrenching
no matter the size of the universe.
Each crystal dissolves
with a tiny burst of energy.
Heat transfer burns.
Damaged skin
falls away from bony icicles.
Hear them weep.

Dinosaurs
Lisa Shulman

I wonder
if the brontosaurus
knowing the end
was near, uprooted
saplings, crushed
new shoots, stamped
upon green ferns, grinding
all to a messy pulp
in primordial
spite.

Grass
Chido Munangwa

When the sun didn't rise,
under the manmade light
my grandmother thought of my future.
Granddaughter, she cried voice strong,
The grass is always greener
on your neighbor's side
because you didn't water it.
Tend your own pastures.

Learn from the grass.
First, it sinks its roots
before boasting of its lushness.
Burn it; it betrays not its faith.
Instead, it grows in the dark
away from piercing eyes
and hands that pluck.
It feeds the cows
but doesn't seek praise
until a drought.

Four Haiku about Chinese Gentility: a Bicultural Poem
Yuan Changming

Plum [梅]: Your brave bold blood dropped
 As though to melt all world's snow
 Before spring gathers

Orchid [兰]: Deep in the valley
 Alone on an obscure spot
 You bloom nonetheless

Bamboo [竹]: Straight, hollow-hearted
 You shoot high against the sky
 Never arrogant

Mum [菊]: Hanging on and on
 Even when wishes wither
 You keep flowering



Brian Michael Barbeito, *Stone Statues*, Photography

The Archivist

is in the kitchen,
folding laundry
and days away
from our week.

All these images—

you, well-dressed
and uncertain,
finding the core
of your bicycle's
balance. You,

well-dressed, this time
more casual, choosing
spices, bare feet
on linoleum floor. You

and me, well-dressed and summery,
walking the dog
together on Saturday afternoon
to pick up some sandwiches

and eat them in the park,
the sun in the flowers
like stacked wineglasses

—folded

very carefully
and all put
in cupboards:

canvases,
earmarked for storage,
in the dank back rooms
of an art gallery.

DS Maolalai

Euterpe: The Greek Muse of Lyrical Poetry
Nancy Taylor

Inspire me where garter snakes hide,
cicadas click tymbals, and cedar lends
scent. Perch me where turtles risk
crossing lichen-covered logs and ideas spring
from a rabbit's hop or the ribbit of a frog.
Where metaphor floats in the wake of drake
and mallard, I'll ring sonnets from lady slipper
tongues and reflect rainbow from trout
to color my verse. There, as music blows
through common reed, I'll mark tempo
with a cattail wand. When thought
doesn't stream like a minnow school,
I'll find patience in a heron's pose.

Molt
R.B. Simon

I know the reason
snakes shed skin,
or crabs forsake shells
on forgotten coasts
to fill with water and float away
like storm-wracked boats.
Carapace grown too tight,
the world within grown larger
than the world beyond.

I know the despair
of counting all the stars
in the night sky attempting to
hold back the maddening clamor
of my thoughts. Thinking,
if I could reach out just one hand,
pluck a single brightness
down to wish upon, I would beg
to be rebirthed as a creature
who can live without skin.

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Journal Issue #07

Star Student
Maggie Palmer

I want to be a star student–
I'd like to calculate
the exact amount of stardust
that makes the worlds rotate.

I want to be a star student–
write well-researched essays
about the Kepler Objects
for galaxies to grade.

I want to be a star student–
and when exams are done,
I'll be a moonshine teacher
and Scholar of the Sun.

Editor's Note:

Here at Minnow Literary Magazine, we often publish creative works that indulge in a reverence for nature. However, the reality for parts of our world is not every environment is one to revere as a safe space. This final piece of our Winter 2022 anthology does not consist of our usual tone, but it is a story that we felt should be heard. We hope we can learn from each other and grow into a stronger community that builds every environment into a safe space.

2020 Kabul University Attack

Dunya Yousufzai

On November 2, 2020, we started the day with so much hope. Each of us struggled for a better future in a world of panic and dread. One with old clothes and bare feet and the other with a hungry stomach, all held pens and books, trying to join the caravan of science and knowledge.

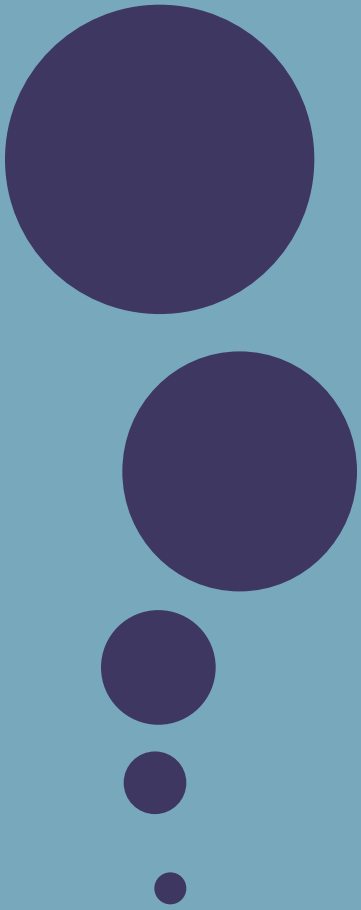
The sun shone like any other day. All the students were heading towards the university under the blue sky. We were studying in the classroom and planning for the final projects of our undergraduate course, unaware that we were being attacked. It was the middle of the day when one of our friends, in a trembling voice, opened the classroom door and cried, "Flee!" Precisely, it was that time that three gunmen armed with assault rifles and other heavy equipment attacked the campus of Kabul University in Kabul, Afghanistan. We were all in a panic. The voice of students moaning and screaming made hearts cry; even the birds of the sky wept for us.

We were lucky students because we succeeded in getting out of there, but we lost many of our friends. Over intelligence reports, 32 people were killed and 50 wounded in that terrorist attack, but the accuracy of this report is unknown. Kabul University is one of the largest universities of higher education in Afghanistan with a capacity of 22,000 students. In addition, Kabul University is one of the oldest universities in Afghanistan and played a vital role in the development and progress of Afghan generations at the international and national levels.

Unfortunately, after that horrible attack, we no longer dared to go to university. Our hearts were wounded; we were no longer able to read the message of a father who said, "Where are you, father's soul?" They broke our wings. They did not give us a chance to fly. Can someone tell me what our sin was?

They destroyed us with cannons and guns; they dragged us to the ground and blood; they buried us in the soil; they turned Afghanistan into a cemetery of Afghans. Notwithstanding the worst condition, we got up firmer than before. We flew with broken wings. Yes, we are such powerful seeds that we always stay strong, and we are going more solidly and well-appointed than before.

We will not let our country turn into a nest of ignorance and darkness.
We will sing the anthem of freedom again and again.



be more than a drop in the ocean

WINTER 2022