

THE KAYAK SLID through the pristine waters. The sun was setting, with a splendid array of colors waiting to settle in once the golden hue was fully saturated. Shadows moved slowly into place, cast from treetops that hosted osprey nests to low flying sea birds skimming the water's edge. Grassy islands, rising from oyster bed sandbars just under the water, spread their intricate reflections across the surface. Steps seemed to form off the islands through their shadows, created by the angle of the sun.

Landyn turned the paddle with the ease of a seasoned outdoorsman. His weathered face and graying hair soaked up the golden rays that signaled the onset of twilight, and he was consigned to its imminent arrival. His life had been rich for a number of years. Living on the coast and enjoying its splendid majesty had been his purpose and it was fulfilled, through hard work and planning, day in and day out. He did not prepare for the end, and had no intentions of doing so.

The kayak continued its glide through the amber-coated reflections of everything outlining the bay. Every push through the waters was like floating inside a kaleidoscope of changing colors, from a bare, stripped tree to an overhead cloud shaped like an old man's expressionless face, surrounded by a light blue sky. Landyn's paddle had become wrapped with a suave of orange. A bare, weathered tree lay across his path, or perhaps across its mirror image. He gently broke through the elaborate canvas, leaving it scattered and broken up in his wake.

Landyn rowed past a sandbar. The swaying grasses stepped upward toward the changing afternoon sky. He lifted the paddle and glided along side the island. He looked to his left, downward, and saw himself rowing on the surface. His life was moving below him with distortion, constantly changing, as the colors of the seasons began to change. One season was fading as the other quietly approached.

A seagull flew into the setting sun, hugging the line of fire as if her life depended on it. Landyn imagined holding on to the bird from behind, his hands wrapped around its neck, steering the wings like a leather wrapped steering wheel in a sports car. With the wind blowing his hair back, making him free. The new season's arrival brought much anticipation.

A majestic eagle came down and kissed the reflection on top of his head. Landyn returned the favor, intuitively. A jagged ripple ran across the water. The continuous flow of current was competing against the push-pull fight of winds. Seabirds floated in the evening glare, interrupting the serenity when dipping in for their catch.

The landscape turned a brilliant swath of blues and pinks. Landyn lay back and drew in a deep, salty breath, enjoying the vision he had once strived so hard for, finally seeing it come to pass. He could count down the minutes to the end, as the sun dropped precipitously toward the horizon. The glistening of the setting sun reflected off his eyes like a well placed catch light, as seen from his alter side.

Darkness began to settle in. The nearly unseen wake moved along slowly from one corner to the next. Landyn thought, *it's on its way....*

The anticipation of a new day brought forth its own colors,

and the season drifted in with no promises. It came from a new direction during the night, with noises from both the east and the west. Crackling at the shoreline from something unseen, a splash just out of sight ahead, or was it to the side? He was exposed for the season, at its mercy. Looking over the side of his vessel, with his vision dimmed, the water seemed so close. *Where is my safety net?* A symphony of sounds erupted at nightfall's onset. Like a concert of ten thousand, with each voice trying to overshadow the next. A ragged blend of tenor, soprano, alto, and bass. A cutting in the water ran haphazardly in front of him like a trembling hand.

Regrets flowed through Landyn's mind. *What I would give to go back to what was safe and secure.* A gentle bumping along the bottom of his kayak drew a knot in the pit of his stomach. Thunder boomed in the distance, and lightning flashes reflected off the water's surface. He now had a glimpse of what was to come. *Real beauty comes just before the dawn.* The gentle, evenly spread pastels softened the harsh landscape, and for Landyn, knowing the cold darkness, the worst hour, was behind him made all the difference. Voices grew in a grand crescendo, just before the morning colors broke through and silenced them. Reflections returned, along with soft ripples of water and light. Unlike the magnificent pinnacle he had experienced before, this marked a new beginning.

Off to his side, reflections of trees, vivid blue sky, and a half moon appeared to be deep in an abyss. Its likeness revealed a hidden beauty inside. He wanted to dive in and explore his new world. Once again, wonderment touched his life. Landyn thought, *one more round is all I ask....* He smiled as he paddled toward his home.



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