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## Second Place - Painting Uncertainty

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## Painting Uncertainty

*Anjali Rabindran*

“See you later, Mom,” I said, tears streaming down her cheeks as I left for my first day at university. Sitting in my unfurnished dormitory, the harsh reality washed over me. I was completely on my own now, with no one to guide me. Gone were the home-cooked meals, the family movie nights, and the familiar comforts that had been my sanctuary for so long. This was the stark face of change—one moment you were nestled in your childhood haven, and the next you were thrust into classes with people of all backgrounds, and professors who seemed to talk endlessly. Embracing this newfound independence felt akin to an artist standing before a blank canvas, both daunting and exhilarating. The prospect of creating a masterpiece from scratch loomed large, where every stroke, color, and texture would etch the story of my life.

Diving into the vast canvas of uncertainty felt like painting an expansive scene. With each stroke, I realized my place in the composition, understanding how my presence influenced the world around me. No longer a wide-eyed teenager, my decisions now held weight, as if they defined my entire existence. I tried desperately to anticipate every misstep and to make decisions that would ensure my success. Yet, this frantic planning only blinded me to the bigger picture. I had become so engrossed in mapping out my future that I missed the beauty of the present moment. The masterpiece was right in front of me, waiting patiently as I hesitated over every brushstroke.

I must share something with you, my past self: I once believed I had it all figured out. Many things I had once destined myself to do have been lost to the movement of time. As I live, my options begin to narrow. It's a bittersweet realization, this acknowledgment of destiny. The person I was, the future I had meticulously sketched out, has blurred into the background of my present self. Living has a way of limiting your choices. Every step taken and every decision made become pivotal junctions, guiding you down a path that is as unpredictable as it is mysterious.

So, dear past self, embrace the uncertainty, for within it lies the true essence of living. The choices you make will mold you in ways that are beyond your current understanding. Trust in the process, for even in the face of lost destinies, new and remarkable ones emerge, painting the canvas of your life with hues you never knew existed.