

# In the *Midst* of the Storm



Dr. Sharon Schuetz

## In the Midst of the Storm

The Art Center is having a contest,” Sue Rhine nervously bit her lip, handing Larry the crumpled flyer. “They’re looking for a painting of the ‘Essence of Peace’. First place is \$10,000.”

As he tightened his jaw, Larry slowly hissed through clenched teeth, “That’s stupid; how can you paint peace?” He had been in a funk since his parent’s fatal car crash three months before. Consumed by anger and doubt, he blamed God.

“You’re a talented painter, Larry, but you must get out of this mood. We can’t live like this. I just thought maybe this would help.” Larry ignored Sue’s monotone whisper.

“How can I paint peace when I can’t even find it in my own life?” He slammed the door so hard that a cup fell off the counter.

With sagging shoulders, Sue rested her chin on her fist, and the sofa became her altar. “Father, Larry is in such pain. I know he still loves You. Help him. Please. This darkness is killing us. Please give him peace. Thank You.”

Larry clenched his fist as he paced back and forth in the garage. I don’t care what anyone says. They didn’t deserve it. They were faithful to You, God, and You didn’t protect them. How can I have peace if I can’t trust You to take care of my own parents? He stopped pacing and continued speaking to God for the first time in months. “God, I don’t want to go to hell, so I’ll serve You, even if I can’t trust You.” He raised an eyebrow and nearly smiled as he stuck his head in the bedroom where Sue read her Bible. “I’ll do it.” “Who knows, with luck, I might even win.” Shrugging, he turned to leave. “Besides, we can use the money.”

Larry painted for six days, delighting Sue. She noticed a gradual change in him since he started working on his project. The depression cloud was dissipating; he was softening and even smiled occasionally. He was more preoccupied than normal, but at least he stopped brooding. He was always a private person, almost tight-lipped. He even hid the canvas from Sue’s curious eyes. When he finished, he delivered the painting to the Art Center.



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The winner was to be announced the following Friday night at an open house. He was handsome in his tuxedo. Larry looked young for forty. Sue wore an exquisite blue floor-length gown with a low cut back; the pearls Larry gave her for their tenth anniversary, and matching heels. She pinned her long, blond hair in a tight bun at the nape of her neck with a pearl studded clip.

Larry squeezed her hand on the way to the Art Center. “God and I’ve been talking for the past few days. He used this painting to show me how to find peace. I think we’re going to be okay now.” This is all he said, but for Sue, it was enough.

The gallery was full of mingling art patrons. Muffled conversation filled the large room. A plump woman in her seventies stepped to the microphone clearing her throat. As she greeted the assembly, she droned on about the Arts. A hush fell across the room as she was finally ready to make the anticipated announcement.

“Third place, for \$1,000, goes to Geoffrey Lindale for his, Morning Meadow.” Trees, flowers, and butterflies covered the canvas, tranquil in understated beauty. The peace drew you into the painting. You could almost smell the flowers and feel the soft breeze coming from orning Meadow.

“Second place, for \$1,500, goes to Mitzy Douglas for her, Lion and the Lamb. The king of the jungle lay quietly, his large head resting beside a soft, white lamb. They were nestled together in peaceful slumber, without a care in the world. Peace radiated from the near embrace of these natural enemies.

“And our \$10,000, first place winner is Larry Rhine for his, In the Midst of the Storm.” The eagle’s nest was perched on the edge of a ten-thousand-foot cliff. A storm raged, threatening to destroy everything in its path, with lightning, thunder, and treacherous winds. Two tiny eaglets slept soundly, snuggled in the soft down taken from their mother’s breast. Their parents sat close by watching over them. Oblivious to the danger around them, these eagle fledglings knew only contentment and trust. </p>

<p> Larry took the microphone. “God promised us that he’ll never give us more than we can bear. As long as we’re in this body we’ll always have storms, even then our spirit can still find peace. I forgot that for a while. But God reminded me He’s always there, even In the Midst of the Storm.”