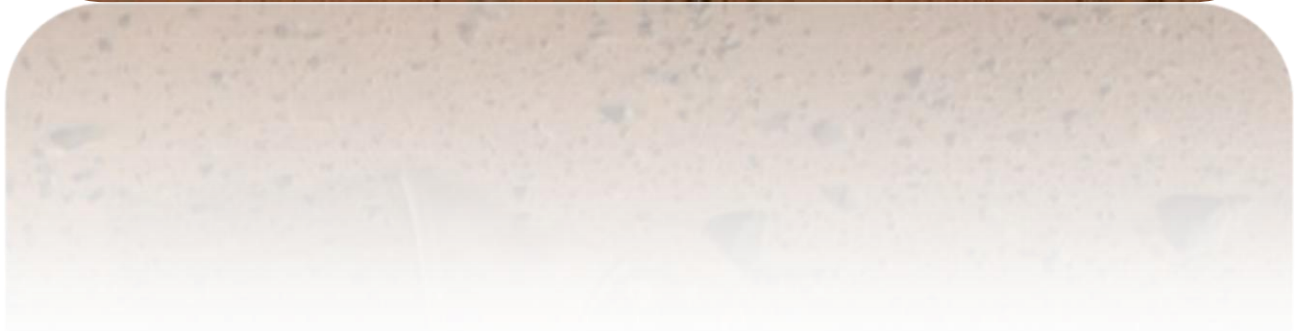


# Life on Mars as Told by a Tellurian

By Marina Malak



## My Final Reflection

Reading has always been a struggle for me; I used to get distracted easily and found many books not engaging enough. However, I've read many pieces this semester; written by different authors, in different times, from different genders, and from different races. I've learned that I'm actually not a bad reader, but I had to put effort to understand the perspective of the author and their experience. Through reading, I've seen the world from their eyes and point of view. I've gained some of their experience through their own stories and ideas that can be similar to mine or very different. I've become everyone of the writers to understand their perspective. I've lived their stories through reading then after the piece was done I came back to my reality. I've learned that I'm a sensitive reader and I would like to see the humane side of the author in the piece and their own unique lines or metaphors. I've learned about myself as a reader that I like realism in writings with little to no filter; I want to read the whole truth about what the author wants to say through his/her piece.

I have always had the belief that everyone is a writer in one way or another. A basic writer that does not have to have a degree in writing or publish a book; but they have to be alive like you and me. During this semester, I've been a writer; I've gather some of my struggles, my love stories, my hard situations, and my heart breaks and shared it with all of you through my assignments. I've learned that I'm capable of expressing myself, my emotions, and my thoughts through writing. I've learned that I can use my experience and my voice to help out others who had the same experience but cannot speak up or do not know how.

I've used the critiques from my peers and my professor to better my writing style and get the readers' attention. All my peer feedback was important to me and shaped the writer but there was no specific one that stood out to me. I've gone over and revised many assignments multiple times; especially when I had to critique a piece. I've learned to understand the piece and actively read before I write and that's how by the end of the semester, I've become a better reader and also a better writer.

It was very challenging to keep up with the work load in this course; especially that it was during a very difficult time of a pandemic and while working full time. Through time management and determination to do well; especially that I personally like writing, I've managed to have a better grasp of the work load. I adapted well to the asynchronous system of this writing class, in fact it was very good for my work/school/life balance.

Throughout the course, my most favorite assignment was the second short story. I enjoyed writing this assignment because it was based on different setting yet had many metaphors to its real setting. In this short story, you will read about the struggle of space travelers in Mars; it has many symbolisms and metaphors that represent the life in America as immigrants.

In conclusion, I enjoyed this course and it helped me gain knowledge to be a better writer and to deliver my message in different ways and to different people. I've learned to do so through

poems, metaphors, or even short stories. I can use this knowledge further in my life by writing to speak up for and empower immigrant women like me and maybe In the future, nurses like me.

## My Memoir

“She is so slow, does she even understand anything” Said Elizabeth to the gang while standing on the door of my class. I was a regular immigrant junior in high school, but Elizabeth was a classmate; a popular classmate. She was tall, approximately 5’7, with a tanned skinned and curly hair. Elizabeth had lots of friend; she called them the “gang”. Elizabeth and her “gang” would gather every day before class at the door and giggle, unstopably. One day, they were standing before class as usual, talking and looking at me, and then they started laughing. Their giggles were loud it felt like my ear drums could explode. I had to bypass them to get to class on time but they were still looking at me. Six years ago, it was my first month in the United States when I started high school, I did not speak English well and my vocabularies were not good but I still could understand when people speak to me. Not so long after starting school, I got the courage to raise my hand in class and answer questions; I was very eager to learn and do well in school. I would answer a question but my accent would not make what I am saying clear to the teacher. I did not allow this to stop me and I kept raising my hand whenever I know the answer to a question. Unfortunately I could only keep my confidence for a while; their giggles whenever I talked started to get to me. I saw her every day after class, she would try to talk to me then make fun of whatever I am saying then the whole group would start laughing and I had nothing to do but to leave quickly to my next class.

I started growing shier little by little; to the point that my presence was passive and unnoticeable. “Relax and just do not talk to anyone”; I said to myself whenever I am surrounded by others to relieve my anxiety. It was a difficult year for me, I barely had any friends or went out other than going to school even in the summer. I felt anonymous and I did not like it. Here comes my senior year, I was studying and working on my English during the summer; “Hi” Elizabeth said, “Hey” I replied. My heart was racing, wondering if I stutter and she starts laughing and then everybody else follows her lead. “How was your summer?” she said, “it was ok, how was yours?” I replied. We started chatting and told me that I look different. I was very confused and I do not know what happened to her during the summer but I was ok with it anyways!

I started little by little speaking up in class again, even though it was not as much as before. I still had left over anxiety that came out whenever any random person would giggle. Elizabeth and I were finally in good terms and she apologized for her previous actions. “Marina, I am sorry I was mean to you last year. I came to realize that I cannot be mean to people like that, especially people like you who did nothing to hurt me.” I was hearing her words and I paused for a moment then I said “It was hurtful and impolite, but as long as you know that, I forgive you”. She smiled and said: “I will take that” then she kept telling me about her father being mean to her and the family and how he got in trouble in the summer and finally they were separated from him. I said that I was sorry to hear that but I’m glad she her life is better now. At our last few months before graduation, I was considering nursing school and started the application for the prerequisites, Elizabeth was also interested in it and we would help each other out with information about

available nursing schools. She added me on Facebook and we would chat every once in a while, in English!. Looking back, those memories might seem insignificant. “So what, what is the big deal?”, my brother said when I told him my story; it is a big deal when you feel defeated, when you feel anonymous. It was a big deal to me but it helped me and added to my personal growth and ability to forgive and learn. I am now a registered nurse graduated from CUNY with my nursing degree and working on my BSN, helping many people daily and I love my job. I guess I am not anonymous anymore after all!

## My Short Story

“You are the apple of my eye. I love you more than your mother but don’t tell her”, my grandmother said to me on our last video call. I laughed and said: “she is right next to me and heard everything!”, then my grandma started giggling with an evil tone. “when are you coming back to visit your old grandma Marina, or you just wanted to get rid of me like anything that becomes old”, my grandma said in a sarcastic yet sad tone. “Soon”, I answered with a helpless tone yet promising. “Let’s change the topic” I said, “I missed you grandma!”. “Do you remember when I used to get you the candy you liked and sneak it behind your mother’s back, hehe”, my grandma said in which I laughed very hard. I replied: “why are you exposing yourself too much today grandma?, that was our secret.” We laughed together and it was warm.

It was this time of the Martian year, the winter here is twice as long as earth but you will get used to it. My story began when I left the earth a few years ago to come live in Mars; I heard that on Mars there are better jobs and opportunities but I have not hear about the cold long winter. The calendar here is different since the month is twice as long or it could be the year has twice as many months as the earth. It was approximately November 55<sup>th</sup>, or maybe it felt like it. I was receiving a video call from earth; something important it seemed since my spaceship was flashing way too many times. I used my computer in my spaceship; they are connected so whenever I get a call, the spaceship lights go on. I was far with my friend who also came to Mars for better opportunities. We were having a chat and enjoying each other’s company since that’s all what we had left after leaving the earth. We left our families there; they are too old for the life demands on Mars but we still kept connections through video calls.

My spaceship would not stop flashing so I had to go and see who is calling. I walked towards my spaceship with heavy feet but floating at the same time. The land texture was so desert-like and there are no plants here, not even grass. I walked slowly; just like how life have been feeling since I got here. On my way, I was wondering who is calling me that persistently but I kind of knew who. Off course it was my mom; she came to Mars with me but she barely leaves her spaceship because she does not like the weather and the land here. The way to get to my spaceship was too long and I was lazy for a second I was not going to bother picking up, but I did. It was my mother crying; she looked like she was in pain. I was very concerned with too many questions; “what happened?”, “are you ok?” I asked my mom but she could not even breathe well so I got no answers. I kept asking so she answered with two words; “your grandma”. The two words were enough to make my space suit feel like a freezer even though it had a built in heat system; I was very cold all of a sudden.

I knew the rest of her words before she say it; my grandma was gone. My grandma was still living on earth before she was gone. The only means I would speak to her is through video calls and I just spoke to her a few days ago!. She was ok and I was the happiest person on Mars for a

moment with all my sweet childhood memories that she brought in the video call. I felt my suit getting heavier and colder, or maybe it was my heart. I froze. I missed her and I promised to go back to earth to see her soon, but it was not soon enough. She left but I did not get a chance to say goodbye. Was I too slow or did she go too quickly?, Maybe because we were living in different planets; her on earth and me on Mars. Damn you Mars!, and damn you time on Mars!.

## My poem

I rewrite books in the language that I understand; poetry. I read then I write then I read what I wrote. The books can be read in a way you have never known before. I read to know my history, my anatomy, and my economy. I write to live and to educate you just like I've been educated. I read to be enlightened, to connect the dots. You can connect the dots or the stars in the sky; you don't have to read to do that. "The winner writes the history"; that's what they say, but you can read and judge if it really happened this way. The way they say it happened; the way you were taught. That's why I tell you to read, that's why I'm a poet. You must read to sing the truth, or it will never be a song. I write my songs of the roots and not the surface fruits; because if the root is bad, you don't eat the fruit. I search the history for myself; at least I want to know. So read the books and search them for biased racist thoughts.



## My Dialogue

Tania: Hey Marina how are you?

Marina: Heyyy, I'm ok. I'm just working, ugh. How are you??

Tania: I'm barely surviving!. Work is no joke and I'm struggling with our case management course because of it.

Marina: I'm sorry to hear that. Try to talk to the professor to extend some of the deadlines, she is very understanding and we are in tough times. Let me know if you need any help with assignments even though I'm struggling because of work as well.

Tania: Thanks a lot Marina. Maybe I will email her today. I will let you know if I need anything.

Marina: off course!, say hi to Daisy (Tania's daughter) for me, I hope she's feeling better.

Tania: She is much better thank goodness. I was terrified when she tested positive last month, I had to quarantine her and isolate her from me and the rest of the family. Poor girl is only ten years old for all that virus nonsense.

Marina: I can only imagine, especially after her grandpa passed away from it (sigh). How is your husband John doing by the way?

(Rest)

Tania: He's taking his time to heal from the loss of his dad (sigh). He loved him so much; John was his youngest and most spoiled so it has been really hard to let go.

Marina: He sure needs time; it has been only three months since he passed away.

Tania: He's making a progress; he started talking to his family in Puerto Rico and became very close to them which had helped him to feel the presence of his father in them.

(Rest)

Marina: I'm glad Daisy and John are feeling better. Let me know if you need anything other than school as well, and tell Daisy that I said Hi!!

Tania: Thank you love, I will let her know you said Hi, she misses you

Marina: Awww I miss her too. Let me know if you guys wanna facetime on thanksgiving.

Tania: For sure love, see you then!

Marina: See you!!

## My First Journal

Hello,

My name is Marina, I'm a BSN student in City Tech. I'm writing to you to give you an idea about what to expect and what you will learn from this creative writing class. I've personally enjoyed this class a lot for many reasons; one of them is the interesting readings that I did in this class. There were two readings that I really enjoyed and found them to be compelling; *The First Day* by Edward P. Jones and *Whatever Happened To* by Anonymous.

*The First Day* talks about an African American single mother and daughter that are getting ready to go to apply to elementary school despite the fact that the mother cannot read or write. I found this reading to be very inspirational, it discusses many issues in the society such as the difference in social classes, poverty, the importance of education, and the struggle of single mothers yet their love to their children. The second reading, "*Whatever Happened To*", talks about a female teacher who is also a writer and a mother and her struggle with her ex-husband and the society. This reading discusses issues such as violence in marriage, gender roles, and gender inequality and societal double standards via a beautifully written monologue that started with a simple conversation with a taxi driver.

I have done this class online and I will be honest with you, it was tough. It is difficult to keep up with all the readings and the assignments which were a lot but you can always reach for help and ask questions to the professor. You will need time management skills to do well in this class as well as technology and computer skills. Besides that this class was really enjoyable in a creative sense, it will be useful to you in the future if you are a nurse or any career that require you to communicate, document, or create written content or information. It will help you with getting your ideas by and writing in a descriptive way which is also useful for research in your future career. It might also awake a hidden talent or hobby of writing in you that will give you the opportunity to express your emotions and ideas in a written form. In general, you will enjoy this class as long as you read, participate and write creatively.

Best of luck!

## My Second Journal

My experience writing short stories has been really enjoyable to me. I did not know POV meaning but now I clearly understood that it is about who's telling the story while I thought it was the idea of the story or the narrator's opinion. I had my ups and downs when writing the short stories in terms of ideas to write about or different setting but overall, it was inspired by personal experiences and metaphorically written events in my life. I learned from my professor's and cohort's feedback on how to add more feelings and details to it to catch the attention of the reader such as an opening sentence or metaphors that has double meanings. I truly enjoyed speaking my mind and experience through writing in a meaningful way; it allowed me to reflect on my life and imagine what it would be from a different person's perspective.

One thing that really stood out to me while writing my POV short story was how different can the story be if told by multiple people and how details of the story can differ from different lens or perspectives in which no one is wrong but they see it differently. I learned how human biases can affect storytelling and how feelings of narrator might shift the whole story in terms of who is the protagonist and who is the antagonist. It has been a good experience of brain storming and expressing emotions, ideas, and opinions through simple short stories.