



University of Minnesota Crookston

Inspired 2024

Art Journal

Issue 11

Inspired

Art Journal 2024

**Creative works by UMN Crookston students, staff,
faculty, and alumni**

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Cover— “Painting in the Sky” by Tatianna Enget



Stranded



Photograph by Nicia Joyner

The Lighthouse

The waves crash

The wind blows

The rain pelting down.

Tossed about—

Holding on for dear life.

No sense of direction.

Just cold. Wet. Fear.

Is this it?

(The end?)

Or just the dark night of the soul?

All alone.

No hope to be saved.

Through the dark and through the storm

(Blink). There it is.

One

beam

of

light

Love is the lighthouse

Shining

(Once) Come home.

(Twice) Come back to me.

(Three times) You are not alone.

—Sarah Carter

The True Artist



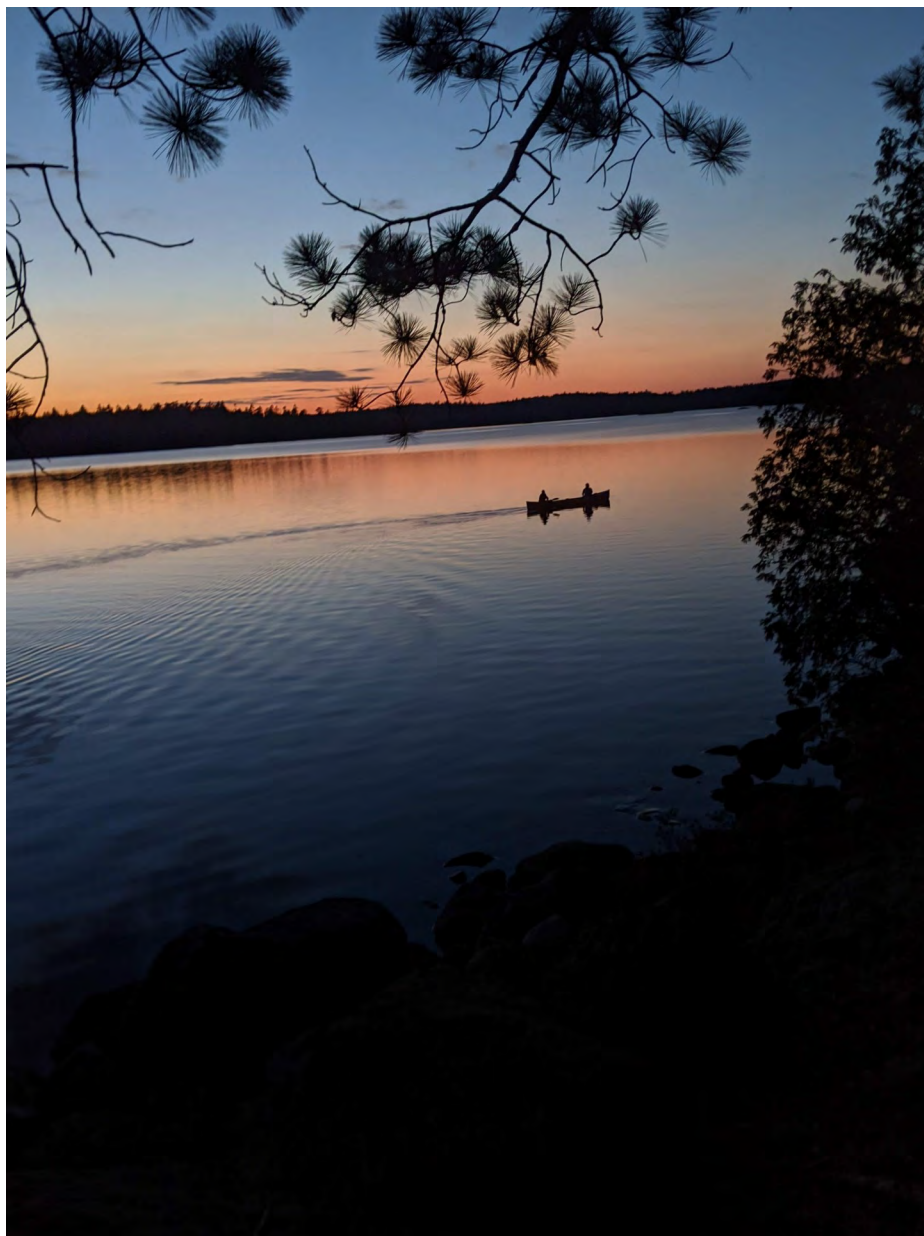
Photograph by Tatianna Enget

City of Art



Photograph by Saba Shafiq

Sailor's Delight



Photograph by Devin Messina

Don't go Chasing Waterfalls



Photograph by Allison Groth

Gone Birding



Photograph by Danielle Bruemmer

Always Take the Scenic Route



Photograph by Arabella Owen

First Day in Life



Photograph by Ranjan Khadka

Auntie

Smiling at me
like I'm her idol.
She runs
into my arms,
and I embrace her.
My heart melts.
For I am her hero,
and she is my motivation.
To her,
I am more
than just me.
I am Auntie.

— Adria Peters

Backstabbed

The blade of betrayal
sinking into my back.
Blindsided
by this personal attack.
Your loyalty
was fleeting
as my trust
was depleting.
The memories
vanishing like dust.
Perhaps I shouldn't mourn,
but I must.
To you,
our friendship
was like a carton of milk—
it had an expiration date.
Maybe that's why the backstab
carried so much weight.

-Adria Peters

Her Hands

Her hands—
intricately wrinkled,
soft like satin,
and warm like her coffee.

Her hands
told a story
of love,
sacrifice,
and loyalty.

Her hands
raised fourteen children.

Her hands
held dozens of grandchildren.

Her hands held me—
my heart,
my soul,
and my identity.

The day that
her hands
became cold,
my heart did too—
shattering like ice.

— Adria Peters

Denial

I don't know how to make myself believe this.
Why can't I just get over it, pretend it never happened?
Did it even really happen?
Is it possible I'm just overreacting?
I would ask but I risk being judged. Who would I ask
anyway?
I can't let others see the vulnerable side of me.
Even though I feel transparent already.
What if they didn't believe me? I would die.
Plus, saying it out loud would make it a reality.
If it was a reality, I would have to deal with it.
I would learn what a liar I am to myself.
Can't figure it out, I give up.
Pretend it never happened again. But it did, didn't it.
Viscous cycle, running circles in my head.

—Andrea Bly

May 31

As you take the last pill,
I know the battle feels uphill.

As you drink the last drop,
I want to plead with you to stop.

As you pick up the knife,
I scream “It’s not only your life!”

As the flames get higher,
We now have the same desire.

Now you’ve gone way too far.
Want to take it all back.
Why did you have to go so far?
I just want my heart to grow back.

As you took the last pill,
That was also my will you killed.

As you drank the last drop,
That was my heart too you made stop.

As you picked up the knife,
I can see the end of my life.

As the flames got higher,
That put out my life’s desire.

—Andrea Bly

Results Vary Depending on Your Condition

“Close your eyes, picture yourself how you want to be. Do this every day. Think of every little detail. Someday, this IS how you’ll be”

Consult your provider about meditation.

I close my eyes. The sun is shining brightly in a cloud-free sky.

Picture myself with a carefree smile. Feeling as open as the clear sky.

This is used as a once daily medication.

The warmth melting weight off my shoulders. Light as a balloon, I could float away.

There is a calm, stillness within me. Nothing can take this new-found freedom away.

Meditation could lead to blissful sensations.

Once revitalized, I feel like I can accomplish anything.

There is a strong drive in me.

I open my eyes; the smile and calmness are real now. Happiness feels good on me.

Side effects include self-actualization.

—Andrea Bly

Sunshine

Outside, the sun is high in the sky.
I lie on the soft grass.
I need to bask in the tender sun,
Soak in all of its glory.
Not a single cloud to disturb us.
The rays land on my face.
They settle softly onto my arms.
My skin is craving this.
Not enough sunshine in the winter.
Gentle warmth penetrates.
The light works its way through my body.
My skin drinks it in first.
Next, I feel it running through my veins,
Tranquility ebbing.
Then, my muscles relax and accept.
At last, it's in my soul.
I feel it fill up with golden warmth.
The sun ignites a spark.
I can achieve anything I want.
Spring is finally here.
—Andrea Bly

A Reluctant Student

*Suffering is the gift of life,
That which presents
Adorned in a decorated box
With a big bow,
The possibility of what life
Could be.
The anticipation of what I've
Always wanted.*

*The gift is unwrapped,
And it reveals*

Nothing

*That is wanted or planned or expected.
The box overflows
With fear and hardship
And loss.*

*Emotions that are too messy
To navigate.*

Is is the suffering of life that gave me

Nothing

That I wanted.

*But everything that I needed
To build and grow and
Persevere.*

Pain has been my greatest teacher

And I,

The most reluctant student.

—Ann Tepoorten

Barely Visible

As the night takes on the day
My heart longs to be ok.
But as I lay beneath these sheets
My dreams take on my Heart's defeats.
There is no escape from the Cold,
When it is, "Not Loved" you are told.

With the morning, I arise
Before I even open my eyes
A lonely thought passes through
Of the Love that we once knew.
You say you want me still, and so I am still here
But I wonder if you'd miss me if I just disappeared...

—Cat Atkins

I Remember

I remember the way the Earth
Would soak up winter's snow
In long cool sips,
Swallowing the last of the season.

And I remember
The bits of neon-like green
Sprouting from the brown ground
The brown trees,
The brown sky.

Nature created a plethora of life.
Knowing nothing but birth.
Bright greens rest
Under cool blues
With the warm yellows.

From green to yellow
From yellow to orange
And orange turns to brown,
The earth prepares herself.

The white frozen cry of the sky
Falling politely,
Lonely with the fear of
Color fading away.

Setting quietly.
Looming.
Earth holding her large breath.
Waiting –
Waiting.

She is painted in sleep,
Like a gray tomb.
Resting patiently
For the next gasp of
Spring.

—Caylin Scheff

Sirens

Sirens are screaming behind me
The rearview mirror is broken and bloody
Glass shards imbedded in my knuckles
As I wipe my tears with my broken hands
I leave a mess of crimson on my cheeks
Before reaching to cover my ears
To protect them from
The piercing sirens
—Janie Tormanen

Constellations of Us

Only on tranquil December nights
When the wind
quietly serenades
And the snow
Dulls the sharpness of winter
Do I lift my gaze to the heavens
And discover constellations of us
—Janie Tormanen

If a Tree Falls in the Woods

If I fell for you
But no one was there to see
Were my feelings ever real?

—Janie Tormanen

The Glass, Net, and Rim

I toss the ball to myself
Jump stop, pivot, pump fake, spin back, dribble, shoot, rebound
I toss the ball to myself
One, two, one, two, deep breath, find the rim, game speed, shoot, rebound
I toss the ball to myself
Sweat dripping between my shoulder blades
The ache in my heart lost to the ache in my muscles
All my focus spent on the glass, net, and rim
I toss the ball to myself

—Janie Tormanen

Mind in the Gym

Fidgeting in my chair, I take a sip of water

I can't believe I missed that shot

My still sweaty body uncomfortable behind a desk

A captain can't miss a wide open layup

The cursor blinks at me from the blank document on my screen

That can't happen again

The professor asks me a question

I need to practice on my own more but I have classes all day

The professor asks me a question

I can get to the gym to shoot if I-

“-am so sorry, what was the question?”

—Janie Tormanen

Elderly Wisdom Speaks: A Plea to the Youth

The road of the aged is a significant test.
Funerals mark the passage of time.
Handicaps emerge, memories fade.
Driving privileges rescinded, freedom of movement diminishes.
Eyes dim, ears dull, pain becomes constant.
Spouses and friends depart from the earth.
Loneliness creeps in, accompanied by insignificance and disrespect. They seek to be your primary companions.

The youth wanders astray, distant, busy, and unreachable.
In this modern age, technology is sought for wisdom, not me.
The youth dismiss my understanding.
And so, I have been stripped of my great worth in my twilight years.
I find my elderly people locked away, forgotten, in the confines of nursing homes and facilities.
They face death alone, gripped by fear.
No, the road of the aged is no longer straight.
My elders once stood as sages, guardians of tales.
Preservers of heritage and lineage.
Their wisdom earned through the passage of time.
Respected, revered, their voices resonated at the family table.

I tell you, my young friends, return to the old and ancient paths of honoring, esteeming, encouraging, respecting your elders.
Do not overlook the treasures of their wisdom any longer.
And now I warn you, aging lies ahead of you too.
It will come sooner than you think.
You too shall tread my path.

So then, consider, my elderly undergo life's most significant tests in their most vulnerable state.

Yet, you, my young friends, are also being tested by how you treat them.

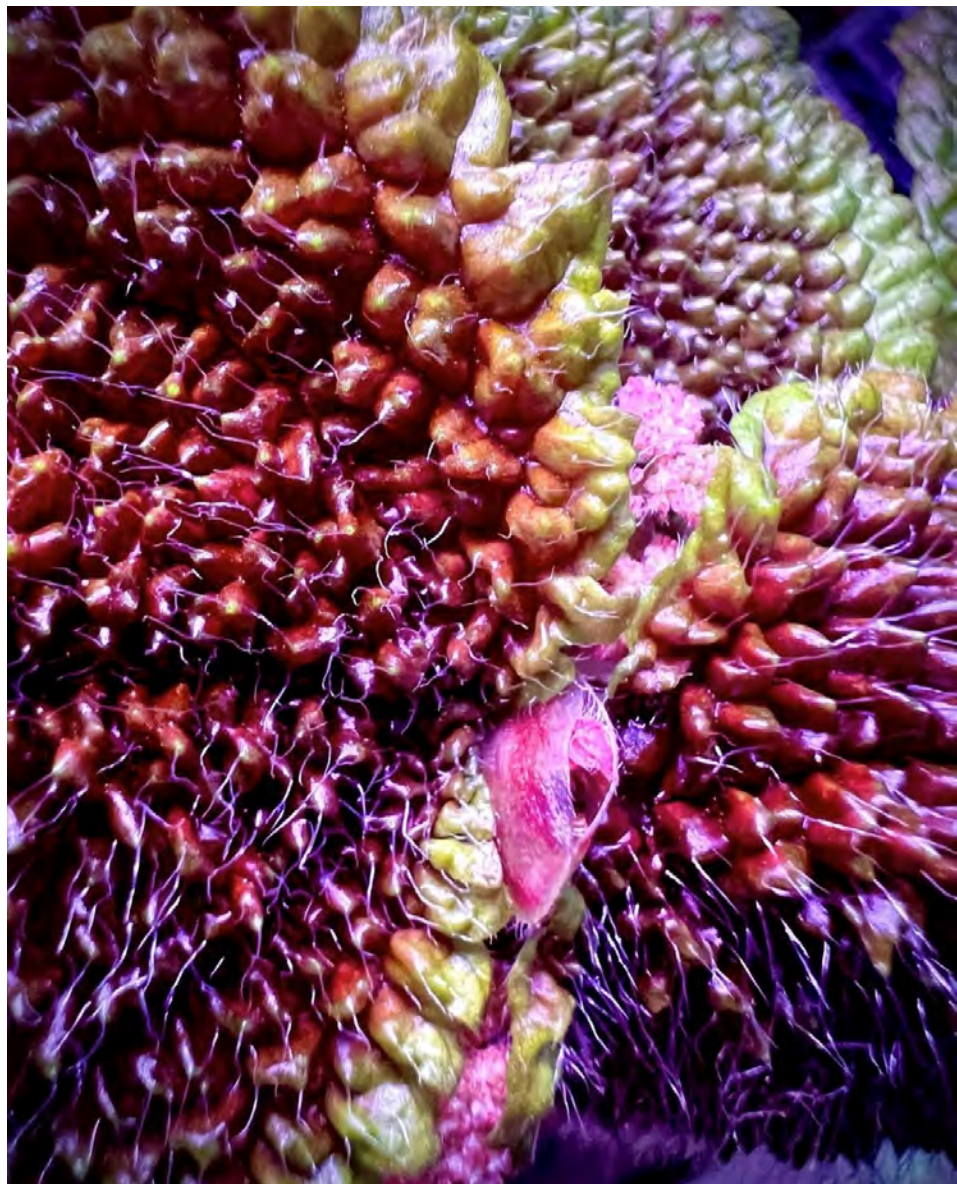
Act wisely now, while time still permits.

Please, for your sake and theirs, help my honored aged.

This, I shall remember and reward.

—Matthew Loeslie

Moon Valley



Photograph by Sarah Giese

Message from Heaven



Art by Kelsey Harms

Ma's Lookout at Chippewa Loop Trail



Art by Jen Reynolds

Art Night



Art by Eric Castle

Silver Ring

A non-fiction sketch scene | By Kari Sundberg

My grandpa and I are in his house, specifically in his bedroom, standing next to his bed. This familiar, comforting home is situated on a farm, miles from a small, rural town. A big red barn sits across from the house, among other farm buildings and sheds, old and new.

It is just after lunchtime, around 1 pm. It's a beautiful February day; February 8th to be specific. It's today. I'm writing this today while the vivid details are still fresh in my mind.

I woke up to a beautiful sunrise, hoping my grandma had a hand in it as she just passed away two days ago. It is 35 degrees outside, which feels balmy in the middle of a white Minnesota winter.

It's just my grandpa and I. Well, my aunt and uncle are out in the kitchen, but my grandpa just called me to his bedroom.

Just a few minutes ago, we were all sitting around the big circular kitchen table, helping to write my grandma's obituary. A hard question came up: do we bury Grandma with her beloved wedding ring, or do we take it off and keep it here with us. My grandpa fell silent, started weeping and went back to his bedroom; I followed.

My grandpa is 87. I am 39. I'm suddenly aware of just how fast the years can go by as he mourns the loss of his wife of 63 years.

His old, thin shirt looks as worn out as he does. He looks tired and, oh, how I wish I could wipe the hurt from his face. He is standing next to the bed. I'm dressed casually in sweats and a flannel shirt, rubbing his arm when he asks me if I think Grandma should be buried with her ring on or if we should take it off before they close the casket. It's a question I've never thought of until this moment.

My grandpa is tall, but he suddenly seems shorter. He

hunches over with each cry that comes often.

My grandma's presence is still very much in their bedroom. Her quilt and pillows are on the bed that my grandpa has been making every morning since she moved into the nursing home a few months ago. His "good clothes" are draped over the chair in the room, while the closet doors are open, revealing his side, along with Grandma's side. Most of her hangers are empty as her clothes were taken to the nursing home with her. But her dress clothes remain, which is what I am about to browse through as we pick out her burial outfit.

I smell the smoke from the fire in the wood stove, burning hot in the basement below us. It's bright as the curtains are open. It's comfortable and it feels like home. I instantly recall all the nights I slept on this floor in a sleeping bag next to their bed.

I turn my gaze towards the window as I think I hear a helicopter, but no, it's just the washing machine in the basement below us, spinning and spinning, in repetition like the rest of us.

I notice my grandma's jewelry box on the dresser; the colorful, plastic earrings strewn about inside. I notice the old, outdated alarm clock and wonder how often it went off and for what reason. Suddenly, I want to know more about the years...the life within those years...the little details we don't think to ask about until moments like this.

I notice a purple blouse that's hanging sideways on a hanger in the closet, and I wonder if my grandpa hung it, not sure of how it went on the hanger, or if my grandma hung it amid her Alzheimer's, not remembering how it went on the hanger.

I turn back towards my grandpa. I think of that ring and everything it meant to them. I think of my grandma and everything she meant to us, and I offer him my own thoughts on her beautiful silver ring.

Game Night



Art by Eric Castle

The Old Barn



Art by Cat Adkins

Letters

By-Kate Bunner

Public Notice-Posted outside Fletcher's Magical Wares

"To whom it may concern,

"This shop does not sell and will not sell love potions; such abilities are beyond magic. A recommended alternative is having a conversation and handling your emotions like an adult. Furthermore, this shop does not accept payment in livestock, family heirlooms, or political favors. Any business must be conducted during normal business hours; no products shall be delivered to the docks at midnight. Any further requests for poison (magical and otherwise) shall be reported to the watchmen."

From-A Messenger

"Lord Henderson,

"We shall be journeying through your lands during the late spring. We shall stop at castle Arcliff with our small company of two and thirty. We shall be passing through on our journey to England for the celebration of the Festival of Fire in King Arthur's court. I expect to have longings and provisions for our company when we arrive.

"King Ethan Harris III"

From-Lord Henderson

"Lord Curth,

"I am expecting your compliance and assistance with our arrangement. You shall of course be responsible for preparations, which shall need to be completed before the end of spring. A small mistake and this opportunity may never arise again.

"Lord Clive Henderson II."

From-Henry H. Murdok (Blacksmith)

“Honored Lord Henderson,

“It is truly an honor that you have selected me for the forging of your swords. I am pleased to note that the order of weaponry you requested should be finished by late spring. However, the specific sword of the black metal has taken longer to forge. Wizard’s bane is highly brittle. The price as previously negotiated will be fifteen crowns. I shall send them to castle Arcliff when they are completed.”

“With sincere regards,

“Henry H. Murdok.”

From-Frederick Thatch (Sorcerer)

“Rodrick,

“Where exactly are those reports you promised me? I shall be leaving to accompany King Ethan Harris within the week. I should think that you would keep the records of purchased wizard’s bane close at hand, considering how that metal kills all beings who possess magic. If you could kindly send me that report through magic so I may be able to act on it in a timely manner. Something of which you may be unfamiliar.

“Frederick Thatch,”

Franklin Brown (Senscale of castle Arcliff)

“Dear sir,

“I was explicitly told that my spice shipment would be delivered a fortnight ago. I require this shipment before the 20th of March. Your last shipment was highly incorrect. I had ordered cinnamon and you sent cloves. A mistake that is neither easy nor correctable. I expect my current shipment to be correct if not on time.

“Yours sincerely,

“F. Brown.”

From-Hooded Traveler (Placed under a very specific table)

“Word must reach support before the end of the spring. Or what was taken shall be lost.”

From-Sir Lancelot Du Lac

“Greetings Lord Baldwin, I hope that this letter finds you well.

“We met once before at King Arthur’s court last autumn during the Michaelmas celebration. You were quite good at the mele’d’peed. The reason for my correspondence is I have on reliable information that you have been usurped by your uncle Lord Henderson. If this is not the case then my most sincere apologies for the misunderstanding.

“However, if this is true, then please do not hesitate to call upon me for assistance. If you seal your response with the enclosed enchanted candle, it will magically appear on my desk. I shall attempt to reply as quickly as I can.

*“In hopes to be your trusted friend,
“Sir Lancelot Du Lac.”*

From-Lord Henderson

“Lord Curth,

“I trust that everything is in order. I received all the necessary implements, however, you will need to bring the vial, as the local magic shop is uncooperative. We shall be expecting our honored guest before this fortnight is up. It is of utmost importance that nothing goes wrong.”

“Lord Clive Henderson II.”

From-Franklin Brown

“Dear Cousin,

“I hope that this letter finds you well. I was heading to England next week and was hoping that you would provide shelter. I am afraid that the situation in Stonewist has become rather hostile. By the time this letter reaches you, it should be clear. I do not suppose you know of someone in need of a sensecal? The new Lord of Arcliff brought his own, and I find myself without recourse. On a pleasant note, I was given my wage a few days early. I also happen to have an excess of cloves which shall be with me,

“Your faithful friend as long as I breathe,

“Franklin Brown”

From-Merlin

“Lancelot, what have you done now?”

“I have received word that Lord Henderson has been killed by his nephew in a duel of honor. You were strangely absent for the past month. You are indeed lucky that there was a plot to kill King Ethan Harris for if there was not, Arthur would be faced with the question of why one of his knights is meddling within foreign affairs.

“Is it indeed your purpose and wish to make my job harder? If so please blithely go into highly political situations representing King Arthur and England as a whole! If not then promptly return and maintain a recreation. Does jousting not keep you entertained? Do you require more people to attempt to kill you for sport? I would be happy to provide my talents if that is the case or even if it’s not.

“M.”

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

By Kari Sundberg

“My husband died on our honeymoon,” I said in a monotone voice that didn’t sound like my own.

“Good. Give it life. Say it again but bring me more,” she instructed, as she sat in her ivory chair holding her notepad. Her chair was way too modern for this office, by the way.

“My husband died on our honeymoon because he was attacked by a shark.”

She didn’t break eye contact or even blink. Her eyes told me to keep going.

OK, I thought. This is what therapy is. You share a thing that you can’t seem to get over and you try to figure out a way to move past something so traumatic that it paralyzes you to even say it out loud, yet you can’t keep it alone in your head either because it’s too heavy.

Like your husband being killed by a shark.

Here we go. I straighten myself up a little taller for the truth that cuts me as sharp as those teeth I can still see coming right out of the water, biting down onto my husband, and pulling him under.

“My husband died on our honeymoon because he was attacked by a shark, and I watched him die. I couldn’t save him because I swam for safety. Partly because I was scared, mainly out of instinct, also because I knew there was nothing I could do, and he died. I swam away as fast as I could, and it feels selfish. I didn’t do anything to stop it because I was absolutely terrified, and he was gone from my sight within seconds. It doesn’t

feel real, like I'm living someone else's story; the ones you see on the Discovery Channel during Shark Week. The story that you can't believe would ever happen to you, so you don't even really feel sad about what you just watched. Until it does happen to you and it's the saddest, most unbelievable thing that could ever happen."

And I'm not sure how I can ever get over this, but I keep that part to myself.

I grabbed a Kleenex out of the box sitting next to me, but honestly, we both knew I was not going to need it. I grabbed one anyway because it felt like the right thing to do. But I haven't been able to cry since the flight home over two months ago. Apparently, I'm stuck in the first stage of grief, though it kind of feels like I went through them all before I even left the tarmac in Jamaica.

Dr. Peters disagrees and says we have a lot of work to do, but we'll get there. I wonder if she'd see the light shining through if it had been her husband. Right now, my vision is as dark as the waters far below the surface where I last saw mine.

I've already told her the entire story of me and Mark. Honestly, those first few visits were wonderful. I got to re-live our love story all over again, just to help her better understand me. I've been to therapy before, I know how this works. It's never been for anything too traumatic. Until now. But I went through the motions and spent hundreds and hundreds of dollars before even getting to the reason for me being here.

Nonetheless, Dr. Peters now knows that Mark and I had a different kind of love and, God, do I love him...DID I love him...I loved him to death.

Mark was the kind of guy you don't want. Well, the one you DO want, but you know will always capture the eyes of others so it's better to just settle for less. Most women know

what I mean. I'm not going to get into that. Anyway, he was beyond beautiful. His body was perfect. Like the kind you talk about getting your hands all over with your girlfriends when you're a few glasses of wine in. He was so attractive, and he knew it, though he'd never admit it because his heart was just so kind. He was athletic and strong, and put as much time and effort into me as he did his health. Watching him work out was like watching my favorite movie. It never got old, and every part held my attention, bringing about a lot of smiles and those feel-good feelings. And he felt really good, let me tell you.

I was never great about working out until I started dating him. He took extra time to show me how to reshape my body. I hated lifting weights, but I loved what those rest days brought. We'd get our Yoga mats and put them side by side in the living room. I'd light a candle; he'd take off his shirt. We'd go through an entire Yoga flow, looking from our mats to each other, our eye contact saying so much, and stealing kisses when we were posed close enough. Those nights were my favorite. I can still feel him rolling over to my mat, holding his body over mine, dipping down to kiss my lips softly in between laughs.

God, I miss him.

As I already explained to Dr. Peters a few sessions ago, Mark and I had decided to get married in Jamaica, staying a week longer than our friends and family. We tied in wedding festivities and our honeymoon after only a year of dating. It seemed like a good idea to send the rest of the group packing so we could have our alone time, but as it turned out, I could have really used my people there. Had they not left three days prior, I would have had my family and friends to console me. They would have been there supporting me, emotionally and physically, because I couldn't even walk once I crawled out of that water and hit the sand. I was numb. I wasn't even in my body. I was right with Mark being pulled under the water. I'm still being pulled under the water every day and I'm a thousand miles

from the nearest ocean.

Dr. Peters has heard the good stuff. She's seen the highlight reel. Our entire relationship was one highlight reel, to be honest. It took us both a long time to find a love like ours. I can't help but feel as if love like that just isn't out there. I'm sad it's over. And if I hear one more person tell me to be glad I found it or say some cliché quote like, "It's better to have love and lost than to never have loved at all," or however that goes, I don't know where my fist might land.

Wait, did I just go into the third step of grief? Is it anger? Maybe I flew right over denial and went right to the anger stage because, yes, I'm mad. I'm mad my husband died. I'm mad because our incredible love is gone. I'm mad that I won't hear his laugh again. I'm mad at a shark – A SHARK! I'm mad that hardly anyone can relate. I'm just so damn mad. Mostly I'm mad that Mark didn't get more time because he really did deserve time and happiness.

I think that's how a person knows it's real love. When you truly just want the other person to feel happy and feel like they are enough and worth it.

Mark was worth it. I wish I had gotten to call him my husband for more than three days.

As I was saying, Dr. Peters has smiled through those stories already. Of course, she didn't say much other than to listen or evaluate, but I'm assuming I came off normal during those visits as those were really my best parts. I'm not sure how she'll receive things next, but it's probably safe to say she's never sat through the details of a shark attack before. That makes two of us.

"You're quiet," she says.

My mind easily trails off in here. They set their rooms up like that on purpose, you know. A comfortable couch, a stylish lamp with one of those light, amber-glowing Edison bulbs. Usually a plant or two, in this case, five. They're all grouped together by a window that sits directly across from the cutest coffee shop.

I make a mental note to go grab a vanilla breve when I leave.

I smile at my therapist who feels a lot like a friend. I suppose that's also a good thing. "I guess if I just sit here thinking about the good stuff, I don't have to start talking about the bad stuff," I admit.

She tells me to go at my own pace and share whatever I want to share. "There's no right or wrong way to talk through this stuff, Amelia," she reminds me.

I just want to re-live the week of the wedding and the three days after. Those were the best ten days of my entire life. All of us arrived at the resort on the same day, but at different times. We all wore the same bright smiles, most of us wearing bright dresses to go along with them. Mine had an open back, tying up at my neck. I can still feel the warmth of Mark's hand there. The way we always had to be touching in some way was annoying to others, I'm sure, but we had waited our whole lives for that kind of love. We talked so openly about it all the time. That side of Mark was all mine. We would stay up for hours through the night, passing a bottle of cheap red wine back and forth, sharing bits and pieces of our stories that we had never let anyone else really be a part of.

Anyway, it's easy to let my mind drift in here, as I said. Back to the warmth of his hand guiding me through the week.

Mark and I had invited our close family and friends to

join us in paradise. The days leading up to the wedding were filled with endless amounts of laughter, long walks on the beach, cold beer at the swim-up bar, bright swimsuits, summer dresses for the evenings, when we'd all wash the sunscreen off us and meet for supper in one of the seven restaurants on site. We went four-wheeling in the jungle, snorkeling above the coral reefs, and danced on the outdoor patio that was adorned with strings of lights that swayed right above us in the gentle, ocean breeze.

Our vows were said amongst the sound of the rolling waves. "I'll give you my absolute best for the rest of my days," I told him.

The rest of the days were limited. Three to be exact.

"Amelia," she said, breaking me out of thought. "We knew today was going to bring us to Mark's death. I know it's hard, I do, but bring me out into the water with you guys. Let me experience this with you so I can lead you through the waves and back to safety, OK?"

Damn, this is where the money goes. It's all for this moment and what comes next. I just hope she's got a strong grip to pull me out of these depths.

She sees the hesitation in my eyes and the tension that shows through my body language, but she looks so empathetic and trusting that I do feel ready to finally talk about the details. I haven't uttered them out loud other than to one woman on the rescue squad, who barely even spoke English.

"Well." I sucked in air heavily. "There was a lot of blood in the water."

I hate that I started with that.

I decide to back up 20 minutes.

“Sorry,” I continued on. “We were over on the side of the island where it stayed fairly shallow for almost a mile out. I remember feeling surprised that no one else was swimming over there, but it was as the sun was setting, so I suppose it was a strange time to be out there. But it was such a calm night, the weather was perfect, still so warm, and we wanted to watch the sunset from over there. Obviously, everyone thinks of sharks when they even put a toe in the ocean, but you never really expect it to happen, you know? There were no signs posted about anything, no warnings to be given by anyone, honestly the thought just never crossed our minds.”

“We waded out about ½ mile or so. It was about 7 feet deep at this point. We could easily force ourselves down to touch the sandy bottom quickly. There was a huge rock underneath us at one point because Mark was standing on it, trying to make me believe it was a sunken fishing boat. Maybe it was. But I swam over to him and was so thankful for that little landing. It allowed me to get some sturdy ground for a minute and wrap my legs around his waist,” I shared.

Dr. Peters wasn't holding her notebook anymore, I noticed. She was just present with me for this.

“It's strange how the mind remembers certain things,” I went on. “I remember in that moment I had caught a smell of his deodorant. My legs were around his waist, his arms were holding me up, the water was so still, and he smelled so good. The scent was Mandarin Woods; he always got that kind. I remember taking the smell of him in as my lips kissed his tanned shoulder. That's what I remember mainly, or that's what I want to remember.”

The next part happened so fast.

“Mark kind of threw me off him. It was unexpected, but I thought he was just being playful. I had gone under for just a

second and came back up ready to laugh until I saw his face. He was still on that rock, but he was looking past me into the water. He had a very concerned look on his face and was scanning the water. I didn't even have a second to react or ask what was wrong because this all just happened in matter of a second, but it's almost like time just stood still when I saw his changed expression. I'm assuming he saw a shark fin at the exact moment he threw me off him. I have no idea. None of it makes sense. He wouldn't throw me in the direction of a shark so I can only assume he was being playful, and everything changed in a fraction of a second. I just don't know. Before I could even say his name, he just kind of slid off the rock and went under. There was a huge thrash. I knew immediately what it was. I caught glimpses of something big and gray in the violent water in front of me. I saw the shark's mouth and so many teeth. I saw the red seeping around like a watercolor painting."

I wiped the first tears that have fallen in months. Dr. Peters eyebrows squeeze together, and she licks her lips, nodding silently.

"I just swam. I swam so fast and so hard, and I don't know what I was hollering the whole time, but I remember trying to get words out as the water would gush into my mouth. I don't know what was happening behind me because I didn't look. I couldn't. I didn't want to see it, I didn't want to be next, I don't know," I cried.

It turned out that I had been hollering "HELP!" over and over. An older couple was walking on the beach and the woman ran to call for help. I vaguely remember the man pulling me out of the water and laying me on the sand.

Somewhere between those moments, the sun had set.

It was getting darker by the time the rescue squad came. The moments of panic, complete and utter disbelief and shock would immediately follow.

I remember all of those details, but I don't say them. At this time, I am sobbing in the office across from the coffee shop, unable to catch my breath. I see people walking out with their to-go cups. Dr. Peters gets up from her chair and comes to sit next to me on the couch.

“Oh, Amelia, just breathe. I'm here. Breathe through this. Let it out. I've got you,” she said as she wrapped her arms around me.

I wonder if this is enough for today. I wonder how scared Mark felt and hope like hell he didn't have to feel scared or feel pain for long. I hate that his story has ended, and I have a new one just beginning.

I'll admit all of this to Dr. Peters in another session, but for today, I think it's enough.

The Tailor

By Kate Bunner

Dionigi Vioni walked down the street past the stone houses as the morning sun began to rise, casting the town into warm lights of orange and yellow. A slight chill blew through, carrying in the salty tang of the ocean and promising colder weather as autumn grew later. Dionigi hesitated for a moment as he stared at the door to Master Lattantio's shop. Lattantio was the most important member of the tailor guild in Sicily, and Dionigi truly enjoyed his work as Lattantio's apprentice. However, the shop was not without its oddities; work always got done at a supernatural rate, and Lattantio seemed always to be locked away in the back room and never let Dionigi see him work.

Dionigi shook his thoughts aside as he strode up to the door and unlocked it. Dionigi stepped inside, almost losing his footing on the wobbly tile just outside the shop door. He would need to speak with Lattantio about that.

The shop was empty as it was still early in the morning, but Dionigi wanted to get a head start on the order for the Signore Basillo. Dionigi stopped walking when he noticed Master Lattantio was sitting at his workbench.

Lattantio was sitting at the workbench out of view of the door with three shirts around him stitching themselves, while he was rubbing his eyes. Lattantio's head shot up when he heard the door close. All the stitching stopped abruptly. "Dionigi!" Lattantio said, standing up, "You are here rather early."

Dionigi backed up, his mind raced as he took in the situation. Lattantio was a sorcerer.

"Now, Dionigi, calm yourself," Lattantio said, as he held up his hands.

Dionigi instantly recoiled from the gesture. He thought quickly; he could not be captured by magic. He quickly grabbed a wooden candlestick and threw it at Lattantio.

The wooden block hit Lattanzio squarely on the nose causing him to swear loudly and clutch his face.

Dionigi rushed towards the door before everything became black.

Dionigi blinked, he was sitting in a chair in a small room. It took him a moment to realize that it was the backroom Lattantio always kept locked. It was not quite what Dionigi expected from a sorcerer's lair. It was small and modestly furnished with a small bookshelf beside two relatively comfortable chairs across from a large desk.

Lattantio was behind said desk, holding a cloth to his nose with his head tilted backward.

At that moment Lattantio's younger daughter Celia came in carrying two steaming mugs that smelled strongly of flowers.

Lattantio smiled as he put the cloth down, "Thank you, my dear."

Celia smiled, as she set the cups down on the desk, "I hope your nose heals, Father." She glared pointedly at Dionigi as she stalked out of the room.

Dionigi's mind raced as he took the situation; it finally occurred to him. In his panic, Dionigi had thrown a candlestick at Lattantio. He was fired.

"Now, Dionigi," Lattantio said, as he picked up the mug, "I understand if you are a bit confused right now; however, I hope this does not impact your wanting to proceed with this apprenticeship."

Dionigi faltered, "But...I hit you. Hard."

Lattantio smiled ruefully, "Yes. I felt it. I am willing to overlook that because you reacted in panic. However, I will not take it kindly if this offense is repeated." He paused as he slid the other mug towards Dionigi, "I am telling you this, Dionigi, before I hand you this hot drink."

Dionigi shook his head as he sipped the drink; he had let his fear of magic run off with him and he had forgotten that it was Lattantio for a moment, “So why am I in here?”

“Oh, you hit your head on a loose stone.” Lattantio said, “I have been meaning to repair that.”

Dionigi thought for a moment, staring into the drink. A few rose petals bobbed at him. “But I can still stay?”

“I would like you to,” Lattantio stated, as he set his mug down. “As long as you are not afraid of magic.”

“It unsettles me...But, I would not call it fear now.” Diogini said, glancing at a book that floated over towards Lattantio.

“Good!” Lattantio said, with a smile, “We can work in here today. Between the two of us, we should be able to finish Senrio’s order before this afternoon.”

Dionigi smiled as he finished fashioning the sleeves to a jerkin. Dionigi looked up and frowned as he watched Latnatio. Two undershirts stitched themselves while he went over the accounts for the month. There didn’t seem to be much of a point if the shirts stitched themselves.

“You’re sighing, Dionigi,” Lattantio said, as he closed the book.

Dionigi gestured towards the floating articles of clothing, “Why do you need an apprentice? It appears as if you can get the work done yourself.”

Lattantio beckoned him forward, as the shirts drifted lazily to the desk, “Bring the jerkin.”

Dionigi set it down before Lattantio; it was made from a rich purple and was lined with straight gold stitchwork.

“When I was young, I was far too impatient to practice tailoring like my master said,” Lattantio said with a smile. “I used my magic to make the stitches, but they never are as good when they are done by hand.” He placed the two garments

beside each other.

The undershirt stitches were even, and they were decent. But, the stitches on the jerkin were smaller and seemed to gleam with an inner light.

“Everything made with care by hand contains its magic. Magic that sorcery can never imitate,” Lattantio said, patting Dionigi on the shoulder, “Now how about you start on the cloak? Senrio Basillo wants his crest embroidered onto it.”

Dionigi smiled as he sat down and began picking a colored thread from his box, content with practicing his magic, the magic of those who bring the world to life with their creations.

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