

Unremembered Loss

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

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Lamps

I've written in the past about my experiments with lamps. To date I've made 27 lamps in a variety of styles. I've sold one bottle lamp and dozens of the votive lamps. I've also given away dozens of the votive lamps as Christmas and Valentine Day gifts.

Hanging lamps:

- 1) Bruce Wayne Batman
- 2) Cylinder
- 3) Asymmetric Cylinder
- 4) Simple
- 5) Droopy
- 6) Flower

Desk lamps:

- 7) Birds

Votive candle lamps

- 8) Japanese style birds
- 9) Single heart
- 10) Triple heart
- 11) Asymmetric heart
- 12) Cross
- 13) Bell
- 14) Tree
- 15) Star
- 16) Angel
- 17) Candy cane

Bottle Lamps

- 18) Jose Cuervo tequila
- 19) Camarena tequila
- 20) Corralejo tequila
- 21) Tequila Reserve 1800
- 22) Centenario tequila
- 23) Tonalá tequila
- 24) Pinnacle Vodka
- 25) New Amsterdam Vodka
- 26) Jameson Irish Whiskey
- 27) Exotico tequila

My latest lamp was inspired by walking down the Tequila aisle at the grocery store. None of the bottles had a shape that called out to be a lamp so I started looking at the labels for a theme.

I saw the painted skull and said that's the one. I know the painted skull is associated with the celebration of the *Day of the Dead*. Since I didn't really know anything about it I decided I would do a little research as part of the build.

What I found didn't really surprise me, or rather just confirmed what I already knew, except for why the skulls are painted with bright colors and flowers. I have a new perspective now, and a new appreciation for the history of the Day of the Dead and for how we Americans seem to get things wrong.



I did the four faces of the shade in different styles. The lower left picture shows engraved wood. The lower right is outlined then hand painted. The other two sides are half and half. Emma helped me paint then, which was special.

When I was done, I decided to write a story about a young girl going through some of the learning process I went through.

I hope you enjoy the story enough to pass it on to a friend.
Doug

Painted Skull

“Mom, why is there a painted skull in the window of the Hernandez’s house?”

Emily’s mom walked over and sat down on the couch next to her. “It’s complicated, Em.”

“We have a paper skeleton on our door, but its just white and I think scary. Theirs is all pretty colors and looks happy.” Emily made waving motions in the air. “Can we paint ours?”

Mom sat quietly for a minute then said. “Maybe, but I think you need to know how to do it before you start. Maybe you can run next door and talk with Mrs. Hernandez about it.”

“Okay.” Emily jumped up, ran across the room and disappeared out the door. Moments later she was knocking on Mrs. Hernandez’s the door.

“Hello Niña,” said Mrs. Hernandez. At four feet eight inches tall, she was still taller than Emily, but not by much. Her hair was long and straight and held in a long braid that came forward across her left shoulder.

“Hello Mrs. Hernandez, can I ask you a question?”

“For course you may, and please call me Maria.”

Emily looked down at her feet for a few seconds then back up at Maria’s face. “Why do you... I mean, I like the painted skull in your window. What does it mean?”

Maria tightened her lips and her eyebrows lowered, then she said, “It’s part of our celebration. In English you call it the Day of the Dead.”

Emily’s eyes widened. “You mean Halloween?”

“Well, sort of. Do you know what Halloween is?”

“Not really. I know it’s scary. There are skeletons and Jack-o’-lanterns.”

“Why don’t you come sit with me?” Maria opened the door the rest of the way and motioned towards the living room.

Emily came in and stopped on the way. On a little table, in the corner of the room, there were flowers (golden and red), oranges, peanuts, a plate with a stack of tortillas on it, and a funny looking piece of bread. There was also a little toy train, two bottles of soda and some brown liquid in a glass.

“What’s all this?”

“Its more of the things we use to help us celebrate.”

Emily sat down. When Maria sat down she said, “So, what’s Halloween and what’s the Day of the Dead?”

“Halloween is the evening before All Saints Day. The next day is All Souls day.”

Emily pouted a little. “Saints and souls?”

Maria took a deep breath and let it out slowly. “Saints are people who are called by God. There are two kinds; those who have spent their lives serving God and who do miracles and children who he called home while they are still young so they can live with him.” Maria tilted her head to the side. “Souls are everyone else who have died.”

“Oh,” was all Emily could say.

“On the Day of the Dead, All Souls Day, we celebrate everyone who has gone to heaven before us.”

“Okay, why do you have the pretty skulls?”

“Where I’m from, Putla which is in the state of Oaxaca in Mexico, we have skulls made from sugar. We have them to help us remember the people who have died, but we don’t want them to be scary so they are made with bright colors and flowers.”

Now Emily tilted her head to the side. “You don’t want them to be scary?”

“No, Niña. At midnight on Halloween, my Jorge gets come back and spend the day with me. That’s what the things on the table are for. Candles to light his way, hot chocolate because that was his favorite drink. We have the pretty skull to remind everyone of Jorge and to remind us of how happy he was, so we won’t be scared that he’s coming back to visit.”

“You had a son? I thought you just had three daughters?”

A tear rolled down Maria’s cheek. “He died many years ago. He was only five, Rosa was six.”

“I’m sorry.” Emily reached out a had towards Maria. “I didn’t mean to make you sad.”

“No. No. It’s all right. You helped me remember him and tomorrow I get to be with him.” Maria reached out and took Emily’s hand and squeezed it.

“I think it’s better to be happy than scared. I asked my mom if I could paint our skeleton to be like yours. She told me I should talk with you first so I would understand what it means. Thank you.”

Maria stood up and walked to the table with the candles and other stuff on it. She pulled out a box of paint and turned back to Emily. “My Jorge loved to pain so I got him some paints this year. I think it would make him happy if we used them to paint your skeleton to make it less scary. Can I help you paint it.

Emily jumped up, ran to Maria and gave her a big hug. They spent that afternoon painting together and Maria told Emily stories about Jorge.

That evenin all the trick-or-treaters said how special Emily’s skeleton was.