

I, icarus by alden nowlan

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Dreams are the perfect worlds for all of us for dreams give us the chances to possess the goals we are craving for that we might not be able to have in reality. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a famous German writer, artist, and politician, expresses his perspective about dreams: “ Dream no small dreams for they have no power to move hearts of men”. Through “ I, Icarus”- one of the poems in the collection Bread, Wine and Salt by Alden Nowlan, we readers will get to know his childhood’s vivid dream.

Alden Nowlan produces a striking effect that leaves deep impressions in readers’ minds right at the beginning of the poem with its title “ I, Icarus”. As to my understanding, the title refers to Greek myth which is about Icarus- the son of the master craftsman. Icarus’s father constructed two pairs of wings from feathers and wax for the purpose of escaping Crete, and also warned him not to fly too close to the sun. Ignoring his father’s caution, Icarus attempted to reach the sun, which resulted the wax to melt and cost him his own life.

Through the title’s allusion and Nowlan’s act of putting “ I” in front of the name “ Icarus”, readers get some hints that this poem might be another story of catastrophic fall caused by over-ambition. After a few first times reading “ I, Icarus”, readers might superficially interpret the meaning to be about a flying dream, yet if we dig deeper, we will be able to comprehend the yearning to reach a superior dimension of Nowlan. As a matter of fact, Alden Nowlan was born in a small village in Nova Scotia; the constrictions had influenced him to foster the dream of breaking free to seek his own prospects.

Nowland reflects back to his childhood and imagines he was flying beyond all the restrictions that had been confining him. Even though fictional elements play the main role in the whole poem, Nowland's detailed description and firm assertion " There was a time when I could fly. I swear it. "(1), " I rose slowly...toward the window" (9-12) have thoroughly convinced readers that he could really fly. The metaphorical and imagery has been utilized intriguingly as an analogy to represent the country life of Nowland's childhood.

Like a gentle sheep, Nowland is penned inside the boundary of the " pasture fence" (13); " the music of flutes" (16) is played by the shepherd to lure and tell him to be satisfied with this confinement. On the other hand, the sheep himself is eager to go on an adventure to explore the mysterious space behind " the dark, the haunted trees" (14), thus wishes it could fly to float " beyond the pasture" (15). To another extent, the imagery of the countryside does not only indicate feelings of confinement, but also evokes senses of peace and secure.

Even though Nowland - the " sheep" - has the feelings of being restricted by the constrictions of this small town, it still brings back to him safety that protects him from the perils behind " the dark, the haunted trees" (14). Standing outside Nature, enjoying the harmonious melodies of an Aeolian harp - " the music of the flutes" that " the wind made" (16- 17) falling in line together with " voices singing", Nowland becomes intimate with Nature and his beloved hometown.

In brief, " I, Icarus" has reflected successfully Nowland's complex emotions and currents of thoughts; he cherishes his great ambitions to escape from <https://assignbuster.com/i-icarus-by-alden-nowlan/>

restrictions and explore a whole new world outside, yet still be attached to his familiar homeland which provides him extreme protections and harmony. Relating the context of the whole poem to its own title “ I, Icarus”, readers now realize that it’s not a story about Nowland’s catastrophic fall as Icarus, but his wonders whether he should be a risk-taker to pursue his dream of reaching the sun or live a peaceful and ordinary life.