



*Student Showcase*

*2024-2025*

*Mrs. Edey*

*8/9*







**Marshall**



"Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed? I know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants, and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery."

"When night came I quitted my retreat and wandered in the wood; and now, no longer restrained by the fear of discovery, I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils, destroying the objects that obstructed me and ranging through the wood with a stag-like swiftness. Oh! What a miserable night I passed! The cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me; now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness. All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment; I, like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me, and finding myself unsympathised with, wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around me, and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin."

"But this was a luxury of sensation that could not endure; I became fatigued with excess of bodily exertion and sank on the damp grass in the sick impotence of despair. There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No: from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery."

"The sun rose; I heard the voices of men and knew that it was impossible to return to my retreat during that day. Accordingly I hid myself in some thick underwood, determining to devote the ensuing hours to reflection on my situation."

"The pleasant sunshine and the pure air of day restored me to some degree of tranquillity; and when I considered what had passed at the cottage, I could not help believing that I had been too hasty in my conclusions. I had certainly acted imprudently. It was apparent that my conversation had interested the father in my behalf, and I was a fool in having exposed my person to the horror of his children. I ought to have familiarised the old De Lacey to me, and by degrees to have discovered myself to the rest of his family, when they should have been prepared for my approach. But I did not believe my errors to be irretrievable, and after much consideration I resolved to return to the cottage, seek the old man, and by my representations win him to my party."

"These thoughts calmed me, and in the afternoon I sank into a profound sleep; but the fever of my blood did not allow me to be visited by peaceful dreams. The horrible scene of the preceding day was for ever acting before my eyes; the females were flying and the enraged Felix tearing me from his father's feet. I awoke exhausted, and finding that it was already night, I crept forth from my hiding-place, and went in search of food."

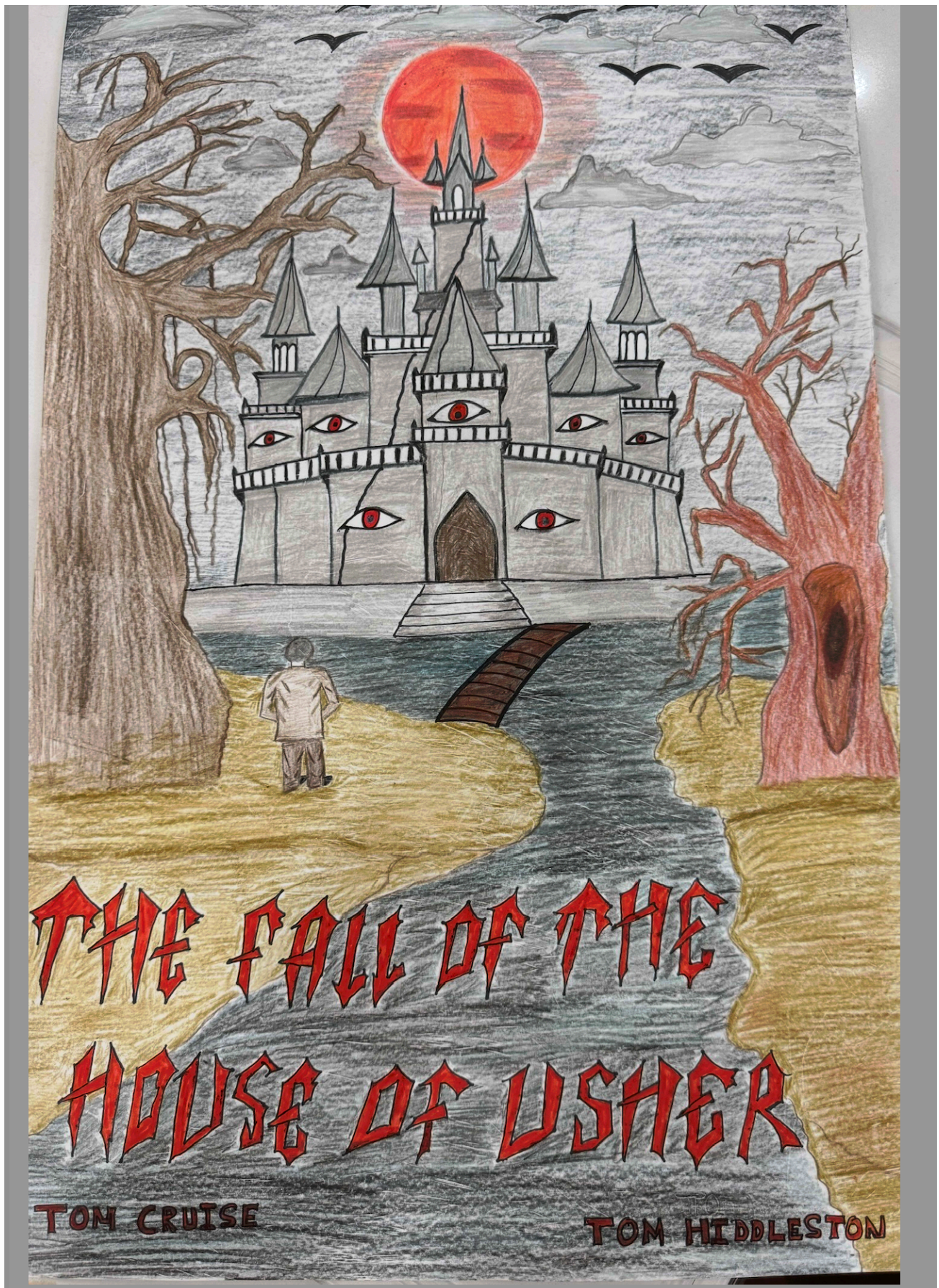
"When my hunger was appeased, I directed my steps towards the well-known path that conducted to the cottage. All there was at peace. I crept into my hovel and remained in silent expectation of the accustomed hour when the family arose. That hour passed, the sun mounted high in the heavens, but the cottagers did not appear. I trembled violently, apprehending some dreadful misfortune. The inside of the cottage was dark, and I heard no motion; I cannot describe the agony of this suspense."





**Nishanth**









**Imogen**





**Sara**





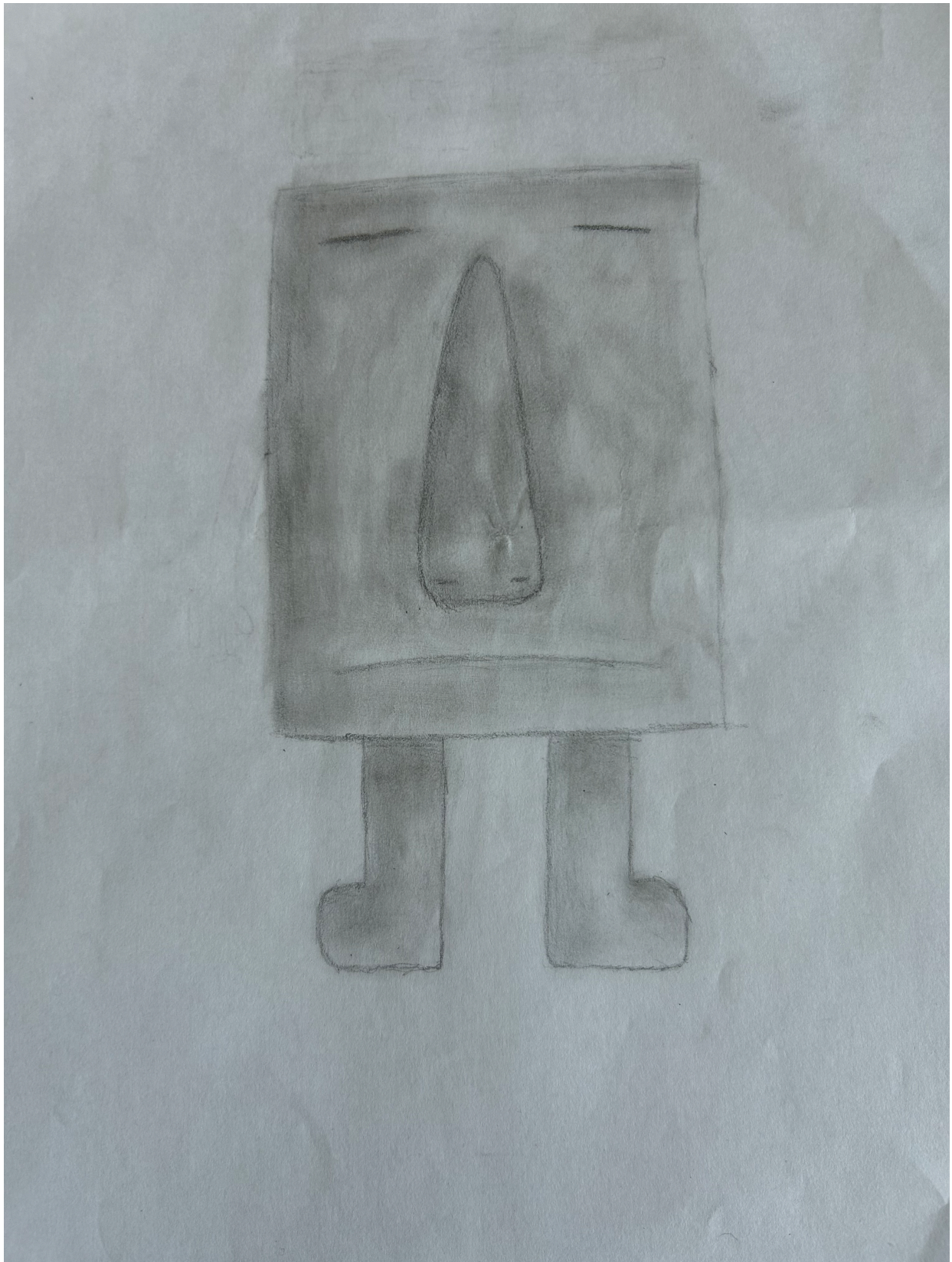
**Nahla**





**Omar**



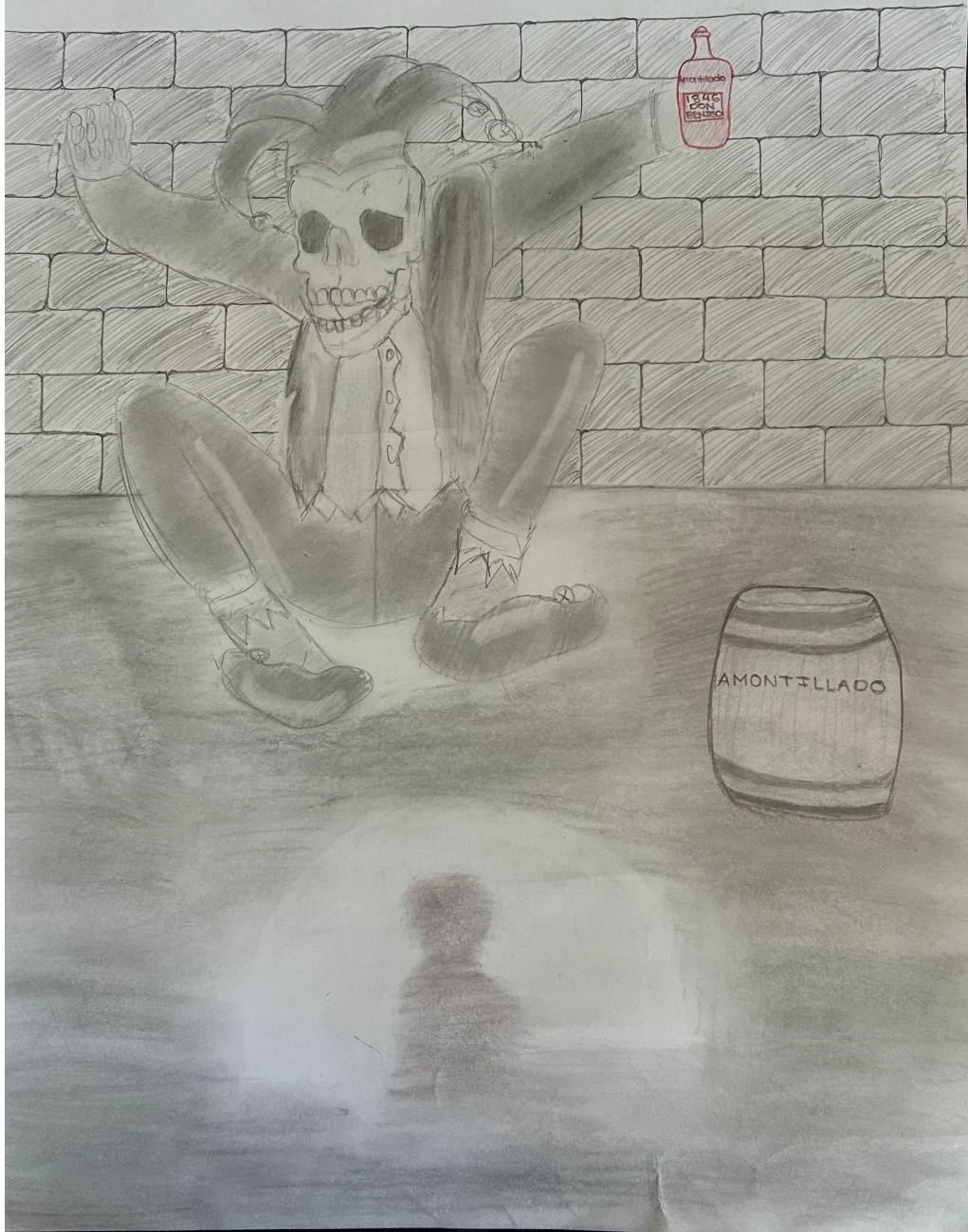


**Lukas**



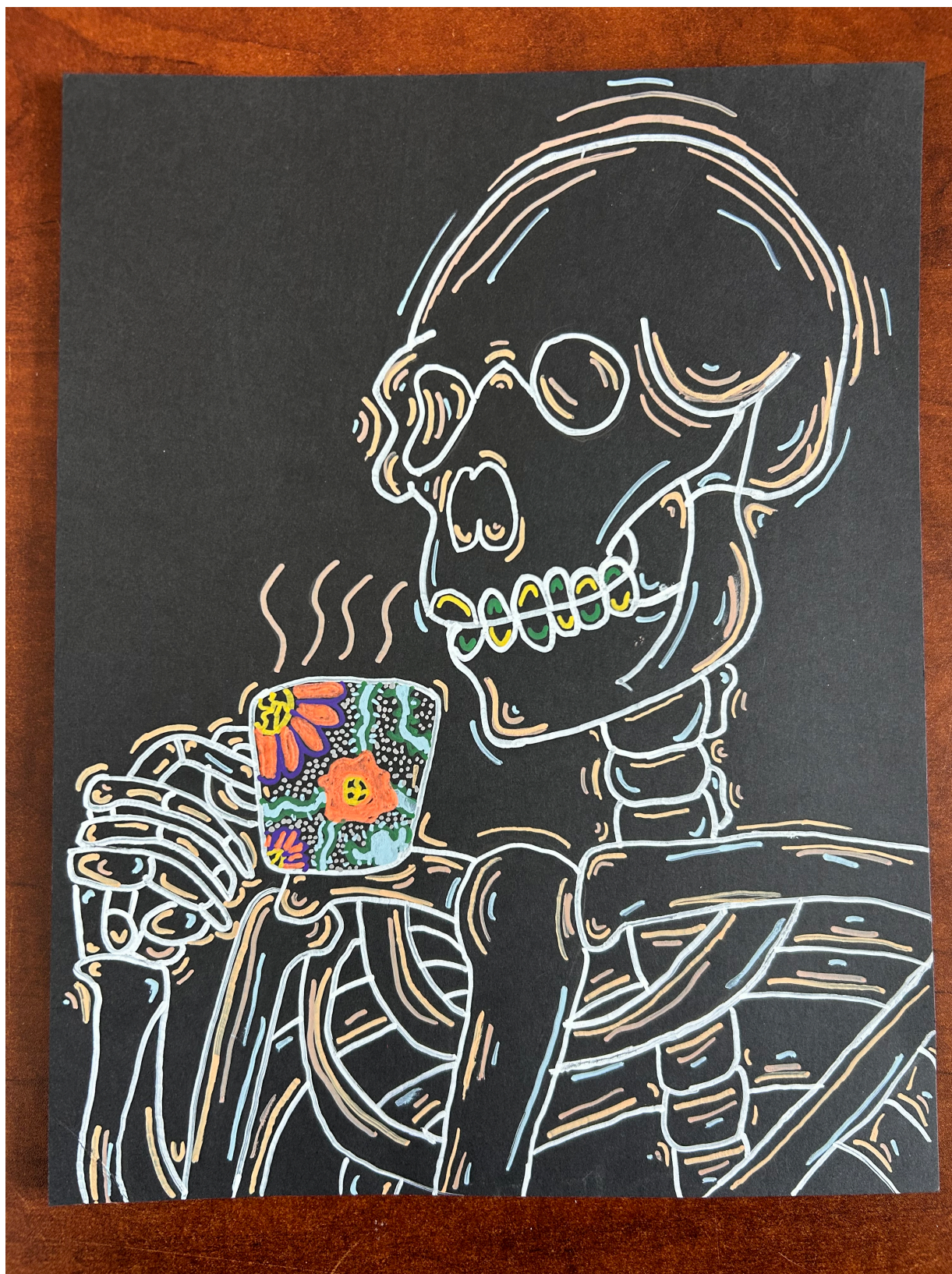
# The Cask of AMONTILLADO

STARRING  
Tom Holland & Asa Butterfield



**Mahleo**





**Shaf**



### The Distance Between Worlds

As I lug my duffel bag down the aisle, my legs and back are plagued with a throbbing pain—probably because I’ve been sitting on the uncomfortable seats of the MSF cargo plane for hours. I set it down for a second to rest my arms, because this bag contains provisions that are supposed to last me just over three months: clothing, canned food, sanitary items, and medical supplies.

When I finally make it through the plane doors, I’m hit by Afghanistan’s dry heat, and the hijab I’m wearing— courtesy the Taliban’s guidelines— sure doesn’t help. The rest of the doctors and nurses assigned to this mission are men; lucky them as they will be mostly unaffected by the misogynistic rules.

For a split second, I wonder why I’m *really* doing this. I’ve been telling myself for the past couple weeks it’s for the experience of working under even more pressure than the trauma units in America, which are always overflowing. I tell myself it’s for helping the less fortunate who don’t have access to even basic healthcare, let alone surgery. But at the back of my mind, there’s a small voice telling me it’s to actually *feel* something and reconnect with purpose. The past decade of working as a trauma surgeon has numbed me. I don’t feel like the person who was utterly excited for medical school anymore. In fact, I barely feel anything. I’ve seen too many people rushed into the hospital, barely hanging on as the golden hour passes. I’ve seen children covered in their own blood, wheeled into the operating room by overworked nurses who are barely keeping themselves awake. I’ve made the decision to let people go, and afterwards, I only have a small moment to collect myself before scrubbing into the next operating room.

“Dr. Morgan? Hellooo...” A calloused hand waves in my face.

I snap back to the present as my colleague is trying to get my attention because the bus that will drive us to a small rural clinic in Ghor has arrived. I step aboard, and realize the vehicle is actually an ambulance. It smells faintly of cleaning solution and blood, a smell I’m all too familiar with. The drive will take roughly an hour— Ghor is on the outskirts of Afghanistan. I try to get as comfortable as possible on the seat— which is not a lot— and close my eyes. I know strenuously long shifts await me, so I’m going to take advantage of every single second of rest I can possibly get.

I drift off not long before I’m awakened by a buzzing in my right ear— no, both of my ears. I peel my eyes open, and to my dismay, two disgustingly large mosquitoes are dancing around my ears. Just great. At this moment, I finally realize how difficult the next three months will be. Firstly, I’ll probably die of malaria before I can perform my first international surgery. Secondly, there will be no wifi where I am working, meaning I won’t have access to any online medical information or data bases. Finally, I will be living solely off of canned food, even the fruits I’ll eat will be canned— unless I can get my hands on one of the apple trees that grow around here.

The ambulance, disguised as a bus, comes to an abrupt halt, and my team begins unloading their baggage and carrying it off into Ghor, our home for the next three months. Because Ghor is



fairly far from Afghanistan's main cities, we'll see less of the Taliban here, thank God. I look around, taking in the sight of small houses, stray animals, and a few children playing in the streets. In the near distance, I can make out a tiny clinic, if I squint my eyes. We'll have to walk the rest of the way because the ambulance has already left for the main cities, where the larger hospitals are located.

In recent years, a trending pattern in patient deaths in Afghanistan has been observed. Patients coming from rural areas, like Ghor, have a lower chance of survival once they arrive at the hospital than patients from the big cities. This can be explained by the long travel distances the villagers have to take. Hopefully, we can even out the patient death numbers by adding new teams all around the rural areas of Afghanistan.

When we complete our walk to the clinic, we are greeted by a team of nurses, speaking rapidly to Hamzah, one of the surgeons on my team, in a language I can't understand. A look of horror passes over his face.

"At the back of the clinic there's a surgery room we can use, there are two children with third degree burns covering their arms and back. They said they already have the skin donations. Scrub in, right now!" He orders, his expression has transformed to a look of duty, as we all hurry to the back of the clinic.

Four hours later, we completed the skin graft surgery. The patients were twins, a girl and a boy, who had been playing around in an old house when they heard sounds of an animal coming from the furnace. Turns out there was a cat with its legs stuck between two canisters of boiling hot water. You can probably see where this is going. The boy and his sister each tried to move one of the canisters, when one of them toppled over and burst, terribly burning the twins.

There was barely enough anesthetic to keep both of them asleep, and occasionally one of their eyes would flutter open, and then they'd pass out again. By the time the surgery was complete, they started coming to their senses and explaining bits and pieces of the event. They'll be staying at the clinic for the next couple of months until they can somewhat recover. I feel slightly helpless, knowing I'll have to send them off when they're not fully healed. But what we're doing is generous, there's barely enough space for them to stay here even for a few months. In fact, they're lucky a surgery unit was even added to a *clinic*.

I am exhausted, but sure enough, there's another patient arriving in a car that looks like *it's* in dire need of surgery. The patient is carried on a stretcher into the building, and Hamzah starts yelling out more orders as the nurses scramble to make sure the operating room is ready for surgery again. This time, the patient has two stab wounds in his chest and stomach, we need to act quickly.

...

Two surgeries done, God forbid there's any more. I don't know what I was expecting when I signed up for this humanitarian mission. If I knew how much more overexerted I would feel than my usual shifts, I sure wouldn't have even considered this. But in a way, I feel a bit more fulfilled, helping these people whose chance of survival would have been slim to none.



I take a swig from my water bottle which is supposed to keep the water cold, but the sweltering heat combined with no air conditioning has turned it lukewarm. I stomp outside, praying for a cool breeze, but I'm met with the hot, dusty air and a scrawny girl bumping into me.

"Sorry!" She apologizes in her high, accented voice.

I barely look at her before brushing past, searching for an apple tree to save my stomach from eating itself, because there is no way I'm going to even touch canned food before I absolutely have to. I can hear the steps of someone following closely behind me. *Oh no, has the Taliban come to dress code me?* My thoughts are humorous, but my face pales a little at the thought of being sent to a detention center for exposing my hair.

"Hello. Are you a doctor?" The same girl from before asks.

Is that even a question? I look down at my disgusting blood stained scrubs and stare back at her. Why is she even talking to me? Does she need medical care? I look over her thin figure, but she appears fine, so I'm kind of annoyed with her following me. Maybe after I get a good night's sleep she can come back and pester me.

"What gave it away? The uniform or the existential dread?" I reply dryly, in an attempt at sarcasm.

She laughs a little, her voice breathy, "I'm Amina. I saw what you did with the twins today, I've been watching you."

Watching me? Am I a celebrity in Afghanistan? I know they don't see people who look like me very often, but I'm still surprised.

"Anyway, I've been watching a lot of the nurses and doctors work, but they're always busy with something, so I can never talk to them. But I can talk to you." She explains, her eyes gleaming with hope.

I sigh, stopping mid-stride so I can shut down this one sided conversation. "Look Amina, I'm very tired right now and I just need some time to myself." I watch her smile leave for a second, before it reappears. "If you go back to the clinic, maybe this time there'll be someone willing to talk to you."

I do not remember reading that I'd have to socialize with teenage girls in the contract I signed before I came here.

She pauses for a second, shocked that I didn't ignore her this time, and I kind of wish I didn't reply so she would leave me alone. "Trust me, no one there wants to talk to me, but if you really want me to go, I'll go. Just expect me to be back next week, but maybe at a later time."

I rub my temples when she says the last sentence, but why worry about her today? She can be next week's problem.



“Okay, see you, Amina.”

“Bye...” She pauses not knowing my name.

“You can call me Dr. Morgan.”

“Bye, Layla!” Amina says, referring to my first name embroidered onto the chest pocket of my scrubs.

...

Sure enough, Amina has returned the same day next week, this time carrying a bowl of food and a notebook.

“Here, my mom made this for me, but you can have it. It’s called mantu,” she offers.

I feel slightly touched, because it means I won’t have to resort to canned food like I did yesterday for dinner.

“Thank you, Amina,” I say and take a bite.

It is delicious, and the flavour is completely different from what I’m used to back home. Now I feel embarrassed, because while I thought of her as a nuisance, she brought me the most delicious food to eat, and she’s been nothing less than friendly.

“You’re welcome. I also have something to show you. Look.” She opens her notebook and flips past a couple of pages.

Amina points to a detailed sketch of the twins I performed on last week. There are numbered steps explaining what she saw my team and I do. She flips back and forth between pages, showing me the past sketches and notes she’s taken. Amina’s clearly very bright, and her drawings look like they’re straight out of a medical textbook.

“Amina,” I gasp, “These are great. Do you want to become a doctor when you’re older?” I ask, still stunned.

“Something like that, but I’m not sure if I can. Only the boys here have access to higher education, and I need to stay at home to help my mom with my little siblings. But when they’re older and I don’t have to take care of them, maybe I’ll work at the clinic and help people, like you do.”

...

Later that evening, I reflect on everything I’ve seen in Afghanistan while taking a cold shower. It’s one of those poorly constructed outdoor showers where the water is cold enough to be a torture method, but it gets the job done. After three days of not bathing, just feeling the sweat, dirt, and grime collect on my skin, I can’t complain. It’s funny, because back home I never really appreciated the privilege of hot showers. Now it’s something I dream about.



I think about Amina, how she dreams of becoming a doctor, how she's limited by both the Taliban and her family situation. I think about myself, how I had come to Afghanistan to feel something. I do feel something, I feel gratitude. For the first time in many years, I feel grateful for all the opportunities that I was given in America. I never had to worry about people exploiting religion and using it as a form of oppression. I never had to worry about not receiving healthcare. I lived my whole life complaining about this and that, I didn't even notice how fortunate I was. Maybe the distance between our worlds isn't measured in miles, but in what we take for granted

Now, when I hear the buzzing of mosquitoes, I don't mind. I'm okay with eating canned food, even if it doesn't taste the best, because I've dealt with people dying of starvation and I've seen how Amina gave her meal to me. The sweltering sun is uncomfortably hot, but I can look past that and appreciate the apple trees that have grown as a result of its bright rays.

**Hafsa**



"But then, while she was here in the house with us, I did not permit myself any liberties. And the worst of all is that she is already.... All this must needs happen just to spite me. Ar! ar! ar! But what, what is to be done?"

There was no answer except that common answer which **life** gives to all the most complicated and unsolvable questions, — this answer: You must live according to circumstances, in other words, forget yourself. But as you cannot forget yourself in sleep—at least till night, as you cannot return to that music which the water-bottle woman sang, therefore you must forget yourself in the dream of life!

"We shall see by and by," said Stepan Arkadyevitch to himself, and rising he put on his gray dressing-gown with blue silk lining, tied the tassels into a knot, and took a full breath in his ample lungs. Then with his usual firm step, his legs spread somewhat apart and easily bearing the solid weight of his body, he went over to the window, lifted the curtain, and loudly rang the bell. It was instantly answered by his old friend and valet Matve, who came in **bringing** his clothes, boots, and a telegram. Behind Matve came the barber with the shaving utensils.

"Are there any papers from the court-house?" asked Stepan Arkadyevitch, taking the telegram and taking his seat in front of the mirror.

.... "On the breakfast-table," replied Matve, looking inquiringly and with **sympathy** at his master, and after an instant's pause, added with a sly smile, "They have come from the boss of the livery stable."

Stepan Arkadyevitch made no reply and only looked at Matve in the mirror. By the look which they interchanged it could be seen how they understood each other. The look of Stepan Arkadyevitch seemed to ask, "Why did you say that? Don't you know?"

Matve thrust his hands in his jacket pockets, kicked out his leg, and silently, good-naturedly, almost smiling, looked back to his master: —





**Mohsin**





**Milo**



## Thanks Pays Off

Carter and Greg hated each other with a fiery passion. Their rivalry had been in place since their time in the same grade school, where Greg always got everything he wanted, and everything Carter had couldn't compare to what Greg would make his own parents purchase on a daily basis. Yet even still, this would not have been a problem for Carter on its own; "Everyone has a different life" is a major tenet in Carter's philosophy. However, what absolutely irked Carter was how snobbish Greg was about it. Greg took everything for granted, never uttering thanks for anything, while Carter was grateful for every scrap. The poor man couldn't understand how Greg could have no respect for what he had.

Greg also competed with Carter in this moral battleground. He felt that Carter's love for every tiny thing was bothersome at best - downright vexing at worst. Carter's incessant chatter had no place in a world where time is money, even though Greg had no shortage of either. As such, the two became fast enemies, butting heads at every altercation.

This rivalry continued all the way through the grades, even into high school. Teachers would have to break up their arguments daily, yet the topic never seemed to exhaust itself for the two adversaries: the topic of gratitude, and its importance in the world. The same formula would repeat itself again and again in their debates:

"You show no respect for the world around you," Carter would shout, hoping Greg would one day listen, yet Greg would never do so.

"To be thankful every day for the world around me is simply a waste! It will last until tomorrow, and the day after that," Greg would always respond, unwilling to see Carter's thankfulness as anything more than idle chatter which grew more and more annoying each day.

The arguments of the two foes grew tiresome for everyone around them, yet they continued even past high school. By some strange coincidence, they even found themselves working the same job together - as cashiers in a small corner store. Their philosophical battles still carried on, however. They competed for every achievement, every title. However, Carter did one thing that Greg couldn't seem to: he treated each customer with respect. He gave recommendations, he helped find things, and most importantly, he thanked each and every one of them for anything that warranted it. Greg was the opposite; acting rude and aloof, never helping with anything, and never giving thanks. Carter brought in new customers, Greg drove them away.

One bland Tuesday afternoon in particular, Carter found himself working his shifts as per usual. This time, however, a new face appeared. The man acted quite odd, from his mannerisms to the way he seemed to know exactly where everything was from even the most basic of directions, yet he asked for the locations of even the most obviously-placed products. Nevertheless, Carter treated the strange gentleman with the same courtesy and gratitude that each man and woman deserved. They thanked each other and went their separate ways as Carter proceeded to help the next customer until Greg's shift arrived.

During Greg's shift, the strange man returned again, asking the same questions and acting in the same odd manner. Unlike Carter, Greg treated the man poorly, getting more and more annoyed as his shift went on and acting in a rash manner, unbecoming of someone whose job is to help customers with their needs. While Carter went home at the end of the day happy, Greg was just frustrated with his job making him have to service everyone. It was the only place that



would hire him, though. Every other location has refused on the basis of his disastrous attitude and refusal to show thanks. As he fell asleep, Greg wondered why his life seemed to go downhill, why his parents were refusing him when they had previously succumbed to his every wish.

Greg's time as an ungrateful slob would end when he went into work the next day. The manager of the store had arrived with a special announcement; Greg was being fired.

"You see, I was the strange man you each helped yesterday," he would say, directing a look at both of them. "Carter, you helped me and never once showed a hint of annoyance, even at my rather odd antics. But Greg, you treated me horribly. You were annoyed at everything I did, and you took your status for granted. As such, you're fired."

And to make matters worse, Carter piped up as well: "Maybe you should've shown more appreciation for the things you have. Now you can learn what it's like to have nothing. Be grateful for every scrap."

Greg stormed off in a frustrated huff, aimlessly wandering around the city for a while. The next time Carter and Greg saw each other, Greg was an ordinary beggar, asking for money on the suburban streets. Carter would've passed by him out of spite for what he had done to him, but he sensed a change in Greg.

"Because you have learned to be humble and show gratitude or everything you have," Carter spoke, "I'll be the better man and give you some of my money."

As the money was placed in his hands, Greg uttered the word he had never dreamed of saying in his life, the word he always saw so annoying: "Thanks."

**Dace**



