

The Brolga Young Persons Writing Prize 2021

"The Wind Calls"

By Amelia Scott, Year 11

My teeth ached and my head was pounding in my ears. My father was across the chasm, tapping his foot in impatience. You would think he'd understand the danger, that if I made even the smallest step out of place, I would plummet to my death.

The mountain side was rocky and unpredictable, and spring gave way to territorial beasts and the rising heat.

I would not mind if this was to be my end; I certainly don't wish it, but I would like to think it would be a wonderful view before my death.

The mountainside is beautiful and terrible; sharp and rocky at its edge, with luscious foliage covering all other surfaces. The water below was ravenous, the wave collided with rock and burst into the air life phantoms. The shore was spread with barbed wire sandstones that could cut bone deep. To the right of the river was a cave, burrowed deep into the side of the cliff, a safe haven. When I was a child I would throw stones into the well of water in that cave. I would make wishes, and though I always knew it was nonsense to believe such things, a small part of me still hoped that my dreams would eventually come to pass.

I looked to where the other masons were standing, tall and strong amongst the dark wood piled beside them.

"Come Elyan, we haven't got all day." My father's voice was hoarse, an old man's rasp, a product of years of fighting the wind to shout to his fellow workers atop rooftops and mountainsides. He was a mason, one of many homebuilders and bridge makers of our city. It was our family trade, his mother was a mason, as was his mother's father, and I was expected to follow in their steps, to continue the tradition. We were the Masons. Elyan Mason, it was the name my mother gave me, two summers before she fell from the mountainside to the ravenous water below. She was building a bridge not far from the one I was perched atop at this very moment.

There is a legend among my people, that the wind calls those who do not belong. The tale was traded amongst the children of the city. Parents would scold and teachers would punish at the mere mention of the legend, so the tale would be given in fragments, through whispers under tables and in tree branches. It would soon pass, their hope dwindled. There is no name for the wind that calls, it has no title, no occupation. It is freedom personified. I dream that the wind is calling to me, and though I know it is not a true calling, I wish it were. Ever since I was a child I'd wished to be swept away into the air. I would never tell a soul of my indiscretion, I would almost certainly be punished - straying from your born path was considered blasphemous.

Looking down, down, down at the valley, freedom was a fingertip length away.

The bridge shifted, no longer large and almighty, now laid before me was a fragile patchwork of wood and stone. Reality felt flimsy. The world swayed and glistened.

When I was a mere child, optimistic and mischievous, I visited my wishing well. I'd thrown a silver coin into the murky water and watched it sink below the surface. Minutes passed like the wind, I'd been gazing into the water, deep in thought. I had felt my hand slipping on the stones, but the realisation hit far too late.

I was sinking. Like a coin attached to the string of a wish. The water was cold and it bit my skin, or perhaps that was the water mites. My eyes clouded, and though I blinked, the fog did not clear. It was calm. I was calm. My heart rate was slow, and getting slower. I was dying.

And then I was not.

I was once again atop the bridge. The air whipped around me, pulling my hair in front of my face, pushing my body toward the edge. I looked down. The valley shined with pure beauty, it was as cold as the well. I looked back towards my father, his eyes were clouded with confusion. To him, I smiled. The wind was at last calling. I looked to the horizon, and took one single step forward. I was flying.

I was back in the wishing well, below to water. It was all a dream.