



the stories in the stitches

*a mother's journey to send
her son off with style*

Findlay, Ohio, is a small, industrial town quietly holding its ground along the Midwest rust belt. It's where Kim Furiate was born and bred. Where she received her Vogue in the mail and poured over its pages.

It started as escapism, the way many passions seem to in the Midwestern towns people forget about. Back then, flipping through each new issue was about Kim's love for those images rendered within the confines of the page. Over the years, it became a love for the way reality could be rendered with aesthetic, and the way it could break the confines of what we perceived.

It became a love for the stories behind the stitches.

She became a mom earlier than expected. Fresh out of college, she married Tim in Arlington, Ohio. It's a town she describes as flat as a piece of paper.

Nathan arrived in the world shortly after the wedding. Back then, Tim's job providing for his new family often took him on the road, leaving Kim and Nathan to grow together, surrounded by a thick expanse of woods and fields.

As a young mother, Kim began the task of figuring out how to raise a life alongside her own. But she didn't mind all the time alone with him. She was enchanted with Nathan from the outset. He was mellow and bubbly. Their personalities meshed even as the years marched ahead.

When Kim talks about Nathan it's with words that flow tender from the tongue. Words that steep in the air and in the silence that hangs as she pauses to smile.

It's been thirty-one years since their shared story began.

He's getting married this summer in the forests of Eugene, Oregon. Kim is over the moon even though it means giving him away. She loves his fiance and the thought of them sharing this life together.

For Kim, being the mother of the groom is a chance to honor Nathan and the journey that has led him to that one fleeting day approaching in July. Kim sees this wedding as a chance to celebrate the man she's watched him become since their meeting in that small town hospital all those years ago.

In a world saturated in words, Kim knew exactly where her search to give them meaning would lead her: Fashion. How many times can "I love you" be said before it begins to sound like a moot point? Fashion is Kim's space to reaffirm what she tells the world through word and action.

Just as her relationship with Nathan has grown over the years, so has her relationship with style. What began as a childhood fascination, turned into Kim's favorite space of self expression and art.

When Kim began to think about the wedding, she would imagine standing next to Nathan in a dress she picked for that day in particular. She knew she had to find a garment that would reflect her desire to honor her son and his journey to the altar.

Kim sees fashion as more than a method for covering the nakedness of the human body. It's her calling card. She says it lets her announce how she feels about herself and the world. But sometimes her passion leaves her feeling misunderstood.

High fashion comes with a big price tag. Yet where some see status and labels, Kim sees art. Her love of fashion as an art stems from its ability to convey stories, and its capacity to allow her to tell her own.

Just as many designers start with a muse, or with a story that they want their collection to encapsulate, Kim began the search for her mother of the groom dress with Nathan as her muse. She knew that whatever dress she chose needed to have a story complimenting Nathan's and her own. She wanted more than a pretty dress to wear and greet guests in. Fashion is Kim's way to own, celebrate, and honor the personal journey.

As Kim began the search through designers, a clear connection began to emerge between Alexander McQueen's Fall 2017 collection and Nathan. The collection was inspired by a small county of Cornwall, England. During the design teams' exploration of the land, they encountered the sacred cloutie tree at Madron Well. Strips of brightly colored cloth were tied along the branches. People wrapped them on the tree in honor of people in their lives needing wishes. For this reason, it was also called the wishing tree. Locals said that as the cloth became worn down over time that the wish would become true.

Kim was intrigued. Nathan, like his mom, is Midwestern born and bred. He was raised where the fields kiss the woods, where the vastness of the land becomes an invitation to roam. Nathan always loved the trees and being around them. He grew up playing in the woods of small town Ohio and Indiana.

To this day Kim thinks he's happiest on a hike.

She saw the dress in person the first time during a trip to Dallas. Kim knew there was an Alexander McQueen store, and she felt pulled to it. She couldn't lift the collection from her mind.

When she saw it for the first time, she was quiet and overwhelmed. She describes the dress with a reverence that mimics its careful construction. She calls the dress a divine mess. But it's exactly what she wanted. It's reflective of her story as a mother: beautiful and a little chaotic.

In this dress she saw the reflection of Nathan's life. It captured his love for nature, for the trees dotting his Midwest youth. Most of all, the dress captured the way their lives wove together. It told of her wish for him to find love in a world that often feels as distressed as the dress' fabric.

Kim knows that her dress will play no overall role in the event. She wants it that way. The wedding day is for the bride and her son standing beside her. She'll be watching from the sidelines. There, her dress can quietly honor the boy she raised. The boy who, as she tells it, ran to the woods to play and find his peace in nature.

In July, Nathan will pass Kim as he walks down the aisle to start a new chapter of his life. He will walk past the colorful strands of fabric blowing in the soft breeze. Just as she did all those years ago in the Midwestern woods, Kim will watch him as he goes.

This time she will be wearing her love in the threads of a dress sewn with their shared story.