

Junior Division, Prose

Madison Ryan, Avondale

The Halcyon's Lament (an excerpt)

Those quiet moments could not last forever. My only companion's soul was no longer near me, but rather the skeleton he left behind. It was high time I let that rest, as well. First, I removed his shield and spear to ensure they would be in good keeping - the helmet was left in the centre of the battleground. He would lay with only his robe, adorned with hyacinth of gold and silver thread. I carried him to the river that laid under a blanket of stars, protected by the ever long branches of elder oak trees. With his arms folded over his chest and his hazel eyes eternally shut, it was as if he was sleeping. I whispered, "Good night, most cherished Erasme. May the afterlife welcome you dearly."

Morning came as it ever did. Summer's gifts filled the air with the aroma of life. All was silent but for the soft breeze and trickling of the scattered streams. That place could have been called a paradise, I was certain. But loss was unkind. Helios illuminated the abandoned shield and there sat a ghost of myself in the reflection. Its black hair had grown to the point where it seemed that its owner did not care for himself any longer. The eyes, set in pools of darkening olive, saw right through me. It was paler, weaker than I remembered. I refused to believe the image was a reflection, rather a caricature. The familiar ghost must have been a soothsayer. *Go on, carve yourself a corner of the myth you all hide behind*, it must have told me.