

# PERSONAL STATEMENT

EDITORS' CHOICE IN ART | danica wixom

**M**ore Than Watchmen Wait for the Morning went through so many changes that it mirrors the story I painted into it. I was inspired by a friend's composition—a piano piece whose dark, dissonant chords resonated with my own dark night of the soul. Even as I listened to his composition, I knew in my heart that I was not in a good place. So I started painting. I found that Psalm 130 from the Bible was a good jumping-off point. It starts as the psalmist is crying out for God to hear his voice. He is thirsting—waiting—for God, “more than watchmen wait for the morning.”

I started with one canvas and painted the piano keys—a life-song of solitude. The skeleton hands are the weary, dying soul of the person who is grasping the keys. Originally, the first canvas was vertical. I turned it sideways. The inspirational piano piece I started with changed halfway through into quick, light, notes. I heard water trickling. I grabbed another canvas and painted living water that comes from the cleansing blood of the nail scars in Jesus' hands (this human dimension of God is paralleled with the galaxy of stars behind it, communicating the sovereignty and divinity of God Incarnate.) Right at the moment where death and life collide, the change is dramatic, but it is invisible at first as it is patiently growing. I showed a time progression in the three lumps of dirt next to the grave. At first, the grave is disintegrating, and then a new seed begins to sprout. The plant to the farthest right is the expression of the same soul that was once dry bones. These hands are now made new, sprouting more new green from each highest-reaching fingertip, and poised in an offering of worship. This new plant is life to the fullest here on earth, fruitful and healthy and erect toward heaven.

I worked on this painting during the hardest eight months of my life. I began as a depressed, fearful young woman with so many dark secrets held inside that my soul had begun to deteriorate. It hurt to constantly be guarding the “grossness” inside of me when I was around people, and it hurt to be left alone. Change seemed completely impossible. My faith in God at that point was a mere mask to keep the outside world at bay. I painfully broke.

There is a similar story found in the book of Ezekiel, who was a prophet of the Old Testament. God led Ezekiel to a deep valley. In front of him were thousands of bones that had belonged to the defeated soldiers of the army of Israel, Ezekiel's people. The bones were dry and shriveled in the hot desert sun. God came close to Ezekiel and asked him, “Son of man, can these bones live?” (Ezekiel 37: 3). And then something amazing happened—death and life collided.

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In an instant, God covered the bones of the valley with tendons and flesh. He took the wind and infused the bodies with life-breath. The dead army of Israel stood on their feet. This was a metaphor for the spiritual resurrection of the house of Israel, God told Ezekiel (verse 12). In the same way, it took the death of my pride, the planting of a tiny seed of hope, countless tears watering the ground, and patience for fruit to bear. It seemed that all the world was watching me, to see if that strange mess crumpled up on the ground in shame could ever be salvaged, made new. Miraculously, it was.

Now, I have a story to tell through this painting. God had told Ezekiel, “You, my people, will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and bring you up from them” (verse 13). That’s what my God did for me. God made a masterpiece of my life-canvas. And the creative growing process continues.