

Scarf

by Jeremy Cairns

Salad is artist food. It's the stabbing.

On the drive home Phil thought that that was a bunch of hooley. He said steak is artist food because of the knife and the blood. Phyllis isn't convinced. Phil doesn't know anything. He thinks his truck is possessed by his dead mother. Phyllis knows the stabbing isn't about violence. It's about motion and function. The perfect combination of color and flavor with every stab. It's about art.

Today was a learning day. The kind that deserves a blush in a curly wedding flute.

First off, Phyllis wore the wrong thing, a pink jumpsuit. The white plastic chair they gave her made her feel like she was sitting on the patio of a trailer carpeted with fake green lawn. Elephant ears lumbered by. Hmm, they would say. She smiled. Where's the bathroom, they would ask. She pointed. Where-ja get the fries, they would inquire. Her head whipped to the side like she was hit with a wiffel ball bat. Not one sale.

The lady in the booth next to her ate salad. It had vinaigrette. That's French.

The lady sat cross legged and relaxed on a tall stool like she was about to dissertate. A floral scarf draped across one shoulder like the curtain of a stage. Corn dogs don't ask about salad. Funnel cakes don't ask scarves directions. She was an artist. She made women's shirts and jean coats, all bright and pastely, with French words bedazzled across them in curly letters over an impressionist Eiffel Tower. A real working artist. She sold a ton.

Phil decides to fall asleep on the couch in the den watching Bass Masters rather than deal with nonsense.

Scarves cover Phyllis's side of the bed. She has lots of them. It's going to be hot tomorrow, but she's going to wear a turtle neck anyway. And a scarf on her neck, no, her shoulder, no, her waist, no, her head. Definitely her head. Like a pirate. It makes her look she

did in the cancer unit, but with a little hair sticking out of the back this time. She hoped she'd never need them again. She was going to burn them. She's glad she kept them.

Phil will drive her back in the morning. He'll put the tall kitchen stool in the truck before they go.

Tomorrow she'll sell her first painting to a stranger. Perfect for their den. Dens are where the most loved art goes. They can look at it when they're not looking at the television. They'll see it every time they come in after getting a soda or a beer or some chips or what-not. Someday she'll hit the big time; someone's living room. Maybe at the State Fair in August.

One day at a time.

