

A person wearing a dark, long coat and dark shoes is walking away from the camera through a field of fallen red leaves. The background is a hazy, orange and yellow sky, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. The overall mood is contemplative and somewhat somber.

Into the unknown  
Guided by uncertainty  
Fear holding back  
That covers reality

Flow put on hold  
Artificial stop  
Water standing still  
Barricades dropped

# Galcom

Miriam Bell

**T**ick– tick– tick went the old wooden clock in the left corner of the room next to the door – standing like a chaperon guarding the chaos Dolia had created unintentionally. Flowers she had picked from the side of the road had become a sign of the times. A few leaves had dropped on her desk and were pantomiming transience. Clothes had turned the floor into a sea of colors and textures – with scattered books rising out of it like rocks on a stormy day. The coat hooks by the door carried the weight of the human façade. Games on the open shelf next to her bed were enduring the quietness of the moment, looking forward to communal voices. Under the open windows stood a heavy chest of drawers with photos, and postcards – full of nostalgia beating inside. Air streamed into the room as the branches of the chestnut tree outside were dancing in the wind.

It had been an uneventful day for Dolia so far. She lay on her bed and stared at the ceiling. Dolia had often attempted to picture herself as a character of her own story. She wanted to read her story from an eagle’s perspective. Each time Dolia had tried to imagine why she existed and what her story was, she had gotten stuck.

Dolia rolled over – feet in the air. She reached for her scrapbook placed on top of her nightstand. The empty pages stared back at her. She held a black fineliner in her right hand – about to draw and create something new.

A certain kind of pressure built up in her chest; the emptiness and vastness of the blank pages caused euphoria and fear at the same time. Dolia imagined what her life

would look like as a comic. She began to draw two fully grown chestnut trees surrounding a tiny chestnut tree and providing it with nutrients. One of the big trees became unwell. With less power, the tree tried to do its best to give the tiny tree the nutrients it needed to grow. One day the weak tree became soil once again, slowly fading from the surface. The chestnut tree was still young at the time. Not being able to get these special nutrients from one of the big trees any longer, the little tree did not want what other trees could offer. The other big tree was rotting inside itself and did not know how to make up for the nutrients formerly provided by the vanished tree. The pain from loss worked as new type of nutrient and parasite that nurtured and poisoned the tree simultaneously. On the outside, the little chestnut tree grew higher and stronger. On the inside, the pain hollowed it gradually. Yet, its struggle was indiscernible. The chestnut tree did not know how to use its roots to connect with the trees around it.

Dolia slammed her book shut. Severe loneliness had infected her and the chestnut tree. The older Dolia grew the more she became nervous. More cautious. More vigilant. She was afraid that sooner or later she would get sick like the vanished tree. Dolia knew what that path looked like. Her own mortality and that of the people around her had become a constant companion. Wanting to feel joy in life while awaiting the next moment of suffering kept her in a state of paralysis.

**Miriam Bell** is a student of the Master of Education program (English and Social Studies). She enjoys photography, dancing, singing, and writing as a form of self-expression. *Galcom* was written in 2020 and has been reworked multiple times over the past three years to explore various directions. A divergent version of *Galcom* was short-listed for the short story contest organized by the University of Münster in 2022. Miriam aspires to turn her writing into a short novel in the future.

