

# Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities

---

Volume 5

Article 38

---

2023

## Personal Narrative

Hanne Marin Lund

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/rwc>

---

### Recommended Citation

Marin Lund, Hanne (2023) "Personal Narrative," *Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities*: Vol. 5, Article 38.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.humboldt.edu/rwc/vol5/iss1/38>

This Narrative is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at Digital Commons @ Cal Poly Humboldt. It has been accepted for inclusion in Celebrating Writers and Writing in our Communities by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Cal Poly Humboldt. For more information, please contact [kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu](mailto:kyle.morgan@humboldt.edu).

# Personal Narrative

by **Hanne Marin Lund**

There are many things in this world that we do not fully understand until it's gone. It doesn't have to be complicated, either. It may even be the simplicity of eating one food. That's why we must enjoy everything while we have it. That's why I now stop to smell the roses and every other flower in my grandmother's garden. That's why we have our family meetings and family hugs. That's why my friends and I try to spend time together every week. The artists of the world weren't wrong, and I wish I had listened to them before my downfall.

"Absence makes the heart grow fonder, but it sure makes the rest of you lonely."  
- Charles M. Schulz

It all started back in August. August 30th, 2022 to be exact. It was my best friend's birthday and I knew we wouldn't be seeing each other that day. Instead of celebrating the day before, we decided it would be best to celebrate the day after. That's the problem with planning. You can never predict your future.

I had gotten up that morning, nothing too abnormal. However, part way through my routine my stomach started to feel ill. I had to sit for a moment to lull the vertigo before I scavenged the cabinets for the bottle of Pepto in the back. I hastily took a fair dose before contemplating my plans for the day. What would I be missing? Is it important? Is this a sacrifice I can make? After weighing everything, I had decided that the Pepto would calm the storm enough to attend school. In addition, I had a friend relying on me for a morning ride that I couldn't let down.

I unlocked the car, pumped with adrenaline. I drove to my friend's house using the winding backroad. I got to his residence running 3 minutes behind. He hopped in and we drove. We got around  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the way to school before my stomach clasped with the strength of a baseball catcher. My vision zoomed like a Panasonic camera trying to focus. In fear that I would not only hurt myself, but also my friend, I had panicked. I panicked with the might I had left, trying to keep the car between the lines. My friend quickly picked up upon my ailment. He could feel the stress radiating off of me, so he started to perform some deep breathing I crept into the parking lot as we sat in silence. My thoughts were manifold, yet said nothing at the same time. We began to breathe together as my vision started to darken. We breathed the rest of the way to school.

"Is there anything I can help you with?" He said.  
I gave no reply. I just sat, clenching my waist.

"I'm here if you need me. I'll stay here with you until you're ready to go."

While his act of sitting just a bit longer didn't take much energy, I now realize how important it is to have a friend by your side in a moment of peril. You won't always have that, but when you do, it's a privilege.

I gathered enough strength to walk to class. He escorted me as I stumbled up the hill like I had my 21st birthday the night before. I grasped onto every handrail I could and collapsed into my seat. It was my college psychology class about growth and development. I sat in the front row, second chair from the left. I took out my notes and attempted to write down the prep on the board. Suddenly, my stomach cramped again and I reached for my water. I drank half of the bottle in one go, leaving the rest right next to me. It was as if drinking would wake me up. I could barely follow the professor's lecture. His voice sounded different and I couldn't read the board despite my glasses. Every time I noticed it getting worse I would take a sip of water as if that would reset my brain. I tried pinching myself to wake up, but eventually got so sick I just put my head on the table and hoped it would all end.

I somehow managed to make it halfway through the class. I was reintroduced to the class by my professor. He approached me with great concern. It was evident that I wasn't feeling well. As a part of health and wellness, he told me to go home. Don't push yourself. Washed by relief, I picked up my bag and stumbled out of the room, down the stairs, down the hill, and to the car. I had to stop every 10-15 steps to rest my stomach, but also allow my legs to rest. My stamina had been drained 90% compared to the day before. The only other time I had felt this awful was when I had the flu in middle school. I called my mother to tell her what was going on. Scared of blacking out, my mother stayed on call with me all throughout the drive home. I made it, head nearly against the steering wheel. I sluggishly made it inside, going immediately to my bed. I fell onto it and went to sleep immediately, hoping that everything would be fine when I woke up.

The next few days were a blur. I stayed at home for the whole week despite my will to go to school. My stomach had briefly lessened in ailment for the next two days. I had thought it was just a stomach bug. Then, Friday hit. I sat in my darkened room, late in the afternoon. I had my mother on the phone as tears streamed down my face. I couldn't ignore the pain. I wanted her by my side to tell me everything was going to be okay. Though, that wasn't possible. She left work immediately. I somehow managed to make it another half hour before she walked through the door. She got me some water and escorted me to the car. We went to the emergency room.

I remember clutching my stomach as we walked through the hall. The whole room swayed and the people were unrecognizable. I was quivering in pain. We were in the waiting room for not long before I was admitted. I changed into hospital garments and tried to follow everything I could. I got x-rays and samples, examined by the stethoscope and thermometer. Yet, nothing was found. All they could tell me is that things looked fine except for the fact I lost 10 pounds in one week. The doctor said that it was probably a stomach virus and that it would go away in 3-4 days. To spare you the details, it didn't.

By the time it reached the fourth day, I was starting to panic. It hadn't gotten any better and I was still homebound. I was tempted to go back to the doctor to get another examination. Though, that would've been expensive. So, we waited a couple more days. No results. My grandparents started to call with worry every day. I had missed two weeks of school at this point and my sanity was running low. We scheduled an appointment with our local gastroenterologist. She'd know what to do.

Another week had passed. My mother drove me to Dr. Kennedy's office. I sat shaking from my stomach pain and took several bathroom trips before I even got into the exam room. By the time we made it, I couldn't stay quiet. I cried. The doctor seemed concerned, but did her best. She recommended several remedies to try, but had no diagnosis. So, I got my new meds, started the infamous low-FODMAP diet, and just had to have faith.

I had been on the low-FODMAP diet for six weeks, yet no results had come from it. I spent six weeks avoiding complex sugars, gluten, nearly all fruits and vegetables, and everything processed. It was the most bland thing I had ever done. But, while it seemed like it didn't help in any way, it actually did wonders for the long run. To be able to freely eat anything you want without worry is a privilege not everyone has. I am thankful to be able to enjoy the foods I do. It took losing them to realize that.

We had gone from the beginning of September all of the way to the beginning of November and I still hadn't been able to go to school. I was taking 6 pills a day at that point. So, we scheduled an upper endoscopy/colonoscopy. I have a major fear of hypodermics and had never been under anesthetic before. In addition, I'd have to go through the dreaded colonoscopy prep at the age of seventeen. Though, if it meant getting rid of chronic pain, I was willing to do it. So, I stuck it out. I went through the day of prep, just happy that I'd be getting results. Sure, I was nervous about the procedure, but it also helped me discover that it isn't that bad. I was always afraid that I'd never get the medical care I needed in fear of the hypodermics and procedures. However, I got through it, and I now trust that I will be able to take care of myself in the future.

I remember getting home from the appointment and calling my grandmother to update her on everything. I had to drop all of my college classes at this point since I couldn't attend them. My graduation status was threatened. Yet, despite it all, I was just happy to have conquered my fear. I had learned so much more about life and gratitude than classes could ever teach me. I find that more valuable than anything else. So, I enjoyed my bowl of Mac'n'Cheese, knowing that I may not be able to eat it again some day.

While we had wished the colonoscopy would bring answers, it didn't. In fact, it only brought problems. My symptoms had worsened in what we believe to be an overreaction to the prep. Now, my ailment had affected me throughout the night. I wasn't able to sleep longer than 2 hours at a time before waking up in excruciating pain. I nearly went to the ER again, but we just used home medicines Dr. Kennedy recommended since that's all the ER would be able to do anyway. That day of hell went on for two weeks. I was now taking four extra medications everyday just so I could sleep at night. Still, we had no answers.

By the time we had reached mid-December, my grandfather had been hospitalized for a fractured hip and a second round of pneumonia. When he was released from rehab, my mother and I stayed with him to make sure he had everything he needed. Even though the mesalamine started to help my illness a bit, I knew I wasn't going to be going back to school that semester. So, I got to spend a couple of weeks living with my grandparents and supporting them through their rough time, as well. I got to learn so many things about my grandparents in those weeks. I got to ask questions about their lives that I may never have known about otherwise. I got to spend time with them while they're still on this planet, for everything ends at some point. I had learned the importance of doing things while you can. I learned that you should enjoy every day for all of the little things, and not wait to complete your bucket list. I got to hear all of my grandparent's regrets in life. I heard about all of the trips they wanted to take but became too old to. I heard about their hobbies that their bodies could no longer support. I learned some of the wisest things I could have from them. I learned how I want to live my life, and that's more valuable than anything.

After winter break, I had to make a decision. Still with sickness and without diagnosis, was I well enough to go back to school? In that semester away from my friends, teachers, and classes, I had grown into a new person. I grew into someone who doesn't need straight A's in their classes. I grew into someone who wanted to prioritize my friendships. I became the person I had wanted to be many moons ago. So, I went back to school with a fresh start as the new me. I continued my medication and appointments. Now I sit in my classroom on a Wednesday morning typing this story. I have a few close friends that mean the world to me. We go on little adventures and take the time to smell all of the flowers that we cross, for we never know if we'll meet them again. I don't push off the things I want to do. I savor every moment, and that's the way I like it.

You know, I've asked myself one important question. If I could go back in time and live that semester without ever falling ill, would I take it? Would I relive months of pain if I had the option? I thought long and hard about this. I was miserable, but it takes that kind of low to realize how good things really are. I learned some of the golden rules of life that I wouldn't have otherwise. I grew into the person I wanted to be because of it. So, no. I wouldn't change anything, even if I had the option. I would do it all over again if it meant I'd become the person I am now.