

My Daruma. My bestie. My dreams. My life.

Description

There's an ancient saying in Japan, that life is like walking from one side of infinite darkness to another, on a bridge of dreams. They say that we're all crossing the bridge of dreams together. That there's nothing more than that. Just us, on the bridge of dreams. •

Matthew Tobin Anders

The year was 2018. I had just completed a 3-week stint supporting the Winter Olympics in PyeongChang, South Korea. I had helped Chloe Kim & Mikaela Shiffrin get fitted for their sponsored apparel they would be sporting from the podium just days later. And now I was in Northern Japan, crunching around the thick glistening snow of Hokkaido with my bestie planning out our futures together and separately.

Maybe I should even take it back a step further. This bestie (maybe I've used that label more than once;) was new-ish. I was in Krakow in 2016 for World Youth Day. A friend and I decided to head over a bit early to visit a few other areas of Poland. One of those stops included the city of Oświęcim to take the Auschwitz-Birkenau Nazi death camps tour. As I was standing in line for the tour, I separated from my friend I had arrived with and instantly connected with a fellow American. Southerner. I could detect his accent immediately. We started chatting and never left one another's side for the remainder of that heavy day. I guess when you experience something so heavy, contemplative, and heart-wrenching with someone, you're just connected for life. I do truly believe Benjamin & I crossed paths not by accident.



So there we were, two years later, traveling in Japan. Benjamin & I stayed in touch after having met in Poland. He joined us as a volunteer for the PyeongChang Games, and then we carried on to Japan to travel together and decompress afterwards. Benjamin had a special connection with Japan, speaks Japanese with near-native fluency, and had spent some time living in Japan. I had never been. We both delighted in sharing the experience together.

As we walked through the heavy snowfall of Hokkaido, migrating from one temple to another, we talked about our lives past, present, and future. We shared our goals and dreams, the impactful events that made us who we both were in that moment, and the lives we wanted to shape for our futures. The entire experience was so quiet, peaceful, and surreal for me. Magical. I remember in the moment thinking to myself *never forget this feeling!*

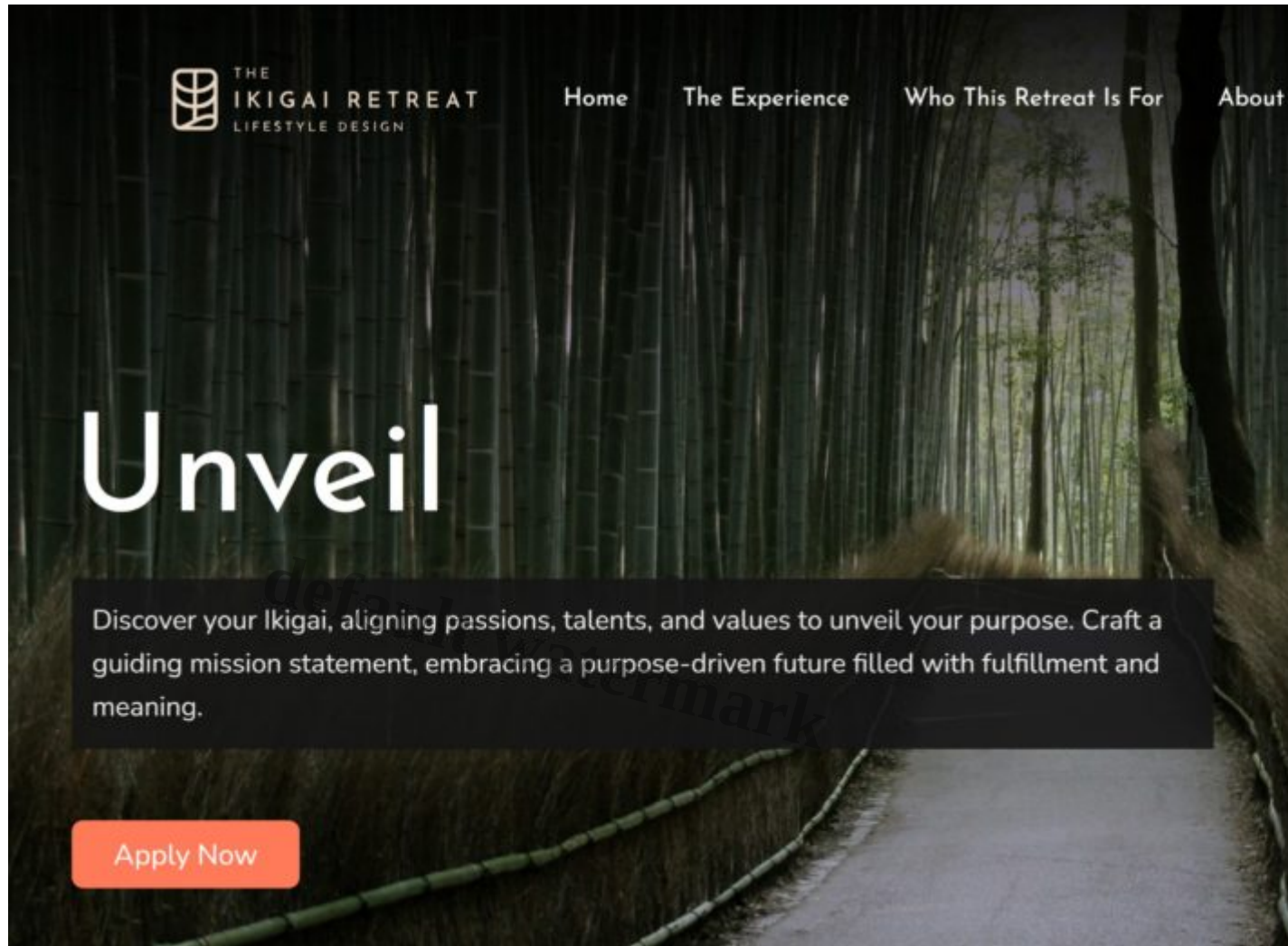
That day was the first time I had shared with Benjamin my dream of becoming self-employed and the fears that came along with it. He helped me see the limiting factor of some of those fears and encouraged me to keep running toward that goal.



As we parted ways after an amazing 10-ish days in Japan, Benjamin gifted me this Daruma and taught me about the Japanese wishing doll. I learned that these papier-mache dolls are to help our dreams come true. My doll came hand painted but with white eyes. Benjamin taught me that as I focus on my wish for my future, and picture my dream as my reality, I will color in the left eye of my new Daruma doll. And as I filled in the eye, I promised Daruma that I would fill in his other eye once my wish was fulfilled. Daruma is blind to the world until I make my wish a reality.

My Daruma sat on my desk at home and watched over me for the next 3 years as I worked tirelessly to make my dream a reality. I noticed my one-eyed Daruma peeking at me from time to time on those long days where I spent more than 12 hours in front of my computer screen. It was a reminder to me that I owed it to myself to keep putting in the work. That I would see the world around me clearly once I was able to bring my dream to reality and fill in the other eye of my Japanese wishing doll. January 2022, on my first official day of self-employment, I proudly filled in the second eye of my Daruma and thanked him for keeping watch over my journey. I captured this picture and promptly sent it to Benjamin with so much gratitude!

Since that Japan adventure in 2018, Benjamin and I have both been on a journey. We've done a lot of inner work- self-discovery and growth- both independently and together. We have continued to travel the world together and meet up in cities around the country for bursts of laughter, joy, love & inspiration as our schedules would allow. And now we are crossing this bridge of dreams together. We're bringing the magic of our friendship, cultural immersion and connection, and life purpose journey together into a profound and once-in-a-lifetime two-week retreat hosted in Tokyo & Kyoto, Japan. Participants will be imbedded in Japanese culture, learn about and experience customs first-hand, while putting in the work to discover what makes their lives most meaningful. This feels like a project that was meant to be, and one that will make my Daruma very proud. For more information or to register, check out www.theikigairetreat.com



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