

Unremembered Loss

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

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It's All In The Story

First some news and then a story about story.

The Rise And Fall Of Man

I found a Beta reader, thanks David, and I've gotten some good feedback. There is both Good News & Bad News.

Bad News: It's not ready to publish. Good News: David finished reading the book. Bad News: the stories in the first two chapters lack organization and purpose. Good News: The stories get better in later chapters. Bad News: The stories don't have unique voices. Good news: Some of the stories built characters that David cared about. Bad News: Those stories seemed to just end and left David wanting to know what happened. Good News: I've gotten lots of good feedback and I'm going to get some more. Now I've just got to take that feedback, make the flagged stories better, and get the thing done.

Story Story

I was talking with a friend at work, Sandee, about woodworking and she told me about a guy in LA who turns wooden bowls. His bowls are nice, but that is not why people want them. This guy turns all of his bowls from fallen trees that he reclaims. People call him when their tree falls, he comes over, cleans up the mess, and takes some of the wood to turn into things.

That's not the special thing either. What's special is that he writes up the story about where each bowl came from. Was the tree struck by lightning or a car? Did it blow down from high winds or die of old age? Then he tells the story about getting the wood, was it a dark and storm night or a blistering summer afternoon?

That talk with Sandee stuck with me. I thought about the wands I've made and how their history is more interesting than the wands themselves.

So that's the backstory for this weekend. I decided to make another lamp. For those of you who don't know, I've been making lamps for the last eleven months. I used most of my Christmas break making lamps (I did something each day of my break and 3/4 of the projects were lamps). You can see my lamps if you go to Instagram and search for #agoodtale or go to my website douglasclarke.com.

So here I am, making a lamp, and I'm almost done. It's the second in my "Tequila" series and I was at the stage where I wasn't liking the fact that there was this cord running through the bottle that you could see. Rory was sitting in the kitchen, working on his own art project, and I asked him, "What should I fill this with?"

He didn't hesitate a second and said, "Sand. That's what all the best bottles are filled with."

I said something about glass beads, but I already knew that I was going to fill it with sand and I knew just what sand I was going to use, but before I tell you about the sand, I think I should go back and tell you the whole story of the Camarena Tequila lamp.

The Camarena Tequila Lamp

This is the second in my tequila lamp series. The first is a Jose Cuervo Lamp. It's story is quite simple, I had just emptied the bottle, was looking for a project and imagined the lamp shade that would go on it. I made it and I think it came out good. That's about it.



After making that lamp, and having run out of tequila, I decided that I should select my next bottle of tequila based on the lamp that I could see it one day becoming. With that in mind I headed over to BevMo! (no promotional fee paid to mention their name, however, I do have a discount card. No fee paid by Jose Cuervo or Camarena either, maybe I'm doing something wrong here).

I walked through the isles till I found the tequilas. I have to admit at this point that I had another objective beside finding a cool bottle of tequila that I could empty to turn into a lamp. I've always purchased margarita mix to make my margaritas, this time I decided I was going to get a good tequila, some triple sec and sweetened lime juice (I

come to find that I should really be using unsweetened lime juice and agave nectar – next time).

I found a couple of bottles I really liked, but decided I was looking for good tequila, not top shelf tequila. I looked a little more and selected familia Camarena Silver Tequila.



I liked the curves of the bottle and how the top is wider than the bottom. A lot of the bottle are either just straight cylinders (wine bottles) or have sharp angles.

Bottle selected, I headed home and started the arduous tasks of emptying the bottle and designing the lamp. As these things go, at least for me, I had several weeks to empty the bottle as I worked on the design. As I started to cut out the pieces and get everything ready to put the lamp together it became a race to see if I would be ready for the bottle before the bottle was ready to start its new life. Turns out that the bottle lost and I put the tequila in another bottle.

From my previous work I know that a lamp shade is usually two or three times wider than the stand (bottle) and one to two times as tall. With this lamp I broke those rules (because that's what rules are for when your an artist). Since

I bought the bottle because I liked its lines so much, I decided to make the lamp shade follow those lines.

I also made the lamp shade the same size as the bottle, which has a few effects:

- it puts the focus on the bottle
- it makes the lamp look very tall
- it limits the size of the light bulb
- it brings out the mirroring of the shape

The other thing I decided to do with this lamp, which I had not done before, was to not make it symmetrical – specifically I didn't want to make the front like the sides. Since my goal was to reflect the shape of the bottle, I decided to make the front a solid piece of wood.

Besides mirroring the shape of the front of the bottle, I incorporated the sun-burst from the back of the bottle.



Because of structural issues I had to connect the pieces of the shade together (the four holes along the bottom of the above picture), but I wanted to keep the top of the shade clean. In this design I put all of the structure at the bottom of the shade and left the top floating. This should create a nice pattern on the roof.

With the design complete, I cut out the pieces. The lamp is made from two outside pieces (front and back) and five middle pieces.

I sanded all of the wood before I cut out the pieces with the laser cutter and then again before I finished them. I added blue dye to the sealer and ended up with this rich blue. It doesn't quite match the blue of the bottle, oh well.



With the shade assembled, I found that I needed to add some more structure to the lamp to keep the seven pieces ridged.



I added two more pieces inside the bottom of the shade, which butt up to the front and back so that they don't show from the front and back.



I put in the wiring and got to the point where I asked Rory what to fill it with.

Sand

I live in San Diego so sand is not a rare thing. We have beaches of it. I've bought a ton of it for the kids to play with and to make my clay heavy yard drain better.

But when I thought of sand for my lamp it wasn't these sands I thought of. It was the containers of special sand I've been storing in my backyard for 16 years.

One day, shortly after we moved in, Cindy and I were driving through the neighborhood and came upon a new construction site (which was not uncommon because we moved into a new development). As we were like to do, since it was evening and everyone had left, we drove onto the construction side to see what they were building (it was an office complex).

As we were walking around, we found a couple outcroppings of San Diego Red Costal Mesa Sand. I say the word sand here and I don't want to leave anyone with the wrong idea. This is not sand as in play ground or beach, this is more sand as in sandstone. There was some loose sand, but mostly big solid pieces of hardened sand, one to five feet in size.

We had heard of this "rare" sand from one of our friends (its only rare because no one cares about it and when ever it's found it's just taken out and thrown away. The only place you see it is sticking out of the sides of some of the cliffs).

Having found this treasure and knowing that in a day or two it would be plowed under – since the site was already being graded, Cindy and I decided to collect some of it. The plan was to use it in either the train garden that we were planning to build or in a Japanese garden. The train garden never got build and when the Japanese garden went in, we didn't have enough sand to fit the scale of the garden.

We drove home and came back later that evening with several large containers. We brought a pick axe and two shovels. We worked for a couple hours to fill the six containers. We filled

them in the back of the van and almost couldn't get them out once we got home. Probably 200 pounds each.

The Containers of sand went into the backyard and over the years have been moved four of five times (currently in two locations). I could have used the sand as filler lots of time, but the work to get it and the perceived (if fictional) value has always saved it.

Here are four of the containers (the container the worse for sitting in the sun 16 years) out behind the peach tree, blocking the path. (I've thought of moving them a few times, but the containers will not take another moving.)



The sand has a beautiful red color, at least to me, which I'm guessing comes from a high iron content – okay, it's rusty sand.

As you can see, it is still not beach sand. In fact I had to take a screwdriver to it to break off the part I used.



I filled the bottle with the sand and then decided that it didn't look very good. I had broken up the big pieces with my fingers, but it needed to be sifted.



After seeing the bottle filled with sand, I started to question my pick of blue for the shade – I could have picked up the color of the sand.



All I had left was to put everything together, which went well, take some pictures, luckily I decided to start taking pictures as I went through the building process, and then write it all down – no pressure, it's only Saturday and the end of the month is not until Monday.

All of my builds feel good – I think its the actually completing something that feels the best. But it also feels good just creating something.

The only part I regret is that I haven't built up a group of friends that also like to create things. If any of you ever want to spend a Saturday with me making something, just say the word.



Here is the finished lamp. Looking at it now that it's done, it reminds me of a person wearing a big blue hat.

One of the things that I've become aware of is, I'm running out of room. I've made a dozen or more lamps now and I still have them all – mostly in my office. If you're in the need of a lamp – desk or hanging – let me know. I'm sure we can come up with some arrangement.

I keep thinking about putting them up on Etsy, but shipping is an issue. This lamp is probably shippable, meaning it won't break, but filled with sand it's got to weigh over ten pounds.

In any case, it's fun and helps me unwind on the weekend. Just be warned, if no one buys any of my lamps, you might find one under your Christmas tree.

Well, that's it for this month. Let me know if you've got a favorite something that comes in a bottle that you'd like to see as a lamp – I'm always looking for ideas and commissions.

Doug



This newsletter comes out monthly. It contains news about the two novels I'm writing, the occasional short story, discussions about writing, and very off topic things like the sand in my lamp. Go to DouglasGClarke.com to see back issues.

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