



# Healing Reflection

Story by: Jan Larson, Chair  
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*I am standing on the shore. Arms at my sides, hands open, palms facing the sea as gentle swells touch the shore. The horizon shows no hint of the storms to come.*

*The first wave laps at my toes.*

*"Let's order a CT scan just to be safe," my doctor suggests.*

*A white puff appears, dim on the horizon.*

*"Are you driving? Can you pull over?"*

*I am in Friday night Minneapolis traffic heading to an Airbnb where my adult daughter and I will spend the weekend making Covid-19 masks, watching girl movies and visiting over a bottle of wine. And swallowing fear.*

*"I'm sorry, the CT scan came back abnormal. We'll schedule an MRI for Monday."*

*The waves cover the tops of my feet.*

*"It's a tumor," the neurosurgeon I met minutes before, tells me. Unable to join me during the office visit - another bit of Covid-19 fallout - my husband phones in from the hospital parking lot. He listens. There is nothing to say.*

*The images tell a story. The tumor measures roughly three inches long by an inch wide. It has been there awhile, slowly taking up space meant for my brain.*

*My feet melt into the wet sand as the wave covers my ankles. I breath in and blow out trying to calm my frantic heart.*

*We are in Rochester with yet another neurosurgeon. He assures us the tumor is benign. We cling to hope.*

*Clouds on the horizon show hints of gray. The seas build and I brace myself for the waves that splash white foam up my legs.*

*It is early morning. A young resident appears at my bedside. My head is swathed in bandages ala "The Mummy." Luran already knows what I am just learning. The tumor is malignant.*

*A rogue wave crashes the shore. I am knocked to my knees. Drenched, I struggle to regain my footing, determined to face the coming storm.*

*The next 10 days will be consumed waiting to learn whether we have a future. Luran insists all will be well. I want to believe. But I don't want to make promises I can't keep. I share the image of my lone vigil against the storm with our youngest son.*

*"Mom," he chides me. "You need to rethink that image."*

*"You are not alone. Others are on that beach, joining hands, linking arms."*

*What comfort those words bring.*

*I construct visions of rows and rows of friends, family, loved ones, volunteers, medical professionals, and all those who will join me in facing the crashing waves, forming a barrier that surrounds me in love and healing.*

*Another day, another doctor. "You have a rare lymphoma. This is something you will learn to live with, not die from." There will be work ahead. It will be hard, but we can do hard.*

*Storm clouds threaten, but hints of blue appear.*

*I am filled with gratitude for the community that will see me through.*

*I am not alone.*

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**Artist: Joshua Brown, Professor  
Department of Languages  
University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire**

Joshua is a professor of German and linguistics at UW-Eau Claire, and he is also a weaver and needleworker with a focus on historical forms of folk art. His textile website is <https://www.ullfroginntextiles.com/>.

*For this project, I wove fabric for three stories and embroidered a recurring motif from each one using blackwork embroidery techniques. I then replicated the loss, fear, and disruption from each story by cutting the fabric into pieces. I then sewed the pieces together with visible seams and in an irregular pattern – reminiscent of 19<sup>th</sup> century piecework textiles. I was struck by these stories of loss and fear in our own UWEC community – we don't often know about the very real struggles of our coworkers, but we need to hear those stories and work as a community to lift each other up.*

**View all the pieces in the *Healing Reflections* [online gallery](#).**