

## **BookClub response to A Gentleman in Moscow**

An aristocratic man sentenced to house arrest in a formerly glamorous hotel for many years definitely tells a good story. Intertwined with the notion of growing up, relationship dynamics, political variances, and the strict quarantine-like living style, which is the anchor of this tale, I chose to respond to a constant theme the main character, Rostov, held throughout. That being the contemplation of possessions of places and things.

Directly pulled from the novel are the two sections that my photographic response is directed.

From the very beginning of the book:

*“But experience is less likely to teach us how to bid our dearest possessions adieu. And if it were to? We wouldn’t welcome the education. For eventually, we come to hold our dearest possessions more closely than we hold our friends. We carry them from place to place, often at considerable expense and inconvenience; we dust and polish their surfaces and reprimand children for playing too roughly in their vicinity all the while, allowing memories to invest them with greater and greater importance. This armoire, we are prone to recall, is the very one in which we hid as a boy; and it was these silver candelabra that lined our table on Christmas Eve; and it was with this handkerchief that she once dried her tears, et cetera, et cetera. Until we imagine that these carefully preserved possessions might give us genuine solace in the face of a lost companion.*

*But, of course, a thing is just a thing.”*

From the very end of the book:

*“If one has been absent for decades from a place that one once held dear, the wise would generally counsel that one should never return there again.*

*...*

*For as it turns out, one can revisit the past quite pleasantly, as long as one does so expecting nearly every aspect of it to have changed.”*

Living in all these rooms of the house filled with items of necessity, value, and charm. Interacting with everything daily. This forms a new routine and appreciation, which is never forced because it is welcomed. This is your home, your safe place, your castle. You are the lord, the lady, the aristocrat. Looking up to a sky that is shared with everyone suddenly creates a perspective of community. Rostov made the best of his detention with a bit of imagination and magic.