

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Rathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss

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News and a Story

The San Diego Maker Faire was a success. We were in the back corner of the still under construction Comic-Con Museum. It was a little dark in the back corner, but my wall of lights did ease the darkness a little.

We were there from 10 AM to 6 PM both Saturday and Sunday. The button making was a big hit. Kids, and adults, too – you make 1” buttons for free. We had some

printed out sayings and some of the Steampunk characters I had commissioned. (Maybe I should start up that project again.) We also had a “glitter” station, which had stickers, pens, lots of colored paper and, of course, glitter.

We had 2.5” button kits that people could buy for a dollar. I probably sold over one hundred of them. I also had candle holder kits and sold most of them. I had paint



pens that could be used to paint the skulls, and five or six people sat there and painted them.

I don't have a complete list of what we sold, but here are the highlights:

Two lamps

One superhero plaque

Three wands

One key fob/holder

Four books

28 skull candle holders

30 Maker Faire candle holders

100+ buttons

It was a lot of work and doing all the free buttons took a lot of time. Would I do it again? - Sure. It was fun, and I enjoy interacting with people.



This newsletter comes out monthly. It often contains news about the two novels I'm writing, the occasional short story, discussion about writing, and very off topic things like my card game. Go to DouglasGClarke.com to see back issues. Make sure to sign-up at <http://www.douglasgclarke.com/lists/?p=subscribe> so you won't miss the next issue.

Introduction

Simone Grünewald is a young woman (at least young compared to me) who lives in Germany. I discovered her on Instagram (@schmoedraws). I don't remember if I found her because she was followed by someone I was already following or if I was just searching for cool drawings. In either case, she had cool drawings and started following her.

It has been a while since I've written a story with my time consumed with editing, book covers and way too many hours at my "real" job. But on October 24, as I sat in my room feeling like I wanted to do something, I saw Simone's latest Inktober drawings. For those of you who don't know what Inktober is, every day in October artists create an illustration (usually, but not always in ink). Some artists just make a drawing each day, while others draw one based on a prompt of the day.

Simone's October 24th drawing was of her son stealing cut up peppers off the table. While this picture is definitely cute, and I feel like I know what Remus is like from the chronicle of his life that Simone has shared with all of us over the last almost two years, it reminded me of a series of pictures she had done earlier in the month - 18th, 19th, and 20th. #bottle, #scorched and #breakable. I went back and looked at them again. Each of the pictures featured miniature versions of Simone and Remus and a bottle.

I was inspired. I didn't know where it was heading or how it would even start, but I sat myself down and started writing. After making sure I had the spelling of their names correct, the first thing I did was come up with the title. For me, titles are strange and magical things. If I can get the title, the rest of the story often just flows. Sitting and thinking about how to start the story - how to get Simone and Remus tiny so they could fit in a bottle - I realized that how they got here wasn't nearly as interesting as what was going to happen next. The title, ***Not a Beginning - Rather a Middle***, quickly formed and instantly freed me from having to figure out how the story started and how it might end. Instead, I was able to focus on a story within the story. A friend at work today said I was writing Star Wars, doing the middle story first. If it was a hit, I could write the end and then go back and write the beginning.

I started planning, trying to decide what the problem was, what Simone wanted to accomplish internally and what she and Remus wanted to achieve externally. With that in mind, or at least partly in mind, I started writing. It felt good to be writing again. I wrote for two hours - 1550 words - and then started editing. An hour later I was happy with the story and sent a copy to Simone, (who said I could share her pictures and my story on these pages - thanks Simone)

So, without further elaboration, because I don't want to give away the good points, other than to say when I started, I imagined a scene with giant crabs, but that's not where the story went, I give you Simone and Remus in, ***Not a Beginning - Rather a Middle***.

Not a Beginning - Rather a Middle

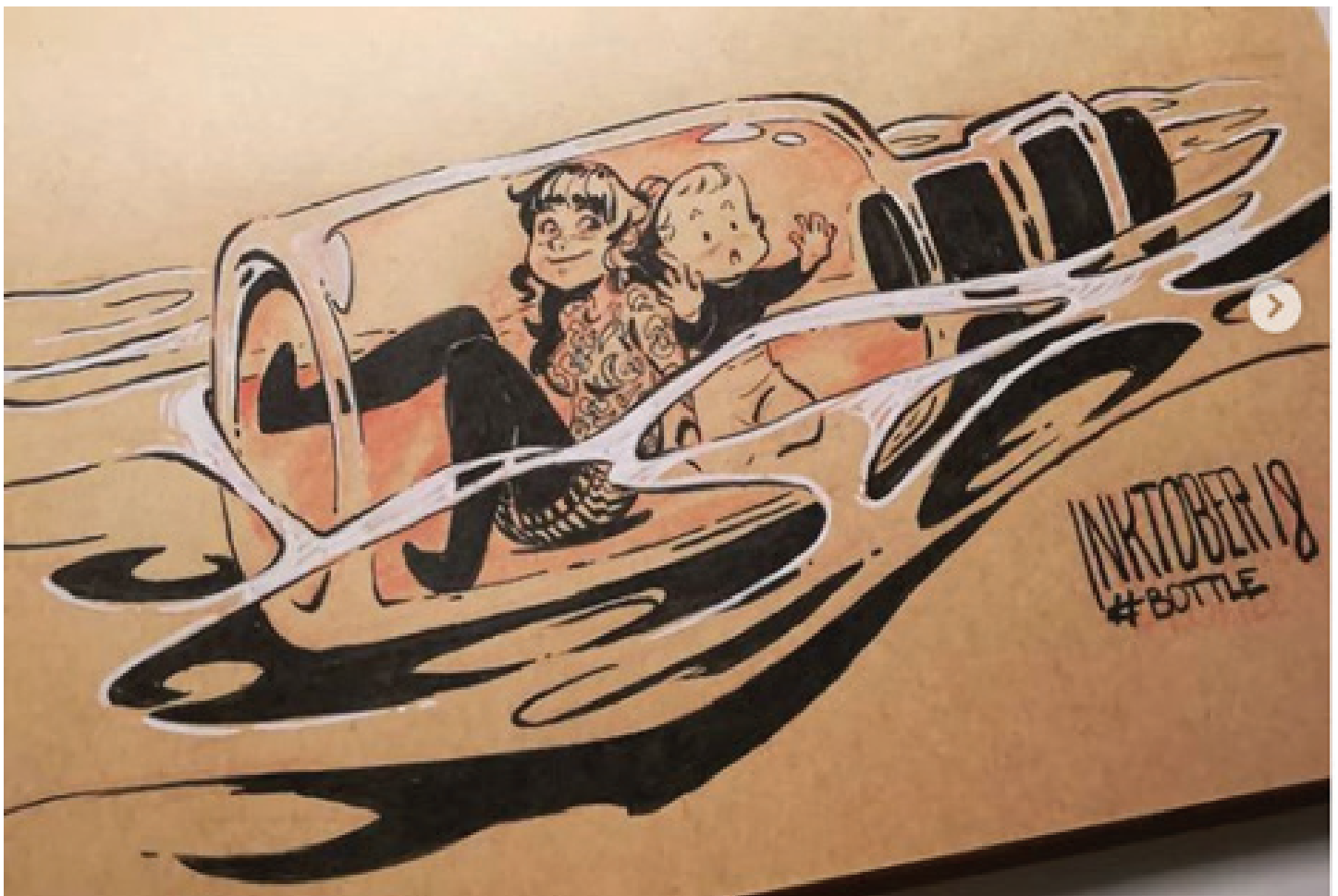
Story By Douglas G. Clarke

Illustrations by Simone Grünewald

Simone and her son Remus found themselves adrift. Exactly where Simone couldn't say, other than in the ocean somewhere. Remus knew where he thought he was, in the middle of the largest bathtub he had ever seen, but he wouldn't say because the sight of passing schools of fish had stolen all his words.

Simone was concerned, as any mother would be, finding herself and her son bobbing in a bottle she could just sit-up in. But, after the panic had run its course and she had decided that maybe it was a bad idea to be pushing on the cork, she decided that just maybe it wasn't such a bad place to be stuck.

The morning sun was just rising and chasing away the coldness that the ocean had given the bottle. The waves were gentle. And Remus was quiet. Not that she didn't love to hear him chatter away or ask a hundred and one questions about the simplest of things – she was proud that she had taught him how to talk so well. But, at this moment, hearing only the gentle lapping of the waves, she was glad the fishes had decided to follow them.



The contentment, of course, didn't last. Soon the gentle morning sunlight turned into the blazing heat of noon. The temperature rose and soon Remus found his words again - hot, go home, no clothes and others along that vein. He also made a discovery, the bottle was cold on the bottom and hot on the top. Laying down it was almost too cold. That's when he discovered that right at the water line it was just right, but also, that it was hard to lie on the side of the bottle - he kept sliding down.

Then a magical thing happened, Simone tried to hold Remus up on the side and the whole bottle rolled in the water. Remus tried to crawl up the side again, and Simone started rolling along with the bottle. The hot glass started cooling as it touched the ocean, and the air inside the bottle started cooling as well.

For the next couple of hours, Simone and Remus crawled up the side of the bottle together. Never getting anywhere as the bottle spun beneath them, but being spared from the afternoon's heat. That is, again, of course, until Remus grew tired of crawling. With their stopping, the temperature in the bottle started rising again. Simone judged the heat, and when it was getting a little too hot, she would push Remus up the side of the bottle and then quickly crawl up to him. While more work, it let them get past the worst of the afternoon.

As it looked like they would make it through the day, Remus woke up from his nap and announced he was hungry. This threw another stick on the metaphorical fire that was roasting them. The realization of their situation and the associated panic that was attached to it were short-lived as they were replaced with a different source of panic.

The bottle started to rise and fall as the waves suddenly grew from inches to feet in height. Simone was now glad that their stomachs were empty as they were tossed from side to side and up and down, and as nature would have it, front and back. Stretching out, Simone found that she could place her feet on the bottom of the bottle and stretch up to hold herself against the bottle's neck. With Remus holding tight to her, their wild ride became a little less wild.

The ride wasn't too long either as they both saw crashing waves in front of them and beyond that, rocks and beach. As they were tossed along, quick prayers went up for sand over rocks, and somehow, for it is rare in stories, their bottle rolled up onto the beach. A wave pushed them up, but then as it raced back to the sea, their bottle started to roll back as well. After several more tosses by waves and an equal number of rolling back down the beach, Simone and Remus found that they could stop the rolling. A few more waves and a few more stoppings and they found themselves out of the wave's reach. Except for that last big one that hit them from the side and sent the spinning up the beach.

Stopped and feeling like they had just gone through the spin cycle of the washing machine, Simone and Remus lay there like rag dolls. Letting their stomachs settle and their heads stop spinning. That is until it started getting hot again. This time Simone decided it was time to get the cork out, and them as well, before they either cooked or were swept back out to sea. It took a while, many kicks, and a few tears, before for the cork finally popped out at the same time their ears popped.

Remus climbed out quickly, followed by Simone's words to say close. The escape from the bottle wasn't as easy for Simone. She found that those hips that were so great for having Remus were now working against her. Stuck halfway in and halfway out, she wondered if it was better to be halfway out like Winnie the Pooh had been in rabbits house, or if halfway in would be better - like in the honey tree.

Luckily Simone didn't have to wait for days to lose weight like Pooh, and only an agonizing hour watching Remus run up and down the beach, picking up shells and wearing seaweed on his head like a hat. Remus pointed out to sea and yelled "run" as he turned away from the water and started running. Simone turned her head in time to see the wave crashing down on her, just in time to close her mouth and shut her eyes tight, but nothing else. The wave threw her and the bottle. Simone screamed despite herself, and even though she was underwater, but in that same moment, she felt the bottle slip away from her.



The wave deposited her on the beach, but apparently decided to keep the deposit on the bottle and took it back out to sea. Simone spat and coughed and frantically looked for Remus. His laughter quieted her fear, and she picked herself up and scrambled up the beach to him.

Simone and Remus walked together, hand in hand, because that's the only proper way to walk, and explored their new home. A tropic island, which narrowed down where they were for Someone (a little), but not enough to matter. They walked what felt like miles, with Remus at times walking, riding on Simone's hip, her shoulders or something just hanging from her neck.

They were rewarded with a small freshwater stream and a guava fruit that it would take them a year to eat. Tummies full, tired from the walking, and nap time upon them, they did the only reasonable thing and took a nap in the shade of the guava fruit. Afternoon turned to evening as they slept. The heat of the afternoon became the slight chill of evening. They woke to a million million stars stretched out across the sky.

They decided it was time to find someplace safe to sleep, so they started walking back down the beach. Here and there were tall trees. There and here a rock. The moon rose, chasing many of the stars away, but giving them light to search by. Simone thought about trying to make something from the grass that grew out of the sand, that to her felt like small trees. Remus wanted to make something out of seaweed.

Then the stars started to go out. In a great race across the sky, they winked out in a flood, leaving behind darkness. Then to, the moon darkened and Simon and Remus could see that the stars were not winking out, they were being swallowed by clouds. That's when the first raindrop fell. The size of a footballs, they came crashing down around them. Just a few at first, but with the promise of many more to come. Simone reached down and picked up Remus and started running. She didn't know where she was running to, only that she had to run somewhere.

The last rays of moonlight glinted off of the something, the bottle. Simone ran towards it, grateful for the thought of stuffing herself back into it. As she approached, she saw she needed to rethink that plan. The bottle lay in two pieces, dashed against a rock. The rain started falling harder, so Simone ran to the bottom half and climbed carefully across the jagged edge.



The bottle was hard, but it was dry and secure and felt like home. Remus lay there for hours watching the rain until he fell asleep laying across Simone's lap. Simone tried to sleep, but found that the storm and her son lying across her were both too special to miss by sleeping. So she sat there, think about how lucky they were to have a bottle to hide in, to have had a bottle to not drown in, and to wonder what the morning would bring.

The End of the Middle

If you made it this far – liked the story and the drawings – do me a big favor. Go on Instagram. Search for @schmoedraws. Find whichever of these drawings you like best, then leave her a note telling her that you enjoyed seeing her pictures in my story and tag me too, #agoodtale. It would mean a lot to me.