

Hello everyone.

As many of you know, Ikse and I knew each other from our wilderness canoe camp, Les Voyageurs. At camp, we train our participants to be self-sufficient in the backcountry. Camping, cooking, canoeing, first aid, you name it. This is something both Ikse and I took seriously, and had a lot of pride in. So part of our first week on site is training kids on what to do if your canoe flips over. In the middle of a lake.

One day, at base camp, we were doing just that.

[photo of Ikse and me teaching canoeing] (explain briefly)

We taught the kids the basics of how to get your canoe back upright, and soon enough we were practicing on the open water. (change photo) This of course involved lots of capsizing intentionally, then hailing another canoe to come rescue you. All was going well, and the kids were learning a lot, until the wind picked up on our lake. Suddenly, a routine day of canoe skills turned into an emergency. The wind was spreading all the canoe groups apart. We were all *generally* getting pushed towards the opposite shore, near the Russian camp, but we were also getting fanned out farther and farther apart from one another. I remember I was in the water as the wind picked up, and as soon as I got back into my boat I leapt into action, and Ikse and the other counselors were doing the same. I think there were 3 or 4 counselors for maybe 15 campers. And that was our first mistake. We were spread too thin.

Back in my boat, I remember seeing kids in the water, some separated from their canoes by the wind, and others hanging on to their swamped canoes, completely at the mercy of wherever the wind was pushing them. Already some of the far away boats looked like tiny specks on the horizon, and all I could do was hope they were ok. I began to paddle furiously towards the specks that were closest to me.

It was a wild goose chase, and chaos on the water. After much time and effort I got the 4 or 5 campers closest to me wrangled and back in their canoes. I have an image burned into my head from that day of lashing my canoe to another canoe with my legs, because the kids couldn't steer in the strong winds on their own. Throughout this, the only thing I could do was pray that the other counselors were having success wherever they were on the lake.

After what seemed like ages my group reached the far shore. When I arrived, I met up with Elysee, but between the two of us only half of the campers were accounted for. And we really had no idea where the others had ended up.

Eventually, Ikse arrived with their group, and stumbled onto the Russian beach looking utterly exhausted and defeated, but with all the rest of the villagers in tow. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief. Everyone was accounted for, and Ikse had done the lion's share of the rescues. All told, they probably saved about twice as many villagers as I had.

In this moment I gained a ton of respect for a person that I already had admired greatly.

Afterward, when debriefing this incident, which we call *Le Crise Canot*, I learned that Ikse had re-injured their rotator cuff, re-opening a wound from the year prior. They were in tremendous pain, especially after the adrenaline had died down. But there was no regret. They had been depleted of strength and ready to collapse. I asked them how they had managed to rescue all of the remaining campers and canoes, despite this. And then they said something I'll never forget. They simply said, "I had to find more strength, even though there was none left. I had no choice."

Ikse had a tremendous sense of duty and responsibility to these campers, as the one in charge. They didn't have to put themselves at risk and rescue every remaining camper alone. But they did. They didn't have to re-tear their rotator cuff. But they did.

And in that moment I realized exactly how hardcore of a person I was dealing with. Ikse was gritty, and determined, and had deep strength.

That continued to be the case. Ikse often talked about the “good kind of suffering” on backpacking adventures, and other paddling trips. Pushing through pain and other barriers was always worth it for the scenery, sunsets, and quality time spent outdoors with friends.

This probably sounds familiar to a lot of you, because they were tough, and steadfast in *every* aspect of their life. They approached everything with 100% effort and dedication. Whether it be for writing a book, going on a long backpacking trip, or climbing a wall, they were always a full sender.

And Ikse absolutely loved that they were strong, and swole, and tenacious, and a badass. They reveled in it. (As we heard in their poetry.)

Ikse was a tough cookie, to be sure, but they were also extremely thoughtful, and generous in helping others. They were fiercely competent in most things they tried, and they loved to share their knowledge and skills with others. They were a talented, and a patient teacher.

Ikse. I am heartbroken we'll never get to canoe together again, but I am so enriched for having known you and learned from you.

Lastly, I also want to give a special thank you to all those people that turned toward Ikse, and helped them at the end of their life. Ikse's final days were better with your support.