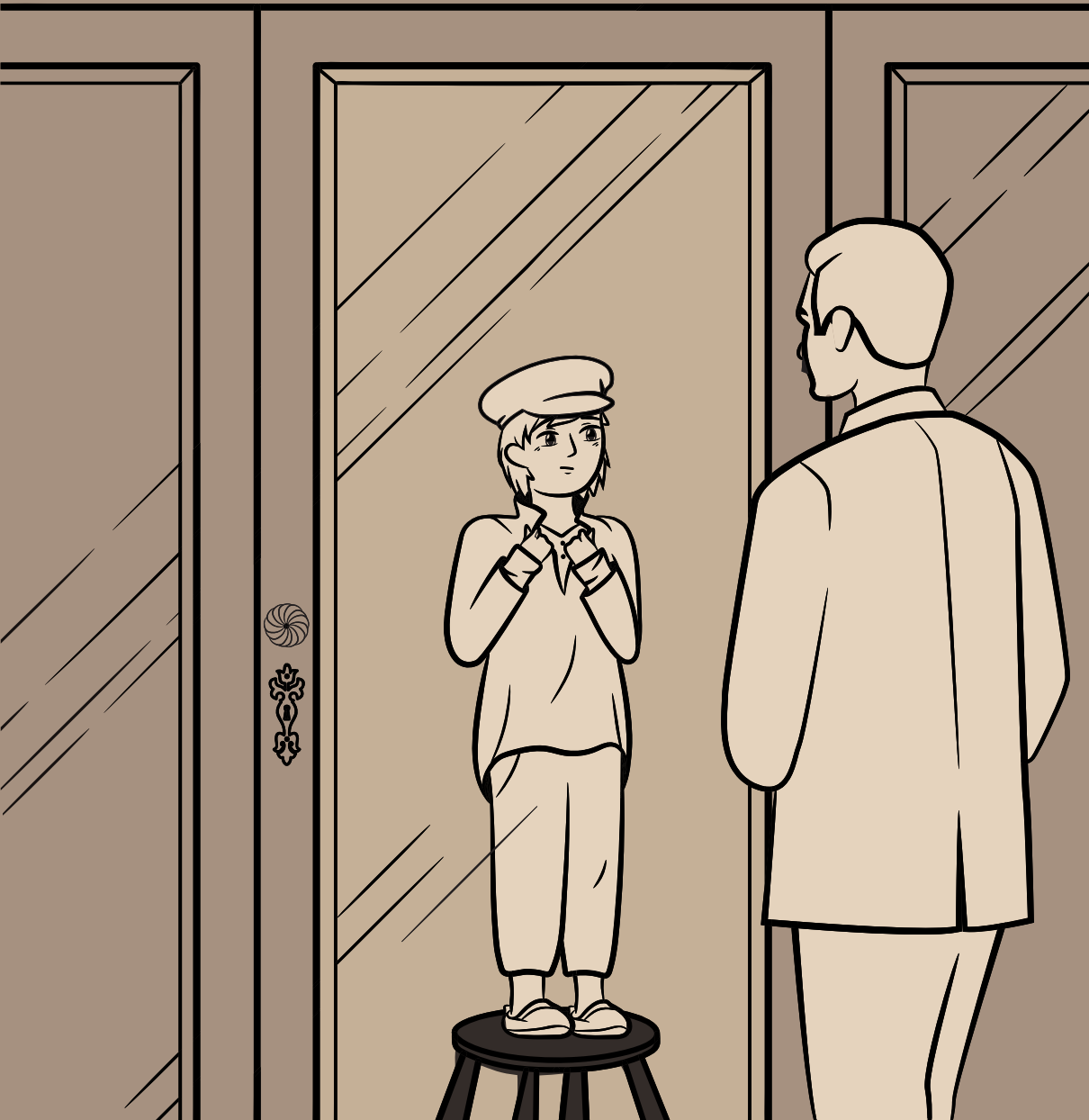


# HAGOP BARISH

A Genocide Survivor's Life Story

Vana Anbarson



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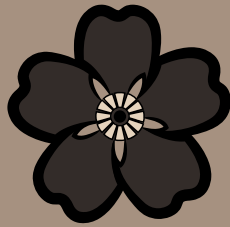
Vana Anbarson



Vana Anbarson

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With deep reverence,  
this literary work is dedicated to the  
Barish family  
and the souls who perished in the  
Armenian genocide.



In the year 1915, in the distant surrounding plains, far along the main road to Diyarbakir and close to the Syrian border, lay a historic city in Western Armenia known as Mardin, the city of the sun. It had a remarkable collection of buildings stacked on one another that stood proudly amidst the rolling hills of southeastern Anatolia.

The streets of this enchanting city hummed with life. With its rich cultural heritage, one could not help but marvel at the ancient churches that adorned the skyline that bore witness to the Christian heritage of Mardin.

However, the peaceful facade of Mardin would soon be shattered as the impending storm of the Armenian genocide approached. The very buildings that had borne witness to centuries of coexistence would become silent witnesses to the unspeakable horrors that were to unfold.

Mardin, 1915



June 3rd

From the balcony  
of Dominican monk  
Jacques Rhétoré

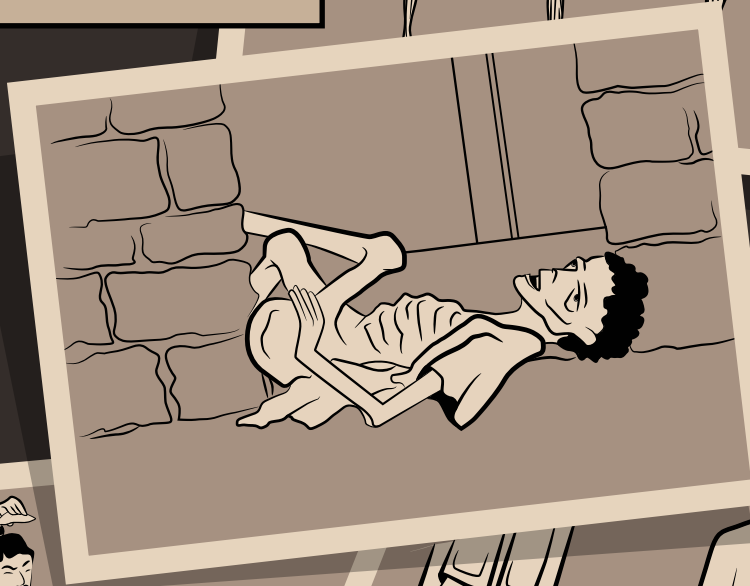



What is that over  
at Ömer Agha's water  
spring? A great caravan  
advances like a herd of  
sheep! I must pull out  
my binoculars!



"... An end must be put to their existence, however criminal the measures taken may be, and no regard must be paid to either age or sex nor to conscientious scruples."

- Talaat Pasha






Ignatius Maloyan, you're hereby under arrest by order of Governor Badri Bey and Police Chief Mamdouh Bey. Come out with your hands up!

Under arrest? But what for?

St. George Church

Accused of planning a revolution and hiding weapons and bombs. That's what!



With all due respect, gentlemen. You've searched the church once before and found nothing.

Are you accusing us of lying?! We'll see to it that you'll admit to your crimes in prison!



-and I'm certain you won't need this filth anymore!



Let us out!  
We're loyal to the state!

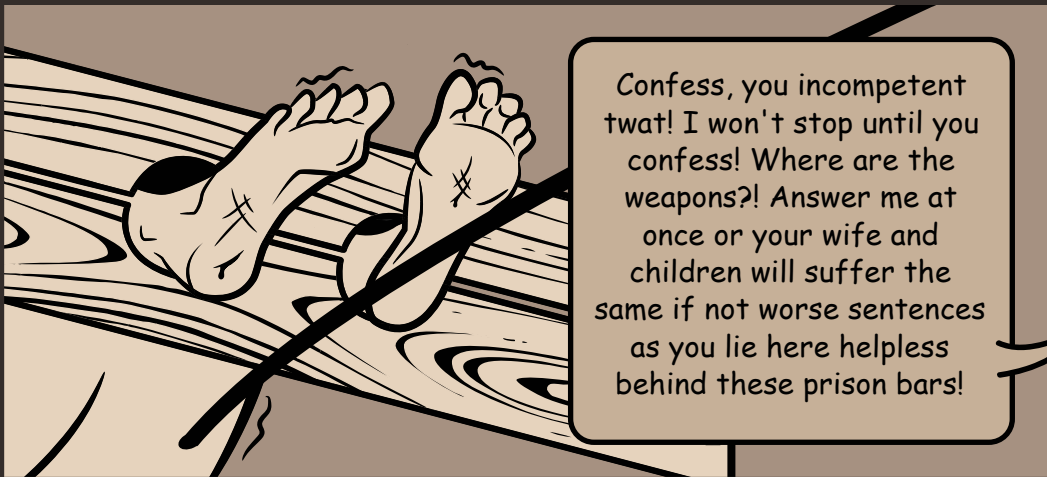
We're no traitors!



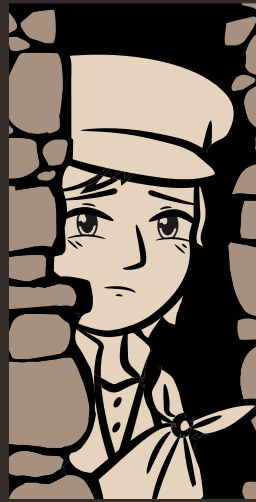
Holy Father, we warned you.

You should've left Mardin.

While I could've saved my own skin, a good shepherd can never truly abandon his herd unless one were to get lost.



Confess, you incompetent twat! I won't stop until you confess! Where are the weapons?! Answer me at once or your wife and children will suffer the same if not worse sentences as you lie here helpless behind these prison bars!









Mam- MAMA!!

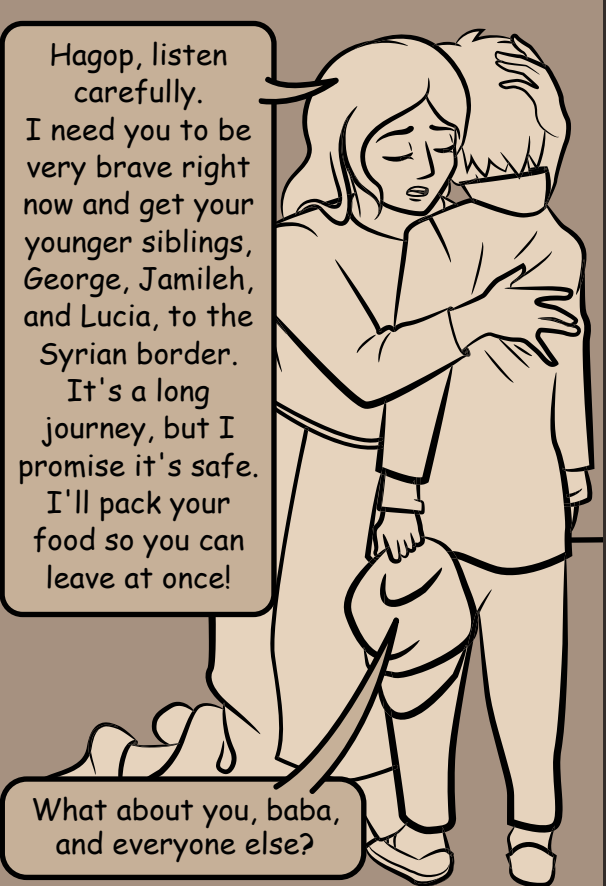
Hagop? Honey, what's wrong?!

I- I saw them-  
I saw them  
killin- **THEY'RE  
KILLING BABA!!!**  
He's going to die-  
**WE HAVE TO  
HELP HIM!!**

A- a bunch of people in hats and boots with guns are killing everyone on the streets!  
Baba was there, and so were Alexander and François and-



**WHAT?!!**



Hagop, listen carefully.  
I need you to be very brave right now and get your younger siblings, George, Jamileh, and Lucia, to the Syrian border.

It's a long journey, but I promise it's safe.  
I'll pack your food so you can leave at once!

What about you, baba, and everyone else?

I'll... I'll find him- but I need you to be responsible and protect our family until I come back... O- okay?



As the Barish children tearfully kissed their mom, unaware their embrace would be her last, they clung to each other through the terrain, following the lead of other adults and their kids, who, much like them, were trying to flee the city from the mass slaughter.

The blood-curdling cries and gunfire slowly died down the more distance they covered, but faint rounds of shots still rang through the landscape. The thought that the food Hagop carried might be the last meal his mom cooked dawned on him as he clenched his supper.

Meanwhile, women and children were captured in the terrorized city, but their sentencing was put off. Of the victims, a mother and her three kids managed to take advantage of their opportunity and met an Arab man willing to make a deal with the Rasho family.

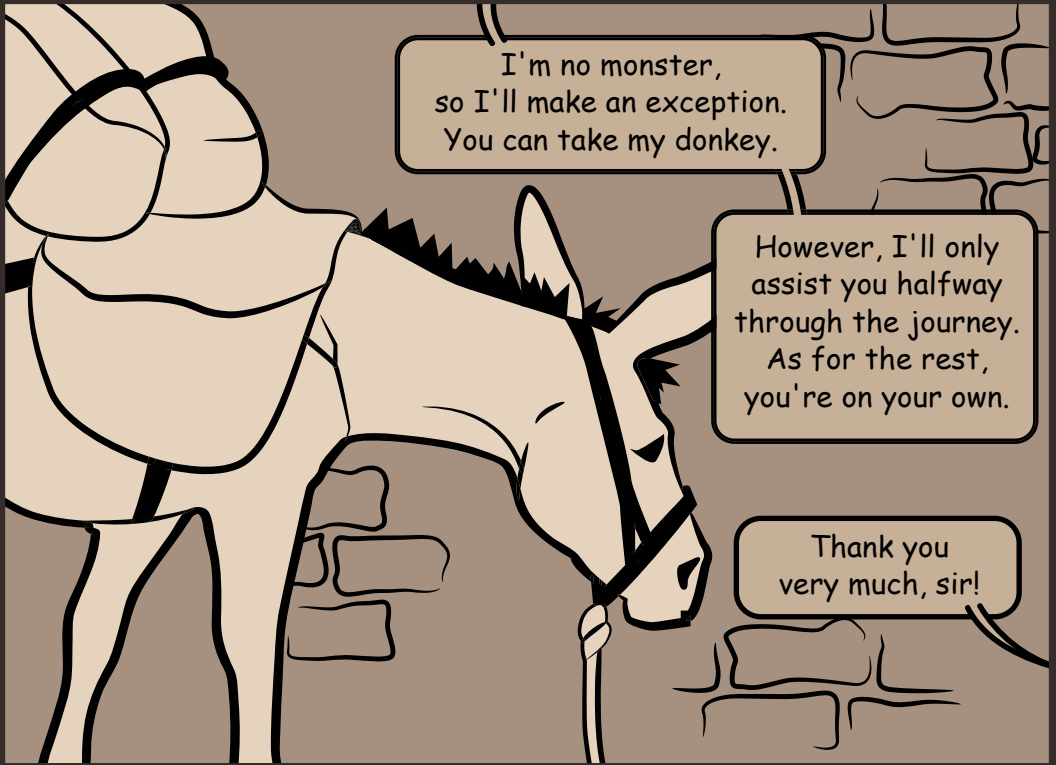
Rasho's family home

What would it take to flee the city with my children?

I only ask for four gold pieces, ma'am—one for you and each child.

Sir, this is all I have.  
Please, I'm begging you!

Spare my family from suffering a cruel fate.  
Please, allow us to use your donkey to make it across the Syrian border so that my children can live a full life! In God's name, please help us.



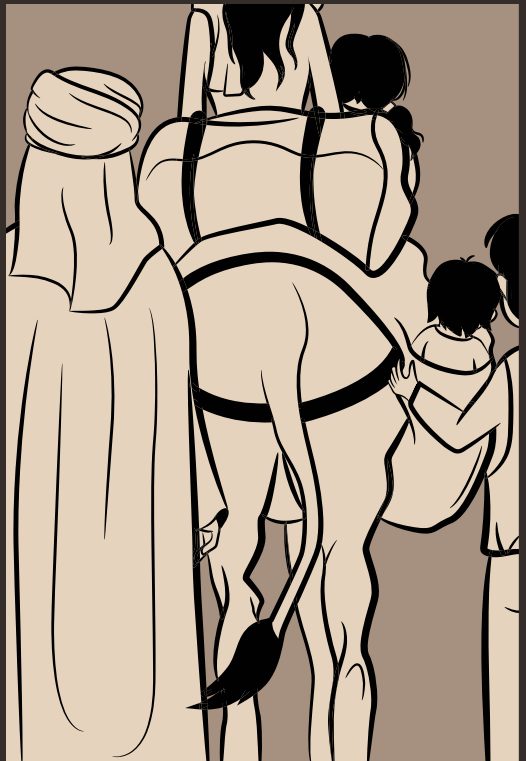
I'm no monster,  
so I'll make an exception.  
You can take my donkey.

However, I'll only  
assist you halfway  
through the journey.  
As for the rest,  
you're on your own.

Thank you  
very much, sir!



Just sit tight in  
the khurj, Attia.



True to his word, the Arab man guided the family out of harm's way and accompanied them on their travel. Having been forced to leave their once-home behind, the mother of three looked back on the dirt road to the city now left in the hands of thieves to be raided, trashed, or used to hold captives for brutal torment. Her heart ached watching her birthplace, her motherland, run by savages who show no mercy to the young and frail. She and her children were the lucky few who escaped as a family from the close encounter without being spotted.

The mother returned her gaze to the track ahead. The path beneath her was not only the road to freedom but was her children's only chance at a future. A future that was only met with the aid of a stranger lending his mule to cover the remote trek.

Upon reaching the midpoint, the man allowed his donkey to assist the family onward following the trail, much to their relief. After what seemed like hours, the family finally reached their destination; standing before them was the castle that signified the end of their fear and trepidation, their new forever home.

Aleppo, Syria

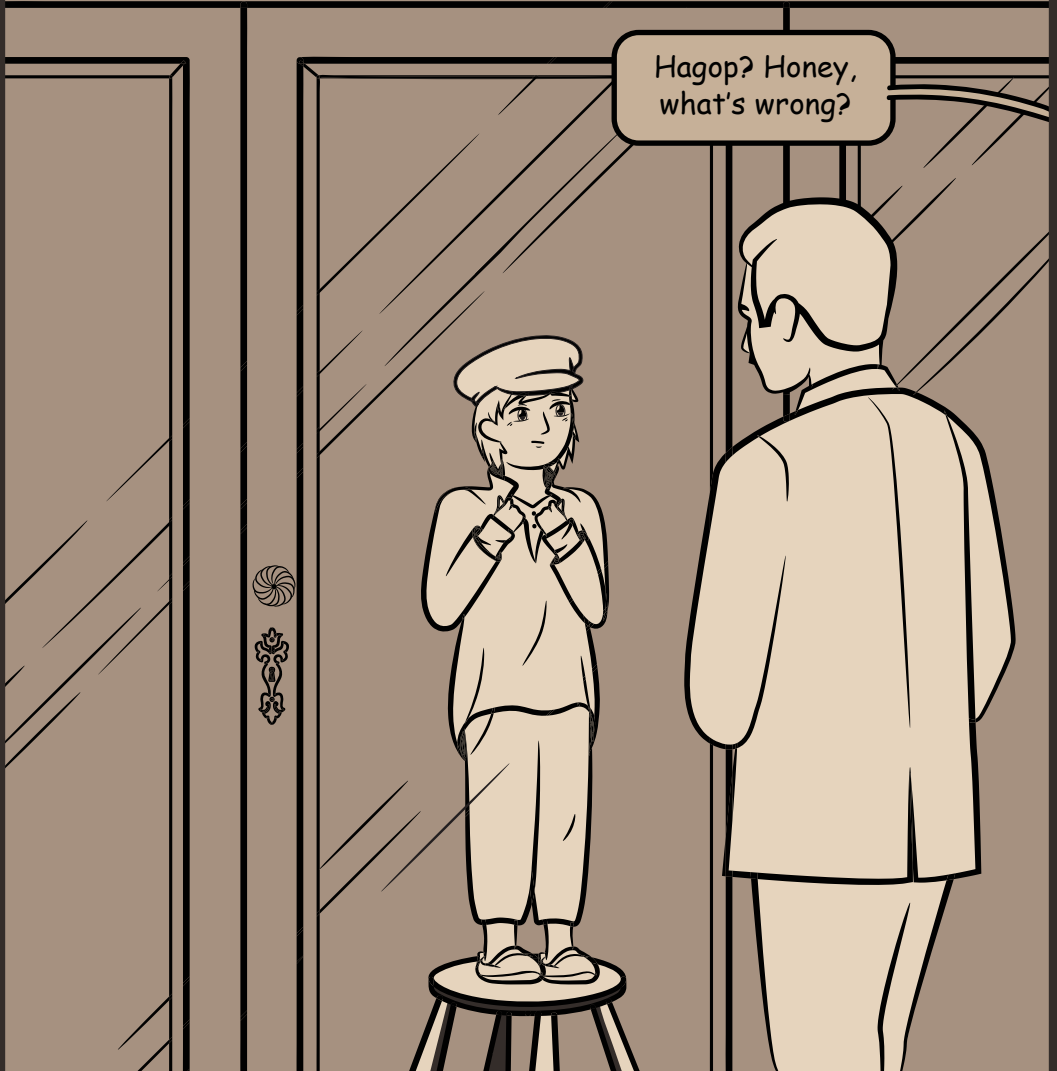


Struggling to fit in initially, the locals welcomed the mother of three with open arms in establishing their new life in Aleppo. Over the years, her youngest daughter, Attia, grew to be a beautiful, loving young woman. Fearing for her daughter's future and safety, Attia's mother wanted her to marry a man she could depend on, someone she trusted, a man she knew as family: her late brother's son, Hagop Barish.

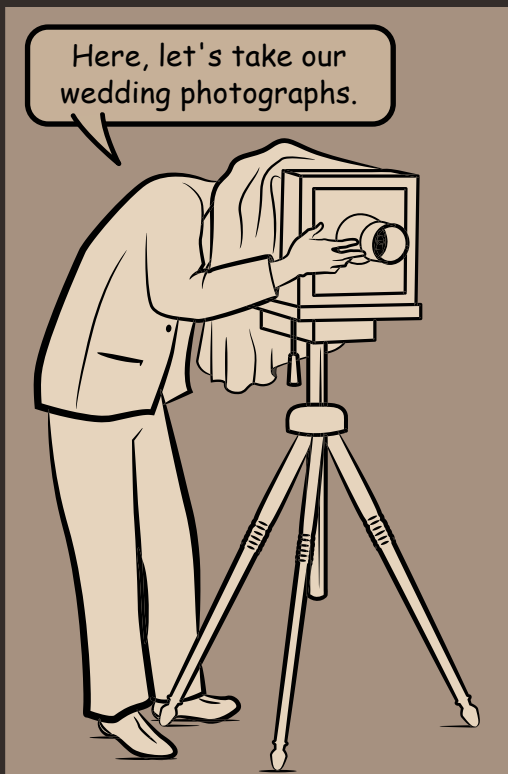
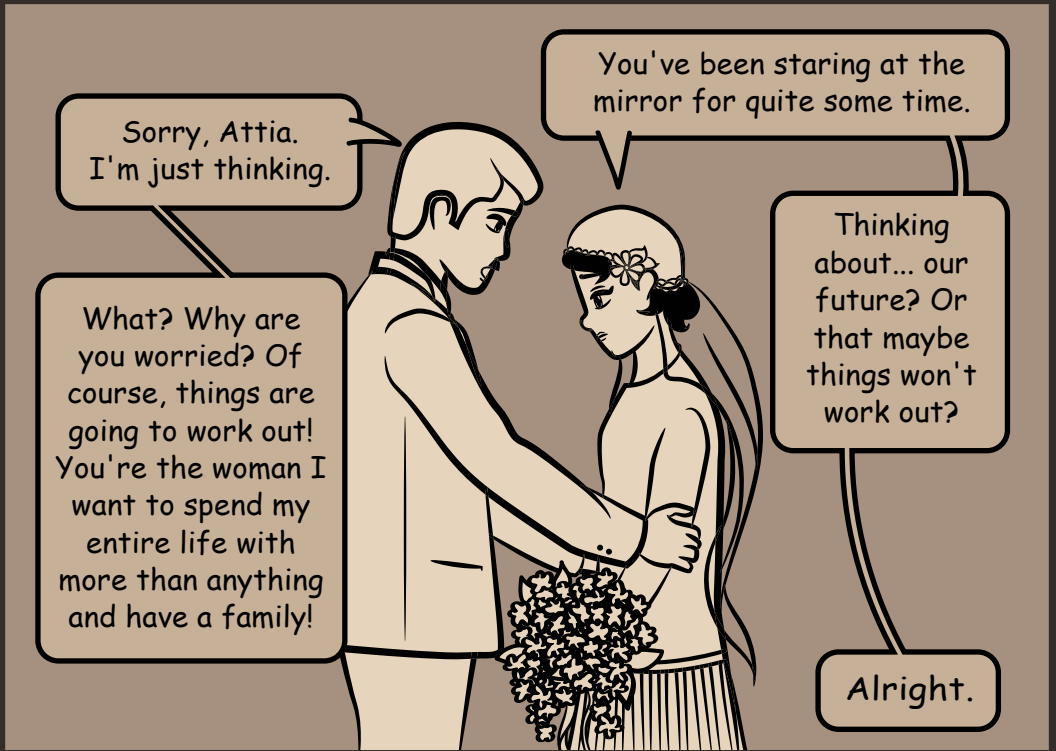
Hagop grew up with his siblings in Syria's capital city, Damascus, where he matured into a man with a fondness for art. His passion included playing the violin. He was also an artisan who'd craft his own frames for his exquisite paintings and there was no limit to his love of photography, taking every opportunity to bring his View Camera to capture a moment in a snap, freezing emotions and memories into a single frame. He was, by all means, an artist.

Attia's mother couldn't entrust her daughter to anyone better than her own nephew. Hagop traveled to Aleppo to catch up with his family per his aunt's request and instantly swooned over Attia's features and soft-spoken tone. It didn't take long for the arrangements to be made.

Aleppo, 1926









Hagop, what are you up to?

Just painting a portrait.  
One moment, I need more paint.

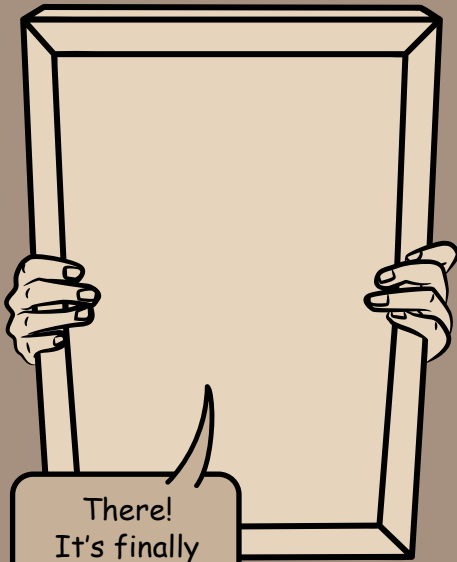


Whom are you painting?

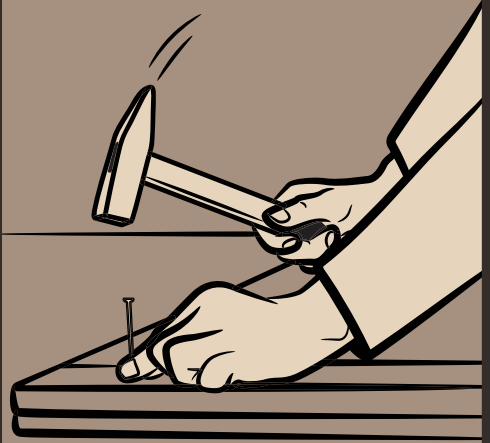


Someone I once knew, someone I idolized...

You probably don't remember them.

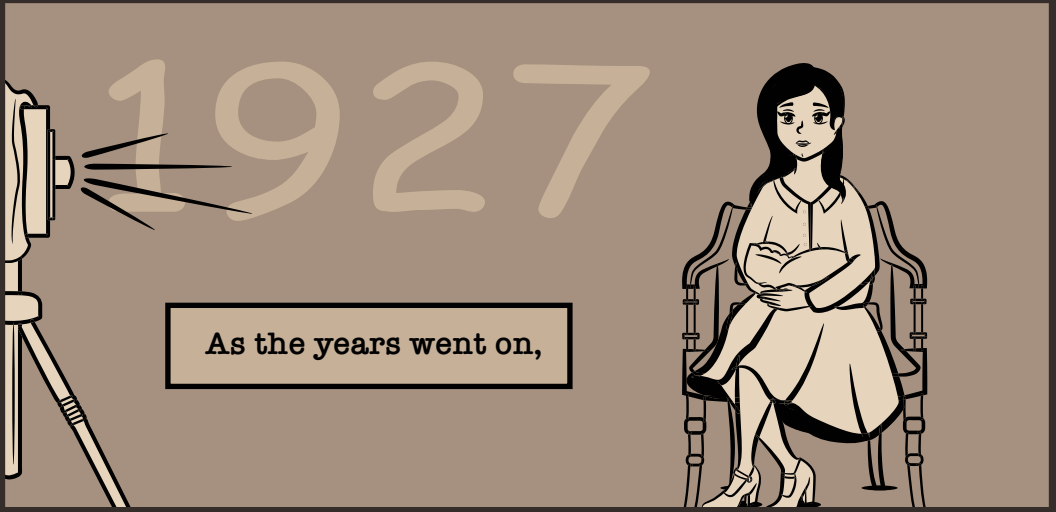


There!  
It's finally  
finished!

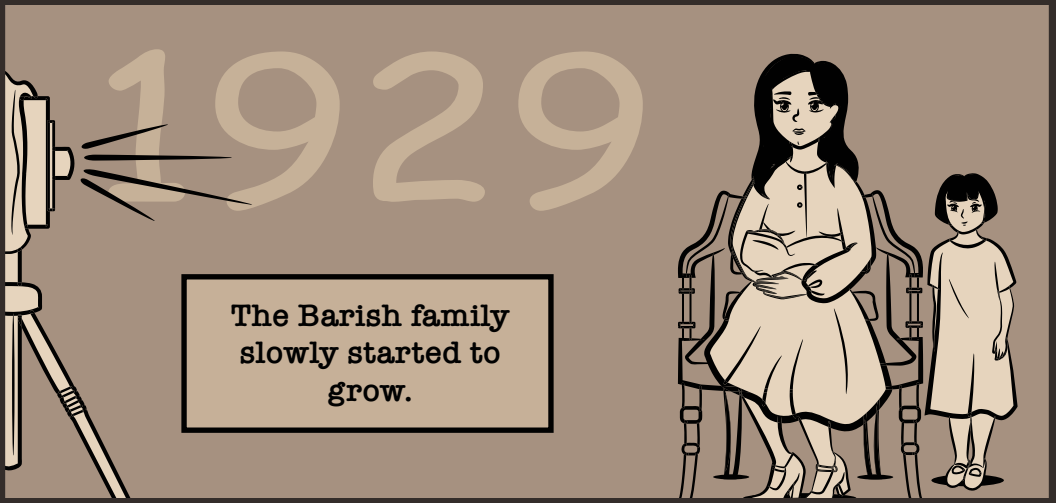


Only the finest  
frame in honor of  
Archbishop  
Maloyan.

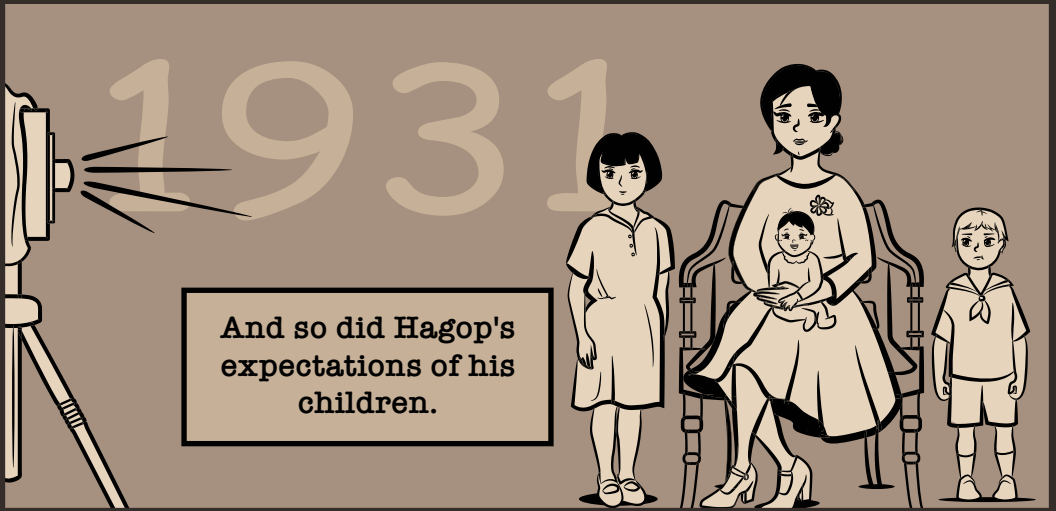




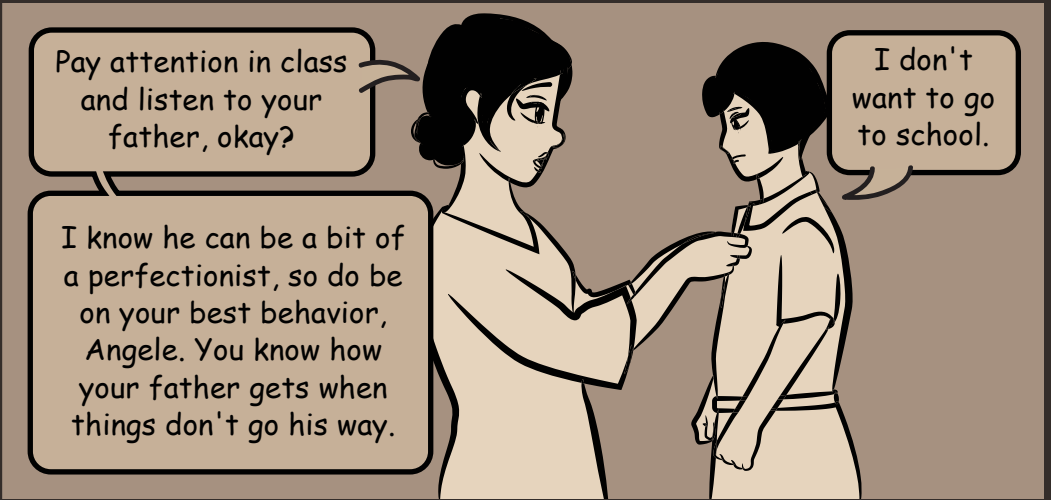
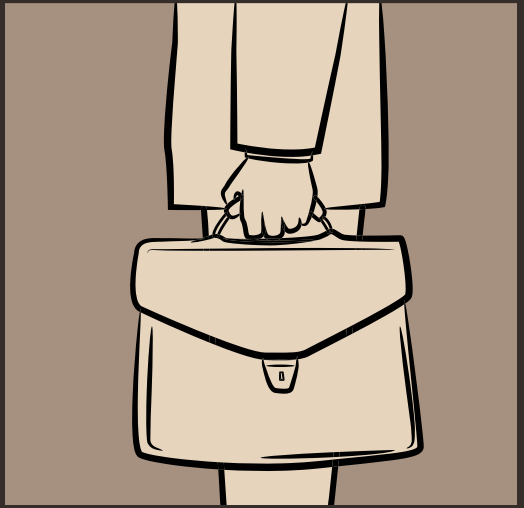
As the years went on,



The Barish family slowly started to grow.



And so did Hagop's expectations of his children.







Later that day.

What's gotten into me...

Have I lost my senses?

Why, in God's name, did I opt to humiliate my daughter that way in front of her entire class?!

I've gone too far this time.

I can't let this happen again.



I'll never forgive that madman for what he did.

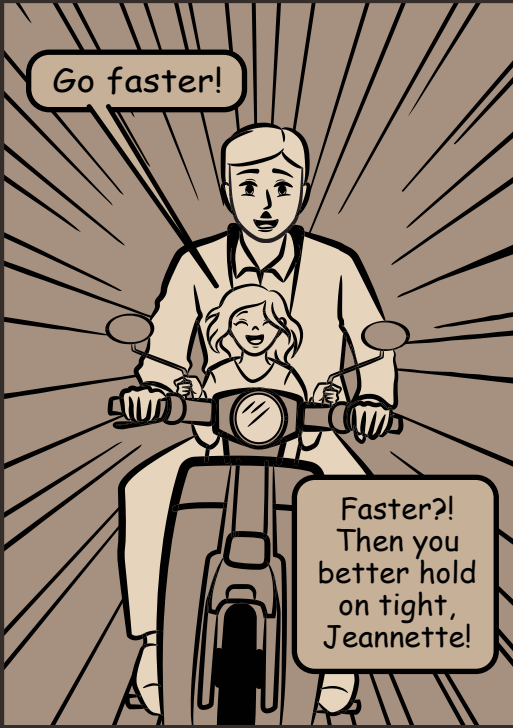
I won't ever talk to him for as long as I live.



True to her word, Angele rarely ever spoke a word to her father. The falaka incident had placed an incredible strain on her relationship with Hagop. She moved out of the house the minute she married at a young age, and besides a few visits to see her mother and siblings, she didn't attempt to repair their relationship and continued to resent him for the rest of her life.

Hagop had always been a rigorous man, but never in his life did he experience a sudden outburst toward anyone the way he did with Angele. He couldn't comprehend why he felt the way he did, nor how he even thought such a cruel punishment deserved his daughter to be humiliated in front of her friends for something as minor as whispering. Angele's hatred toward him ate Hagop up, but he couldn't make amends with her, for the damage had been done.

As more time passed, the number of children doubled. This time he was adamant about treating the remainder of his children as a father they would come to love and that he would never forgive himself if such an incident occurred again.



Go faster!

Faster?!  
Then you  
better hold  
on tight,  
Jeannette!



Make sure to put  
some tension on  
the line while  
reeling in, Simon.

Marcelle, Antoinette  
and Violette! To bed  
with you three!

And stop counting the stars!  
Do you want warts  
on your fingers?





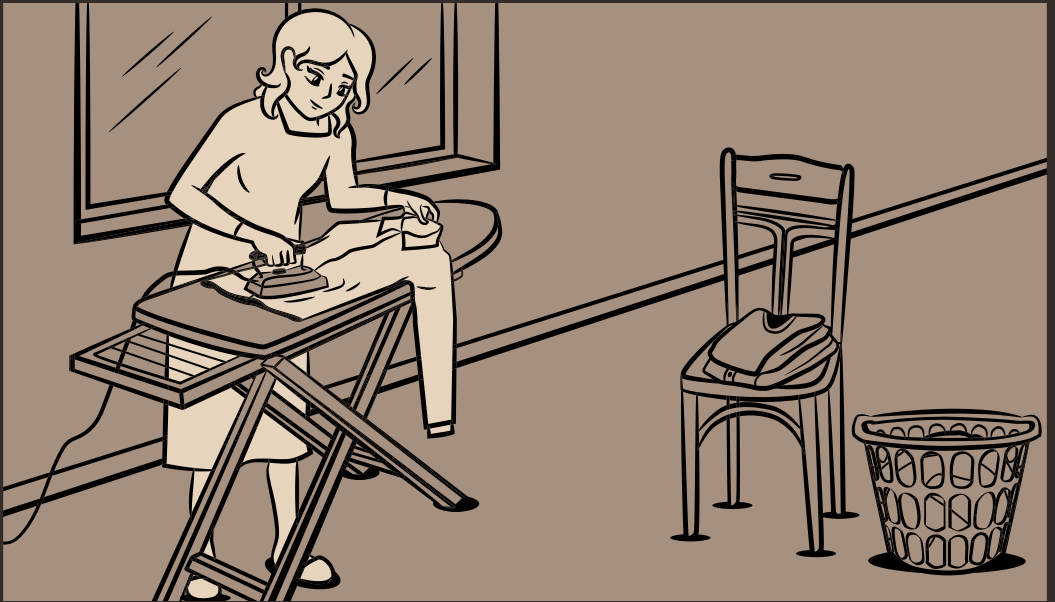
For a good period, Hagop was able to be the joyful, fun parent he wished he could be to his kids. He shared countless hours with each child and tried his hardest to give them something to treasure or a memory to remember him by.

He had his proud moments, got along with most of his children, and maintained his composure... to some degree.



Antoinette. Iron my shirt after you're done shining the shoes? I need to attend an important meeting.

Okay, baba!



Here you go. It's all been taken care of.

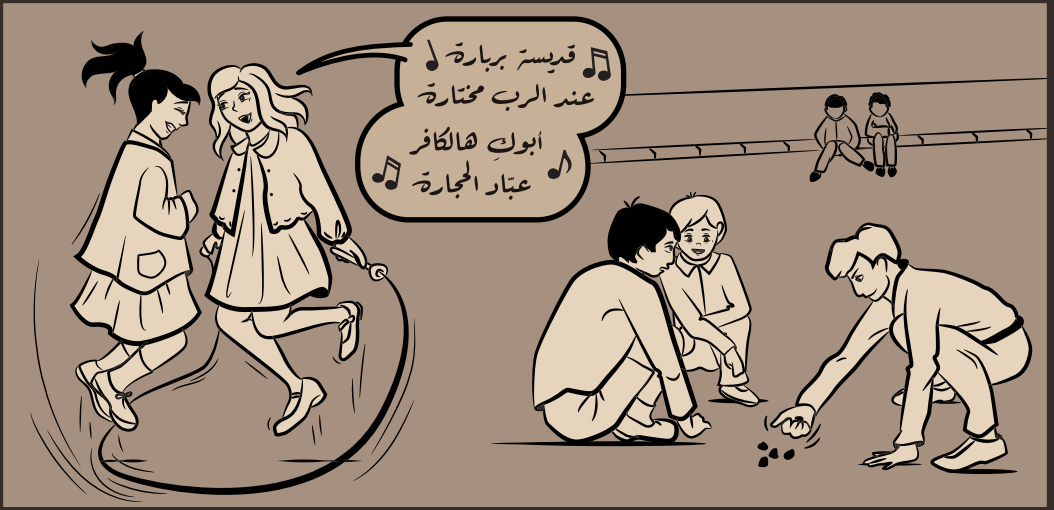
Thank you.



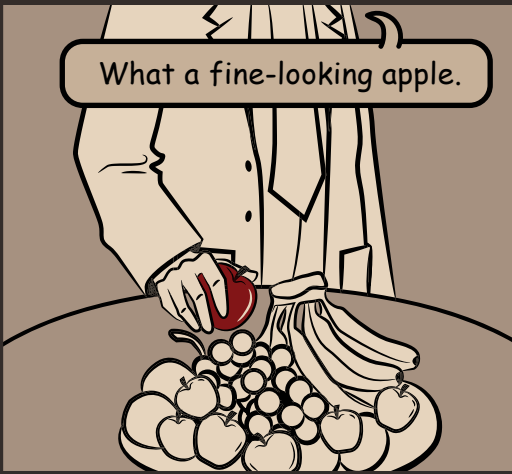
Hagop had continued to beat Antoinette with the chair before Attia intervened. Antoinette ran out of the room to her bedroom in tears before locking the door, fearing that Hagop would chase after her.

Attia managed to calm Hagop down and re-ironed his shirt for him. By the time he caught his breath, he realized he had lost control once more. Hagop looked over his hands again; he couldn't make out why he lashed out at his daughter. He was overcome with so much anger and fury he couldn't comprehend where it came from. The only thing that went through his mind while attending the meeting was that he'd upset yet another of his children the same way he'd done with Angele. He broke the vow he set to keep.

As Saint Barbara's day approached, he knew he had to keep his cool. It was a day full of children, family, and festivity. So just maybe, this celebration will help to reconnect the tear he ripped between him and his kids.



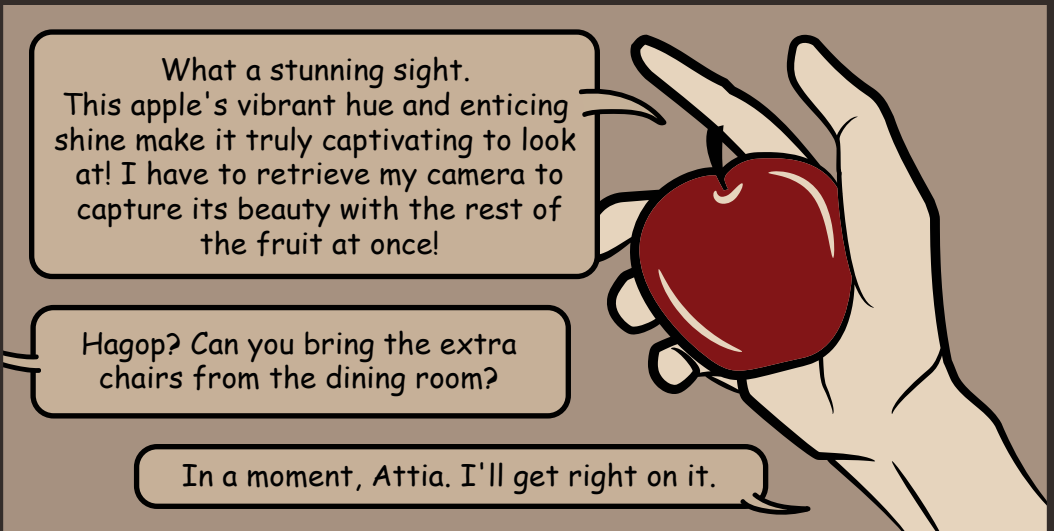
قديسة بربارة  
عند الرب مختارة  
ابوك هالكافر  
عبارة الحجارة



What a fine-looking apple.



Just need to shine it a few times.

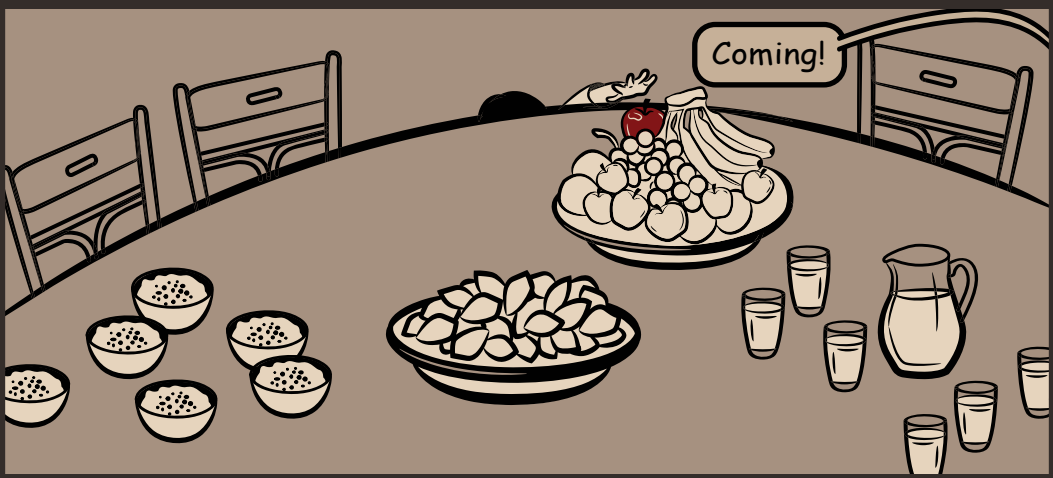


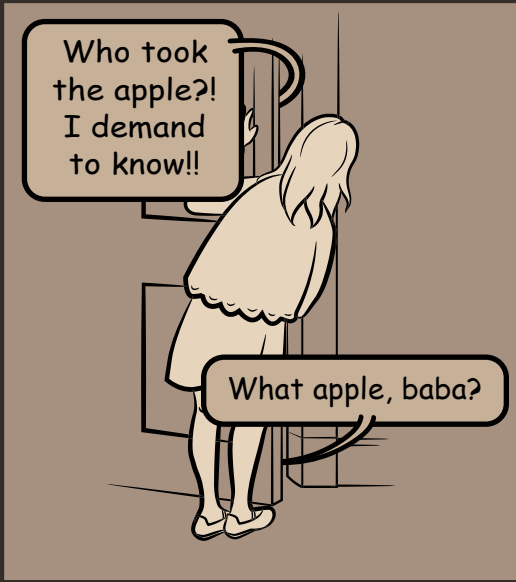
What a stunning sight. This apple's vibrant hue and enticing shine make it truly captivating to look at! I have to retrieve my camera to capture its beauty with the rest of the fruit at once!

Hagop? Can you bring the extra chairs from the dining room?

In a moment, Attia. I'll get right on it.

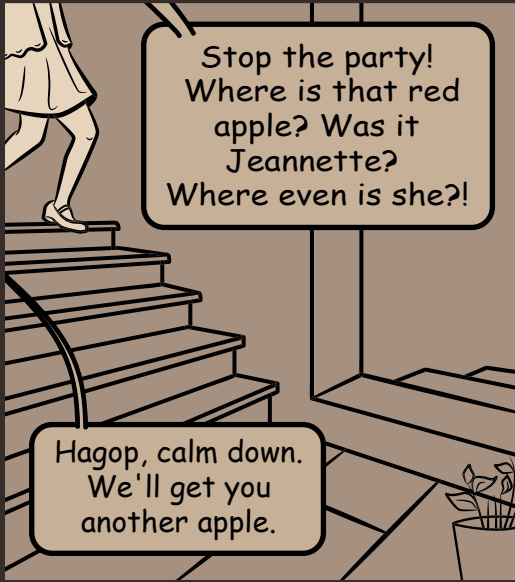






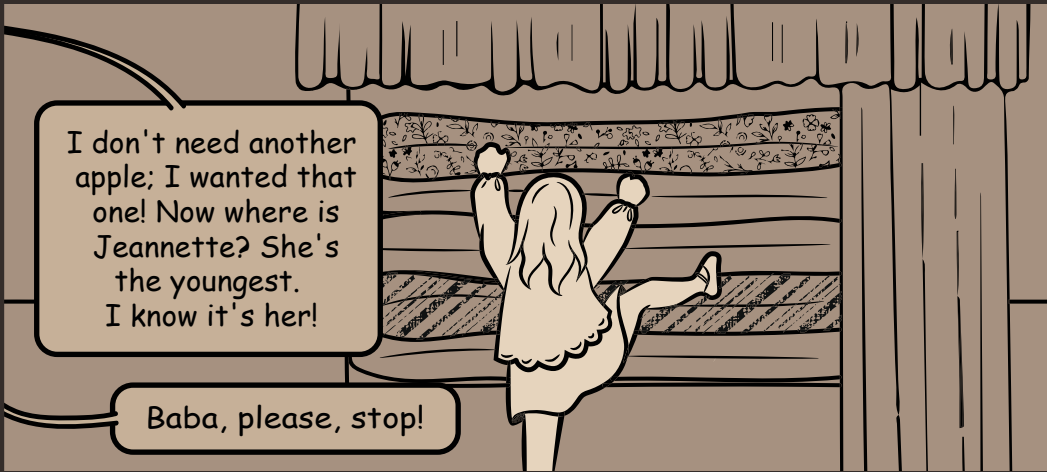
Who took the apple?! I demand to know!!

What apple, baba?



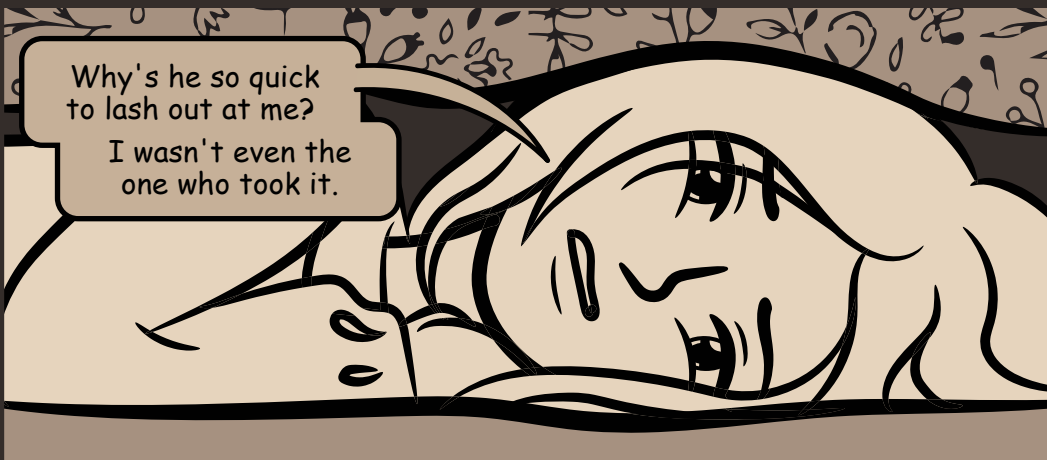
Stop the party! Where is that red apple? Was it Jeannette? Where even is she?!

Hagop, calm down. We'll get you another apple.



I don't need another apple; I wanted that one! Now where is Jeannette? She's the youngest. I know it's her!

Baba, please, stop!

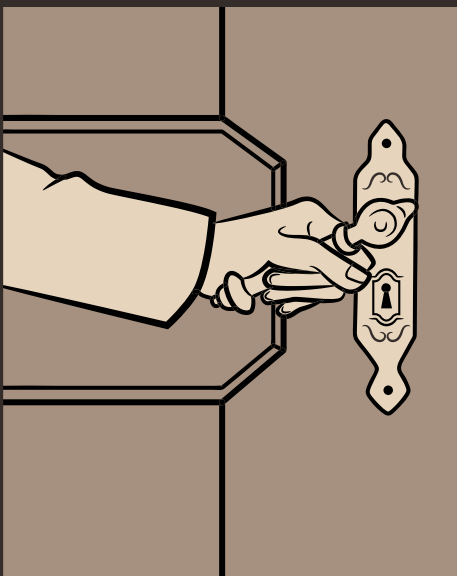
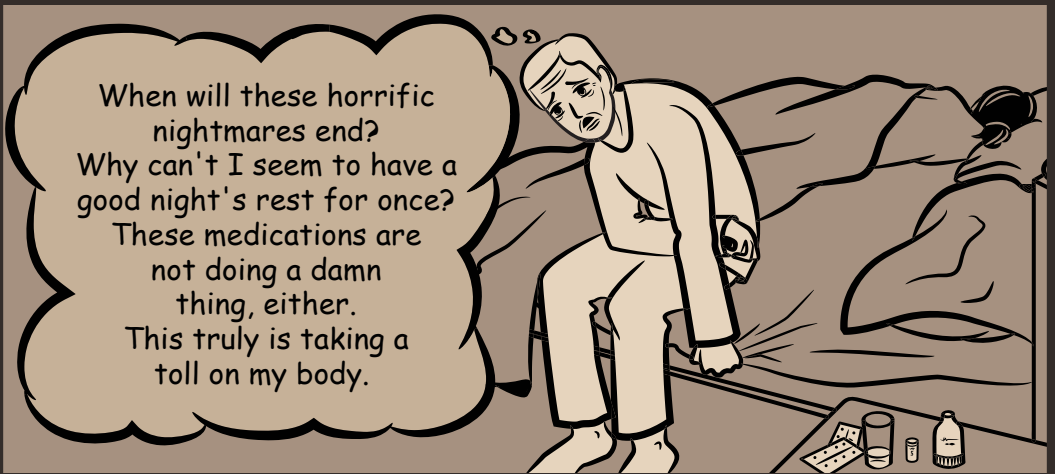


Why's he so quick to lash out at me? I wasn't even the one who took it.

Little Jeannette stayed hidden for the remainder of the celebration. She was the only sibling out of the seven children who didn't get caught in the middle of Hagop's sudden explosive temper, no matter how hard Hagop searched the house for her. The rest of the family was still trying to piece together the cause of his outrage, but no conclusion matched the strong reaction he portrayed over an apple. By the time Jeannette came out of hiding, Hagop had tired himself out.

This went on for years, with the kids making simple mistakes, such as dirtying their own shoes, resulting in Hagop losing his cool in a matter of moments, harshly disciplining his children for every slight inconvenience, to the point where he'd go so ballistic he couldn't be reasoned with. His own children even nicknamed him "Madman" when he wasn't around.

These absurd outbursts of Hagop's started to take effect on his overall health. He was growing nauseous and tired very quickly. As time passed, he only got weaker, whereas his children moved out of his home one by one.

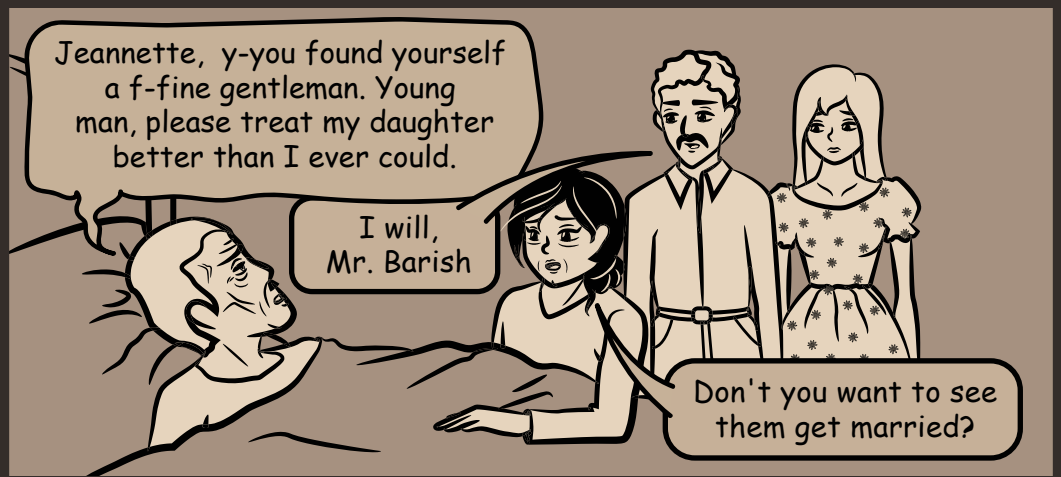


1962



"Hagop, listen carefully. I need you to be very brave right now-"

Someone's here to see you.



Jeannette, y-you found yourself a f-fine gentleman. Young man, please treat my daughter better than I ever could.

I will, Mr. Barish

Don't you want to see them get married?



I'm... afraid I w-won't be around for much longer... My only regret, Om Simon... Attia, is the hell I put our k-kids through. They d-deserved better.



Y-you deserved be-better. I'm truly s-sorry...



I'm sorry too.

THE END



# Glossary

- P: 2** Mardin is a mountainous city near the Syrian border in southeastern Anatolia, famous for its impressive architecture. Houses were built on top of each other, with the roof of one family becoming a terrace for another. Therefore, its residents were able to see the convoys of deportees coming from the northern provinces as they were on their way to Deir Zor. Mardin was part of the Levant, so its inhabitants of all sects: Armenians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arabs, and Kurds, speak Arabic. It was annexed to Turkey by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923.
- P: 3** Jacques Rhétoré (1841-1921) was a French Dominican monk, missionary, scholar, writer, and poet. During the First World War, Rhétoré was taken hostage by Ottomans and interned in Mardin and Konia. He witnessed and carefully recorded the persecutions and massacres of Christians in 1915 in his manuscript *Les chrétiens aux bêtes*. In 1918 he stayed in Constantinople and returned to Mosul two years later, where he died. His manuscript was discovered in Mosul after the first Gulf War.
- P: 4** Mehmed Talaat (1874-1921), commonly known as Talaat Pasha, was an Ottoman politician who served as the de facto leader of the Ottoman Empire from 1913 to 1918.

He was one of the perpetrators of the Armenian genocide and other ethnic cleansing during his time as Minister of Interior Affairs.

**P: 5** St. George Church is an Armenian catholic church, a prominent landmark in Mardin, that has been abandoned since the deportation of Armenians in 1915.

**P: 5** Ignatius Maloyan (1869-1915) was the Armenian Catholic Archbishop of Mardin between 1911 and 1915. He was killed during the Armenian Genocide alongside other members of the Armenian Catholic clergy. Maloyan was beatified in Saint Peter's Basilica by Pope John Paul II on October 7th, 2001, and is venerated with the title Blessed in the Catholic Church.

**P: 6** Falaka is a corporal punishment by striking the soles of the feet with a wooden stick to cause maximum pain. This type of torture was common in the Ottoman Empire.



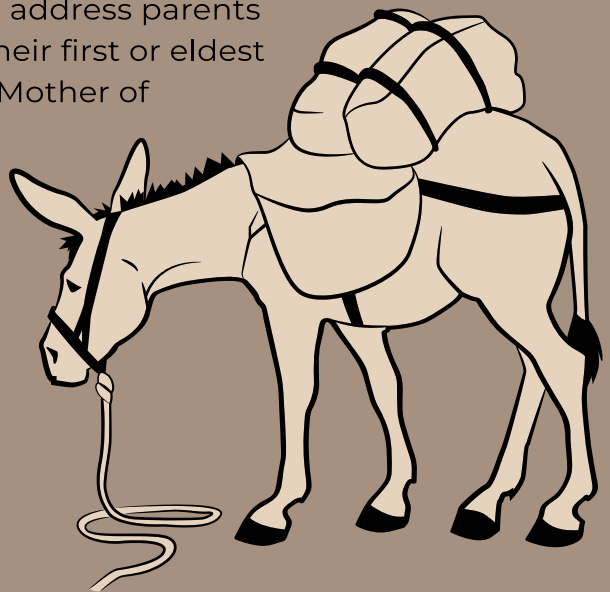
- P: 12** Al-Khurj is a piece of burlap in the form of two pockets that are placed on the back on either side of a donkey to transport goods or necessities.
- P: 14** Aleppo is a Syrian city located in the north near the Turkish border. During the First World War in 1915, the displaced Armenians arrived in Aleppo from different regions of Cilicia, north of Aleppo, in preparation for their transfer to Deir Zor and the Syrian Jazira. Some of them were able to stay in Aleppo, hiding from the eyes of the Ottoman authorities, and from there, they spread to the rest of the world.
- P: 15** The View Camera, also known as a large format camera, is a traditional photographic device characterized by its bellows extension, ground glass back, and use of dark cloth, allowing for meticulous focus and composition control in capturing detailed and high-quality images.
- P: 26** In the past, parents used to warn their children against counting stars because a superstition says that whoever commits such an act will have warts grow on their fingers.

**P: 31**

Saint Barbara's Day is a religious holiday celebrated by Christians on the eve of December 3rd in Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Jordan. Similar to American Halloween, the children wear costumes and masks and sing songs about St. Barbara, such as "Hashli Barbara" and "Barbara, the chosen saint of the lord." Like any joyous occasion, a special dish is served to symbolize jubilation and victory, usually made from boiled wheat grains with anise/fennel, cinnamon, sugar, nuts, and dried fruits.

**P: 32**

The Arabic terms "Om" and "Abu" translate to "mother" and "father" respectively. In the Arab culture, it's a common practice to address parents using the name of their first or eldest child. For instance, "Mother of Simon" is referred to as "Om Simon," while "Father of Simon" is known as "Abu Simon."



# HAGOP BARISH

A Genocide Survivor's Life Story

Hagop Barish was just a young Armenian boy living with his family in the city of Mardin. That is until the 1915 Armenian genocide took place and wreaked havoc on the city and its residents. With chaos, destruction, and massacres taking place, little Hagop bore witness as his home and the people he once knew were taken away from him.

Now a full-grown adult, Hagop continues to live his day-to-day life in Syria and embarks on a new journey of starting a family and becoming a parent. But will he live up to being a good father and role model? Or will his past experiences affect the way he disciplines his children?

