

Love in a Prism

A Mind Release
by Lisa Hering
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Music by Nature Healing Society
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_6L7ONN5JI

Note: This story has two endings.

The Seattle air seems perpetually damp and rainy. I arrived here recently to meet up with my fiancé who is on a short break between jobs across the sea. The year is 1986. Soon he must go back to a new job in a foreign land with customs strange to both of us. He asked me to come with him, but I'm nervous and hesitant. I can't decide. But he's bought me a ticket on the next plane anyway. Just as he begins to board, I agree, and he heads out, promising to wait at the foreign airport for me until I am in his arms again.

I watch as his plane takes off, the wheels leaving the continent that I am on. It's hard to see through the mist, but I can follow the red tail lights as the plane vanishes above the misty clouds that bring a late afternoon drizzle. Now I can only wait for the plane that will take me to him. I have both impatience and trepidation imagining a life I know nothing about. Time goes slowly, and I wait past the time my plane should have arrived. The flap board shows the plane is late. I ask, and am told there are mechanical problems, but it will be here soon. It is winter and it is cold outside, cold and wet. And



there is a storm approaching. At least I am warm in the building with my gray tweed coat and gray boots with a furry white cuff.

The drizzle has turned to cold rain with ever increasing strength, and it beats upon the tall glass windows of the airport terminal building. It is getting dark outside as the afternoon turns to evening. I keep waiting. There is nothing to do but wait. The hours pass and still nothing.

I am watching the rain pound the windows, covering them in sheets of water. I listen to the loud speaker and watch for my plane. There is no break in the weather. The rain is so thick and the clouds so dense, I can't see outside the windows. It becomes quite dark and dreary, even inside the terminal. But I feel safe enough, and I just watch the water pelt the windows. I think about the someone somewhere waiting for me on the other side of the water. I know I am loved as no one has loved me before, as though I were the most precious thing in the world, and I am comforted.

Evening becomes night. The rain does not stop, and a few leaks have begun in the ceiling of the building. There seems to be some chaos inside the terminal. I ask again. The agent tells me to sit down and fasten my seat belt. But I think the request is strange, and instead, I walk. I lose track of time. There is nothing I can do to calm the angry people down. Their fate, and mine, is already determined.

All of a sudden, there is a loud and angry bolt of thunder which shakes the building and frightens me momentarily as it crashes down. So disturbing is it that people start panicking. One woman screams, and a man cries out, "We're all gonna die." I look over at them, and more water is leaking from the ceiling. It's a terrible rainstorm. Torrential rain is pouring all around outside. And everything goes dark except one light which shines directly on me. Everyone else fades away. I don't know why there is such a light on me and the others are all in dark. I am only aware of myself in this strange light. It's as though the very raindrops are channeling light from the other side of the world onto me.

It's unusually cold inside, much colder than before and my hands are turning pale and losing their feeling. My boots are getting wet. They become water logged. There is water in other parts of the airport, too. People become frantic and start screaming. I wonder why people are crying, and when I rest my eyes, my life flashes before me, each important moment. The funny thing is, the important moments are not those I would have

guessed. All my memories are of plain and simple days, playing with my brother in the backyard or hurting my foot and being comforted by my parents. And I watch the images my mind brings to me, like a movie. Moments pop up from deep within my subconscious that I had almost forgotten. Did I do right? Was I good? Was my life worthy? I feel I must answer this question right now. And I decide that it was. And I am at peace as my body becomes numb in the cold and everything becomes completely black as the rain water rushes in and the lights go out.

He sits in his truck by the baggage claim on the other end of the world at an airport where he will pick her up. He waits and waits for her arrival. It is misty, and it turns to rain. She is late. She has not appeared from the airport doors. He watches the doors and occasionally checks his rear view mirror. Dangling from the mirror by a string hangs a tear drop faceted prism. In his private Idaho state of mind, he sees her reflection in it, but not in the rear view mirror above it. She must be here. He looks at the prism again, and she is in it. Love is in a prism. He turns to look behind him where her reflection appears to be coming from. But he sees no one. He gets out of the vehicle and looks. He is greeted by raindrops, each one holding her image, each drop like a tiny blue ocean with her in it, as though her image is telescoped into them from the space where she is, unknown that she is observed, like a lens into her life. He watches and sees her sitting, waiting. She is thinking, remembering, and observing, waiting for that plane to come take her to him. And he watches her as they both wait. He watches intently. His concentration, like the thread from which the crystal dangles, keeps her afloat. So long as he can see her in the prism, he is connected to her. He dares not turn his attention away. It is the thread that holds onto the prism, the thread that keeps the prism from falling and breaking apart.

She stands and walks to the window of the airport. She looks out at the rain. She sees the raindrops fall on the window and wind their way down, leaving wet tracks for the next raindrop to follow in. She places a finger on the track and follows it down, as if she could somehow touch it and be a part of it, be in it. Then, she sees her reflection in the drops. She sees herself in each drop, just as she is, in her gray coat. Waiting. On her wrist is a bracelet with glass drops, faceted like a kaleidoscope. She is in each facet, her image repeated a million million times. She looks around and sees herself in every piece of glass.

It is quiet now, the rain has finally stopped. The leaks in the ceiling are no more. But there is still no plane. Her waiting seems now more endless than ever. It is the middle of

the night and everyone is sleeping in their chairs. She is the only one awake. She walks the airport for something to do. She looks at the ads on the wall, and the gift shops and restaurants which are now closed. She steps around some debris, some metal boxes that seem to have been thrown on the floor. She steps over a radio that is dead. She gets wet as she wanders through the silent rubble as men rush to block off the area. She goes to a pub and two people are having drinks. She enters. There is a small stage for a performing group. She is watched by the two people drinking, and by him, waiting at the other airport. She sees her reflection in the faceted mirrored ball that rotates above her. The ball grows further and further away from her, as though she were sinking. The two people drinking stretch across their table to kiss, and she imagines them as fish. She laughs at her own thoughts, and then somewhat embarrassed, looks away.

She wanders aimlessly from gate to gate, seemingly stuck at the airport. She reaches the end of the line, and it was built as a full circle with floor to ceiling windows all around. She stands in the middle, alone, and is caught like a prisoner inside a prism. She can go no further. The airport terminal has provided her with a seemingly terminal existence. And even though the plane seems terminally late, the check in clerk tells her the plane will come in on schedule, just a little late. Be patient. She finds a flap board again, and looks at the schedule. The plane is on its way. The flap display shows that it is on schedule and will arrive on time to pick her up. She double checks her watch. But it must be broken, as it always says the same time. It's as if time keeps resetting itself, or perhaps there is no time, only space.

On the other end, he is still waiting. Her image is in the stars, like a tiny mirror reflecting on her. He can see every move she makes. It is his private eye into her life. She asks the check in clerk about the plane and is reassured it is coming. Just sit and be patient. There is nothing she can do to make the plane arrive. And there is nothing he can do but watch and wait. He just sees her waiting, waiting and thinking. Doing nothing of importance. Just waiting. She is the love of his life, and he cannot pull himself away. He knows by now that she will never reach him. But he will not leave because he is trapped in his own place and time. He sees her here in the raindrops and if he quits looking, he might not be able to find her again. He can't take the chance of losing her. He will sit, waiting in his vehicle, for as long as she is in the raindrops, or in the stars, or in the prism twirling on the thread from his rear view mirror.

There is a tap on the window. A woman is trying to talk to him. He looks away from the crystal as his attention focuses on the woman speaking outside his window. He rolls his window down. She tells him he needs to move his vehicle so her car can pass. He explains his situation and apologizes. Her situation is similar. She tells him they have lost contact with the plane and the airport and there is no point in waiting further. She suggests going for coffee to warm up.

But he doesn't want to leave. He momentarily hesitates, saying, "I hate to leave. I like to look at the raindrops here. There is always something in them."

He stares at her, thinking of the gentleness of her features, and the caring nature of her words, which she says in a soft and comforting way.

She looks at the raindrops and sees nothing in them. She says to him, "There is nothing in them."

At that moment, on the other end of the flight, a woman in a gray coat passes through the interface between glass prism and air, water and sky, fantasy and reality.

He looks at the raindrops again, and indeed, now he sees nothing in them, just as the woman has said. He looks at the crystal prism, and it has fallen to the floor of the vehicle, the thread broken. She is not there. The woman he has waited on for so long is no longer in the raindrops. There is no one left for him to wait on. It is time to go. So they have coffee. And the following day they have dinner. And as time passes, they fall in love. He marries her and they eventually have a child and as the years pass, they have a wonderful life together.

But every time it rains, he looks into the raindrops to see if she is there. And she is not. She is gone. But he can't help it. Each time it rains, he looks. He looks at the glass he is drinking from. He looks in the crystals hanging from the chandelier. He looks in the soap bubbles that rise when he washes the dog. She is never there.

ENDING 1

He is much older now, and he takes his wife to the airport to drop her off for a business trip. He kisses her good bye and the wife walks inside the terminal. It begins to rain. He turns on the engine to leave, but he has a change of heart and decides to wait. He watches the rain, and he remembers the rain, that rain of so long ago. The window fogs up with his breath. Is she still waiting? He looks for her reflection in the raindrops, but she is not there. His eyes water. He touches his own tear and looks at it on his finger. He touches the foggy window with it, and sets it free to slide down the glass, in it his sad spirit at not having been able to connect with her, to have left her alone at the airport, to not have been able to tell her that he knew her plane had crashed in the ocean and everyone inside had perished, and that she didn't need to wait anymore. But he kept seeing her waiting. She wouldn't go home while he was still waiting on her, to tell her that he forgave her for not finishing the flight to him. He knew and he understood it was not of her doing, and it was OK to go home.

He happens to glimpse in his foggy rear view mirror and he sees a figure in a gray coat walking towards him in the rain. Her light brown hair is wet and her bangs cling to her forehead. Her coat is soaked. But she smiles and waves as she approaches, and he rolls down the window.

"You're still waiting," she says, a drop of rain falling off her delicate nose, and her cheeks being as rosy as he remembers. "I wanted you to know, I tried to get to you. I just couldn't, and there was no way I could reach you to tell you I wouldn't be there. I didn't mean to abandon you, and leave you to finish your life without me."

He could not speak. She leaned down towards him and laughed as she said, "I just wanted you to know I didn't leave you on purpose. I didn't mean to not come or abandon you. It was beyond my control, and it was OK for you to go home."

"I did wait," he says. "I saw you in my crystal prism. I saw you in the raindrops. I saw you through everything glass. I wanted to tell you I understood why you didn't make it, and that it was OK. I couldn't hold on to you forever. And I felt guilty about that. I abandoned you. I looked away for just a minute at someone else, and you were gone. I couldn't keep you. I couldn't save you. So I left without saying good bye. I felt so guilty, so

responsible. I just wanted to say good bye and let you know I knew what happened on that day, in the airport, in the plane, in the icy waters in that winter.”

“You didn’t need to feel guilt or responsible,” she says, “I was OK. I knew when the scared young man in the back shouted “We’re all gonna die”, it was time for me to look at my life. And I closed my eyes and thought about my life. And trusted that it had been well spent. And that was good enough. And so I smiled. And while I wanted to live a long life, I could already see the water. We were all doomed. Though others were panicking all around, I found my own peace with my life. I was gone in my mind before the plane went down. I was somewhere else, ready to begin again. I had a blank map to start over on, with nothing yet written on it. I was OK. But I new you wouldn’t be. I knew half your heart would go down in the plane with me that night. I knew a part of you would die with me. And I couldn’t tell you that I tried, and I couldn’t say good bye. And I couldn’t hold your hand one last time, or tell you it was OK to find someone new.”

He says, “I dreamed we’d meet up again sometime for coffee in a cool place and just chill so we could let each other know we’d tried, to end us both feeling guilty about something we couldn’t influence.”

Outside his car, there’s a tap at the passenger side window. He looks over and someone is asking him to move his vehicle. He turns back and reaches his hand out to touch her, but she is gone. He opens the car door and steps out. He looks around. But he is alone in the rain. He looks at the raindrops, and he sees her in them again. But this time, she is not at the airport. She is in a strange new world, a candy land, and she is warm and happy. She goes about her daily affairs, as though no one were watching.

He had a new window into her life. And he didn’t have to wonder anymore about a woman he would have married, if her plane had brought her to him. If he had known she was coming, he would have waited no matter how long it took. But time waits for no one. And he had to move on. But there was always that desire for connection with someone you lost who had meant a lot to you. And now that connection was alive again, through the rain and the stars, in every bubble and every crystal, and every eyeglass, in every starry night, she was there. What they had was once upon a time when fairy tales were possible.

He talked to her, from his car, at the airport, in the rain. He told her about his life since he had seen her last. And he could see in the raindrop what she had done and how her life had changed. But they were worlds apart. And their needs were satisfied, simply in knowing that each had waited on the other, and that it was circumstances beyond their control that had caused their lives to go on in other directions. It was OK because they had each waited until distance and time pulled them apart and separated them. What was between them now was only rain and bubbles and prisms and stars. And though they were not physically there, the reflection was always there, reflections of a thing that began long ago, and would be reflected a million million times in each glass, mirror, bubble, and raindrop. Reflections are the light, but they can't touch your hand. They can only live in a raindrop or a star. But that very thing is what allows you to turn away and find something real.

The rain becomes a drizzle and her light fades away in the mist. The weather is melancholy, and he wishes for the bright smile of his wife and her warm touch. He misses her already.

In the drizzle, he makes out a figure walking towards him. As it nears, he recognizes a familiar figure he knows so well. The dreariness lifts and his melancholy fades. She waves. He sticks his head out the window.

His wife says, "You waited! How did you know to wait? I'm so glad you're still here." She touches his hand and it is warm and loving.

She gets in and begins to tell him the details of her ordeal with the flight. "They were having some mechanical problem with the plane. They delayed it at first, but then canceled. I'd much rather get on a different flight tomorrow. It isn't worth the risk."

"It never is," he says. "I'm so glad you came back." He feels warm inside. He listens. The voice is familiar and comforting. Her laughter is pleasant.

"Why did you wait so long?" she asks. "Did you know the flight was canceled? I couldn't get you on the cell phone."

He replies simply, "I like to look at the raindrops here. There is always something in them."

She examines the raindrops and says, "There is nothing in them."

He looks at the raindrops now falling on the windshield. And indeed, there is no longer anything in them. And he wonders if there ever was. He turns on the windshield wipers, and the wipers wash her away into the swirling waters of a hidden vortex in a desert landscape, and he knows that where ever she is, she's OK and she's started over, on a blank map, that she'll fill in day by day.

And he leaves the airport thinking, "What we had was once upon a time when fairy tales were possible."

ENDING 2

In a green garden on one of the few warm, sunny days in Alaska, a woman sits on a white wooden bench and notices the flash of a red tail light in the water of the bowl of a fountain. She is reminded of the tail lights of a plane that left the continent she was on, with a man she would never see again, a man who once waited on her in his truck at an airport far away on another continent, on a dreary, rainy evening, a man she was unable to contact, a man who waited a very long time, afraid she had changed her mind, afraid that if he left, his fears would be undeniable and that the act of leaving would make his fears true, sick that he would never see her again.

A cat gently drinks from a fountain and disturbs the water. She peers more deeply but there is nothing but the image of the cat licking his face. She takes a pen and paper and begins to write about a flight that was canceled a long time ago when the building she was in was badly damaged by a torrential storm. She had no place to go. She had no ride to take her back home, and waited over night until the next flight which was also canceled. She left the terminal to hitch hike a ride home but the only vehicle that stopped was a truck headed for Alaska and she was only going to ride part way but she had no money and no way to contact him and she ended up riding the whole way because there was nowhere to stop, and the landscape became more magnificent the further north they drove, and the truck was warm and safe and the trucker watched over her.

She wrote him many letters, but her letters were always returned undeliverable. His work was freelance and he moved about a lot. China had just opened up to the western world, but there were no cell phones and information was often impossible to get. She eventually gave up.

And the warm cat purrs gently by her side on a bench in the garden and her mind wanders in the sunshine and the red tail light of a truck flickers in the water again and vanishes. A trucker pulls onto the property, gets out, and they go inside together.

Thank you and good night.