



10. MAKE ME A VESSEL



After witnessing my mother's death and cremation, these rituals, which were previously marked by a kind of conceptual or cerebral detachment, suddenly took on a newly visceral reality.

The indelible images of the cremation were imprinted in my memory — *the furnace, the fire, the metal rod, the ashes, the sifting, the sorting, the precision, the care.*

Years earlier, I'd been introduced by a friend named **Vera** to a local glass artist named **Ethan Bond-Watts**, whose art show in Burlington she and I had once attended together, and his meticulous work had always remained alive for me.

I contacted Ethan to see if he would be interested in making glass together. When we met up one early spring evening in a bird sanctuary a little south of here, we built a small fire in the woods at the edge of the water, and cooked steak and broccoli together on the open flames.

I told him about my mother's recent death and cremation, and described the ritual journey that I had begun about six months before. I described my wish to make glass using the materials of our land — mixing crushed-up limestone powder and other special elements with my mother's cremated remains.

Neither of us realizing at the time what an odyssey we were about to begin, we agreed to work together in this way.

This ritual presents Ethan in his element — the master glass artist at work, virtuosically crafting an exquisite funeral vase to hold my mother's remains.

Working with his assistant, **Kraig Richard**, Ethan moves like a dancer around **AO Glass**, a glass shop in nearby Burlington, while creating the beautiful vessel.

Using a trick and a tool he picked up in **Venice**, he punctures the gummy glass with a spiraling series of air pockets in a **Fibonacci** distribution, rendered in my mother's favorite color palette of pinks, violets, and blues.

The aesthetic parallels with the crematorium are striking: *the industrial setting, the blazing furnace, the metal rod, the piles of powder, the transformation of materials, the care.*

Once completed, the vessel shifts to **High Acres Farm**, where my sister, **Amanda**, and I funnel our mother's cremated remains into Ethan's newly crafted vase.

For me, this ritual carries a double request — a request of Ethan to make me a literal vessel to hold my mother's ashes; and a request of life to make me a vessel for whatever kinds of transformation need to happen through me.

Performed in 2016 — Duration 7:40

