

2024 Elie Wiesel Competition

3rd Place Senior Poetry

Sam Light, 11th Grade

Norfolk Academy, Rich Peccie

A Table to Repair

Another day-

At the Aras River where tears blend with blood

Lines of "rats" waiting for their end

Elmus Kachigian, a young girl, in line with her Armenian family

Her Mother's body rests alone.

Like a boulder against an unforgiving sea

Her young eyes watering from the odor of rotting corpses.

The sun blazed brightly over the decay

Her earrings, a 12th birthday present, glisten in the sun.

She cries silently as a Turkish general tears them out

Drowning in waves of sadness.

Across treacherous seas, my great-grandmother's spirit takes flight, on a ship bound for freedom

Echoes of sorrow, haunted by memories, etched deep within her grain.

Her soul scarred by the genocide's cost

Yet hope grows mighty

Her eyes, like embers, ignite with defiance

With weary steps, in a new land, she creates a haven for all.

With trembling hands, she sought a symbol of unity

A table,

A place where her new family could gather to heal old wounds and to create precious memories

They gathered around, sharing stories of the past and dreams untold

Nathan, her brother-in-law, shares his story:

Look Another day-

At the factory of death

Smoke clouding the air-

And their dreams

The darkest tide came crashing down as Nazis spread throughout Poland

Burning, sweating out poisons

Bellies, swollen by gas

Tainted souls and broken families

The sun screamed brightly over the decay

All innocence lost in silent screams.

A beacon of hope, Nathan's spirit held tight

Through barbed wire and endless despair

His dreams of reunion held a steady pace

With horrid memories etched in his weary soul, he embarked on a journey.

He sought refuge in a land where his dreams could be repaired

A fresh start awaited him, a chance to start again.

In a new country, he yearned for a sanctuary of solace and peace
He shares his story with a strong voice so all the world will know
Nathan has been through the darkest nights
His brother's wife, newly married, has a similar tale to tell
Nathan and Elmus sat together at the table
Both witnessing the light of freedom.-
They shared their stories at the table.

Here I sit, at that same table
Its dull mahogany color still visible
A table with memories, etched within its grain
Whispers of the past and stories untold
Through four generations, it stands as a guide
When we gather, for Rosh Hashanah Dinner
We feel their presence
I listen to their tales, their laughter, and their pain
As the table weaves their stories, again and again
Through the table's sturdy 109-year-old frame, a legacy is preserved
Every meal shared, a testament anew.

Guests may see just an old table.
When the chairs fell apart
We had them repaired
As if our family is still there
We inherit this table from survivors' strength
And tell their stories forever.