

Black Girl in Bellaire

A Mind Wandering by Lisa Hering

August 10, 2019

Music by Lounge Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sKECIep75Cg>

Believe it or not, I'm black. True, a very light shade of black. But none the less, I am a black woman, even though I was born German/English Caucasian. I'm beautiful. I'm about 35, tall and thin. My cheeks are rosy, my lips are pink. And my hair is nappy. There is a very happy, peppy tune in the air. And I'm walking very peppily, if that's a word. I have a ribbon in my hair. I'm wearing a plaid skirt, a lilac knit v-neck top with a purple sweater around my neck and shoulders, because it's fall and it's quite cool. Makes me want to walk fast. And gives me a little boost in my stride. In fact, even though it's sometimes breaking the rules, I'm skipping. And the biggest thing I'm wearing is a smile.

I'm walking down my old street in Bellaire, Texas, the street I grew up on, that's right, Willow. I'm walking, er uh, that is, skipping, down the street in my white tennies and sparkly bracelet, and I see my old neighbors. I used to have a best friend in that house right there. I see her mother, and I raise my hand to my mouth, cup it so she can hear me, and I shout out, "Hi, Loretta!" And then I smile real big and wave, a little bit over done. She looks up and sees me, but she has no clue who I am. You see, when I lived here, I was a very young Caucasian girl with brown hair and green eyes. I played with her daughter, Blair. And her two older daughters sang a song about a peach, The Peach in the Garden. We had so much fun. I remember when I'd come around, Blair would run to me with her arms stretched out. She was much younger than me. She was only 4. I was 8. But we were buddies anyway.

Loretta waves at me, with a slightly confused look on her face. I say, “It’s Lisa! You know, little Lisa, Kathy’s daughter.” I smile real big again. Her face is completely expressionless, but she puts down her gardening tools and watches me walk down the street. “Do you hear the music?” I shout at her as I walk backwards so I can see her. “Music?” she asks. She is now really confused.

I see a kid walking down the street. He looks tired. He’s coming home from school which is at the end of this block. He has a backpack on and he is staring at me. I’m very tall. And I’ve never seen a black person in this neighborhood. Likely he never has either. I wave real big at him and say, “Hi!” or rather, “Hiiiiiiiiiiiiii!” very long and pronounced. I do a little jig, clap my hands, spin around, and look at him again. He has a big smile on his face. He starts dancing too, and we give each other a high-five. “Where’s that music coming from?” he shouts so I can hear above the sound waves. “I don’t know,” I shout back. “But I love it!” “Meeeee too!” he says, and giggles as he squats and twists on his haunches, and then bounces back up and points his fingers like the letter L and waves his arms high in the air. We pass on by each other and he runs down the street with so much energy I’ve never seen.

There’s a man watering his lawn. I wave big and smile. He waves and stares. Then another kid comes riding his bike down the street. “Hi!” I shout as I jump to the tune and twist ever which way. The kid looks in wonder for just a moment, then smiles. “Hey!” he says. Then he laughs, stands up on his bike pedals and starts riding around me in circles as I follow around with him pumping my arms in and out to the beat. I give a few kicks and he turns the bike around and circles in the other direction. He laughs again. The man watering his lawn is still staring intently. His wife comes out. He doesn’t notice her. “What are you looking at, Al?” she asks. He doesn’t seem to hear her. He’s spraying the flowers in a row, and as he sprays where he is not looking, he showers his wife with water spray. “Al!” she screams, “Put that hose down!” He wakes from his intent stare and takes in a big breath as he sees what he has done.

I keep hopping on down the street like an Easter bunny looking for colored eggs. I reach the school, it's an elementary school, and there are children playing in the playground. They have drawn Hop Scotch boards and are hopping through the squares. I come into the play ground and start hopping to their Scotch. I'm turning in circles and clapping my hands high up in the air. Then I shake my hips and jump back up. The kids are smiling, and begin one by one to hop and skip too. Pretty soon, they are all jumping and clapping and laughing. The teachers come out and shake their heads. "Children!" they say. "Everyone line up!"

Funny, there aren't any black children in this school that I can see. I must be making quite an impression. I dance over to them, smiling. And my smile is really big and bright. My teeth are really white and my lips are really pink. The teachers have a fearful expression on their faces.

"It's Lisa!" I say. "Don't you remember me? I used to go to school here. That was my classroom right over there." And I point my finger. I have loud red nail polish on and my nails look really good. The teachers just stare at me in wonder. They look very confused. I shake my head at them. "Don't you hear the music?" I ask. "What music," one of them asks, offended.

"This music!" I say, and I come right up to them and blow in their ears. I'm still dancing as I try to make them hear. Pretty soon, one of the teachers looks at the other in awe. The teachers all start staring at each other in wonder and confusion as they begin to hear tunes coming out of nowhere. The melody is so upbeat and happy, they can't help themselves. They begin to smile, and then they look at me and start snapping their fingers and getting the beat. Their heads start to bob up and down, and pretty soon they are dancing and turning circles and holding their hands up in the air and waving them right and left. I look back at the kids, and the kids look at me, and we all start smiling and the kids get out of line and start dancing again. They figure it's OK since the teachers are dancing.

I dance my way out of the school yard and start walking back down my old street. There's the man with the hose and as I pass, he looks at his wife and she looks at him. They hear my music and start smiling at each other. Then they start dancing there in their front yard. They are dancing and laughing and in love all over again. I dance backwards so I can see them as I continue on down the street. He sprays her with water again and she laughs in delight. She grabs the hose and sprays him with water. He kicks up his feet and laughs.

I pass back by Loretta's house. She is still staring at me. She still hasn't heard the music. Then, little Blair comes out of the house. "Lisa!" she yells in amazement. She waves big and smiles. Then she starts dancing. Robbie and Millie, her sisters hear her and come out. They start dancing too. I keep going on down the street. Now I'm passing by my old house on the corner of Willow and Second St. There's my dad in the front yard, and my mom too. They are so young. And they are dancing and laughing. I'm dancing along with them. We dance dances we've never even seen before, from countries all over the world.

I see Loretta walking to our house. She is staring intently at me again. Finally, she says, "Is that you, Lisa?" "Yes!" I shout. "It's me! I've been trying to tell you that! I'm all grown up!" She tilts her head slightly, smiles and says, "Yes, you have, and such a beautiful woman you've become." Then she joins us in a line up dance where we all put our arms on each others shoulders and shuffle and kick our feet. We've never had so much fun. It was a great little neighborhood to grow up in back in the 1960's. Bellaire. Willow Street. Good to see you again.

Hope you enjoyed.

Thank you and good night.