



My Great Dane and Knights in Shining Armor

A Mind Release by Lisa Hering
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With music by Tim Janis, "Happy Mother's Day with Love"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5Bd2SHgY4Q>

I was standing in a grassy field. It was night, but it was bright. There was a most amazing contraption sitting in the middle of the field. It was huge, made of metal and hundreds of yards in length. This thing had lights on it, and exhaust was coming from underneath. The night was calm and peaceful with a cool summer breeze that blew across my face, and it felt good. I stared at this saucer shaped object from that field on that unusual night. It reflected the moonlight back onto me and made me glow. But it all seemed quite harmless.

The grass was tall, like wheat, up to my thighs. I walked through it to get a better look at what I knew was not from here. Suddenly, a ramp opened, and a door above was raised, like part of the curved roof split apart. There was light inside. I paused, but my curiosity got the best of me. Then something maneuvered its way to the door from deep within. It appeared to be someone dressed in tin, if such a thing is possible. And he stood to the side of the opening, like a footman or a majordomo, waiting for me to enter. He looked at me and I looked back at him. The metal suit covered him completely and I couldn't tell what he really looked like. But it didn't matter, because whatever it was, and where ever it was going, so was I. It was the offer of a lifetime. I had no ties to Earth. And my apprehension was overruled by my desire to see what lay ahead. It would have been futile to resist. Whoever this was, my technology was child's play to them. If they were insistent on one of ours coming with them, I wouldn't endanger the world by forcing their hand. Appeasement works if you are willing to accept all the consequences, or if the consequences of resistance are sure to be worse. And I was ready to accept what may come. After all, at this point, I couldn't walk away and forget about it. And I couldn't let them take someone with dependents and responsibilities. I didn't want them to have someone who was unwilling and afraid. I needed new adventure in my life, and the Grand Canyon was no longer enough. Here was what I needed, and it was laid right at my feet, as though someone dear knew what I needed and was making sure I would be just fine, a parent giving their child the ultimate gift, the gift of a fulfilled life.

The wind brushed my hair across my face. The steward waited. He was patient. He merely stood at the door. My bare foot touched the shiny ramp. I paused... one last moment to change my mind. The metal was smooth and sleek. I placed my foot solidly upon it. And then the next foot. I felt as though I were already off the Earth. Then I walked proudly up the wide ramp, watching the major with each step. He didn't move, but appeared to be taking notice of me. Once at the upper landing, I tried to see what lay inside. I saw others like Domo moving about in odd looking spacesuits. I saw dashboards and buttons and levers and handles. It all looked very space-crafty.

I turned to look back at the open grassy terrain of green. It was perhaps my final time to say good bye to all those I had loved, and all those I hadn't met, and to the memories that haunted me that I might escape. I was absolutely certain that Earth was the most beautiful planet possible in any galaxy, any universe, and any dream. It was a

shame to leave it, but yet, there was no purpose for me in staying either. I had done everything here I could do in my sixty some odd years. The Earth didn't need me anymore, and I didn't need it. So I faced the craft, saluted Major Domo, and walked forward into something I knew not what, with some trepidation, but with determination and certainty of my decision. There was no one to see me off. It was a lackluster exit. There were no fans cheering, no waves goodbye, no tears from those who would miss me. They would understand when they found out I was gone. And I didn't know but what I might see them again, although I did not believe so.

I walked inside, and Domo followed. The large ramps came together and closed me in. Those inside stopped what they were doing and, standing quietly, faced me. I couldn't see any faces inside their astronaut type suits. Each had a chair of sorts and electronic screens of clear glass, beyond which one could see beyond the craft, although from the outside, one could not see in. I saw the tall grass and the trees far beyond. I saw roof tops in the distance, and some backyards lining the field. A few dogs barked. And then, I saw one very large dog running across the field towards us. He stopped and barked furiously. Suddenly, I could comprehend what the dog was saying. "I am the great guard dog of this land. If thou should hurt the fair maiden, thou shall pay greatly!"

Apparently, the space being understood as well. He walked to one of his contraptions, flipped a switch, and had this reply to him. "We have seen guard dogs much greater than you. You are small and frail." He was taunting the beast. And it seemed to work.

The dog was taken aback. His pride was damaged. He replied, "I am not weak! I am the greatest guard in this land! I can protect any human I choose!"

The suit laughed. "Prove it!" he said. "Be her guard on this exciting journey and keep her safe. If you are what you say, then we will not be able to harm her!"

The dog barked, and then whimpered. He sniffed around in the grass and ran in circles, trying to make up his mind. The great ramps opened again to allow the dog to enter. But the dog stood his ground and barked.

"I thought not," said the suit. "You can't do it." And the ramp began to close up. The dog made several big circles again, but just as the ramp was several feet off the ground, the dog said, "I'll show you!" With great power and perfect coordination, he sprang from

the Earth with a leap so solid and strong, that he landed squarely on the rising metal ramp and slid inside like a batter sliding into home plate. In fact, he almost crashed into me. I sprang to the side while he put on his paw-brakes and let out an ear piercing howl. Then he stopped and looked around at those staring at him. I gave him a big, bright smile, clapped my hands and said, "Come to me and keep me safe, you handsome steed! I'm so glad you will be at my side. Please introduce yourself."

I swear he lifted one eyebrow as he peered at me and contemplated what I said. He said, "Is it you I'm saving? Are you the damsel in distress?"

"I am!" I replied. "But now I know I'll be safe with you. You are mine and I am yours. Please, come sit by me!"

He smiled in his steedly way, got up and headed my way, lumbering from side to side. "I think ye a fair maiden," he said with certainty, and continued. "I am the greatest of all dogs. I am a Great Dane, and you may call me Dane." And I replied, in a like manner, "I think thee a loyal and true companion and protector, Dane, and these suits here, they are none other than knights in shining armor. With you at my side, and them at the helm, we will get along now on our adventure. What say thou?"

And my great companion let loose a very heart felt and long cry that went far into the night air, which was soon followed by hundreds of barking dogs from the neighborhoods for miles and miles. Most were saying, "Dane, where are you going? We want to go with you! You're our leader! You're the greatest!" But then as we got further and further away, they settled down some and began wishing him Good luck, and asked him to write and send a post card. And almost as we were out of hearing range, I heard some saying, "I could have done that, why didn't they pick me? I'm as good as he is!" And the last I heard, their yelps turned into, "So long, keep the faith, fair thee well, God bless, and good bye. We will miss you." So, in an indirect way, there was an audience who waved us off, me and my new family.

And as we lifted off seamlessly and silently, the walls of the vessel became transparent and it was as though we were floating in air. I sat on the floor with my arm around the Great Dane, and he sat on his haunches and watch as breathlessly as I did at the views before us. We could see all the dogs in their respective back yards, and all the homes, and all the streets and parked cars as they became smaller and smaller. There

were the tops of trees and chimneys with smoke and bright lights downtown. There was a river meandering through the woods, and I saw it as it connected with the sea where there were boats and ships tied to the docks. And then, there was the vast ocean completely dark and silent. I could see nothing else, nothing until we went above the clouds. Then there were ribbons of white between us and the Earth and the further and further away we got, the more of the Earth we could see, until there was this beautiful turquoise ball of land and sea and ice and torrents of weather here and there, and creatures so amazing that filled every niche, every space, except the very tip of the highest mountain, yet even there, I saw a note that read, "I was here. Signed, Edmund Hillary."

As we moved away, the rocky ball became smaller and eventually I could fit it into the palm of my hand. I looked at my companion and said, "Dane, what thinketh thee?" And he said, "I thinketh, why are we speaking in merry middle English? Let's do some dog talking!" So, you see, I knew it was going to be an amazing trip. All of our knights dressed in their armored suits were busy at their controls steering us on some path known to them but unknown to us. I was truly happy to have this canine friend beside me. Perhaps some are unafraid. But I say for almost anyone, it never hurts to have a best friend by your side on a journey to unknown places of unknown danger. And as the Earth vanished out of sight, Dane gave a woeful howl that echoed the pain of the loss of something we were both experiencing. We were now sailing like the explorers to a new world, bringing the past with us into the future, and hoping we had made the right choice, a choice which was now set and irrevocable.

Occasionally, our knights would look back on us seemingly to see if we were all right. Finally, the one I called Domo waved me over, and I looked at Dane as if questioning him, "Should I go?" I stood up and Dane barked quite loud, saying, "Beware! It's not safe to leave my side!" But the individual in the suit was only offering me a look in the cockpit.

"It'll be OK, Dane," I said, "Come with me." He barked once more, but soon realized that if he didn't follow me, he'd miss all the fun. So, my great guardian almost hopped with nimble feet behind me with more curiosity than any cat I'd ever seen.

Once at the controls, I could see how they operated. It was the most elegant set of controls I'd ever seen. It was powered by Caesium ion batteries, an element much heavier than lithium. But in space, and with our size being dwarfed in comparison to the vast distances between gravitational fields, it seemed to work OK. The ions were heated, and

propelled the ship with the light emitted when the electrons cooled, or jumped from the excited state to a ground state. We only had to pass the heat of a star to excite all the atoms again, and there were stars everywhere. Some of the excited ions were kept in a closed system, where the energy was kept constant, the old $E=MC$ squared routine put to use. What energy one atom lost, another one gained. And thus, the energy was preserved indefinitely until the ship needed it. It was like watching fireflies in a glass box, with photons jumping from atom to atom in a never ending dance. And because we use Caesium on Earth to keep our atomic clocks accurate, we were in sync with Earth, and could find our way back home by searching for that frequency, listening for the millions and billions and trillions of like sounding pings. Our ship could literally talk to the Earth, if only the Earth knew how to listen. In fact, that's probably how this vessel found us, by following the rhythm of the excited Caesium. But it looked like our tank was running low, and it was a good time to fill up. I thanked the suit for allowing me to watch and was about to turn when he pointed to a star on our left. I looked back at him confused. He pointed to the controls and then offered them to me with a motion of his hand.

“You want me to steer?” I asked?

He bowed his head. And I quickly said, “But I don't know how to steer this ship. I might break it!”

He stepped back and stood behind me. Then I had the strangest thought. Inside my head, I clearly heard the words, “You'll do just fine.”

Dane barked, “Go ahead! Can you imagine if you don't, and you get back to Earth and you say, “Yeah, they offered to let me fly the thing but I said “no”?” Come on! Who else gets such a chance? The ship of opportunity is here. Don't miss the boat.”

I turned to face the controls and the infinite space in front of me, peering through the invisible walls which revealed fantastically colored gasses and a big star approaching. I placed my hands on the helm and steered towards the alien sun, host of it's own set of planets.

“Everyone steady,” I said. “Vector nine one.” I had no clue what I was saying, but it sounded pretty good. The suits all stared at me, apparently confused. So I added, “To our left, nine o'clock.” They returned to their screens and seemed satisfied.

Our vessel slowly veered left. “Look, Dane!” I said excitedly. “Look at that beautiful planet! It’s colorful, like Earth! I thought there couldn’t be another one like it, but look at it! It’s incredible! But the oceans aren’t blue. They are green!”

Dane echoed my sentiments with a series of excited yelps.

“I know,” I said, “Amazing, huh?” I was completely entranced by the beauty to my left.

Dane continued to bark, and I was so entranced that I hadn’t noticed he was looking off to the right.

In my mesmerized state, I said, “Dane, you’re beginning to sound like Lassie warning her owner of impending death!” Just then, a meteor slammed by us so close I could have hitch hiked a ride on it! The sound barrier blasted the ship.

“Dane!” I shouted, “Why didn’t you warn me? You’re supposed to keep me safe!”

The ship was vibrating strongly, but soon settled down to its normal hum.

“Hey, Domo,” I said, “Is it OK if I go investigate this planet?”

Domo shrugged his shoulders as if saying, “It’s OK with me, I don’t mind.”

So I concentrated on my vectors and headed us into an angular tangent with the planet that would be us in its orbit.

“Hey, Domo, got any idea where their North Star is?” I asked. “We can blend in to one of their constellations so in case there is intelligent life, we won’t be noticed. Domo pointed to a distant star in line with one of their poles. It was a brightly twinkling star that was the winking eye in a whale shark constellation. I had a special connection to whale sharks and knew I’d like this planet. I steered the ship directly between the planet and this star.

As I guided the ship into position, I pulled on the yoke and pressed a button that was labeled “Reduce Throttle”. We slowed and eased into a perfect position where we had a front seat view of the planet.

“Look, Dane!” I called out in excitement. “The grass is blue, and the leaves on the trees are red and orange, like in autumn, but it’s spring here because I can see all the blooms! Oh, I want to take a closer look. Can we, Domo?” I asked.

Domo nodded, and I pulled on the wheel to move closer to the planet, of course, keeping in line of sight with their North Star. Domo pressed a button which magnified the view, and suddenly, I could see everything on the planet up close and personal. I gasped at the beauty. I couldn’t help but say, “Oh, look at that! And look over here! Isn’t that something! It’s ever so fantastic! The animals are so different. That one is half dinosaur and half elephant, with velvety skin and ears that look like butterfly wings in shades of Caribbean Blue and Indian Yellow. And look at the lakes! They are crystal clear and the rocks and cliffs are turquoise with waterfalls of green everywhere. The fish jumping in the rivers look like small orcas and whale sharks. But I don’t see any people.”

Dane added at this point, “That’s why it’s still so pristine. It’s not broken yet.”

“Yes,” I said. “You’re right.”

But we need to keep moving along. Domo steered us back towards the sun to reheat our energy sources, and I said my good byes to this quaint solar system.

“Good bye, Planet,” I said. And I just barely caught a glimpse of a dino-elephant pointing at us with its trunk. Maybe those were the intelligent life of this planet, gentle souls. We passed the other side of the planet when passing out of their solar system where it was autumn. The leaves were bright green fading into blue violet as they died and dropped to the forest floor. “Plants absorb and reflect light differently here,” I mumbled to myself. “Just the opposite from Earth. This gives me a reason to want to learn again.”

Once back on a steady, even course, Domo handed me back the controls. This time I gladly accepted. For several hours, I held our ship steady, making only small movements, and I was learning how to communicate with the flight staff. I could understand a few of their symbols and signals. And occasionally, it seemed I could read their thoughts. In general, I was learning what they meant. I was getting the hang of it, and I began to enjoy it, and was, in fact, very glad I had come along on this journey. I began to understand that you never have to stop learning, and if you do, you might miss adventures and sights like this.

I was excited, comfortable, and ready to play. So I whispered to Dane, “Get ready! I’m going to take us for a roller coaster ride!” Dane gave me a good bark, and with that, I plunged the ship into a dive.

The suits were startled and grabbed on to their stations. I began a corkscrew spiral with a broad and gentle circular movement, easing into the curve with a tilt like the track of racing ovals. The light from the stars was swirling around us like a time lapse photograph, and everyone watched, mesmerized a bit by the sensations and the views. I saw a yellow and purple nebula coming upon us, and decided to fly through it in a straight line but spinning ever so slowly on an axis. As we passed through, there were meteor collisions all around us, at a safe viewing distance, of a million meteors that made sparks and explosions. I made a big circle around them and headed straight for the light coming from a super nova, light that was a billion years old. I couldn’t help but smile in delight. Domo seemed content with my attitude and let me express myself in the way I handled the ship. It was the artist in me coming out, and I was glad to have that feeling back. It seems my inner voice had been heard and appreciated. And that gave me great confidence and a zest I had almost lost completely. I was excited, and happy, and full of desire to learn and see everything. It was like being young again and starting all over with a new life, a new chance, a new start with everything in your favor, with opportunity, with friends, with technology that could you do the things you wanted to do. It was a time for me to reflect on how lucky I was, and perhaps how lucky I had been. I had never seen myself as lucky while I had been on Earth. But my father, the person I respected the most in the world, thought he was lucky, no, not lucky, blessed. Blessed because not of his job and his house, but because of my mother, my brother, and me. He said the greatest thing he and my mother ever did was us. And that if he couldn’t have us, then he didn’t want children at all. We were not replaceable. We were the ones he wanted. And he was afraid to pray for things because he was afraid that God would suddenly notice he’d given too much to my dad and might take something away. So he never asked for things, except to live long enough to take care of my mom and to see that me and my brother were happy. I didn’t respect my dad because he loved us. I respected him because he knew how to handle any situation and make it better, and because he was wise. He knew who to trust and who not to trust. And he knew how much to risk and how not to risk too much. And it never really dawned on me until just now, that if I thought he was the greatest person in

the world, and he thought we were the greatest people in the world, then maybe we were all lucky people after all.

For the next several hours, we passed the most magnificent things, gaseous shapes I could never imagine, nurseries of baby stars, old neutron stars sending out massive quantities of heat which our ship absorbed to rekindle our Caesium atomic light sources. It was the absolute most amazing journey. The peace gave me time to reflect on my life. At one point, I had almost given up on God. But I wasn't so sure now whether that was right or wrong. As I contemplated this, something appeared before me that put fear into my heart. Directly in front of us was what appeared to be a black hole, the hole of death from which nothing can escape! All the amazing colors within a huge radius around it were being sucked into it, like water seeking the lowest point. Lofty, fluffy shapes were being pulled like taffy into long strings of color, and all that string was being sucked down the opaque black pancake that devoured everything in its path. My heart began to beat rapidly. My skin turned pale and became cold and clammy. I turned to the suits for help. I was unable to control the steering mechanism any. It wouldn't respond. We were on a path of disaster!

But the suits were just as calm as ever. "Look!" I shouted. "It's a black hole. Don't you see it? I can't move the wheel! We're headed towards it like a paper boat above Niagara Falls!" And then, I clearly heard the words, "You'll do just fine."

"Just fine?" I repeated. "Just fine? I can't do this. I don't know how." I turned to the looming hole in the vast expanse ahead of us. And as I did, it engulfed us, and the transparent panels of the ship went dark. I grabbed Dane and held him tight. He whimpered and wagged his tail. I expected to be stretched into infinity at any moment and never know anything again. But instead, the blackness was stretched to infinity, not us. I just couldn't tell, because it was all black. It was like going through a tunnel on a boat ride at Disney World, except blacker. Was I going to be ripped apart or not?

I looked at the suits. They did not seem alarmed. Perhaps they had done this before. Suddenly, a tiny speck of light, so insignificant, appeared ahead of us. I wasn't really sure if it was light. But I gazed and watched it grow. What was it? It appeared to be a ball of fiery yellow and white, like a star, or like the sun. But it had an unusual glow around it, unnatural, like a halo. It seems we were coming out of the black hole, on the other side!

Perhaps we were not going to die after all. And as we approached this hallowed sun, the darks and lights within it resembled an image of what I thought God looked like. And as the various gasses mixed and moved, it appeared as though the face was winking at me. In that moment, I realized we had all been saved by powers I could not comprehend.

Saved from the black hole, but now heading straight into the burning sun. No one else seemed to be worried. “Hey, guys,” I said to the suits, “aren’t we going to run right in to that sun?” No one moved. I grabbed the helm again, but to no use. There was still no steering away. The heat began to cause perspiration on my forehead, and then I began to sweat profusely. Dane was panting quite hard, and we were imminent upon the god-like star. Our entire ship became as bright as the sun as we breached the volatile surface. It completely swallowed us. We were inside the sun. The heat was furious. But we didn’t burn. The ship, or something, protected us. At the core, I could literally see subatomic particles, up quarks and down quarks swapping places, changing protons into neutrons, and hydrogen atoms fusing into new and bigger helium atoms. I’d always wanted to know how they did that, how he did that.

Once we passed the hottest part of the interior, the temperature went down as we passed through the cooler layers of the sun and finally popped out on the other side. There, the absolute most amazing, unexpected, awe inspiring sight came into view. It was Mercury, then Venus, and then, yes, the Mother Earth, my home. How did it get here? I thought I’d never see Earth again. I looked up at Domo. He took the controls and steered us towards home. He did not try and keep the vehicle hidden. Instead, he passed through Earth’s atmosphere in a fiery mass. As the heat subsided and we could see again, I noticed something entirely different about Earth. Yes, all the continents were there, and all the oceans were there, but there were no cities, no boats on the river, no streets, no neighborhoods, no cars and no houses. Domo set the ship down in the exact spot where he’d picked me up. But it was different. I was astounded and confused. The large ramps opened up revealing an Earth which was nothing like the one I had left only the day before. I turned to face the exit ramp and slowly walked towards it, slightly fearful, but with the Great Dane at my side.

I walked out onto the exterior deck of the ship. The Earth smelled simply wonderful. The fragrance of the flowers and the fruit trees filled my senses. There was no pollution.

And instead of houses along the field's perimeter, there were wild horses and buffalo drinking from the nearby stream.

Then Dane gave several ear piercing barks, and I heard someone say, "Hey Dane, what 'cha doing back so soon? I thought you'd be gone forever! Welcome home!" Dogs by the dozens were headed for the ship. I watched them all line up at the base of the ramp, each with own specific bark. I turned to Dane to ask him if he wasn't going to rush down and meet them, but as I did, Dane wasn't there. In his place was my brother, Greg, whose teenage nickname was Dane.

"Greg," I said, "How did you?" I was dumbfounded and before I could finish my sentence, I saw Domo coming out of the ship and removing his head gear. And for the first time, I laid eyes on his face. It was none other than my father.

"Dad!" I shouted. "How did you?" I wasn't able to finish my sentence. I said, "I don't understand. You all were with me the whole time?"

"Well, I am the majordomo," my father said, "head of the household, and I always have been."

"Why is Earth so different?" I asked. "I don't understand."

"It isn't really," he said. "We just went through a little string theory and a few worm holes, and one really big black hole, to go back in time a few thousand years, and to give you the ride of your lifetime along the way."

Behind him, the other suits were coming out, and removing their head gear. It turns out, they were all old friends, people we'd never want to be in a world without, all of our very best friends and family, and everyone that they love, and everyone that everyone they love loves, and so forth and so on, like a pandemic of love that eventually touches everyone. Everyone was inside that ship, the real Ark of the Earth, not just two by two, but a hundred by a hundred, and a thousand by a thousand, and a million by a million. They all came out and populated the Earth.

"I still don't understand, dad," I said. "How did you do this, and why?"

"Well," and he began his story in soliloquy style, "you see, I finally finished filing all my papers, and so I had time to work on my theory about dehydrated water. And once I figured that out, I started working on my second million, because I gave up on the first

million. And once I figured that out, well, I finally put that Stirling engine together using the aluminum coke can, and well, you see, after that, the sky was literally the limit. And so, as you guessed and believed, I am the wisest man on Earth, well, actually, in existence in the whole universe, and I since I got all that figured out, I was able to work on new theories, and they all seemed to work. I mean, this ship is just like flying an airplane, and I wouldn't want to be in a world without at least one airplane, which is why I designed it that way. Oh, and there's one steam engine train so I can ride it and blow the whistle, and one 18 wheeler so I can go through all the gears one time in my life. And then I told everyone about that I had gotten all my bucket list wishes and I was OK to pass on to the next life whenever it happened. And I even told you, but you didn't hear me, because you were tired and exhausted and burnt out and your mind was wandering somewhere else when I was telling you. And I realized I had one last wish I needed to fulfill."

He stopped for a moment to catch his breath, but quickly continued because he loved to tell stories, "And I told everybody that I had gotten all my wishes except for one. I had been blessed all my life, I had taken care of your mom all her life, and Greg had a family. But I was still concerned about you. You were the only thing I still needed to finish before I go on. And so everyone pitched in. And we made this happen, all of us, every single person in the world cares about you. You just didn't know it. You didn't think you had an audience sending you off. That's because they were all going with you. And I wanted to bring you back to a better place, a place of people, not things, so you could see how much you are loved and you can count your blessing by counting the people because each one is a blessing. I'm not the only one who is blessed. I wanted to show you that you were blessed too. But you couldn't see it, just like you couldn't see all the people on the spaceship. You could see all the beautiful things, all the wonderful colors, and the bountiful things the universe has to offer. You just couldn't see the real blessings. The people were clouded in suits, obliterated from your view, unknowns, slightly scary, you couldn't see their souls."

He continued, "We all want something better for our children, and I wanted this pristine Earth for you, with only the important things in life. There's no silver or gold here, no mansions, no greed, just plain and simple people, the people who love you, and the animals and plants of the Earth. That was my final wish, to show you that excitement is just a small part of life. And that the only thing that makes a life truly fulfilled are all the

people who love you, and that just because you can't see them, doesn't mean they aren't there. They are there, sometimes hidden, in every person. You just have to know that and to realize you can look at them differently and then you will see it. And all of our loved ones helped. I couldn't have done it on my own. The aim is people, and knowing that you belong with them, and being confident that they love you. When you know that, your life will be fulfilled. And now it is." There he stopped his story.

And I said, "There's one person missing. Where's mom?" I asked, somewhat fearfully, as she had just passed a few weeks before this journey.

"She's the reason we took this trip," said my father. "Her last words were, "Let's go." And the last thing she wrote, barely legible, was the word, "unfinished". With her last breath, she wanted us to do this. And she wanted to be a part of it. She wasn't finished with traveling. Because of her, I envisioned this trip. She planned this one as much as any one of our other trips that fill our albums with pictures of the world and our life together as Mr. & Mrs. Let's Go Hering. We toured the universe, at least, the important parts of it."

Then I said, "You were the one who said I'd do just fine, aren't you? You knew then I'd be OK."

"Yes," he said. "I knew you'd be just fine. I could see it in your eyes. You were ready to go again. You got that fire back in you. Just like your mom said to you, "Let's go". Something is unfinished".

"It's Mother's Day," I said. "If she were still here, I'd give her red roses."

"You still can," he said. "She's right over there." And he pointed to the grassy field and I saw her waving at me. I ran to catch her, but I lost sight of her for just a moment as people mingled and passed. When I reached the spot where I had seen her, she wasn't there. But there was a rose bush with huge red roses on it, large, thick, velvety petals with a sweet smell. I was going to wrap my arms around her and give her a hug, but the thorns pricked my fingers. I reeled as a drop of blood fell from my finger.

"Lovely, but tough, sweet smelling but sharp. It's definitely you through and through, mother. You are the red rose bush forever more."

And we built a very large village. And I was well loved in this village, and my father became the wisest and oldest man alive, and gave out free advice frequently and avidly as

he was a master story teller, and my bother guarded the village with his life, although there was no one trying to do any harm so he had a pretty good job and mostly just fixed everything that broke and explained to everyone pretty much every detail about everything because he was a genius. And this was the village I had seen from afar, and was accepted into so long ago, or is that sometime in the future? I seem to have lost track of time. And you know what, that's just alright. I'll be just fine.

Thank you, and good night.

Dedicated to my brother, the Great Dane of my life, Greg Hering, to my father, the wisest and most blessed man in the universe, Lee Hering, and to my mother, Mrs. Kathy Let's Go Hering, who is on the greatest trip of her lifetime right at this very moment. I hope everything you want is there, mom, sep us. And we'll be there soon enough. Happy Mother's Day With Love.

Additional stories at LisaHering.com

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My Great Dane and Knights in Shining Armor