

SMALL MARKS / MOTIF & MEANING NO. 03

The Private Herbarium

Eight botanical directions for memory, calm, protection, and belonging



ORIGINAL SIGNATURE CONCEPT

Concept art for interpretation—not tattoo-ready flash.

Meaning is a direction, not a definition.

A botanical tattoo becomes personal when the plant, growth habit, and arrangement carry real associations. Species can offer a starting point, but your memory of the plant matters more than a universal symbol list.

03 The emotional spectrum

09 How form changes meaning

04 Signature concept: The Unfinished Hem

10 Build your own direction

06 Six visual directions

11 An artist-ready interpretation note

A USEFUL BOUNDARY

These readings are creative possibilities, not universal facts. A symbol can hold family, cultural, religious, or personal associations that do not belong to this book. Start with your own connection and let the artist draw the final work.

Four ways the motif can speak

01

MEMORY

A plant tied to a person or place.

02

CALM

A quieter visual rhythm.

03

PROTECTION

Softness with a guarded edge.

04

BELONGING

Roots, return, and chosen home.

Choose one route as the centre. A second can support it; four at once usually becomes illustration without hierarchy.

SIGNATURE CONCEPT

The Unfinished Hem



ORIGINAL CONCEPT STUDY



READING THE COMPOSITION

Why the image carries its meaning

Violet and jasmine rise from a line that resembles an unfinished hem. Three gold stitches hold the stem at its origin; above them, the plant grows freely. Belonging is shown as something made and repaired—not something assumed.

THE HEM

A remembered boundary or inherited line.

THREE STITCHES

Chosen attachment rather than permanent capture.

FREE STEM

Belonging gives growth somewhere to begin.

Interpretation belongs to the relationship between form and story—not to the motif name alone.

Three directions, three different emotional temperatures



01

Private Tenderness

Closeness, evening memory, and affection that does not ask to be public.



02

Held Calm

Rest, remembrance, and a ritual for returning to yourself.



03

Protected Softness

A tender centre that does not apologise for its defences.

Original direction studies / use to identify a visual route, not as finished work to reproduce.

Three directions, three different emotional temperatures



04

Layered Joy

Warmth, complexity, and delight that unfolds rather than arrives at once.



05

Rest and Remembrance

A pause held with dignity; memory without excessive ornament.



06

Homecoming

Attachment, familiar scent, and the path back to a place or person.

Original direction studies / use to identify a visual route, not as finished work to reproduce.

The motif can hold relationship or threshold



07

Grace Under Pressure

Vertical courage, composure, and a softness that keeps standing.



08

Chosen Family

Different lives gathered without requiring them to become identical.

A stronger frame or pairing changes the story before any extra symbol is added.

Shape is part of the story

Before choosing detail, decide how the motif should behave.

01

Single stem

clarity / solitude

One plant carries the full emotional weight.

02

Loose pair

relationship / dialogue

Two species can remain distinct and connected.

03

Small bundle

family / collection

Several memories are gathered into one gesture.

04

Climbing branch

return / persistence

Growth becomes directional and body-led.

Pose and composition usually change the emotional reading more than adding another object or word.

Start with a sentence, not a saved tattoo

01 / THE MEMORY

What person, season, place, or change gives the motif weight for you?

02 / THE FEELING

Choose three words. Avoid style labels such as 'fine line' at this stage.

03 / THE VISUAL RULE

Name one form decision: open, rising, guarded, paired, repaired, loose, or contained.

04 / THE BOUNDARY

What must not be copied, crowded, made literal, or explained to a stranger?

My motif is about _____. It should feel _____, _____, and _____. The visual idea I want to protect is _____. I want the artist to decide _____.

Clear enough to guide. Open enough to draw.

SAMPLE DIRECTION

I want a violet-and-jasmine stem growing from a short unfinished hem, held at the base by three visible stitches. The feeling is belonging that was chosen and repaired. Keep the plant airy and botanically recognisable, with the hem quieter than the flowers. I am open to your interpretation of species detail, curve, and final scale.

KEEP OPEN FOR THE ARTIST

Exact flower references, number of leaves, stitch style, stem curve, final colour use, and how the composition follows the placement.

SEND ONLY WHAT THE PROCESS ASKS FOR

A short note and a disciplined reference board are enough for a first enquiry. The artist may prefer their own form, ask different questions, or wait until consultation to see visual material.

THE FINAL EDIT

Keep the meaning personal. Keep the drawing open.

Choose the emotional centre, the visual rule, and the boundary. Then let a tattoo artist translate the idea for your body, their craft, and the scale the design needs.



Every artwork in this book is an original concept or direction study. It is not healed-tattoo photography or tattoo-ready flash. Personal planning use only.

SMALL MARKS

ORIGINAL CONCEPT STUDY