Transplanting Hope

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Transplanting Hope

Chapter 1

Western Pennsylvania, 1889

Moonlight bathed my secret garden in light, and I inhaled, savoring the peace of this moment. I knew my plants would need an extra layer of hay and sawdust to insulate them as frost hugged the spring air. I felt closest to home in this garden. Nurturing plants and watching them push through the ground connected me to my past as I remembered my roots. I grew up walking the forest with my mother, and I carried her knowledge to this side of the world, even though I now walk alone. Mama was a natural healer, armed with recipes, tales, and wisdom passed down by her mother. I would give anything to go back in time and be with Mama again in Scotland. However, I have been transplanted to American soil and my Cousin Jack treats me like crabgrass. I know that I have to prove my worth and remind him that we come from the same family tree. I no longer believe that love is freely given. In this garden, hope blooms next to lavender as I work to earn my keep. This garden is proof that I belong with Cousin Jack and his family. It filled me with light to know I would soon be able to add food to Cousin Jack's root cellar.

Tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, turnips, zucchini, raspberries, and corn are planted next to mint and elderberry bushes. There are times when the present and future suffocate me with all that I don't know. These are the moments that I like to recite recipes. I know it's odd, but it's calming to me to hang onto what little I do know.

A few minutes later, I scurried across the sleeping town, listing the ingredients to a sleep tincture in my head while dodging mud, horse manure, and icy puddles. I had to
plant my garden in a remote location away from town. I quietly scampered in the
shadows of the filthy mining town as I worked my way back to Cousin Jack’s house.
Crooked dirt paths connected the shanties that hugged the rolling hills of the Laurel
Highlands. Most of the town's shacks were held together with thick, black coal dust and a
few nails. I shut my eyes and took a deep breath of polluted air, missing the fresh sweet
breezes that floated across our home in Scotland. I tried not to think of the whitewashed
farmhouse, fences, fields, and wide-open meadows from my childhood as I quietly
opened the coal shed next to my cousin's home, wrapped myself in my mother's best
quilt, clutched a scrap from Papa’s kilt, and settled in for the night.

I was awakened from a restless sleep by the frigid air as I slowly shifted my
position on the cold, hard dirt. I rubbed my hands between my knees, trying to let the
friction warm me up in the vain hope that I could go back to sleep. My vibrant dreams
had transported me back to Mama’s kitchen. I tried to let the rich, meaty memory of my
mother's roast wrap me like a lullaby and put me back to sleep. It was useless. I was
awake, hungry, and back in the cold, cruel world. Trying to roll over, I realized in anger
that my quilt had frozen to the ground. I yanked the quilt, spraying ice crystals in an arc
as they peppered the piles of coal surrounding me, and I realized that I was wet, in
addition to being cold.

Spring had come late to the Laurel Highlands. I had been allowed to spend the
coldest nights of the winter laying in front of the stove in my cousin's flea-ridden cabin.
At first, I had thought it was an act of kindness, but soon realized it was so I could keep
the fire going through the night while everyone else was warm in their beds. With the
change of seasons, Cousin Jack told me I could go back to sleeping in the coal shed
where I had swept and tidied up a corner so that I had enough room to curl up like a cat on the dirt floor between piles of coal. The rain had started around midnight, and as the temperature dropped, icy pings echoed against the coal shed as sleet tap danced off the tin roof. The weather was erratic like my life.

Shivering in my damp nightgown, I shoved my feet into shoes that were too small and ran across the frozen yard, quietly slipping into my cousin's shanty. I tiptoed up to the stove, relieved to feel the faintest trace of warmth still glowing from the cast iron. Folding myself against the wall and squeezing my knees into my chest, I waited for the numbing shivers to subside as I wrapped my arms around the exhaust pipe, trying to absorb the warmth. After about an hour, my eyelids became heavy, and I had almost slipped back to sleep when voices punctured the night air. It was still the middle of the night, and I wondered why they were talking. I held my breath and strained against the dark, trying to hear what Cousin Jack and Ana were saying.

"Our food rations are less as Mister keeps raising the price of food. I don't know how much longer I can afford to feed Hazel." Hearing my name, I was wide awake. Even in a whisper, I could sense my cousin's frustration.

"She's your family and just a child. She has no one else. We will find a fix." The soothing strains of Ana, Cousin Jack's wife, gave me hope. More mutters and quiet voices followed this.

The sound of a fist punching what I hoped was a pillow startled me, pushing me back against the wall, and I hit my head off the metal pipe connecting the stove to the rafters. "She's a lazy loaf and hardly my kin. Her pa was my uncle, and I do not feel the
need to pretend we’re a close family. You know she only has cupboard love for us. Hazel reminds us we are related so her belly can stay full. It would be one thing if Hazel helped around the house, but she disappears each day. Where does she even go? This town is no place for a thirteen-year-old to be running wild and unharnessed.”

The voices continued, but I no longer heard them as my thoughts threatened to drown me. Anger washed over me in a wave as I knew I was anything but lazy. I worked from sunup to sundown, stoking the stove and cooking the family breakfast each morning. I packed my cousin’s lunch pail every day, scavenged for coal at the culm banks, chopped wood, hauled water, baked bread, tended to my cousin’s children, and even prepared Cousin Jack’s bathwater each week. I knew my cousin did not see the work I did each day while working in the mine. However, I hoped Ana was defending me, as she knew I was a hard worker.

Despite my efforts, I knew I was a burden. I will never forget the look on his face when I showed up on Cousin Jack’s doorstep last fall, twelve years old and alone. In my mind, I had imagined a homecoming and arms comforting me as I told them of my parent’s tragic passing on the ship.

I had timidly knocked on the door, clutching my mother’s quilt and a small satchel. The man who opened the door had a face that looked similar to my father’s. They had the same build and jawline, but that is all they had in common. Papa was quick to laugh and full of love. Cousin Jack was a man with angry eyes and a temper. Ana, his wife, cowered behind him at the door, balancing a tiny baby while toddlers tugged at her skirt.
“What do you want,” my Cousin snarled as he took a swig from his bottle and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

“Hh...he....hello. I’m Hazel McBain,” I said with a forced smile on my face. He continued to stare at me through squinted eyes. “I’m your cousin,” I added hastily. “My parents are Camden and Aileen.”

“Oh yes. You’re late,” Cousin Jack sneered as he quietly rolled his R’s and peered into the darkness behind me. “Where are your parents? It’s been years since I’ve seen them in Scotland.”

I swallowed hard. “They’re dead....sir. The ship...there was sickness. They never made the voyage.” My words were broken like my heart. There was another long pause. I hoped this was the point where we would embrace and grieve my parents together as a family. Instead, Cousin Jack swore and said, “What am I supposed to do with you here? This is gully-fluff. You’re just going to have to go back.”

Fear gripped my heart as he turned on his heel to go back into the house.

“Wait, I...I don’t know that I have enough money to purchase a ticket home.” It was true, I wasn’t sure how much it would cost to buy a return ticket to my home across the ocean, but I was sure I would never step foot on a ship again.

Cousin Jack softened. “Calm down. You can stay here for a wee bit. Not forever, but until we get this mess sorted.”

I had thought that I might be welcome, as I was family and a hard worker. However, it was the small amount of money I had brought with me that was welcome. I
had Papa’s nest egg safely tucked in my satchel. It was intended to help us make a fresh start in America. Papa planned to find work in the coal mines or steel mills, as Cousin Jack had written and assured us there was plenty of work. Papa and Mama did not plan on leaving me an orphaned immigrant when I finally reached the shores of America. However, no amount of elbow grease would hide the fact that I was just another sauce box for my Cousin Jack to feed. I realized that sharing a last name did not make us kin. I would have to earn my keep, prove my love, and fight for my right to be a part of this family.

I sat with my back against the wall, tears dripping onto my torn nightgown, not caring that it had just dried. Looking back, maybe I should have told them of my hives and garden. I dug my nails into my hand, trying to punish myself for being so stupid. I found a remote stretch of land next to dense woods where I tilled the land and planted a garden. I did not speak up about my plan earlier because I was afraid the land was not mine to plant on and would be taken away. There was also the fact that I did not trust my Cousin.

I sat there as his words, “she’s a lazy loaf,” bounced through my mind, the friction of the words building up to a frenzy. I was always the first one up, racing through my chores every morning, anxious to escape the house and put my plan into action. It all started with a hive. I secretly scouted the mines when the town was dark, looking for discarded lumber and nails. New hovels and shacks were emerging each week in this filthy coal town, and I was able to easily acquire lumber, scrap by scrap, until I had built multiple bee boxes that housed hives at the edge of my garden. Blinking back tears, I knew that Papa would have been proud of me.
“Hazel needs to go. She has already been here for a month full of Sundays.” My Cousin’s words froze my heart into an icy loch inside my chest. This outburst was followed by Ana telling him to be still so as not to wake the children. His words were no surprise. Cousin Jack blessed each meal by jawing that his pay was not enough to feed this many people, even though my hands prepared the food.

I hadn’t been this cold since standing on the deck of the ship, waves rolling underneath, wanting to fling myself overboard and follow my parents to the bottom of the ocean floor. I felt the seawater hit my face that day, blending in with my tears as I stood rock solid on the deck, knowing that I was burying a piece of myself with them. I tried to stop my mind from reliving the memories, but the grief rolled over me like a tidal wave.

We were crossing the ocean, bound for a new life. Papa packed what little we could take but said with a wink that all we needed was his lucky penny. I knew he wanted to avoid another bad year of crops and have a fresh start in America. If he even had any, Papa’s luck didn’t last long as he became ill first. Papa, Mama, and I were housed on the bottom of the ship, packed in like sheep in a chicken coop. There was nowhere to turn or move. We choked on air that was as stagnant as the rancid water we drank, praying for fresh rain to fall from the heavens. Sickness swept through the berth after the first week at sea. Fever, diarrhea, and diphtheria struck over half the passengers while the sea boiled underneath us.

Mama and I took imaginary walks to pass the hours as we sat on the filthy floor of the ship. I would lay my head on her shoulder, and we would pretend we were in the forest, back in the Old Country. We would hunt for mushrooms among dappled sunlight, find plants that would calm a rolling stomach and roots that could be boiled into a salve
or tea. We would imagine the fresh air and sunlight that grew the herbs we needed, along with fields full of clover and tree limbs heavy with bee nests. I would have given anything for fresh honey to soothe Papa’s sore throat. Yet there, in the cargo hold, we just had foul water and putrid air and days that turned into nights full of sickness and disease.

Papa slept restlessly as a rash gave his cheeks a rosy glow. Then mother became sick, and her eyes glazed over. She squeezed my fingers as she slipped Papa’s lucky penny into my hand while she drifted farther and farther away.

Until the bubbles rose around her body, and she floated to her resting place at the bottom of the ocean. And there I stood. Breathing and mostly dead. Wishing to die. Wishing to follow them. Alone and trapped on a ship taking me farther and farther from everything I knew.

There was a time when I knew I belonged and had a home and a family. That was before I realized nothing is safe or guaranteed in this life. My survival now depended on my ability to prove that I was valuable and essential to my cousin. I knew my real family, the one I lost to the sea, loved me enough that they would want me to fight for my future.

As I crossed the yard back into the coal bin, I lay back down on the frozen ground. Dirty and discarded, helpless as I feared I would soon be homeless, I said my prayers and hoped they could soar higher than the ceiling that I stared at. And then, I did the only thing I could think of; I recited the recipes my mother taught me, slowly and carefully thinking of cough syrups and cornbread until I was finally exhausted enough to fall asleep.
Chapter 2

I was up before the sun and the roosters. Wiping mud off my boots, I carefully placed them outside the door to my Cousin’s shanty before I slipped in, barefoot, and stoked the fire in the oven. I heated water for tea and porridge, trying to distract myself from the icy floor numbing my toes. I was sweeping the floors when Jack and Ana finally roused from their bedroom. Ana handed me the baby to change while they sat down and had breakfast together. There was a heavy silence in the room as I continued to sweep the floor while balancing the baby. Later that morning, after I had washed another load of laundry, I slipped out of the house, knowing that I would have to reveal my plan earlier than I had hoped. I was grateful that I at least had a plan.

I scurried across town, knowing every minute I was missed would make my situation worse. I stopped in front of the general store and forced myself to concentrate on my breathing as I willed my heart to slow. The company store was constructed from the same rough, cheap boards that graced every other dwelling in this shantytown. However, a wraparound porch and windows made of real glass spoke of wealth and power.

Taking a deep breath, I entered the store. I clutched my penny and hoped I wasn’t gambling with the last of Papa’s luck. Papa’s penny was all that was left of his fortune. I kept it in my pocket, where I squeezed it and kept it close in the months following my parent’s death. When life with my cousin was hard, this little disk of metal gave me hope as I prayed for the luck that Papa believed it held.
Mister, the clerk, was behind the counter, erasing and writing on the chalk sign that displayed the price of goods in the company store. When he saw me enter, his lips curled into a snarl, and I could feel the hair on the back of my arms rise like a possum’s.

“Well, well, well, what do we have here, my little lamb,” Mister said as his eyes slowly traveled from the top of my head to the bottom of my filthy boots.

He had called me his little lamb from the first moment he laid eyes on me. My Cousin Jack was with me the day after I arrived in America. We had gone to the store together to exchange my Scottish currency for American money. Mister had bickered and debated with Cousin Jack, telling him again and again that foreign money meant nothing in this town. In the end, Mister had “graciously” converted my Papa’s savings into a store credit that was put toward Jack’s sizeable gambling debt. Mister gave Jack a scrap of paper with a small figure on it in the form of company credit. “Buy something for your little lamb,” Mister had said that day to Cousin Jack as his eyes bored holes into my soul. Jack angrily shoved the paper into his pocket and stormed out of the store. I meagerly followed, blinking back tears as I realized that Papa’s wealth had just been squandered.

“I need a glass container….please.” I forced myself to be polite as I resisted the urge to flee.

Mister casually kept wiping away at the chalk sign as a thick silence grew between us. I wondered how long he was going to make me wait. Finally, Mister cleared his throat and spat on the wooden floor next to him, rubbing the snot into the boards with his expensive shoes. Not looking up at me, he asked what for.
I didn’t want to tell him, so I just said that I needed a jar, something wee with a lid. Mister asked me how much I planned on spending on “something wee with a lid,” sneering as he mocked me and my request. I sadly told him I could spend up to a penny. Tears welled in my eyes as I tried to imprint Papa’s lucky coin into the flesh of my thumb, wishing there was another way.

“You know, with these hard times, the prices just keep going up and up,” Mister snarled as his chalk tapped the sign, raising the price of nails from four cents to six cents. I looked at him with sheer disgust, hating that his power gained strength by the second as I grew weaker. Trembling, I backed toward the door, realizing I should not have come here.

“Will this work, my little lamb?”

The glass jar that Mister held out was square and about six inches tall. “Women usually buy this to store pickles or horseradish,” he said. I nodded yes and reached up to take it only to have the jar pulled out of my grasp. “It’s two pennies today.”

“The sign says one cent,” I protested, pointing at the bottom portion of the board.

“Oh, I can see that my little lamb can read. Don’t worry; I just haven’t gotten to adjusting that price. Today this jar is two cents. These are hard times, you know,” Mister leaned in close enough that I could smell the hot whiskey on his breath. Wiping his spittle from my face, I told him never mind and turned to leave.

He grabbed my arm, his nails digging into my flesh through the thin muslin of my dress. “Don’t worry; I will just put it on your cousin’s tab.”
“I do not wish to be in anyone’s debt,” I said. My nostrils flared as my voice quivered, and I pulled my arm away, backing toward the door.

“I’m just playing with you. You can have it today, for yesterday’s price. Don’t worry; I’m sure I will find a way to get my money out of you in the future,” Mister cackled. I did not know what he meant, but I was not going to stick around to find out. I threw Papa’s lucky penny at him, grabbed the glass dish, and ran out of the store.
Chapter 3

Soon after, I extracted honey from a wild hive I found in a hollow tree not far from my garden. After straining the honey into my new glass jar, I checked my honeybee boxes next to the garden. They weren’t quite ready to harvest, but with time, there would be plenty of honey. I knew Papa would have been proud of my hives. We had worked on our bee boxes together in Scotland. Some of my favorite moments were spent with Papa and Mama, checking on our bees by candlelight as dusk slowly blanketed the earth.

I remembered one of our last talks during our weekly bee checks. It had been right before we left for America. I had five years of schooling, more than some girls were able to have. I loved being in a one-room schoolhouse as I listened to the lessons for the older children. I was also able to help instruct the younger students when the teacher was busy. My parents were so proud when the schoolmarm sought them out after church to tell them how pleased she was with my progress and wished us good luck in America. I could tell by the way that Papa squeezed my shoulder as he flipped his lucky coin between his fingers that he was proud of me too. Later that afternoon, neighbors and family steadily trickled into our home, wishing us luck as we hugged them goodbye.

I broke down later as we checked on our bees; after all, what did it matter? Who would take care of the bees when we were gone? How could we leave everything that I had ever known, everyone that I had ever loved? Even my memories were deeply rooted in our family farm. I thought about my brothers. Would my memories of them be as vivid on the other side of the world? What about my friends, my cousins, my neighbors? My school.....I sobbed as I asked again how can we leave all of this?
Mama had grabbed me and lovingly held my face between her hands in the orchard. She kneeled on the ground and gazed into my eyes until my protests ran out and the sobbing subsided. Then Mama gathered me into her arms and placed a piece of Papa’s family plaid into my hand while she said, “This place, these people will all become part of the fabric of your life. Woven into the thread of this tartan is honor and a lifetime of memories. This plaid represents your clan and the family that you will always belong to. We will always be family. We will always have each other. However, there is mystery, wonder, and hope out there. There are more places to love and call home, even if we find ourselves far from this farm.”

A few bees started to gather around the honeycomb I had scraped, and I carefully moved the papery hexagon cells onto a tree branch near the garden. I made a mental note to start collecting lumber for another box, as I might be able to get yet another hive started. Still thinking about Mama’s words, I knew that I needed to convince my extended family that their home was my home too. My cousin and I came from a solid Celtic heritage built on the knowledge that people need to love others and nature as they love themselves. I wondered why honeybees were more loveable than my Cousin Jack.

I carefully studied my new jar filled with fresh honey, knowing that I needed to remind them of the honor in family and the ancestry we shared. I planned to give Cousin Jack and Ana the honey as a gift while explaining that soon I would have extra food and honey for their pantry, in addition to more coins for their purse. I imagined the look on my cousin’s face. Maybe he would even smile when he realized that I was not a burden. I pictured Ana hugging me as the children giggled in a moment when we would become a true family.
Instead, as I rounded the corner carrying my jar full of glistening honey, I saw Mister standing in our yard. I tried to back into the shadows of the neighbor’s house, but it was too late. I had been spotted. Cousin Jack called me over and said, “Hazel, oh good. We were just jawin’ about you. Mister has graciously agreed to take you in. You will cook and clean for him in exchange for food and a place to stay.” Stunned, I just stared at my cousin, disbelief crowding my heart as Mister grabbed my arm and pulled me in close enough to whisper, “See my lamb. I told you I would get my money out of you.” These were the words that echoed in my mind as I ran.
Chapter 4

I was halfway up the mountain before I realized where my feet were taking me. Our coal mining town lay at the bottom of a valley in the Laurel Highlands that was hugged by rivers. The beauty of this valley can still be seen, but you have to squint your eyes to get past the smog, mud, and filth that coal mining and steel production have brought to the area.

A canal system was started long ago as the world tried to connect the Atlantic Ocean and east coast rivers across the Appalachian Mountain range to the Great Lakes. Canals and dams were dug and constructed to widen rivers and deepen the streams scattered across the mountain chain. These dams and artificial waterways were discarded with the birth of the railroad and a better solution. One of the abandoned dams sat at the top of our mountain. It had been recently reclaimed by the wealthy owners of the mines and mills. These rich and powerful investors turned the forgotten dam into a hidden resort community.

I heard that whitewashed cottages lined the beautiful lake on the top of the world, complete with sailboats and cumulous clouds. There were constant rumors of the resort in town, as famous people were spotted and shiny carriages made their way up the forbidden road to a place where the common townsfolk were not welcome. With no other options, I hoped to find a job working for the rich. Perhaps I could be a maid or help to tend to a child. I knew that servants trained in Europe would be brought in to fill these positions, but hope was all I had, and I clung to it with both fists.
Halfway up the steep incline, I stopped to catch my breath. I could see a work team laboring at the dam's base, carrying lumber to support and patch areas of the dam that were weak. I scanned the men, trying to see if any teenagers were among the work crew. I thought for a moment that I could perhaps disguise myself as a boy and try to become a worker. Anything would be better than Mister. Blinking back tears, I realized that this work crew was only made of men.

After walking another mile, I gasped when I finally saw the resort and lake from my spot in the woods running parallel to the road. Small whitecaps pushed across the surface of the lake as the water lazily rippled to the edge. Sailboats and canoes were out today, along with elegant women dressed in white and laughing under parasols. I could see porches full of flowers on gingerbread houses. Violin notes wafted on the breeze from a musician standing in the shadows while laughter drifted across the lake. I sat and watched as a butler hurried along the boardwalk, carrying glasses and towels to a couple who sat in a gazebo.

Splashing and yelling caught my attention, and I saw two boys jumping off a pier into the icy lake. The younger one disappeared from my view, and I clutched the willow tree that I was leaning on as my breath caught in my throat. Gazing through the curtain of leaves, it seemed like minutes had passed before the boy finally resurfaced, laughing and pulling himself onto a raft anchored near the dock. After collecting some willow bark and shoving it in my satchel, I leaned my head against the tree and shut my eyes as I struggled against memories that refused to stay buried.

I grew up next to Scotland's shore, surrounded by water but far enough from the coast to enjoy the sounds of the surf beating on the beach. I know that the angry sea can
brew up storm clouds that drive the weather, drenching our crops with water. I know that water can swallow up men without a trace, leaving families broken as brothers fail to return from fishing trips. My siblings were strong swimmers until that day they disappeared, and it was evident that they were not strong enough. I was a girl and never allowed to swim. I used to admire my brothers and their friends, sitting high up on a hill, watching them chase the waves and body surf onto the sand. Now I look at water, knowing that it is a murderer, taking lives and breaking families.

When Papa and Mama told me we were going to America, I remember bile, salty like ocean water threatening to choke me as I knew that going to America meant crossing an ocean. Mama comforted me in the middle of the night when water would haunt my dreams, telling me it would be a short voyage. It would take three short weeks, less time than it takes for the morning glories to open when they start to push through the earth in the spring. I thought of morning glories the day they threw Mama’s body into the ocean, wishing I had dry land and flowers to plant by her grave. Instead, they wrapped her in linen and let her sink into the black abyss of water that had claimed everyone that I love. I wonder how long it will be until I am taken too.

A woodpecker jarred my thoughts, pushing me back to the present with its sharp drumming. I continued on my way, carefully walking around a puddle in my path. I paused as I leaned in and studied my reflection in the water. I realized I did not look as polished as I should for someone looking for work. When I looked in the still water, I could see sadness reflecting back at me. Dirt was sprinkled like glitter across my face, and my hair was knotted into a bird's nest of a bun. I saw my mother’s eyes looking at me from the surface of the mud puddle, and I took courage in the fact that I knew she
believed in me. Taking a deep breath, I grabbed a handful of lavender and mushrooms growing by the path. I shoved them into my satchel before I marched up to the entrance and waited for the guards to open the ornate gate.

Moments later, I was running down the mountain, galloping through the underbrush; my vision clouded by tears as I tried to outrun the guard’s cruel taunts that chased me down the hill. They laughed when I politely explained I was looking for work. One guard kicked pebbles at me as I backed up. I stammered that I could read and write, that I was a hard worker and would be happy for any job they might have. They couldn’t hear me over their insults and cackling. Running down the mountain, I arrived at my garden where I curled into myself, trying to create a barrier with my own body against the world. I could not silence the voices screaming in my head. “You’re not good enough. Get out of here. Go back to your mother,” the guard’s hateful words echoed and blended with my cousin’s voice, saying, “She’s a lazy loaf.” “She needs to go.” I could not silence the translation that ran deeper than the hurtful words. “You are not welcome.” “You are not family.” “You are not loved.”

I was lost so deep in my head that I did not hear footsteps approaching the garden. “There you are, my little lamb,” Mister’s snarl and words were rough like Scottish thistles. I looked up in fear and disgust.
Chapter 5

“What are you doing here? How did you find me?” I choked the words out, trying to sound brave despite my tear-streaked face.

“There is no hiding from me,” Mister sneered.

“What do you want with me?”

“You are coming home with me. You are mine.”

Angrily, I said, “I don’t give a hill o’ beans about what you think. You don’t own me.”

At that, Mister broke into a cackle, his high-pitched screech breaking the night air. “That is where you are wrong. Your life means nothing. Your cousin happily sold you to me for groceries and to pay off his debts. No one wants you...no one but me.”

I stood up and clutched my satchel to my body like a shield. I tried to push past Mister, but he grabbed my arm, hard enough that his nails punctured my skin.

“Let me GO!” I shrieked as I tried to pull away.

Mister slapped me across my face, hard enough to stun me. “You will listen, you filthy little dog. You will do my bidding, and you will obey.”

I spat in his face, fiercely gazing into his eyes. “Never!” I looked around frantically, but we were alone in the garden. I screamed at the top of my lungs, hoping that the echo of the highlands would take my pleas to friendly ears. Still holding firmly to my left arm, Mister spun me around and put me in a chokehold while clamping his dirty, calloused hand over my mouth. I could feel his damp shirt against my skin. I gagged as the stench of body odor, curdled milk, garlic, and whiskey assaulted me. I moved my
head enough to shift my position and clamped my teeth over his fingers, feeling them sink into his flesh while I curled my toes in disgust. He screamed and let go just long enough that I could move to the trees at the edge of the garden.

I reached the honeycomb I had laid in the tree earlier and launched it at Mister. He immediately started swatting at the insects, stinging torpedoes that transformed his rage into a high-stepping jig. I had a fraction of a head start when I saw an opening in the side of the mountain, partially covered by vines. I squeezed into the crevice, hoping to be far enough inside that he could not reach me.

My satchel got caught on the opening, and Mister ran up behind me and grabbed my bag. “Come here, you little dog.” In a rage, I yanked on my satchel, breaking the strap as I squeezed deeper into the narrow space between the rocks, relieved that it opened into a wider tunnel. Mister was stuck, unable to pass through the small opening into the mountain.

Enraged, he yelled, “Go ahead and hide my little lamb. You can’t stay in there forever, and I will be here waiting when you come out.” His sick cackle followed the threat. I pushed farther into the mountain, into the damp corridor, using my hands to feel in front of me in the darkness. I had no idea where this tunnel would take me. I wondered if it would lead to another opening. I wondered if there were larger entrances to this tunnel that Mister could access. I pondered what would happen to me when he found me again. What if...I would not even allow my thoughts to continue. Instead, I started reciting recipes that my mother had for baking shortbread and oak cakes, and as I slid farther into the mountain, my footsteps kept pace with my heart.
It did not take long for the darkness to overwhelm me. I used my hands to guide me as I slowly inched my way through the void of nothing. I thought about trying to find a hiding spot, but I knew that Mister would come back with a lantern, and it was only a matter of time before he found an opening that was large enough for him to squeeze through. I hoped I could find another opening out of the mountain, far from my garden, where I could escape Mister.

But then what? I did not have a plan beyond that. I thought about my grandparents and trying to go back to my family in the Old Country. I did not have any money for a ticket, as I had Cousin Jack to thank for that. I thought about hiding on a ship and becoming a stowaway, but as much as I hated Mister, I feared the ocean even more.

I had no friends, nowhere to go, not even reciting recipes brought me peace. Deep in thought, I tripped on a rock I could not see. My bag went flying. I heard it hit the rock wall and then slide, and then there was just silence. I crawled on my hands and knees for an eternity, looking for my satchel. Then I sat there in the dark and cried for everything I had lost. My satchel was eaten by the dark, like everything else I loved.

And so, in despair, I decided to stop. Stop and die, on my terms, in the middle of the mountain. I shut my eyes and slept uneasily, for I don’t even know how long. I woke occasionally and sat in the fetal position, heels tucked to my bottom, listening, and praying and reciting recipes in the dark. Until I finally fell asleep again.

After hours, maybe days in the dark, I thought perhaps I should just give myself up to Mister. But I knew that I had no idea how to get back; I was hopelessly lost in the middle of the mines. When I woke up again, I thought it was my stomach growling, but it
was the mountain moving, humming like Irish pipes that started gently but grew more boisterous. Then there was nothing but the sound of my tears dripping and my heart beating in the dark.
Leo and I struggled under the weight of our bundle. Carefully balanced between us, we shifted the sapling, and I pushed aside a branch so that I could see Mileva. “Keep up!” I hissed at Leo.

He looked at me and rolled his eyes. “I could if ye would walk in a straight line. I’ve had less trouble walking off gang-planks,” he said as he hoisted the sapling back onto his shoulder. I squinted my eyes and tried to peer into the darkness to see where Mileva was leading us. Leaves crunched under our feet, and the crisp air under a moonless sky felt like autumn.

The rolling hills surrounded us, reminding me of Scotland...or the Laurel Highlands. I gasped as we mounted the crest of a summit and the familiar ridgeway chiseled across the starscape. Mileva heard me and turned around. I could see her wink at me from the glow that her GPS was emitting. She put a finger up to her lip, indicating that we were to stay quiet, and I continued behind her with a new urgency to my steps.

Against the base of the mountain, obscured by vines and ivy, was a gate. Mileva pushed buttons on the lock, and the gate swung open, revealing a garden. Bright orange pumpkins and squash glowed in the moonlight on the ground leading up to a cabin. Mileva whispered that we could lay the sapling on the ground, but the sight in front of me completely consumed me.

“Oh Papa,” I whispered. The familiar silhouette filled the window. I dropped the tree and crashed through the cabin, ready to throw myself into his arms. As the door bounced off the wall, Papa’s name fell from my lips, and I stood in momentary confusion.
“Hazel? Is that really you?” The voice was familiar but not the deep tenor I was expecting. I realized my mistake. It was not Papa in the window, but Ross. I did not know at first that he was holding a baby, but he handed the child off to a woman standing next to him and scooped me up, twirling me around the living room. My feet swung as the air was squeezed out of my lungs.

He finally put me down, and I laughed as I wiped tears from my face, finally getting a good look at Ross. “You’ve changed,” I said, suddenly self-conscious as I wiped my hands nervously on my skirt. His eyes were the same, smiling, and blue. However, he had grown. He had become a man, strong and tall, like Papa, while I was much the same, at least on the outside.

“You haven’t!” he said as he playfully tousled my hair. “Well, not that much. You really are a Celtic fairy, aren’t you?”

“Where are we?” I asked as I shifted my eyes to Mileva. She was busy hugging the others in the room and unpacking her satchel. “When are we?”

“It’s been twenty years since we last saw you, although I know it has only been two years for you,” a voice said, and I turned to see Bonnie coming toward me. She folded me into her arms, and tears started again as I smelled the lavender in her salt and pepper hair, and I found my home in her embrace. After a long moment, she let me go but grabbed my face with her hands. “You saved us. All of us. And we have been waiting for this day,” she said with a laugh. “And to answer your other question, we are in a secluded location west of the Hive. It is now 2109 in our time, and we have missed you every minute of the last twenty years.”
I looked around the room as Scott came out of the corner. “Can I get a hug here too?” he said with his arms outstretched. A blur streaked across the room, cutting him off and yelling, “Me first!” and I found myself once again lifted off the floor. “Alex?” I said as I looked at his face. The freckles were the same, but his chiseled jawline and 6’2” stature told me that he had also grown up too.

We stood there laughing, and I could not believe how good it felt to be reunited with Ross and his family, my family, again. Ross interrupted our laughing and said, “Hazel, I would like for you to meet my wife, Daisy, and our daughter.” I smiled at the pretty woman standing shyly next to Ross as he placed a tiny infant into my arms. “Her name is Hazel,” I stared at Ross, overcome by emotions.

Our eyes locked, and I wondered if he knew. “I would like for you to meet your great-great-great-granddaughter,” he said with a smile.

I looked at him questioningly. “How did you find out?” I asked as I cradled the infant and instantly fell in love.

At that moment, Mileva came over. “I took the liberty of telling them. I wanted them to know that you were safe with me,” she said with a wink. “I have been keeping them informed and letting them know how you were,” she said.

“What? Why didn’t you tell me? How long have you been in touch with them?” I asked her in disbelief.

“I have been coming back to see your family these last two years on various excursions. However, my visits have spanned two decades in their time. I was able to contact Ross
and his parents,” Mileva said with a laugh. “You might say we’ve even become good friends over the years.”

Ross explained that after our separation in 1889, Mileva made another visit to the future to get her lightbulbs and necessary supplies.

“I left bulbs for her inside the cave with a note, asking her to contact us,” Scott said.

“After Ross explained to us everything that had happened on that day, I had hoped that she would come back one more time. If not with you, then at least with answers.”

Bonnie and Mileva explained that they had met many times in secret, talking about the extinction and the best way to transplant thriving species from the past and reintroduce them to a dying future. “You and Ross started something amazing that took on a life of its own,” Mileva said with a wink. “You have lived up to the tales from long ago, bringing harvests to the world.”

“Of course, we still had to be secretive about it. The Keepers and the Queens Committee know of the initial plants and bees you brought back through time Hazel, but we could not let them know that the portals of time were still open. We needed to be able to work in secret,” said Ross’s mom.

“Which has been much easier since I am now in charge of security at the lab,” said Scott.

“Your name was cleared?” I asked with glee.

Ross nodded as his dad said, “We have you to thank for that. Ross was able to bring back the plants and bee boxes from 1889. Those bees have been the start of a new beginning
for us. We first were able to introduce them to the Hive, but since then, we have been able to release them to the wild. Our planet is slowly blooming and recovering.”

I looked at Ross, and he reached over and squeezed my hand. “So it all worked out? Our plan was a success! No one was banished?” I asked with relief.

“Well, not exactly. My name was cleared, as the charges against me breaking curfew and going into the mines were dropped when I was able to bring the bees and plants back from the past. I now work with dad as part of the security team. Alex works at the lab now with mom. However, we were not all so lucky, “said Ross with hesitation.

I looked up and saw a man standing in the kitchen by himself. “I was banished,” said the elderly man in the shadows.

“Tom?” I asked. “Is that you?”

He sheepishly came into the dining room and sat at an empty chair at the table. “I was punished for allowing you to escape through time. The Keepers were very interested in questioning and studying...er, you, and how you traveled through time. I was blamed for my inadequacy in bringing you back, and as a result, they banished me.”

Tom went on to tell me that there were rumors after the bees returned and news of time travel circulated amongst the various Hives. Humans took an audible sigh of relief, knowing they were no longer vital to the pollination process. However, the Queen’s Colony was alarmed at the prospect of releasing the workers. The Keepers relentlessly scoured the land looking for Hazel, as the Queen saw her ability to free the workers with the introduction of bees as a direct threat to her reign.
In stunned silence, I looked at Ross. He just nodded his head to confirm what Tom had said. They agreed that it was not safe for me to be seen in their time period, which is why it was necessary to keep me away for so long. Bonnie leaned in and covered my hand with hers. “It all worked out, though, dear. We knew that 2089 was not safe for you, even though you had sacrificed everything for us. After speaking with Mileva we came up with a plan. We were able to set Tom up on this remote cabin that is off the grid. He tends to the garden outside, and we have been making use of hydroponics, like the tents we set up in our basement with the plants you first brought through time. We have successfully transplanted over forty species of plants to this region in the last five years alone. Scott can also help to ensure his safety as he makes sure that only he and Ross and others who are sympathetic to our cause patrol this territory,” she said as she squeezed my hand.

“Tom’s cabin is our base of operations in the future. I have been working with Ross’s mom to determine what species would be most beneficial and easiest to transplant back into the future. Together, we have been secretly saving the planet. One plant at a time,” said Mileva. “And speaking of plants, Ross’s family has been preparing food all day. Is anyone hungry?”

It suddenly occurred to me that I was ravenous, and the cabin hung heavy with familiar smells. “What is this?” I said to Ross.

“We thought that it might be a great time to celebrate Hogmanay and a new beginning with you. We tried our best to replicate the recipes that you left behind. Welcome back, Hazel.” Ross said as I blinked back tears.
Chapter 36

Later that day, we had secured portable units, generators, computers, and water filtration systems to a small fleet of hovercrafts. Just then, the earth trembled, and I looked up to the dam on the top of the mountain in fear. “They’ve had plenty of warning,” said Scott, trying to ease my mind. “They have been evacuating the Hive and colony for a week now.”

Alex grabbed my hand and indicated that I was going to ride on the back of his hovercraft. I looked over at Ross, who was holding the baby while helping Daisy get onto their hovercraft. Ross’s parents were behind us while Mileva and Leo were in the lead.

Tom came out and slowly made his way up the line, hugging everyone and exchanging goodbyes, while putting a fresh jar of honey in our hands. “When defying linear time, it helps to grease the wheels of time with honey,” he said. When he got to our hovercraft, I looked at him in confusion.

“Why are you staying? Why don’t you come back with us?”

Tom hugged me and said, “I don’t mind staying here. At first, long ago, when the world fell apart, I realized that the hungrier I became, the more afraid I became. I knew how precious life was and what a gift it was to live at the Hive. We had it better than most. We had a food hub, a cornucopia where the harvest was controlled and predictable.”

He went on to explain that security came with living in the Queen’s good graces. At first, it was easy. However, as he moved up the ranks, he realized that he paid for his promotions with his innocence.
“They told us, just like in nature, the unhealthy and old bees are banished from the hive, for the good of the colony. The first banishments I did were the hardest. When I looked in the eyes of those I was assigned to transport, I knew I was solidifying their demise.” He shifted uncomfortably, pushing dirt around in the ground with his foot.

“I told myself it was their fault. If these workers hadn’t broken the rules or met their goals, they would not be in this situation,” Tom said as he looked off into the distance.

“Later, when I tried to tell myself that if they hadn’t grown old and frail…well, that was harder to justify.” He paused, struggling to find the words.

“Hazel, I just want you to know that when I was a Keeper, I thought I was taking care of my family and the community. I don’t know when I moved from being a protector to perpetuating fear and stripping freedoms. I realized how cruel the system was when I experienced the consequences of not meeting the Queen’s expectations. At first, my banishment felt like death. But I see it now as a second chance, for me to take stock of my life and have a purpose. I remember again what the gifts of life are and have reevaluated who to follow and what to believe.”

He reached up and hugged me as he said, “I am grateful for my family, our family, who helped me through the banishment. They helped me remember who I am, and I am happy to stay behind and try to make amends as I have learned from the past. I am going to stay here and run this post. I will continue to work with the harvest, the underground, and those who are banished. Know that I will be here waiting for you to come back.”
Another tremor shook the land, and with horror, I heard the familiar sound of a freight train before once again, yellow mist covered the mountain and started barreling its way into the valley. Ross looked back at me and smiled as he said, “Time to go…”

“To Tir na nOg!” Ross and I shouted as the hovercrafts sped into the night.
Chapter 37

Moonlight bathed my garden in light. I inhaled and savored the peace of this moment in Tir na nOg. I stood silently as I watched a nighthawk glide and soar through the air, twisting and dipping as it danced across the starlit sky. I pondered the beauty in the flight of the nighthawk, watching its path that was erratic like my life, before it landed in a nest, cradled in branches high above me. I once believed that love needed to be earned; now I know that it is freely given. I used to think family ties were short and strong. Now I know that family roots run deep, spanning time and memories, connecting us all in an invisible yet tangible tartan. I know that friends can become family, and relatives can be strangers. I know that home can be a place, but it can also be a place deep inside, hidden and planted in your soul. I also know that it is the beauty of our memories and our ties to what we know that can give us strength in times of difficulty. My journey has dipped and swerved, taking me far before bringing me home. As I held my plaid scraps, I could hear Mama’s voice echo in my soul, “This place, these people will all become part of the fabric of your life. Woven into the thread of this tartan is honor and a lifetime of memories. This plaid represents your clan and the family that you will always belong to. We will always be family. We will always have each other. However, there is mystery, wonder, and hope out there. There are more places to love and call home, even if we find ourselves far from this farm.” I stood in my garden, basking in the warm light, knowing that I have found my way home.
Craft Essay

My goal for this final directed writing project was to create a novel about time travel, family, and environmental concerns for a young adult audience that includes emerging readers. Toni Morrison wrote, “If there’s a book you really want to read, but it hasn’t been written yet, then you must write it” (qtd. in Watts 90-day rewrite 71). These words strongly resonated with me as many books and novels written for emerging readers assume that those readers are also young. For many young adult dyslexic students and language learners, the books available to them at their independent reading level fall flat in regard to dynamic characters or engaging themes. I wanted to create a compelling piece of fiction appropriate for an older audience but crafted with easily segmented words, primarily three syllables or less. Transplanting Hope opens in the year 1889, where the protagonist Hazel McBain accidentally stumbles 200 years into the future when the extinction of the honeybee has devastated the planet. Hazel’s journey takes her from the shores of Scotland, through underground coal mines, and into artificial hives where she learns about long-forgotten secrets of the past, fearful truths about the future, and what it means to come home.

This story started with a seed, the idea of a time-traveler trying to slow down extinction by transplanting lost plants and animals into the future. I grew up in the Laurel Highlands of Pennsylvania and chose it as a setting, both in the past and future. I grew up hearing stories from my parents and grandparents of the South Fork Dam breaking in 1889, 1936, and 1977, as generations of my family have survived and witnessed these floods. I knew this location would make a chaotic backdrop for someone trying to slip through the fabric of time undetected throughout the decades. I also knew I wanted to create a future setting
in the Laurel Highlands where humans were pollinators, living in a society that echoed a honeybee colony.

Early on, I followed the advice of Alan Watt in *The 90 Day Novel* as I did extensive pre-writing and developed a backstory for my characters. Before creating my first draft, I embraced the creative process of moving from general to specific as I inquired about the transformative nature of many of the characters in my novel. Watt stated, “if we allow our subconscious some time to play without imposing any structural limitations, our characters tend to surprise us, affording us more dynamic possibilities when we begin to outline” (29). I spent hours writing stream-of-consciousness sketches as I pondered the possible wants, needs, desires, history, and goals of the characters in my story. Over time, driven by speculation and inquiry, my rudimentary idea took shape with words as I found structure amidst the fragmented chaos of my thinking. Lisa Cron argued in *Story Genius* that “the story you’re telling doesn’t start on page one. It started long before you got there” (31). When I first started writing about Hazel, I knew she was a recently orphaned immigrant living with extended family members who begrudgingly allowed her to stay with them. As I delved into Hazel’s character, I realized she had come from a loving family in Scotland and was dealing with the grief of losing her brothers, which was a catalyst for Hazel and her parents to start over in America. This pre-writing process helped me give each character in my story a personality and history before I even began my rough draft. This allowed me to organically weave in flashbacks and backstory into my writing that enriched and informed the story’s trajectory.

I was conscious of the rhythm between scene and knowledge as I tried to balance education and entertainment throughout my writing. A scene that was particularly
challenging was when Hazel met Ross’s family for the first time. My writing goals for this chapter included fostering a connection that would grow between strangers while allowing Hazel to realize how much had changed in 200 years. I needed to introduce details such as the events leading up to and the consequences of the honeybee’s extinction, along with society’s production expectations in 2089 and the role of the Keepers. In this moment, I also wanted Hazel to be aware that the struggles she had in 1889 regarding finding a home and having her basic needs met followed her into the future. I relied on dialogue, summary, and interiority to weave together what I hoped was an entertaining scene as I juggled many pieces of complex information.

I also focused on Hazel’s internal transformation through moments of interiority when crafting this novel. I strove to create “a story that starts with an earthquake and builds to a climax” (Cron 133). Even though Hazel struggled to find acceptance amidst extinctions and floods, I wanted to focus on my protagonist's internal transformation by giving her a driving desire to find a home and belong while developing her misbelief, a flawed perception, that love is earned. I followed the advice of Lisa Cron and tried to emphasize the protagonist’s beliefs and expectations versus her reality throughout the various scenes: “It’s not the external dramatic scope of the moment that matters; it’s your protagonist’s internal reaction that counts. Your main job is to track how her viewpoint changes through the scene” (Cron 95). I paid close attention to Hazel’s interiority during Act 2, as she was taken in by Ross’s family. Hazel was suspicious and often unable to reciprocate the love and generosity from Ross’s family that was freely given. This is illustrated in Chapter 20 when Hazel realizes there is nowhere in the past for her to return to. Ross grabbed her hand and asked her to stay in the future as part of their family. As
she pulled her hand away, she thought, “I desperately wanted to believe in happy endings again but didn’t dare let myself hope that I could become a part of Ross’s family. I silently stared at the sky through my tears and wished I could go back in time to when I still believed that love was free or attainable” (92). I found myself going back in and strengthening and focusing the strand dealing with Hazel’s internal conflict as the story developed and her views shifted. By Chapter 33, Hazel had been separated from Ross and was trapped in 1889. When given the chance to go with the time-traveler and start over, she initially declined, as Hazel knew the pain and vulnerability that came with being separated from her home. At that moment, Hazel decided she would rather die alone in the cave than risk having another severed connection with those she has grown to love. The time-traveler, Mrs. Mileva Einstein, told Hazel that “the ability to cling to love and hope is the best way to get through the hardships that come with this life” (150). These words, along with the distant echo from her mother encouraging that she would find a home and love again in the world, gave Hazel the courage to continue her journey. Hazel was able to let hope and love heal her in her new home as she thought, “When we first arrived here two years ago, I was lonely. I loved the challenge of planting and transforming our little corner of paradise, but there was a deep void in my heart that could not be landscaped over. With time, as flowers and vines took root in rich soil, I could feel myself transforming from the inside out as healing and peace gradually took root in my soul.” (153). She had moved from being consumed by pain to finding peace and appreciation, knowing that she had been loved.

Another technique I worked on was developing suspense through an investigative strand in my novel as Hazel and Ross tried to decipher the ambiguous journal found in
the mines and track down the thief. I studied the work of Jeanne DuPrau and her YA novel *The City of Ember*, as the protagonists in this story also needed to solve a mystery. I noticed how the unveiling of critical information helped drive the plot in DuPrau’s writing. The characters struggled with their expectations versus reality when trying to piece together cryptic information. I appreciated how the unraveling of information was spaced throughout the novel, coinciding with scenes that built relationships, added tension to the plot, or were meant to inform. I tried to braid the investigation strand and decoding of the journal while exploring other storylines in my novel. For instance, in chapter 23, Hazel and Ross noticed the references to the weather in the journal and, through conversation, made a connection between tremors and time travel. In the same scene they then learned about creation myths, which gave them the idea to transport bees from 1889 into the future. This coincided with Hazel’s plans to celebrate Hogmanay, a Scottish festival, to say goodbye to the girl she was in 1889 and embrace Ross’s family as her own in 2089. I enjoyed weaving these elements into the story as I tried to build relationships between the characters, advance the plot forward, and inform the reader.

I also focused on sensory details and figurative language, especially when representing time travel. As I tried to help the reader experience what I could not explain, I focused on details “because the details lend credibility to our story” (Kardos 12). For example, in chapter five, when Hazel first moves from 1889 to 2089, I used details and similes specific to Hazel to describe the shifting of the mountain: “When I woke up again, I thought it was my stomach growling, but it was the mountain moving, humming like Irish pipes that started gently but grew more boisterous” (22). Another example is, “the creepy walls and stalactites (were) closing in on me like a butter churn, or a plowt-
kirm, as my grandmother used to say. I could feel my insides, warm and scared, turning and churning into a buttery mass that crept higher and higher into my throat” (99). As Hazel moved through time, I purposefully chose to focus on her and what she experienced, as I hoped those details would lend credibility to her unexplainable journey.

As I worked on figurative language and details, I also studied Ruta Sepetys’s YA novel, *Between Shades of Gray*, which uses metaphor and simile to document the protagonist’s haunting experiences in a Siberian concentration camp during the second world war. The protagonist describes her inability to cry: “I had no tears. The sensation of crying would fill me, but my eyes would only dry-heave and burn” (163). Such language inspired a similar moment in my novel. After Hazel learned of the extinctions and other dangers of being in 2089, she thought, “Knowledge is a burden. The weight of the world’s problems press on me, making me feel like sunflowers in a drought, parched and frail, yet unable to turn away from the sun” (53). I enjoyed developing metaphors and correlations to the natural world as Hazel navigated the many obstacles and conflicts throughout the story.

I also initially struggled with how to contrast how characters from different time periods would speak and interact. At first, I tried to give my protagonist a Scottish accent, with terrible lines like, “I ken yer a scientist too aye?” I quickly abandoned that idea as I wanted to avoid unnecessary reading barriers by spelling words phonetically. I decided to maintain traditional spelling through the dialogue sections with Hazel but use description to accentuate the lyrical quality of her speech or the rolling of her R’s. An example of this is seen in this exchange with Alex when he said: “I like how you talk! Do all time-travelers roll their R’s and say words like fimbble-fumble?” (43). I also strengthen
Hazel's cultural knowledge, including historical information, turn-of-the-century slang, and Gaelic phrases to create contrast between the knowledge and experiences of a girl from the 1890s and a character from the future.

Perhaps my most extensive revision was of the ending. I had followed my initial outline and intended to end the story with Hazel meeting another time-traveler in the mines. However, this created loose ends, as when Hazel and Ross were separated, there was no closure in what happened to Ross, his family, or the future. In trying to address these concerns, I first started drafting possible scenarios that would allow Hazel to leave 2089 while still being informed on how her bees impacted the future. One possible ending found Hazel and a one-armed pirate living on an island made of rubbish in the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in the North Pacific Central Gyre. I found myself struggling with too many possibilities and a thousand different ways to end this tale. I realized that I needed to rely on the benefits of prewriting and inquiry once again as I speculated on the specific perspectives of various characters. I was able to add closure while answering questions in the denouement, as Hazel and the other characters took account of how her journey had altered their lives before returning together to Tir na nOg, the Land of Youth according to Celtic folklore. I felt that allowing Hazel to return to her Celtic heritage in the land of the fairies honored the integrity of my story, as I was able to weave fantasy and reality in a tale that transcended time. I took inspiration from the wisdom of T.S. Eliot, “the end of our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time” (qtd. in Watt 90-day rewrite 285). I decided upon a full-circle ending with Hazel as a transformed individual in a moonlit garden.
This semester I wanted to immerse myself into the writing process fully. In reflection, I am in awe of all I have learned with writing my first novel. I believe I wrote faster than my inner critic could cast doubt, and I was able to nudge my story to life as I focused on the creative process. I am a different person and writer today than I was a few months ago. I fully appreciate that I could study writing and author’s craft for my entire life and still have much to learn. I appreciated working on a larger piece of writing as I was able to stretch and test my ability to craft a cohesive story full of depth, whimsy, and complexity. However, I focused on my protagonist and her internal metamorphosis so much that somehow, I missed my own transformation. I entered this program as a student, and I leave it considering myself a writer. I have deep gratitude and appreciation for the brave authors who have shared their thoughts and wisdom, the challenging conversations, constructive criticism, and encouragement of those who have walked next to me as I found my voice and found the courage to consider myself a writer.
Works Cited


Curriculum Vitae

Education:

2021  M.A. English candidate, Indiana University South Bend
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Academic Positions:

2020-present Literacy Interventionist, Indiana Connections Academy
2015-2019 Literacy Coach, Lakeland School Corporation
2010- 2019 High Ability Coordinator, Lakeland School Corporation
2007-2010 High School English and Visual Arts Teacher, Lakeland School Corporation
2006-2007 High School Art Teacher, Howe Military Academy
2003-2006 Middle School Art Teacher, Newport News Public Schools
2002-2003 High School Art Teacher, Brunswick School Corporation
2001-2002 High School Art Teacher, Tamaqua School Corporation

Presentations:

2020 “Formative Assessments in the Classroom”. Connections Academy Professional Development, Indianapolis, IN, October 20.

2019 “Dyslexia 101”. The Lead Learners Summer Institute, Wawasee, IN, June 21.


Courses Taught:

2020- present 9th-12th Grade Language Arts

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2006-2007 3-D Visual Arts, Digital Art, Illustration

2003-2006 Visual Art

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Professional Memberships

2010-2019 Indiana Association for the Gifted

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Publications:


“Grace” Pan-o-ply Story and Art Michiana, February 2021.

“Still She Sang” Analecta 2020.