

Watercolors and Felt Dolls or

Circle of Colors

A Short Story by Lisa Hering

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OCB Relax Music

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iqmO1RlqorU>

A journey into blue. Soft blue. Fades into strong blue. A drop of blue. An ocean in the tip of a paint brush. Green. Cascading across the textured paper. A meadow appears with a single stroke. Upon it is an imagined deer. The cubes of color sit tantalizingly inches away. Everything that can be created sits in that tin of possibilities. Clear water fills a glass jar. The paint brush is dipped in and it goes swish swish. Out comes the medium of miracles. It dips into brown. It sloshes until just the right amount of color is picked up in the magic bristles. It gravitates towards the meadow which has been prepared for it. It hangs in the air until just the right patch of grass is found. The fuzzy floating seeds of a dandelion migrate into the air. They tickle the nose of the artist's brush and the color is dangling and poised for its new life as nature's precious doe. Down goes the drop as it kisses the surface and transforms into a small being. Quickly, the artist gathers black for eyes and hooves, and then some pink for a nose, and soon, a friend appears nearby to share this meadow meal. A red cardinal flies through the crisp morning breeze with wings spread and song in the air. Purple mountains appear in the background and the sun rays strike nearby trees in a wooded area causing evergreen shadows that appear like forest skyscrapers. Hidden within the trees sits a cabin with a bit of smoke rising from the chimney. How lucky the artist to know what is in the compact tin of watercolors.

Hundreds of miles away, in a small cottage on the edge of some woods near a meadow, a woman works with a felt creation. She has many layers of colored material cut into various shapes seemingly without meaning. Her scissors are a bright shiny chrome and make a defined snipping noise as she picks up the felt and cuts in a meandering path. The fire crackles in the hearth keeping the cottage warm and her fingers nimble. She will

sell the dolls in the market to mothers of little girls and make money to keep her home warm. The children always delight in her creations as the doll faces are precious with bright eyes and pink cheeks, tiny noses and smiling lips. Each detail is sewn to perfection, hands, fingers, elbows, and ears. A small cap with ribbons to tie it on. Black shoes with a buckle. White socks up to the knees. A skirt of red plaid and a red woolen jacket. A small book and a green frog in her pocket.

A meowing at the door stops her work. She looks up and listens. The cat jumps to the window sill outside and peers in. Another meow. It has begun to snow. A flake lands on the cat's nose. It shuts both eyes as it tries to lick the snowflake. Meow. There is a doll on a stand in the window which she has recently finished. Several others adorn the room awaiting the market. Strips of felt lie on the floor under the work table. Bits of lace and tiny buttons. She gives them names. She gives them a story and a past.

On a crowded street in a busy town, people walk, ride bicycles, wait on the streetcar, and sell newspapers. A boy yells, "Here ye, here ye, read all about it." From a window in the row of apartment houses across from the boy sits a young girl dressed in a red plaid skirt with black shoes and white socks. She is watching him and listening to his cries. A large white cat sits in the window staring with her. They are amused by the people passing in the street and both the child and the cat place their noses in the panes of glass in the window creating fog from their breaths. She has a small book with pictures of a warm meadow and deer which she keeps on the window sill and occasionally reads from, but mostly, looks at the water colored pages.

Mother walks in the room.

"Come, shall we get a newspaper?" asks mother.

"Yes, ma-ma," says the child.

"Button up your jacket," says mum as she places a cap on the child's head and ties it on with ribbons.

They walk together outside. Mother has a coin she holds up to the boy.

"I'll take one, please," says mum. The two children look at each other.

The boy says to her, "I'll bet you read books. I saw you with a book."

She answers, "I'll bet you catch green frogs. I saw you with a frog in your pocket."

“Come, darling,” says mother to daughter, grasping her hand. As they walk away, the girl turns her head to watch the boy. He has gone back to selling newspapers. “Hear ye, hear ye. It will be warm on Christmas day this year. Read all about it.” But just before she enters the home, the boy looks back at her. He takes the frog out of his pocket and kisses it, then holds it in the air to show her his prize. She smiles at him. He smiles back, and tucks the frog back into his pocket where it will stay warm.

On the southern side of the equator, on a warm winter day, a clear stream runs through a meadow. A boy is fishing on the banks with his grandfather’s fishing pole. He’s used it many times and knows how to fish quite well. His basket is nearly full of fish. There will be a plentiful meal today, a very fortunate thing, for a very special day, for today is Christmas and it is warm.

Along the water’s edge are nice sized rocks for skipping into the stream and minnows meandering around them. Bursts of white petals and lemon grass create a nice border. Dragonflies settle on plants and frogs croak as they munch on tiny gnats in flight. A fish bites. Waves appear in large rings around the fishing line. The boy jerks on the pole. He pulls out a nice rainbow trout that wiggles in the air, a beautiful fish, the nicest one so far. For a moment, the fish can fly. Adrenaline flows in both the boy and the fish. This one is a fighter. It’s entire body curls right and then left, and back to the right and back to the left as it swings on the line of the old fishing pole. It’s almost more than the boy can handle. He swings the pole around hoping to land the fish along the water banks. Like the young boys who swing on a rope over the river, jumping in when they reach the center, the fish merely swings all the more strongly, gauging his distance to the stream. His speckled body shimmers in the sunlight and dazzles the boy. He is thrown off balance and tumbles into the rippling current. He drops the fishing pole. The frog croaks as he watches karma taking care of the situation.

“Aw heck,” says the boy in his dismay as he retrieves the pole. “He got away.” The boy looks at the line and hook which are both still intact, but without a fish. The wet boy now walks to the bank and right past the frog who continues to sit and stare peacefully at the swimming minnows. The boy glances back around and swiftly grabs the frog, looks him in the eye, and says,

“Well, we got enough.” He places his new mate securely in his pocket, grabs the basket and walks home, drying out in the warm sun. As he passes through the meadow, he spies a couple of deer grazing peacefully. They look up quickly as they hear his feet

marching through the vegetation. He heads for a little cottage near the edge of the meadow where he lives with his grandfather who makes bird houses and his mother who makes dolls. As he approaches the cottage, cardinals are feasting on the bird seed in the bird houses that are perched in the yard.

As the watercolor artist contemplates the final elements of her painting, she dabs the bristles lightly in flesh tones and denim blue, blocking in a young boy walking through the meadow with a basket and a tiny green dot in his pocket. Perfection.

She gives her blessing to the painting and with a pointed tip, writes in a title, “The Eighth Day”, followed by her signature. The paint brush goes into the glass jar of water which is now gray with a mix of many colors. Swish swish, dab dab. And the brush is clean. It, like the artist, is already creating the next story, a new story which has never come to life before. But will become a thing it has never been. It will become alive. And she looks up towards the marshmellowy white clouds and blue sky, and praises all the goodness of the world.

And rainbow colored raindrops come cascading down onto a blank map and fills it in with all of life’s journeys. It stops raining as God cleans and dries his brush and sets it down. He looks at the painting and is satisfied.

Thank you for listening.