

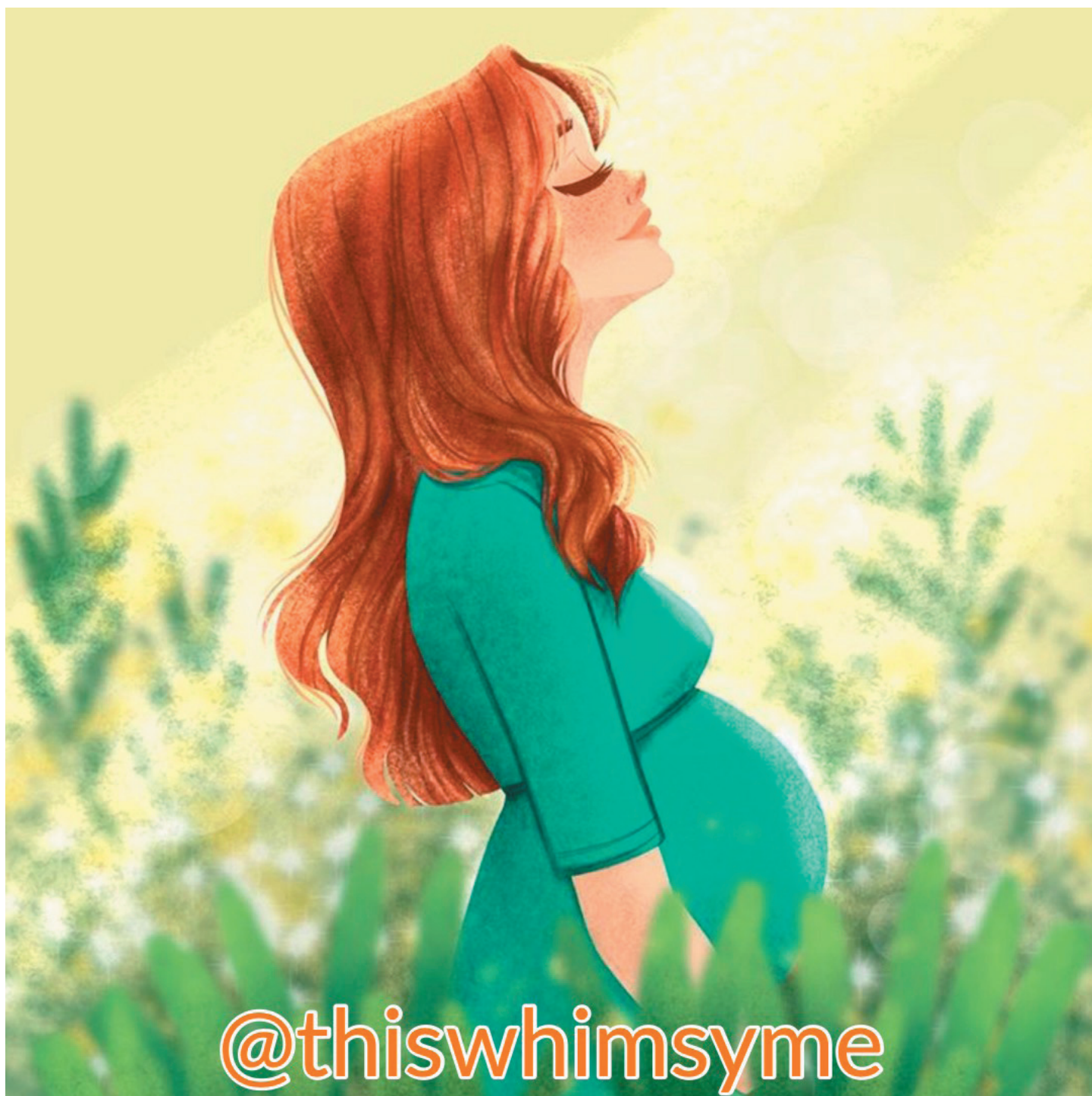
Unremembered Loss

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

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Another Image that Spoke to Me



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.

On the Other Side

Standing here, with the sun shining down on me, surrounded by green feels, a gentle breeze blowing against my face, and a new life growing in me, it's hard to believe how different life was six months ago.

The invaders had just been pushed back, our resolve greater than their expectations, but not before they had set the world aflame, blocked the sun with billowing smoke and tainted the breeze with the smell of death.

But we had won. The last ship left. And somehow I found Tom. Of the millions that had died, he had survived – a crush from my teen years – a spot of hope in what should have been a hopeless.

We didn't plan it. I wouldn't have chosen to bring a new life into this forever changed world, but as nature would have it, it happened. Now I can't imagine living without this purpose driving me.

My child will be the first of a new generation. A generation that will start healing this broken world – making it into something better than it was before. Taking the scars of the past and of the war, and transforming them into the future.

So I stand in a field green, the blue sky above and the yellow rays of the sun warming me, and feel joy mixed with my sorrow. Hope for the future and grief for my past. Content with my place and my purpose and my love.

Behind the Story

This month I was caught by another wonderful drawing posted to Instagram. This one is by Sara Paz who you can find on Instagram at @thiswhimsyme. Sara is a self-proclaimed Proud Mommy, a Freelance designer & illustrator and Wonder Woman wannabe. I've been following her for a while and like the depth of feeling I see in all her work.

I was looking for a picture to base a story on and was looking through the feeds of several people. That's when I found this drawing that Sara had posted two months previously – November 18th, 2018.

I had seen the picture when it was first posted and liked it. The thought of it may have been in the back of my head for those two months, but when I saw it again, I knew it was the one.

So... there are four kinds of posts on Instagram:

1. People who post other people's stuff, (which I'm not interested in).
2. People who post their stuff and say do not re-post, (which often makes me sad).
3. People who say do not re-post without permission, (which gives me pause).
4. People who don't say anything about re-posting.

Sara is one of the "please ask for permission" people. The problem is I have to make a decision up front – do I ask for permission without showing them what I'm asking permission for, or do I write the piece and then ask for permission, knowing that they might say no – or even worse just not answer at all – and that if they say no I need to honor that.

Partly because of who I am and also because it's worked half of the time in the past (and these are short stories so only represent three or four hours of effort), I usually go with the

write it first and then ask for permission.

I made the decision to write the short story and hope that she would like it enough to give me permission – as you can tell by the fact that you're reading this, she loved it.

Several things struck me when I started this project.

1. The profound peace and contentment conveyed through the drawing.
2. That I wanted this picture to be the end of the story. I didn't want to start here and take it to some dark place, even if it ended happily.
3. That all stories are built on conflict and un-met desires, but I didn't want to focus on those elements.
4. I had to keep the story short, so it would fit in ten or fewer panels – I kept it to 241 words on six panels.
5. Because of the length, I was going to write a hint story. A story that has all the elements of a story, but leaves the details to the reader's imagination.

When I started, I didn't have a clear Idea of the story – which is common for me. I began by describing the woman's current location and then made a statement about how that contrasted with where she had been six months earlier. I left unsaid the foreshadowing that six months ago she had gotten pregnant. I purposely left the valuation of getting pregnant unstated – was it a good thing or a bad thing.

When I wrote the second panel, I summarized a horrific story in one sentence – a war, that was somehow over, with some unnamed invaders leaving everything in ruins.

When I started the third panel, it took a while to figure out where the story was going. I ended up with my unnamed woman meeting Tom, whom

she had known some years ago. Implying that she must have taken this as a sign – since everyone else she had known was dead. And that this meeting – in the mists of her grief and loss – had given her hope.

The fourth panel skips over the romance story – finding each other and finding comfort in being together. Rather, I Pointed out that in this kind of situation people don't think about the long term consequences of their actions, but how those consequences – a pregnancy – gave her a reason to live when everything around her was death and destruction.

The fifth panel jumps back to the present (to the original picture and her look of peace) and looks at what she is hoping for – a better world. Not just the way it was before the war, but healing the problems that had already existed.

The final panel is a restatement of where she finds herself. An acknowledgment of the conflicts that still exist within her – joy and sorrow – hope and grief – but also acknowledging that she has found peace with those conflicts. That she feels like she has a purpose going forward, and is able to love.

This story leaves many unanswered questions. Who invaded? Why did they invade? How were the invaders defeated? How has she survived for the last six months? Is Tom still in the picture? Does she live in a community or on her own? Does she know of other women who are pregnant? What scars need to be healed and what makes her believe that her child will have any chance to help in that healing?

But none of that matters, because right here, right now, she has found a moment of peace.

I finished this newsletter but felt like I wanted to say a little more about why I liked this picture so much. I'd love to hear from you if you agree with me or if there is something else that strikes you. I'm also sure Sara would love to hear your feedback, too. You can do that by finding her in Instagram, locate this picture and leaving her a comment at @thiswhimsyme.

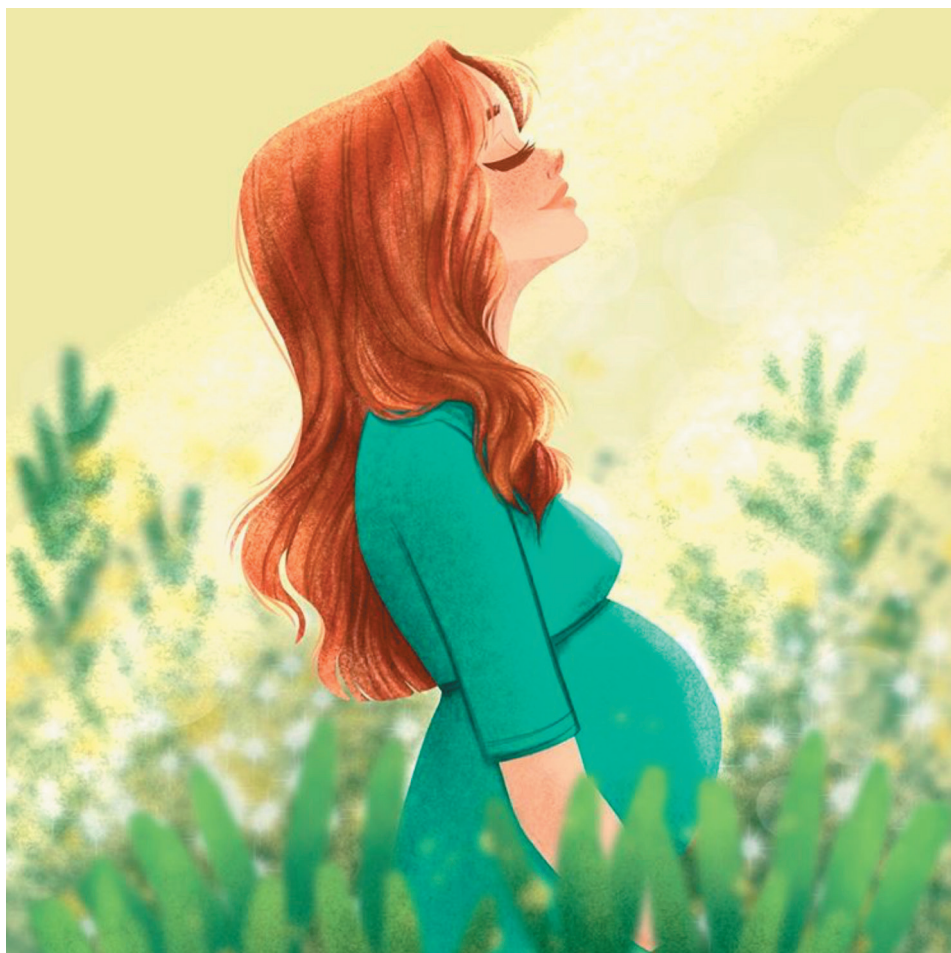
I love the eyelashes, there is a simplicity in their stroke, but a feeling of being just right. The fact that they are just a little darker than everything else draws my eyes to her closed eyes, giving me the sense that she is lost in her thoughts.

I love that there is actually a foreground and a background. It is not just a picture of a beautiful young woman, it is a picture of her in a place. The fact that both the foreground and background are out of focus forces the eye to see only her.

The yellow rays in the background, while being totally unnatural are perfect in this picture. They convey the warm sun that she is obviously enjoying. I think the reason that it works so well is the shades in the yellows and the greens complement each other. While the lack of other design in the background may have been unintentional, I think it really works because there are only three things in the picture to focus on – the plants that are faded away, the sunlight that is everywhere and the woman. The variation is the yellow gives the eye something to ignore where a solid background would have pulled their eyes away to see all the negative space and a busy background would distract by drawing attention to itself – too much of a positive space.

I love the face.

The smile doesn't look forced, not put on for someone else – it seems like she has inner contentment. The smile, more than anything else, makes me wish I could be her.



I like the button nose and the freckles on her cheeks. I like the shades in her hair and the flow across her shoulders.

I like the way her pregnancy is shown. It's essential – it's part of who she is – but it's not what the picture is about.

Just so you know that I'm not totally one side, there are two things that I think distract from the picture.

There are some brighter yellow splotches in front and behind her that don't seem to belong to any element and just distract my eyes.

The top and back of her head seem too bright. The light appears to be coming from in front and above her, so it's not clear what is causing the lightness on the back of her head.

For me, the positives so out way the two details I pointed out that this is a 9.9 out of 10 in my book. In the end, it's all of these little things – the curve of her neck, the lift of the chin and the

definition of the jawline, the smile, and the wisp of hair touching her close eyes that spoke to me and made me write this story of hope.

What do you see in this picture? What do you see in my story? Do you believe that there could be such peace after such pain? Send me an email or find my story on Instagram @altivecer and leave me a comment so everyone can see it.

Have you seen a picture on Instagram that has touched you? Tagged it with a comment and @altivecer and I'll find it and see if it touches enough to write a story – I'll bet you it will.

Join with me in this journey I'm on, and you could be in my next newsletter.

Until next time, Happy New Year.

Douglas G. Clarke